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What Is Truth?

by Ernest L. Martin, 1977, 1979
 Transcribed and Edited by David Sielaff

Read the accompanying [Newsletter for July 2011](#)



[Editor's Note: This article is comprised of two short lectures by Dr. Martin, one presented in 1977, the other in 1979.¹ I combined them into a single narrative, eliminating duplicated material. Both deal with the subject of truth and error, and how to determine what is true and what is not true. The *Oxford Dictionary* definition is: **truth** "is that which is true as opposed to false." Truth, therefore, is the opposite of error. *Dr. Martin:*]

This lecture has a three word title, "What Is Truth?" We have not been accustomed to state things dogmatically as it relates to biblical topics. However, I want to depart from that position completely. I am going to make a dogmatic statement that I believe to be absolute fact. I can state most dogmatically that a person can know absolute truth: doctrinal truth, biblical truth, philosophical truth. Philosophic truth, biblical truth can be known.²

When you get into details of a scientific nature when you ask what is the truth of the origin of the universe, how did God come into existence or things like that, I must admit that my mind is not capable scientifically in a physical or even in a spiritual sense to answer the truth about how God came into existence, if He ever did. I cannot tell you, nor can you tell me, details of how the universe came into existence. I do not even know the truth of how it is sustained. I am not certain what will happen a million years from now, as far as scientific truth is concerned. We have many universities today that are trying to find out the details of truth, the origin of things, the reason why we are here now, where we are going to be in the future, etc.

I will try to show something that might be very fundamental to our understanding of truth and also of error itself. I think we can definitely determine exactly what is truth and what is error, and I mean this in a dogmatic sense. When I make a statement like that, automatically someone will say this is impossible. You

¹ The 1977 lecture was titled "How to Tell Truth from Error" and the 1979 lecture was titled "What Is Truth?" DWS

² Some of our earlier literature is outdated. General truth is there, but not absolute truth. In fact, much of the material I am producing today [in the late 1970s], I would hesitate to say is absolute truth. Yet now I am making the silly statement that it is possible to come to a knowledge of absolute truth. And it is not very complex. Anyone can come to it if he or she is just willing to do so. ELM Dr. Martin changed his mind and his teaching on many topics throughout his decades of research. DWS

know, I would almost share a person's belief on that on the surface. But the more a person reflects upon the biblical teachings about truth and error they will come to understand it is possible even without the Bible to come to general principles of what is truth and error. I think that can be done as well.

I am not talking about scientific truth. I do not know how to send someone from here to Venus. Some people can do so, but that type of truth is material, it is scientific.³ I am talking about philosophical and biblical truth, and after all, that is the most important truth when it comes to sociological relationships between man to man, and man to God.

Let us go to the Scripture, because that happens to be God's word, and in there, when one reflects very carefully on truth and error, I believe it possible for a person to dogmatically understand what is the truth philosophically and what is error philosophically. I am not talking about the details of truth or error. I want to go into principles which will help us to understand all of the points of life that we can categorize as being truth or as being error. However, once one understands in principle, philosophically, what the Bible says about truth and error, all of the matters of detail should also fall into place and we could ourselves appraise whether something is correct or whether it is wrong, whether it is truthful or whether it is in error.

Many people are searching for the truth, yet I feel it is easy to find if one knows where to look and what to look for. I believe the Christian looks upon Christ and His word as being truth. I believe that to be a fact. I am interested in the biblical revelation because that happens to be God's answer on this very important subject.

The Bible talks about the details of truth and also details of error. A proper philosophical understanding of truth and error can even help us to know about some details of scientific or psychological research. Other details and answers cannot be found now. I know that I cannot answer those questions, and the Bible tells me that I cannot answer them.⁴

Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived according to the Scripture, wrote:

“He [God] has made every thing beautiful in his time: also he has set the world [ages] in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end.”

Ecclesiastes 3:11

With this in mind, it is therefore impossible for me to know the truth about the origin of the universe, the details of the nature of God, or beyond **“the end”** (“the consummation” in Greek, 1 Corinthians 15:24), because I am incapable of understanding these subjects, and neither are you capable of understanding such ultimate questions — without God revealing some of the answers to us through His Scriptures. Solomon, the wisest man, admitted to the same inadequacies:

³ Dan Story, *Christianity on the Offense: Responding to the Beliefs and Assumptions of Spiritual Seekers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1998), p. 126:

“Science has no bearing on historical, legal, philosophical, theological, or aesthetic issues and should not even speculate in these fields. When it does, it is dabbling in areas of truth for which it is not qualified to investigate or to pronounce judgment. Can science prove or disprove that George Washington was our first president (historical truth)? Can science prove or disprove that a murder was premeditated (legal truth)? Can science prove or disprove the validity of the presuppositions people bring to ethical issues (philosophical truth)? Can science prove or disprove the existence of God (theological truth)? Can science tell us if a book was good or a piece of art beautiful (aesthetic truth)?”

Actually, God's love can be used as a proof for the existence of God, which we only have God's Word as evidence about Christ's redemptive act at present. The final form of that proof will only come at the moment of and after our resurrection to spiritual life. Then we will know the truth of God's love clearly and begin to experience it fully (1 Corinthians 13:12–13). *DWS*

⁴ God gives wisdom (Proverbs 2:6). God promised to give particular wisdom to Solomon (1 Kings 4:29–34), which God fulfilled (1 Kings 3:28, 5:12, 10:23–24). We should ask God for wisdom which He desires to give to us liberally (James 1:5). Christ is wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:21, 24, 2:7). Our job will be to make known to **“principalities and powers in heavenly places”** the **“wisdom of God”** (Ephesians 3:10). *DWS*

“Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: because though a man labor to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea further; though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it.”

Ecclesiastes 8:17

But Solomon made it quite clear that none of us can really understand all of the physical properties of life that we see all around us. All we have to say is that God is wise. God knows what He is doing and He has created these things for our good, for His glory, and we can all rest assured that everything will work out all right through God.⁵ So I will not discuss scientific truth or error, I want to go into spiritual truth and how to discern it, and how to discern spiritual error.

Basic truth, philosophically, can be practiced by every one of us. We should have no difficulty with it. We are all aware of John 17:17 when Jesus, the day before He died instructed and prayed with His apostles, made a statement concerning truth: **“Sanctify them through your truth: Your word is truth.”**⁶ By **“word”** He meant the word of God. Read all of John chapter 17.

Who is an exponent or the epitome of the word of God in human flesh? Jesus Christ was God on earth. If you could look at Him clearly, you would be able to see truth standing in front of you. If He walked from point A to point B, you would see truth walking from A to B. If you saw Him ascend back to heaven, you would see truth ascending into heaven. When we see Him coming a second time we will see truth coming back. Granted, this is a philosophical understanding of it, but **“your word”** or Jesus Christ or God, must represent truth.

For any deviation from God, if you are one step from God, you must be one step away from truth. If you are a thousand steps away from God, you must be a thousand steps away from truth. I think any Christian would understand this to be true. If a person is not a Christian I think philosophically that person would still have to say, if he is one step away from the creator, he is one step away from truth, and if a thousand steps then consequently a thousand steps away from truth.

Christ made it succinctly plain when He told His disciples that **“your word,”** God’s word, happens to be truth. Who is the living Word (alive NOW!)? It is Jesus Christ. Most of us who are Christians have adopted that principle, but we need to go much beyond that. People are really trying to find God. They would like to find truth. They want to know the difference between truth and error. This question of what is truth is very important and for many years I searched for that very thing. I was told by one group that this is the truth or that is the truth. Another group told me they had the truth and the groups would differ from each other. Many of the people I am talking about were biblically oriented. The truth seemed to be very confusing. In fact, what is truth?

Christ and Truth

When Christ was being judged by the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, the Procurator of Judea at that time, Pilate asked that very question of Christ. They had a dialogue. Pilate was no doubt a well-educated and very intelligent Roman man:

“Pilate therefore said unto him, ‘Are you a king then?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say that I am a

⁵ Once we get those points in mind, then through a process that God can give us in the future when He opens up our minds to understand, maybe in the resurrection when we have spiritual bodies and spiritual minds to be able to comprehend the origin of the universe, where it is going, and all of that, then I suppose we can take these philosophical principles of truth and error, fully adopt them into our lives, then all the details of scientific truth and error will also be made available to us. Ephesians 1:10–11:

“That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will.”

DWS

⁶ Jesus was probably citing Psalm 119:162 where a better translation is that of the Concordant Version:

“The sum of Your word is truth, And all of Your righteous ordinances are eonian [for the age].”

DWS

king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth hears my voice.”

• *John 18:37*

Notice Pilate’s next query. This is a question all of us have asked ourselves:

“Pilate said unto him, ‘What is truth?’ And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and said unto them, ‘I find in him no fault at all.’”

• *John 18:38*

Christ was here on earth not only to preach truth, but to defend truth. He said that anyone having the truth would come to Him and He would **“bear witness”** to truth, to defend truth. It is possible to come, dogmatically, absolutely I feel, to an understanding of that question from the biblical revelation. Christ said as much. It can be done even without the Bible if a person just applies proper principles. Thankfully those principles are well known and well-rehearsed throughout Scripture, particularly in the New Testament.

Yes, it is possible to come to doctrinal truth or philosophical truth, and answer Pilate’s question. Of course, Pilate did not have time because he had a prosecution on his hands. The one being prosecuted and persecuted was Jesus Christ.

Knowing Truth, Knowing Love

Pilate’s question was not answered at that time but it was answered later. Turn to 1 John chapter 4. Granted, this is biblical truth but it would apply to any situation, even a social situation. I am thankful that it is in the Bible.

“We are of God: he that knows God hears us; he that is not of God hears not us. Hereby [by this means] know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.”

• *1 John 4:6*

He does not say we might possibly know. He says **“we know.”** You can know what error is and you can know what truth is.

“Hereby know we the spirit of truth, AND the spirit of error. Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loves is born of God, and knows God. He that loves not knows not God; for God is love.”

• *1 John 4:7–8*

The answer is love. That is the way to tell truth from error. These principles are essential. If you want to know what the truth is, one way is to understand that truth and error are in contradistinction to each other. Love is the central key to everything, and if you want to know truth, you must know love. Love is not too difficult to understand, not really when you get down to it. But here is the way to really apply it.

Just as I said earlier about one or a thousand steps from God are steps away from truth, so too, when you go one step away from love, you are one step toward error. If you go a thousand steps, you are a thousand steps into error. If on the other hand you turn around — and the Bible uses the term “repentance” for that action — and you make one step toward love, you are making one step back toward love. If you make a thousand steps toward love, you are getting closer to truth all the time. If you then could go all the way and love totally you would:

- love God with all your mind, heart, soul, and strength (Mark 12:30–34; Luke 10:27), properly;
- love your neighbor as yourself;
- love yourself; and
- love all creation.

If you could do all that you will have reached absolute dogmatic truth, because that is what it is. That is

philosophic truth, but it is truth. When Pilate asked “**What is truth?**”, that is the answer, love is what truth is. It all concerns this matter of love.

My father once said to me, “Ernest, anyone can know what basic Christianity is.” I said, “Dad, I don’t think you can unless you keep the Sabbath, do this, do that, and all types of other things.” He said, “Ernest, I’ll tell you what basic Christianity is. It is to love God and love your neighbor, and that is in the Bible.” I felt sorry for my dad at the time, but I don’t any more. He was right. It is all based on love; it is not based on rituals. It is not based upon a Temple in Jerusalem. It is not based upon buildings that we have here on this earth or organizations of men or a man. It is based upon love. “**God is love.**” That is what the apostle John wrote:

“He that loves not knows not God; for God is love. ...

And we have known and believed the love that God has to us. God is love; and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him.”

• 1 John 4:8, 16

Christ is God. He and the Father are one, so they are both love. When you have Christ coming into the midst of things, you have love coming into the midst of things. When Pilate asked “**What is truth?**” he was looking at truth personified, Jesus Christ, but Pilate did not realize that. He was also looking at love personified, but Pilate did not realize that either. He realized something about that later perhaps, and one of these days he will know exactly what complete truth is, because he will know what love is.

People Who Seek God

This may be a bit off the subject, but there are so many people trying to seek God. They want truth. They want to avoid error. There is nothing wrong with trying to seek God. But religions are created through people trying to seek God, with themselves trying to approach God. All of the religions that you see on the earth today, including the pagan religions in the Far East, the animistic religions in Africa or the Australian outback, any type of religion, they are really reflections of man’s quest to find out truth, to find God.

Look at the hodge-podge that we have in the world today. Many people in the Christian world, in Europe, in South America, in North America, they are on a quest to find out who God is. They want to have contact with God. They want to know truth. They want to stay away from error.

As they try to find God, as they try to find truth, notice what happens when man does it, they come up with all types of religious beliefs, each contrary to the other. In our own Christian faith in this Western world we have thousands of different ideas on how to approach Jesus Christ. When man tries to find out truth, he finds out all kinds of channels to walk in, but he will almost never arrive at truth by that means because there is too much of “man” in the seeking.

Here is what man ought to do. If they want to come into contact with God, if they want truth to prevail in their lives, stop trying to seek God.⁷ Instead, when it comes to salvation, when it comes to the glories that God can give, and coming in contact with Him and the giving of God’s Holy Spirit to us, the Bible makes it quite clear that man has nothing to do with it. Grace is the means by which God gives to man His salvation. Grace is without works.

We should try to wipe away all of our attempts to find God by our ways, by our methods. It is time for us to ask God to come into contact with us. That is, let God find us. How many bumper stickers do I see here in southern California that say, “I found it!”? Maybe they have found it, as they consider it. It is much more important for God to find you.

⁷ I realize we ought to seek, we ought to ask, we ought to knock, yes, we should endeavor to find out things that we are capable of finding out. *ELM* In addition the seeking, asking, and knocking is done by believers in God. *DWS*

It is time all of us quit trying to find God, because we will be frustrated on almost every turn. How many times have I seen people go to one church, be dissatisfied and go on to another one, then another one, then another? They are still seeking and in a sense that is good. Maybe they are growing in grace and in knowledge to a certain extent, but they are running from pillar to post. If a person would just say, “God, I will try to live a normal, natural, decent life and accept Jesus Christ as Savior, but I want you, because you are more powerful than I am, to come seek me and find me!” God should find you. Christ said:

“NO MAN can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. ...

And he said, ‘Therefore said I unto you, that NO MAN CAN come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.’”

• *John 6:44, 65*

It is time that man quit trying to find God through his own means, which causes all types of man’s religions to develop. If they should just sit back and say, “God, find me.” God is interested enough in every single one of us through Jesus Christ that in His own time and in His own way God will find us. Once He finds us you will be able to discern truth from error. You can know if God has found you as I will show later.

Who Should be Loved?

Any of us who have any departure from love, no matter what the love is toward; you are on the way into error. You can sum up the Bible, all the regulations of the Bible, by making one statement, that if you love God properly, just God alone properly, you can do what you please and everything will be perfect (Romans 13:8–10). No problems whatsoever, if you loved Him perfectly.

I would add that there are ramifications to that statement: love your neighbor also. But if you love God properly you will love your neighbor. Your neighbor has been created by God in His image. He is a reflection of God. Act accordingly.

The key to the whole matter is love. How many times throughout the New Testament do we have this theme rehearsed? The apostle John in particular emphasized love time and time again. He is not talking about (and I am not talking about) a type of syrupy sentimentality that many people think represents love. Love is a much misused word. Maybe we could say “respect,” “concern,” trying to help the other person as well as yourself (and not forgetting yourself). In other words, love is trying to do good to people and to God.

Let me put it this way, change it around to the negative: try not to harm people. Try to help them. Try not to hurt them. Try to aid them. Try in every way to show that you love them. That is what love means. Really, that can sum up the whole essence of the Scripture.

We find in Romans chapter 13 that every one of us has a debt. We have a debt to society. We have a debt to God. We even have a debt to ourselves. Frankly, there are lots of us who do not even love ourselves. We cannot come to the place of feeling we need to be loved or respected. That is a sad situation when we come to that place. I have been that way before. I probably will be that way in the future because I am a human being.

The point is we do have a debt that we have to pay. That is a debt of love. If we pay it, we will be happy, or as happy as we can be:

“Owe no man any thing, but to [owe] love one [to] another: for he that loves another has fulfilled the law.”

• *Romans 13:8*

Many people say you must fulfill the law. How do you fulfill it? By doing this physical action, or that ceremony, or that ritual, or observing that time? Well, if that is the way to fulfill the law, try to go ahead. Good luck. But love truly fulfills the law. Romans 13:9 mentions some of the 10 Commandments. Look at the next verse: **“Love works no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law”** (Romans 13:10).

Rituals? No. That is not the point. In Hosea 6:6 we have a Scripture in the Old Testament that is very interesting. It was a cardinal Scripture that our Lord Himself referred to; it was important as far as He was concerned. Hosea was one of the prophets of the Old Testament who saw the materialism of ancient Israel, how it was going to their heads, and so had some principles to give to them. Amongst his teachings was this one, put into the mouth of God: **“For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings”** (Hosea 6:6) — mercy and knowledge of God more than sacrifice and burnt offerings.

How many of us have ever studied the sacrificial system of the Old Testament? I have at length. It is a very interesting study.⁸ There is nothing more complex, more meticulous, more dealing with ritual and purity, and minute details than sacrificial services, burnt offerings, and things like that. You can see most of the sacrificial system made clear in Leviticus chapters 1 through 5. How many of you understand it completely? I absolutely do not. In fact, the ancient Jews did not understand it in all details.

We have the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds where there are discussions about sacrificial services, Temple regulations, and things like that, filling book after book. They discuss exactly how pure a person could be before he could offer a sacrifice. Everything had to be so precise. It took time, energy, and great attention to detail to practice the sacrificial service properly.

How many of us showing mercy and having the basic knowledge of God, is there anything complex about that? There is nothing complex about that. If you see someone who needs help, can you show them mercy? Is there anything meticulous about that? This idea from God through Hosea was repeated by Christ twice in Matthew 9:13 and also in 12:7. Let us look at that latter verse. I want to show you the Scripture in which Christ came along and said that mercy is more important than sacrifice:

“But if you had known what this means, ‘I will have mercy, and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless.”

• *Matthew 12:7*

There were certain things the Pharisees did not like. Read all of Matthew 12:1–12. The disciples went through the wheat fields and plucked corn on the Sabbath day. This was illegal according to Old Testament law. The Pharisees saw them doing this and said to Jesus **“Behold, your disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day”** (Matthew 12:2). Then Christ proclaimed His own disciples **“guiltless”** and answered the Pharisees with two examples when the sabbath was being violated, one instance in the past and the other in their present day.

Sabbath Law Violated in the Past and Present

The instance in the past was when David went into the Tabernacle and ate the shewbread on the sabbath day. That shewbread was prepared only for the priests. In the Old Testament it says that if anybody unqualified eats of that shewbread in the inner part of the Tabernacle, he should be cut off from Israel. The words are definite and to the point (Leviticus 22:3).⁹ But the priest Ahimelech found David and his men coming in from the field as an army. They had nothing to eat for some time. David asked for some bread. Ahimelech said the only bread we have is in the tabernacle in the Holy Place, the shewbread, which was illegal for David to eat. David may have been on his way to being a king, but he was not a priest. It was absolutely against the law of God for him and his men to eat it. Look at what Christ said:

“But he said unto them, ‘Have you not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which

⁸ See Dr. Martin’s 1995 detailed presentation [“The Sacrificial System of Israel.”](#) DWS

⁹ Only the priests were allowed to enter the Holy Place of the Tabernacle where the shewbread was placed (Leviticus 22:3; Hebrews 9:2). The shewbread was there for God only. The priests were allowed to eat the bread when it was a day old and had been replaced (Leviticus 24:5–9; also Matthew 12:4; Mark 2:26; Luke 6:4). DWS

was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?”

• **Matthew 12:3–4**

Christ said David disobeyed a precise law of God at that time. It was a law of a ritualistic nature, granted, but what was being shown to David and his men? Mercy. They needed something to eat. I know people today that would starve outside a bread truck if it had a sign on it saying “God Almighty says you shall not eat any bread in here.” They would sit right there and not take of it at all. It seems like we should not do so, right? But these verses are about mercy being shown.

When I say God Almighty says not to eat the bread, what would happen would be this: here is the bread truck, the door is slammed, and people need food out of it. On the outside is a sign, a command, put up there by a man, the head of a church. The man even signs his name. He says no one is to take this bread, under some kind of penalty. Some men would stand outside that bread truck and they would not show mercy even to their own children.

Does this mean that we can go and completely violate law that God has given all the time? Of course not, but this is a marvelous illustration that Christ is bringing out that some of the most sacrosanct Old Testament laws do not allow mercy to be shown at particular times. Mercy should take precedence.

What was wrong with having that bread to eat? Nothing. David was not killing or harming anyone. Ahimelech was showing love; that is mercy. David was not hurting anyone. No one was being harmed in any way by David and his men eating that bread. They were being helped because they were hungry. In this particular case God Himself sanctioned mercy above ritual and ceremony because Christ said so.¹⁰

These two violations were presented and then in the midst of it Christ said, **“I will have mercy and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless”** (Matthew 12:7). He considered His disciples picking and eating food on the sabbath as a violation of the Old Testament Scripture. Do not try to say it was not. No one was allowed to harvest or thresh or do any work of any kind on the sabbath day. Just because it was only a little work being done is no excuse whatsoever. Work was being done. Christ said they were guiltless. He had the authority to say that. There was a law that preceded the ritualistic one. That law was called mercy. Mercy was in agreement with love.

Loving God

We should be loving God with all our hearts, minds, soul, and strength (Mark 12:30, 33; Luke 10:27). It is very difficult for us to do that, right? I will tell you why that is. It is simply because you cannot see God. You have never shaken hands with Him like you do with your neighbor. You do not know Him like you can know your husband, your wife, or your children in a face-to-face relationship. So it is very difficult to know God or to love God.

Do you know why so many people seek God? They go from church to church or from book to book. They try to love God, but it is impossible for them to do so on their own. Why? Again, it is because they cannot see God. God does not respond as they think He should, yet they want to share their hearts with Him. Read again John 6:44, 65 quoted above.

Do you know what happens when you do not love God properly? You will find yourself getting into error if you are not careful. If you have a proper love of God, 100% love, you would be walking in 100% truth. That is all there is to it as far as God is concerned.

Loving Your Neighbor

You can, however, see your neighbor. You can shake hands with him or her. You can understand them now. God also says we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. Are you loving your neighbor? Are you

¹⁰ King Saul ordered the murder of Ahimelech and the other priests (1 Samuel chapter 22). They were killed for Ahimelech’s act of mercy. The King showed evil and sin, not mercy. Yes, sometimes showing mercy has a terrible cost. DWS

showing concern to him? Are you trying to help him in the best possible way, being a natural human being? Here is a key: how can you know the spirit of truth from the spirit of error? In regard to your neighbor, if you love him and you love him perfectly, you are walking philosophically in perfect truth. Absolutely you are, without the slightest doubt. If you deviate from any love in any way, you are practicing error.

Christ even said, **“Love your enemies.”**¹¹ That is very difficult to do. Yet if you do not love your enemies you are walking in error. That is exactly what John said in the second part of 1 John 4:6: howbeit we can know **“... the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.”** He says “love” is how you can know.

Can you appraise your own life; can I look in the mirror and appraise my own life? I can and you can to a certain extent. I realize we are human beings that cannot possibly love everybody the way we ought to. That is the way things are. I know that. That means I am in error sometimes. The point is, if I love people and if you love people in the proper way, then we are practicing truth. That is the biblical revelation. There is no doubt about it.

A lawyer, a Pharisee very much interested in legal matters, asked Christ what was the greatest of the commandments. In response Christ explained what a friend was. How can you be a friend to someone? Christ gave the illustration of the Good Samaritan starting in Luke 10:25.

A man was on the road to Jericho from Jerusalem. He was a Jew. He fell amongst robbers and thieves. They stripped him of his possessions. They beat him up, left him in the side of the road in the gutter, and went on their way. He was half dead, about to lose his life, with cuts and bruises all over him.

The next person to come along was a priest. A priest was a top representative of Almighty God, YHWH, the God of the Old Testament and the universe. A priest dealt with ritualistic matters. He was on his way to Jericho from Jerusalem as well. He came next to this man and saw him in the gutter. You would think that a priest, being a representative of God, would have rushed down, bound up the person’s wounds, helped him, got him on his beast, taken him somewhere to rest and heal. What did the priest do? Christ says the priest looked at him, saw him clearly, then passed around him and walked on.

Next person to come along was a Levite. A Levite was second in command, you might say, in the ritualistic system of the Old Testament. For illustration for us today, a priest could be considered a minister in certain churches and a Levite would be considered a deacon, or something similar. Levites were part of the hierarchy although the Levite was of lesser esteem than the priest.¹² He should have been the next one to consider the plight of this Jew. The Levite took one look at the Jew, walked to the other side and passed on.

Here were two representatives of God seeing their countryman down in the gutter, half dead, and they passed by the wayside. They would not even help him. Most people have misunderstood the entire intent of that parable. Do you know that priest and that Levite were actually keeping the law of the Old Testament by passing him on the side? That is true. If you go back to Leviticus chapter 15 it is quite clear that anyone who touches a dead body is unclean for seven days. For seven days he cannot go into the Temple. If he meets other people, he may make them unclean too if he touches them. Any utensils that he uses like a knife or a spoon, if someone else touches it, that person and object are unclean until evening.

¹¹ Here is the full context, Matthew 5:43–45

“You have heard that it has been said, ‘You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy [Leviticus 19:18; Psalm 139:21–22].’ But I say unto you, ‘Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you’; That you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”

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¹² As a matter of interest, in the tithing law of the Old Testament, the Levites were given the bulk of the tithe and the priests were given 10% from the Levites’ tithes from the other tribes. If we adopted that principle today, we would have the richest deacons you have ever seen. But most people do not want to give deacons any money. They want to give it to other people. *ELM*
See Dr. Martin’s book [The Tithing Dilemma](#) free online and for sale, to learn what to tithe, when to tithe, who should tithe, and if a tithe should be given. It also clearly identifies who is qualified to receive a tithe. *DWS*

Here is this priest, a representative of God, if he walks down the road and he sees a man he feels is just about ready to die and he picks him up (as long as he is alive it is all right), but if he puts him on his beast and the man dies, that priest cannot help people in the Temple for seven days. He is out of commission. He cannot help people.

The Levite had the same problem because it says in Leviticus that if he would touch a dead body, he also would be put out of commission. This priest and Levite could have said to themselves, I have very important missions to carry out. I need to go to Jericho to meet this person or that person. I have all these religious duties for God. I am sorry, but I cannot take this man. I would like to help him. It would be beautiful if I could help him, but I will be unclean and I cannot afford to do that if he died. They are keeping God's law, it seems. They do not want to become impure.

A Samaritan also was on the way to Jericho. The Samaritans of the time believed in the Old Testament rituals which they tried to keep as best they could. They also were rascals as far as the Jews were concerned because sometimes they would bring in a little heathenism into their practices, and they were not looked on as being as pure as anybody else. They were enemies of the Jews.¹³

The Samaritan comes down the road sees his enemy in the gutter, and sees he is about to die. He would also be unclean if he would touch a dead body, unable to go into his temple which was existent at Mount Gerizim. He got off his beast, rushed down, picked up the Jew, put him on his beast, took him to an inn, paid for him, cleaned his wounds, and cared for him.

Christ concluded His illustration and asked the lawyer, who was truly a friend to the man who was about to die? There is no question about it. It was the Samaritan, yet he came very close to violating all types of ritualistic laws by helping his fellow man, even one who was his enemy.

Christ gave this as a beautiful illustration to show that mercy and love supersede all types of ceremonies. Most of the infighting that we find in certain denominations today, those that claim to be the true church of God, what are they fighting over? Are they fighting over mercy and love? In my judgment they are not. They are fighting over buildings, organizations, who will rule, who will be the priest, who will be the Levite, who will keep this ritual, who will keep that one, who will tell this person what to do, and where the tithes will go, all of that.

It seems to me that if mercy and love were the prime ingredients that would motivate any man or group of men or organizations of men, there would never have to be any fighting. You would have people trying to show mercy and concern. You may even have to disobey the law on some occasions in order to keep law, like that Samaritan disobeyed, like David disobeyed, or like the priest who regularly profaned the sabbath and Christ said that was allowed also (Matthew 12:5-7). Yes, sometimes you have to disobey ritualistic law in order to obey the higher law of mercy and love.

Many people that I know would be sure to keep those ritualistic laws and ceremonies long before they would ever show mercy to someone. God is not the author of confusion, but God is the author of love, because He is love. He revels in mercy and judgment and goodness. These are the factors that really show forth the law. The Ten Commandments themselves, all together, are based on the principle of love.

In Matthew chapter 12 we find one of the Ten Commandments being disobeyed by the apostles, and Christ agreed with them doing so and said they were guiltless because He was showing mercy to them above the ritualistic law. That always is the case.

There is too much religion in this world, in my view, and not enough Christianity. Christianity is love and mercy. Religion is ceremony and ritual. What should we really be after as far as human beings are concerned, whether we are Christians or not?¹⁴ Again, love and mercy. These are truth.

¹³ See Dr. Martin's book, *The People That History Forgot*, available online and for purchase. DWS

¹⁴ See Dr. Martin's articles: "[The Curse of Church Authority](#)," "[The Dangers of External Religious Actions](#)," "[Why Churches Fall Apart](#)," "[The Folly of Tradition](#)," "[The Anatomy of a Church, Part 1](#)," and "[The Anatomy of a Church, Part 2](#)." DWS

First Peter chapter 4 has a principle that I think should be burned into every person's conscience because we all want to be free of sin, we want to have the approbation of God. We want man to like us, I suppose, and we want God to like us as well. First Peter 4:8: **“And above all things have fervent charity [love] among yourselves: for charity [love] shall cover the multitude of sins.”** (The word “charity” is an old King James Version word for “love.”) God has forgiven us, according to the biblical revelation, of all of our sins, but just because your sins have been forgiven does not mean you practice an active righteousness.

To practice active righteousness means that you do not sin as much. You will sin, we all do, but sin is nothing more than a departure from the principle of love. Sin is also a departure from truth. Peter says that if a person will practice love it will cover not just one or two sins, but a multitude of sins. In fact, it will cover them all. Jesus Christ is love. God is love. He sent Christ because He loved the world (John 3:16–17). If we want to know what truth is, look to Him. He has it. You and I can know it and we can practice it.

In actual fact we cannot practice “truth” perfectly because we are still physical human beings. Yet remember, dogmatic truth can be understood in the sense that it is love: love for God, love for man, love for yourself, and love for nature. You go one step from love, you are on the road to error. You go toward love, and you are on the road to truth. If you practice perfect love, you have perfect truth. Do you need anything else? As far as I am concerned, that is all we need.¹⁵

Loving Yourself

There is a third point to truth and love. Christ said love your neighbor as you love yourself. Do you really love yourself? Do you have respect for yourself? Do you have self-esteem? Do you feel that you are important to God and to man without being selfish and egotistical? You should love yourself — God, Christ, Paul, and James say you should (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 19:19, 22:39; Mark 12:31, 33; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9–10; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8). Even in loving yourself, if you do it properly, you are walking in truth. If you deviate from it in any way, you are walking in error. It all comes down to the principle of love. You know what Christ said to His disciples in John 13:35:

“By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another.”

• ***John 13:35***

That is Christianity. It is based upon the principle of love. God gives us the example of His love. God loved us so much that He sent His only begotten Son into this world so that we might have redemption and a love relationship with Him (John 3:16–17; Romans 8:32), and:

“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”

• ***1 John 4:9–11***

Christ also loved us because He was willing to undergo what He did for us. He also loves us now as God the Father does. He wants us to love Him as well. It is a matter of love.¹⁶ Once we walk in love, then we are

¹⁵ Lies and the hiding of truth have been used since ancient times to keep people subservient and obedient to rulers. Truth was too precious, supposedly, for the “little people” to know the truth. There are times when the truth must be closely held. Winston Churchill said in 1943 during World War II, **“In wartime truth is so precious that she should be attended by a bodyguard of lies.”** Churchill's *The Second World War, Volume 5: Closing the Ring* (1952), Chapter 21 (Teheran: The Crux), p. 338. Apparently religious and secular leaders believe that religious truth must also be held secret. See Dr. Martin's revealing article [“The Pagan Immortal Soul and ‘Double Doctrine.’”](#) Ancient writers, politicians, and priests — the educated and nobility — openly wrote that the mass of people must be controlled by religion and threats of punishment in the afterlife, particularly a hell. See also my Commentaries [“Man's Lies, God's Wisdom”](#) and [“A Contest of Lies.”](#) DWS

¹⁶ Romans 8:35 says that Christ's love will keep us safe unto salvation. Romans 8:39 says that Christ's love is God's love: **“the**

walking in truth. That is all there is to it; it is as simple as A-B-C.

Those without Biblical Understanding

There are people in this world who may not have a biblical understanding of things, but these people — it does not matter who they are, where they are, or what type of religious belief they have — can still philosophically be walking in truth or in error. All of us whether we be Christians or not walk in error because none of us have perfect love. I wish I had perfect love but I do not. I am trying, and so are you. That is what Christianity is all about.

The apostle Paul wrote to the Roman *ekklesia* that it was possible for them to show the fulfillment of the law in their heart and that they could have done so even before they became Christians. The Roman Gentiles originally did not even have knowledge of God or knowledge of the Mosaic Law. They did not have the prophecies of Isaiah, or Jeremiah, or the Psalms which tell people to love one another. They did not have any of those things, but Paul told the Romans:

“For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which show the work of the law written in their hearts.”

• ***Romans 2:14–15***

What is **“the work of the law”**? Remember, **“Love is the fulfilling of the Law”** As Paul later says in the 13th chapter of the Book of Romans. Love is keeping all of the commandments. If you had perfect love, you would be reckoned as having kept the commandments perfectly. Paul says that Gentiles can by nature and have by nature kept certain parts of the Law, not by letter but by heart. Why? Because Gentiles and anybody on this earth are capable of understanding love, if they are sane and mature. You know, love has been expressed and is undoubtedly expressed all over the earth at the present time.

Unfortunately error predominates. Evil predominates. All of the difficulties that come up within the mind of man, they are the things that prevail in the world today. I grant you that. But truth also is being practiced by mankind. I will tell you how truth is being practiced: any time any person or a group of people begin to show love to another, do you know what they are doing by showing that love? He or she is walking in truth because God is love. When you start showing concern, love, and a sense of esteem to others, and it comes out genuinely from the heart, then even if you are a Gentile, according to the apostle Paul, you are doing by nature those things that are in the Law and you are keeping that Law. This Law keeping is love. Love is the fulfilling of the Law.

How to Know God Has Found You

In fact, you can discern whether or not God has found you. You can know this through the principle of truth and error. All of this is in the Bible and it can be discerned even outside the Bible.

I am a biblical man from my point of view. I want to know what God’s own Word says about the matter of distinguishing between truth and error. It is easy to do. Some can say that is being too certain, too dogmatic, too matter of fact. Let us look at the Scripture and principles and I believe all of us will understand

[continuing note from previous page]

love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Note Ephesians 5:1–2:

“Be you therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and has given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.”

Specifics of what Christ did for us is explained in Philippians 2:5–8:

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross [tree].”

DWS

how it is possible for you to be dogmatically certain you are walking in the truth philosophically or in error, again philosophically.

Look at the verses we read earlier in the epistle of First John, but read them from a new perspective:

“We are of God: he that knows God hears us; he that is not of God hears not us.”

• 1 John 4:6

John is leading into the most important aspect of the context of truth and error. Look at the last part of verse 6: **“Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error”** (1 John 4:6). He says here **“hereby we know”** it. How do we know it? He explains:

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loves is born of God, and knows God. He that loves not knows not God; for God is love.”

• 1 John 4:7–8

How can we determine what is truth and what is error? John makes it very plain and clear. The dominant means by which a person can discern truth from error is L-O-V-E. John says that God Himself is love. God is the very exponent of love. Granted He uses very different means to express His love. Sometimes we do not like what He does, that is true, but the ultimate scope of God’s plan is to show His love in action.

Why did He send Jesus Christ to this earth to redeem man? It is because He loves man. He wants us to look to Christ and to come to Him, the Father, through the principle of love, expressing it by loving our neighbors (1 John 4:8, 16). God is love,

God is also truth. Truth and love go together. How can we determine the spirit of truth or the spirit of error? There is only one way. There is no other way that I can mention, because this is the biblical truth. You do not even need the Bible to demonstrate this to you, yet it is in the Bible. The way to show it is through the principle of love.

1. When you practice love, the proper kind of love you ought to have toward God, toward neighbor, and toward yourself, do you know what you are practicing? You are practicing truth.
2. When you show any deviation from love or less love or no love — you are practicing error.

That is all there is to it. When you have supreme love, you have supreme love philosophically. Philosophically, if you have love in your heart and you practice it all the time, you are philosophically practicing truth because you are in tune with God — and God is love and God is truth. If you step away from love, you have gone into error. A thousand feet from love, you have gone a thousand feet into error. How in the world can we tell the spirit of truth from the spirit of error? Says John, it is through the principle of love.

An Example of Truth and Love

I want to give you an illustration about a man that my mother told me about. My mother is 86 years old [in 1977]. Some 10 years ago, I received a telegram saying my father had died. I was teaching in college in England and I had been there for some years. I knew my father had been sick and on the verge of dying.

I had to decide at that moment whether or not to get on an airplane to California, spend some \$750 at that time to attend the funeral, give a eulogy for my father which the family wanted me to do, then return to England. I began to consider, here I am, his son, and I had great honor and respect for my father. I was willing to go to show that respect. Then I thought more about it. My mother had gone through a great deal of trauma as the result of my dad’s illness and death. Instead of spending my \$750 to go there and back (I was in America on business in many occasions), why don’t I bring my mother to my home in England and let her stay for a month, have her rest and relax, show her a good time, then have her return to California.

I discussed it with all my relatives and they said, Ernest, that is the best thing you could do. So I did not go to my father’s funeral. As soon as the funeral was done I had a ticket in my mother’s hand. She came to

England and our family all traveled to a few places in Europe. It was the trip of a lifetime for my mother. She still talks about it, that it was wonderful, and she thought her son was showing love and concern to her.

The illustration I wish to give concerned something that occurred to my mother on her way back to California after her month in England. She got on the plane in London and she had an aisle seat for her direct flight to Los Angeles, 11 hours long. Sitting next to her was a Hollywood movie star. I could mention his name but I prefer not to do so. My mother had seen him on television and movies several times. He was about 45 or 50 years old. She was 76 at the time. They talked and talked.

When they got near Los Angeles, this movie star asked my mother if she was being met at the airport. My mother says “Yes, I think so, but I am not sure.” Do you know what this movie star said to my mother? He was from Hollywood and I do not know what kind of a character he was, but he said “I am having my car meet me at the airport, and Mrs. Martin, I will take you anywhere in the Southern California area to take you home if you want me to.”

My mother has talked about that since, and he was genuine in his heart about it. Of course, my mother at 76 years of age could give him nothing whatsoever, but here this Hollywood movie star and actor had a genuineness of the heart to say, “Mrs. Martin, I will take you anywhere you want to go if nobody meets you.” Someone did meet her. (To this day my mother continues to talk about her trip.) Yet this was an expression of love on this man’s part. I think it was marvelous. That man was practicing truth at that moment and not error at all.

One more illustration. When I was in Moscow in the Soviet Union, after I arrived I was taking pictures everywhere, and a man went with me everywhere, being assigned to me. Finally he came up to me at the risk of his own life and told me. “You know, you may get into real trouble by doing this. I may get into trouble by telling you.” He could have been put in prison. On the way back to London from Moscow an embassy official told me that this man was risking his life by telling me that. All of a sudden this man who was a communist was expressing love. At that moment he was showing truth to me, and I appreciated it.

To sum up, how can we tell the spirit of truth from error? You can do it if you practice love. Even the heathen, the Gentiles can do it, but we who are claiming to live by the biblical revelation, don’t you think we should be practicing love? Every moment you do so you are walking in perfect truth. If you deviate from them, you are walking in error. Dogmatically, that is truth. I hope we are walking in the truth and in love, as expressed in 2 Corinthians 4:2 and as the apostle John wrote in two of his epistles:

“The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; For the truth’s sake, which dwells in us, and shall be with us for ever [for the eon, for the age]. Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. I rejoiced greatly that I found of your children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.”

• 2 John 1:1–4, King James Version

“Beloved, I wish above all things that you may prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers. For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, even as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”

• 3 John 1:2–4, King James Version

To sum up:

[Love] is rejoicing together with the truth, ... For at present we are observing by *means of a mirror, in an enigma, yet then, face to face*. At present I know out of an installment, yet then I shall recognize according as I am recognized also. Yet now are remaining faith, expectation, love — these three. Yet the greatest of these is love.

• 1 Corinthians 13:6, 12–13, Concordant Version

Ernest L. Martin, 1977, 1979
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