

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY

(A. W. TOZER)

- with supplement material by Keith Lewis -

PART 3 – GOD IS A TRUTHFUL GOD

Introduction

God's truthfulness is the backbone of His character.

Definitions

- "God's truthfulness means that He is the true God, and that all His knowledge and words are both true and the final standard of truth....God's faithfulness means that God will always do what He has said and fulfill what He has promised" (Wayne Grudem)¹
- "To call the LORD 'the true God' means that He alone has in His being the fullness of deity and is worthy to be worshipped as God. He and His word are a trustworthy foundation for life because He speaks the truth and is utterly reliable and consistent in His character, His revelation of Himself, His promises and His pronouncements." (Martin Manser)²
- "There are three dimensions of truthfulness: (1) genuineness—being true; (2) veracity—telling the truth; and (3) faithfulness—proving true."³

¹ Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994. P. 195.

² Martin H. Manser, *Zondervan Dictionary of Bible Themes. The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies* (Grand Rapids, MI: ZondervanPublishingHouse, 1999).

³ Erickson, Millard. *Christian Theology*. 2nd Ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998. P. 316.

Three Categories of God's Truthfulness (Integrity)⁴

GENUINENESS—GOD IS TRUE.

His BEING: authenticity; realness; actuality; legitimacy; validity

1. God is Real in Existence and Deity (i.e., God-ness).

- *Meaning:*
 - 1) *Existence:* He is a real God; He is the real God, opposite all supposed deities—His is not a mere claim or the projection of any given culture or individual.
 - 2) *Deity:* "He is what He appears to be...God does not simply seem to embody the qualities of greatness and goodness...He actually is those attributes" (Erickson, p. 316). "We might ask what it means to be the true God as opposed to other beings who are not God. It must mean that God in His own being or character is the one who fully conforms to the idea of what God should be: namely, a Being who is infinitely perfect in power, in wisdom, in goodness, in lordship over time and space, and so forth. But we may further ask, *whose* idea of God is this?...we must not say that a being must conform to *our* idea of what God should be like in order to be the true God!...So we must say that it is *God Himself* who has the only perfect idea of what the true God should be like. And He Himself is the true God because in His being and character He perfectly conforms to His own idea of what the true God should be" (Wayne Grudem, p. 195). This is also a major emphasis in Tozer's *The Knowledge of the Holy*.

⁴ Outline taken from Erickson, pp. 316-318.

- *References:*
 - God the Father
 - II Chronicles 15:3 – identified Yahweh as the true God
 - Jeremiah 10:10 – opposite other gods who are the mere “work of skilled men” (v. 9) is the “true” and “living” and “everlasting God”—2x “There is none like you” (vv. 6-7)
 - I Thess. 1:9 – “living and true” God vs. idols
 - John 17:3 – the “only true God”
 - Jesus Christ—6:32; I John 5:20; Rev. 3:7 – Jesus Christ is “true”
 - Holy Spirit—John 14:17; I John 5:6 – The Holy Spirit is “true” and “the truth”
- *Summary:* God exists, not because we or the Bible says He does, but because He is real. Furthermore, He alone conforms to the true idea of what God should be; thus, He is the only true God.

2. God is the Standard of Reality.

- *Meaning:* Truth is an intrinsic part of His nature; without it, He would be less than God. That’s all He knows; He simply is true. So, the truthfulness of God is more than just actual existence (as we have seen) or accuracy and reliability (as we will see later), but a demonstration of reality—“He represents things as they really are” (Erickson, p. 316). God is the standard of reality/truth.
- 1) *His character determines moral true-ness* (i.e., righteousness)—therefore, “true” commandments/laws (Psalm 119:142, 151) doesn't merely mean that they are free from deception or inaccuracy, but that they conform to God’s character and are thus resemble what is real and right, as intended by God, who is the model of truth

2) *His knowledge determines reality*—“all that God knows and thinks is true and is a correct understanding of the nature of reality...the standard of true knowledge is conformity to God’s knowledge. If we think the same thing God thinks about anything in the universe, we are thinking truthfully about it” (Wayne Grudem, p. 195). He is the standard of what is real.

- *References:*
 - God the Father
 - Psalm 31:5 – “God of truth” is the Psalmist’s bedrock
 - Isaiah 65:16 – “God of truth” (i.e., surely, trustworthiness—Heb. *amen*...different from *ameth*)
 - Jesus Christ—John 14:6 – Jesus is “the truth”
 - Holy Spirit—John 14:17; I John 5:16 – “Spirit of Truth” who is “the truth”
- *Summary:* God alone determines and is the standard of reality.

VERACITY—GOD TELLS THE TRUTH.

His WORDS: honesty; trustworthiness; reliability

1. God's Statements are Reliable—General Truth.

- *Meaning:* This is where we consider God's truthfulness, honesty, accuracy, trustworthiness, and reliability. Scripture clearly teaches that everything that God says is truth, and therefore, reliable.
- *References:*
 - II Sam. 7:28; Mal. 2:6; Psalm 119:160 – "entirety of word is truth"
 - Psalm 18:30 – God's Word is proven and tried
 - Num. 23:19; I Sam. 15:29; Romans 3:4; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18 – God, unlike man, *cannot* lie ("impossible")
 - Ezek. 12:25; Is. 55:11 (omnipotence); Jer. 1:12 (sovereignty); Matthew 5:18 – whatever God has said will come to pass
 - Rev. 21:5; 22:6 – what He says about the future is trustworthy
- *Summary:* Thus, because God is Himself true and His statements are truthful, we consider God's word to be "infallible," "inerrant," and the "rule" (standard) for faith and practice.

2. God's Description of Reality is Reliable—Saving Truth.

- *Meaning:* Romans 1 confirms what Ecclesiastes 3:11 teaches—God has put "eternity in our hearts." Man understands that there is more significance to life than what he sees...thus, he is often drawn to the Big 3 Questions: (1) Where did I come from? (2) Why am I here? (3) Where am I going? These questions deal with the issue of worldviews—i.e., how one interprets the observable facts of life; what

significance one infuses into life on earth. Since God is the standard of moral true-ness and reality in both His character and knowledge, we can trust Him regarding the interpretation of life. He has communicated that interpretation (i.e., worldview) to us in Scripture, and that worldview could be summarized as "God's plan to restore His creation through Christ" (i.e., the gospel—God's plan of salvation). That is the accurate and reliable "glasses" through which to view this world. His Word generally, and the Gospel specifically, provides the reliable description of reality...the proper interpretation of life (visible and invisible)

- *References:*
 - Psalm 40:10 – David links "God's truth" with His salvation
 - John 1:14, 17 – Jesus brought grace and truth, as the Word who enables us to be children of God (v. 12).
 - John 3:31ff – Jesus speaks the "true" Words of God, which deal with salvation through Christ or wrath through rejection
 - John 6:23 – Jesus contrasts "true," life-giving Bread (Jesus Himself, v. 35) with physical bread.
 - John 8:26-32 – When testifying to the Jews concerning His legitimacy as the Messiah, Jesus appeals to them to "abide in Him" which would result in "knowing the truth," which were the thing He heard and spoke from the "true" God (v. 26) and which would "set them free."
 - John 18:37 – Just before the crucifixion, when summarizing His purpose in His first coming, Jesus states that He came to "bear witness to the truth."
 - John 17:3; I John 5:20 – Knowing the "true" God is equated with "eternal life."
 - John 14:6 – Jesus would state clearly that He is the "truth"...the only "way" to God...indeed, "life" itself.

- *Summary:* God’s interpretation of history and our life experiences today can be trusted. In short, God’s Word reveals that interpretation of reality to us; in specific, the Gospel summarizes it as “God’s plan to restore His creation through Christ.” Whatever is happening in the world today fits within that framework and can be explained by the worldview that Scripture teaches.

FAITHFULNESS—GOD PROVES TRUE.

His CHARACTER: consistent; dependable; loyal; steadfast

- *Meaning:* This aspect is contingent upon and flows out of the first two: “The guarantee of God’s *faithfulness* is the truthfulness [i.e., *veracity*] of His promises which depend in turn upon the truth that characterizes God Himself [i.e., *genuineness*]” (Manser). “[God’s] immutability presupposes His faithfulness. If He is unchanging, it follows that He could not be unfaithful, since that would require Him to change....Men become unfaithful out of desire, fear, weakness, loss of interest, or because of some strong influence from without. Obviously none of these forces can affect God in any way. He is His own reason for all He is and does” (Tozer, p. 78). God’s faithfulness is deeper than just keeping His promises (but it certainly includes that...see below); God’s faithfulness is tied to His covenant with His people. On the one hand, God’s faithfulness demonstrates itself in “loyal love” toward His own (Psalm 25:10; 132:11; Hosea 2:19-20; II Cor. 1:18-22; II Tim. 2:13); on the other hand, His faithfulness ensures His judgment upon those who reject Him (Psalm 96:13; 98:9; Is. 11:3-5).

- *References:*
 - General: Lam. 3:23; I Cor. 1:9; I Thess. 5:24; I Peter 4:19
 - Promises: Joshua 23:14-15; Nu 23:19; I Kings 8:20; Psalm 105:42; Romans 4:20-21 (omniscience)—“God will always do what he has said and fulfill what he has promised” (Wayne Grudem, p. 195). “The Lord has never forgotten a single promise to a single believer” (Spurgeon).
- *Summary:* Since God is true and speaks truth, His dealings with us cannot be anything but consistent and dependable. His works are faithful, because His nature is true. We can fully rest upon the God who is unchanging and steadfast.

Conclusion

“The faithfulness of God is a datum of sound theology but to the believer it becomes far more than that: it passes through the processes of the understanding and goes on to become nourishing food for the soul. For the Scriptures not only teach truth, they show also its uses for mankind....What [the biblical writers] learned about God became to them a sword, a shield, a hammer; it become their life motivation, their good hope, and their confident expectation. From the objective facts of theology their hearts made how many thousand joyous deductions and personal application” (Tozer, p. 80).

In light of God’s truthfulness, we should be people...

1. ...of Truth.

- *Life/Character* (Psalm 86:11; “blameless”/“genuine”—conforming to the standard of moral true-ness/righteousness)
- *Lips/Communication* (i.e., telling the truth—Ephesians 4:15, 25; Colossians 3:9-10; numerous other references... God loves truth; keeping our promises—Psalm 15:1-4)

2. ...of the Word.

- *Learning It* (John 17:17)
- *Sharing It* (II Timothy 3:15-4:2; I Cor. 4:2 [relating to #1, too])

3. ...of Faith.

- *Accepting His Reality* (Hebrews 11:1ff)
- *Claiming His Promises* – “Upon God’s faithfulness rests our whole hope of future blessedness. Only as He is faithful will His covenants stand and His promises be honored. Only as we have complete assurance that He is faithful may we live in peace and look forward with assurance to the life to come....The tempted, the anxious, the fearful, the discouraged may all find new hope and good cheer in the knowledge that our Heavenly Father is faithful” (Tozer, p. 81).