

Resistance to God's Truth

Grace and Truth—part 2

April 16, 2023

DAY 1: Resistance to God's truth.

1. When we look to the bible to discover truth, one of the most striking phenomena in the bible is humankind's resistance to God's truth!

*Romans 10:21 All day long I have held out my hand to a **disobedient** and **obstinate** people.*

2. Have you ever tried to convince one of your teenagers about a truth of life, only to run into the brick wall of their obstinance? This is what God faces with all of us!

3. The book of Romans tells us the dynamics that are at work in our fallen human nature regarding God's truth.

*Romans 1:18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who **suppress the truth** by their wickedness, ...*

4. To suppress something is to push something out of sight, to minimize something, or to hide something.

*¹⁹ since **what may be known about God is plain to them**, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—**have been clearly seen, being understood** from what has been made, **so that people are without excuse**.*

5. Our TV channels come to us via satellite. There have been times when we are not able to watch any TV. On a number of occasions, the problem has not been the transmission via satellite. The problem is with "user error" on my part. It is the reception that is the problem. The same is true regarding God's transmission of truth to us—it's working. The problem lies in our faulty reception.

*²¹ For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools ²³ and **exchanged** the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.*

*²⁴ Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. ²⁵ They **exchanged the truth about God for a lie**, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.*

6. Are we even open to hearing and studying God's truth? Or have we already "exchanged" or "suppressed" God's truth in setting it aside?

7. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 2: Eyes, ears, hearts

1. Perhaps you've been to an eyes, nose, and throat doctor. God says we have a similar problem, but it is not physical. Our eyes, ears, and hearts refuse to see, hear, or respond to God's truth.

Matthew 6:22 "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. ²³ But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"

2. Jesus uses the metaphor of physical sight to drive home the need to "see" truth. Truth matters.

a. What happens when we do "see" truth?

b. What happens when we don't "see" truth?

Matthew 13:15 For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'

3. When a part of our body becomes calloused, it hardens. We also talk about being "calloused" in the sense of being hardhearted, jaded, or very skeptical.

4. Here, Jesus tells us that a heart that is calloused has a devastating effect on our ability to rationally consider God's truth. Our ears and eyes become defective.

5. Jesus points out the cost of this callousness at the end of v. 15. He is not talking about physical healing, but spiritual, personal, and relational healing. We cut ourselves off from the very help we most need! What strikes you about this phenomenon?

6. In addition to our eyes and ears failing, we also have selective memory.

Mark 8:18 Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember?

2 Timothy 4:3 For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.

⁴ *They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.*

7. Another issue that keeps us from hearing God's truth is our desires. As long as what we hear goes along with our desires, we'll accept that "truth." But, if the truth God tells us runs counter to our desires, our rationality goes south, and justifying ourselves takes over.

8. In other words, we hear what we want to hear and don't hear what we don't want to hear.

9. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 3: What does resistance look like?

2 Timothy 4:4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

1. You may not see any of this resistance to God's truth? You may believe that your eyes, ears, and heart are working quite well, that you are really an open-minded person.
2. There is another way that humankind turns away from God's truth. It is simply by **marginalizing** it. For most of human history, mankind has at least considered God's truth as normative for life. But several hundred years ago, a significant shift occurred that marginalized God's truth.
3. There is a very sharp distinction in secular culture between heart and brain. This dichotomy is not aligned with how we are made as human beings. The bible's view of being a person is the synthesis of mind, soul, and heart. To separate these leads us to misunderstand ourselves and life.
4. The dichotomy is also seen in what sociologists call the **public/private** split. Peter Berger describes it this way. "The dichotomy is between the huge and immensely powerful institutions of the public sphere (the state, universities, media, large companies) and the private sphere (family, church, relationships)." The large public institutions claim to be "scientific" and "value-free", which means values are relegated to the private sphere of personal choice.
5. The public/private split is a false dichotomy, that Christianity is only for our personal lives. Christianity has a lot to say about all of life, including science, government, race, marriage, parenting, economics, and anything in the public arena.
6. Modern cultures are sharply divided:

PRIVATE SPHERE: PERSONAL **PREFERENCES** (relative truth)

PUBLIC SPHERE: SCIENTIFIC **KNOWLEDGE**

(This is the basis for "what's true for you is true for you. What's true for me is true for me.")

7. The private sphere is filled with **moral relativism**. Berger called it "**religious preference**." Religion is no longer considered an **objective truth** to which we must submit. Now it is only a matter of taste, or preference which we can take or leave, but WE CHOOSE.

8. Another way of looking at this dichotomy:

VALUES—individual choice (feelings, preferences)

FACTS—binding on everyone (but not the bible)

9. This split marginalizes what the bible says about morality, ethics, government, economics, or anything to do in the public square. You will hear someone say, "You can do what you want with your bible at home or in church, but don't bring the bible to the public square."

10. When someone hears you read from the bible, they don't hear truth; they only hear what your preference is.

11. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 4: Satan, the father of lies

1. We are not just socially pulled away from truth. We are not just desire pulled away from truth. Satan also actively works to pull us away from God's truth.

2. Jesus describes Satan as our enemy.

*1 Peter 5:8 Be alert and of sober mind. **Your enemy the devil** prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.*

3. The imagery Peter uses to describe Satan is of a lion stalking its prey. His ambition is to devour you, to "eat you alive," to destroy you.

John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy, but I came that they might have life.

4. Jesus uses another metaphor to describe Satan—the thief. What does the "thief" want to do with you?

5. Satan desires to steal what is most precious to us—our faith, our spiritual life, our influence in living for God, our children's faith, and our testimony.

6. In Genesis 3, Satan's tactics with Eve included insinuating God was holding out on her, questioning God's goodness, tempting her with an idealized temptation, and then contradicting what God had told Adam and Eve.

7. Which of these have you seen Satan attempt with you?

8. Satan's ambition is to move us away from God's truth to his lies, and then to get us to live on the basis of lies and not on the basis of God's truth.

*John 8:44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, **not holding to the truth**, for there is **no truth in him**. When **he lies**, he **speaks his native language**, for **he is a liar** and **the father of lies**.*

9. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 5: Truth matters toward everyday life

1. This is Paul's second letter to Timothy advice as regards the ministry.

2 Timothy 3:1 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. ² People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, ⁴ treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.

2. This is a brutal section of scripture regarding human nature. What strikes you from this list?

3. One wonders, just **how** does this happen with people? What comes to your mind?

4. Paul then makes the central connection between our behavior and one important element!

*⁶ They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over gullible women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, ⁷ **always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth.** ⁸ Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also **these teachers oppose the truth.** They are **men of depraved minds**, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected. ⁹ But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, **their folly will be clear to everyone.***

5. The question is: What do we do with God's truth?

6. Paul gives us four ways of thinking about this failure to live the truth.

a. We can fool ourselves by claiming to be learning the truth without actually getting to the truth and then living out the truth.

b. We can oppose the truth. This can be done outwardly and publicly, or inwardly and privately.

c. Our minds can remain depraved. We refuse to be moved by the truth.

d. To miss the truth is to be fools, foolishly living out our folly. The results will be clear to all.

7. It is not enough to espouse the truths of scripture. We cannot settle just for biblical knowledge. We must continually press in to living the truths of scripture.

8. What strikes you from today's devotional?