

Our Culture & Our Character

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1. The Poor in Spirit

Possibly, one of the most complicated things is our way of speaking. Our languages were born from confusion. It was part of God's design in an effort to overcome sin to confuse the tongues. If there is something complicated today it is grammar. But in God there is nothing complicated.

All that is of God is simple in its nature. But we live in a complicated world, and even more complicated because our essence is pride and selfishness. So to understand truth, is a very difficult issue today.

But for God, truth is very simple, and Scriptures define truth in such a different manner, because Truth in Scriptures, and in the universe, is a person. But for us, Truth is something of a conceptual nature. Plato has really hurt us! He placed us in the world of the 'ideas', but God works in the realm of realities, facts.

God works in the experience. He doesn't work in a conceptual manner. The Holy Writings are the acts of God and He explains with acts, but we explain with abstract facts. The very same subject of Truth is complicated in our grammar. We say that truth is an abstract subject.

Something abstract is something you cannot grasp; something that you cannot see; something that you cannot feel; something that is of an ethereal nature—almost nothing. In the Scriptures, Truth is what is of a most concrete nature, but our grammar says truth is an abstract subject.

Love is an abstract verb, and righteousness is an abstract noun. All what really IS, is abstract according to our grammar—but not according to the Holy Scriptures. God's Love is the most concrete thing. It's His Son, and that is why He says that God is Love. There can't be anything more concrete or real than this. There is no abstract theme in Him; there is no 'idea' in Him. He is and He said, "I am!" "I am the 'I am'."

For us, that is still abstract, because our mind is abstract, our mind is Greek. And the Old Testament was written with that Hebrew mentality. In the Old Testament, we don't find theologians. We don't find philosophers in the Old Testament. Philosophers came from Greece.

From the Hebrew, we have the Prophets. The philosophers and the theologians developed their knowledge with the premise of the human mind, and all human minds are leprous minds, because all human minds are sick. Every human mind is full of sin and of pride.

But God's Knowledge is not born in you and it's not born in me. The Knowledge of God is born in Him and maintains itself in Him—lives in Him and He transmits that Knowledge through the prophets. He has to use our complicated knowledge but with a great problem because each human being has a conflict between what he thinks and what he feels; between what he believes and what he really is.

But in God we don't find this dichotomy—what He thinks is what He is. What He believes is what He lives and what He speaks is what He does. Between what He says and what He does, there is no difference. That's why the Hebrew word 'dabar', is the word chosen for 'word'. It means not an idea, not an abstraction, it means an act—something that happens—news—Good News.

But our mind does not perceive that. We speak and what we speak is in contrast with what we are and what we are is so different from what is Truth. God in His mercy has purposed Himself to make that a living reality in us; something whole—the Truth within us and the way He does that is simply through His

Word. Only through His Word. “Say the Word”, said the Roman Centurion, and he was not a theologian and he did not know of the prophets but he had perceived in Jesus that He was the Truth and he told Jesus, “Say the word and my servant will be healed.”

The Centurion had trust in truth—the Hebrews had lost their trust in truth. They had the book, they had the concepts, they had the Old Testament, they had tradition but they did not know the Truth because the Truth is His Word and His Word is Him.

The Lord Jesus said, “What is Truth?” “I am.” “I am.” And Pilate and the Jews were just scared. They didn’t understand. Pilate asked Jesus, “What is truth?” and Jesus answered him but Pilate never understood—because the Lord is Truth even if He does not speak it. But we are truth when we speak it but Jesus is Truth without speaking.

We believe that the vehicle of truth is our tongue, but the vehicle of truth in Christ was His being, His character, His essence—His Truth. And He said it, “I am the Way; I am Life and I am Truth, I am the Door, I am the Light—I Am.”

Before Lazarus’ tomb, the Lord told Martha and Mary, “I am the Resurrection,” but they were already influenced by the common Greek and for Mary and Martha resurrection was a doctrine. It was an idea. For them it wasn’t Him. The Lord Jesus has said, “This is not a matter of death.” It was not an issue of death and not even the disciples understood.

Four days had passed since he had died, but for Jesus that was not death—for Jesus he was just sleeping. But we cannot understand that because we have a complicated mind, an abstract mind. The Lord Jesus said, “Lazarus come up, wake up, come out!” He is resurrection; He is the Truth; He is Life; now—always! Have we received Him?

What a difference it makes to really receive Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. He came to His own and they analyzed Him through concepts, and they rationalized Him, but they did not experience Him. They applied His ideas and they applied His theology in order to identify Him but their feelings, contrary to their concepts, their selfishness and their pride, contrary to prophecy did not permit them to perceive the simple Truth.

And that process that is a spiritualist process is what Satan has developed with intellectualism and today it is even more refined than ever. And possibly we, unconscious of that fact, live that intellectual experience. But our Lord Jesus, Who is the same yesterday, the same today, the same tomorrow and forever—the One Who never changes—the immutable One, He will always be the same—the great ‘I Am’.

How different righteousness by faith from the lips of Christ—very different from righteousness by faith from Paul’s pen, because Paul was influenced by Plato and Aristotle—his culture was from Aristotle—he lived in the Greek world. He was influenced by the Hellenistic mind thought. Alexandria had an impact in his values and in his culture.

But Jesus’ values are very simple values—easy to follow—authentic values—the Truth. He said something that is so beautiful, and is so simple, and at the same time is so deep. We discuss so much who is going to be saved, and we study so much how to be saved. Jesus said as soon as He sat down, when He gave the Sermon on the Mount, He said, “Of whom is the Kingdom of Heaven?” He said it, “The kingdom of God is of the poor in spirit.”

“Of theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven—of the poor in spirit”.

Is it simple? Do we understand it? “Blessed are the poor in spirit”.

When we speak of poverty, it's something horrible. Who wants to be poor? No-one wants to be poor. All the cultures strive to be rich. But Jesus said, "Happy are the poor. The poor!

"Because the poor in spirit—of them is the Kingdom of Heaven."

The 144,000—poor in spirit. Really poor in spirit. More than poor—pauperism in the spirit. So poor that there is nothing in them, nothing worthy, nothing! Nothing in which to place their knowledge; nothing from which to hang their wisdom; with no pretension. So poor that they are empty, they are completely void and there is nothing in them.

Isaiah came to this experience. "Woe to me! Woe to me! Because in me there is only filthy rags!" when he saw the Lord. He saw the Lord; and he saw Him in the same way that we can see Him. He did not perceive Him in his sensorial capacity; he did not see Him with his eyes—he saw Him through faith.

God always reveals Himself; He has always revealed Himself; to us He has revealed Himself. He has revealed Himself to you each time that the Holy Spirit moves in your conscience. He is revealing Himself, He manifests Himself and His only purpose is to convict me of sin. He knows that in order to convince me of sin, He has to be able to make my life void that I might experience that I am poor. That in my spirit, that in my flesh, that in my knowledge, and in my wisdom, and in my theory and everything that is mine that I am poor. And I should be made completely void but human beings complicate it. We reject that.

There are many ways in which we reject that. There are many ways to reject Him. Sometimes in the way we deal with each other at home we are rejecting that experience; but we don't perceive it. But He is present and He is telling me, "Be poor! Be poor of spirit—with your wife—with your children—be poor. So that you might be in the kingdom. So that you might experience the kingdom." But we reject.

But we have the Truth here [in the head] and we believe we have the Truth in the mind and we are exclusive with Truth. The Jews were exclusive with their truth and they came to believe that all the rest were out of the Remnant. But the Canaanite woman was more willing and she experiences becoming void because of God. But the disciples did not understand. The disciples told Jesus, "Send her away, Send her away! She bothers us!"

The Lord Jesus, He was trying, He was educating, and He was redeeming His disciples from all types of religious bigotry and exclusiveness. But they were not poor. They were not poor. They thought that they were rich; That Jesus was only for them; that truth was only for them and how much did the Lord struggle to empty Peter of himself, and make them all depositories of His Spirit—rich in the Spirit of God but poor and totally emptied of themselves.

Do we understand it? It's as simple as that. The most simple One, the most sincere, was Jesus Christ. But we still believe that Jesus is our example. Is that true? We still believe that Jesus is our example.

The Protestant world believes that Jesus is only our substitute, but in reality, He is not even our substitute. The substitute for the Protestant world is the arrogance of their pride. That's their substitute. That's the substitute of this world and whoever has that substitute has already transgressed the First Commandment, because the First Commandment implies the death to self.

How will they accept Jesus as their example? And in reality, what has happened with us because we in our concepts, He can be the example; in our ideas, He can be the example and in our theology, He can be our example. But in our reality, my selfishness is my example; my self is my example—that is the great dichotomy created by Satan. And Brethren, Satan is the creator of making truth spiritualistic. Not only the Body and the Soul but Truth itself. We accept it as a theory; we accept it as an idea, as a

theology. But in our reality, in our bodies, it never is, and with our tongue we express it but with our spirit we deny it. That is spiritualistic truth and Satan is an expert in spiritualism.

Satan's technique for sin is to separate, to disintegrate, and to break apart; that is Satan's technique. He began using that technique in the Garden of Eden and he will not change it. When God created us, the crown of creation, He created us whole. He created us one, even as He is One. There is no separation between what He feels and what He thinks. There is no separation. But for us these are two different things. We feel one thing; we think another thing. That is the work of Satan; that is not the work of God.

The work of redemption is that the very same thought that is in the Lord, is the same thought that is within us. The same feelings that are in God may be the same mind that is in us. That the same love in Him may be in us, because He is One and He will never be dual. He will always be One, the whole One, He who is complete, where there is no shadow of variance.

We behold in Scriptures the same way that He treated Nicodemus, the same dealing with Mary Magdalene, the same way He treated the big people, the same way He dealt with the small insignificant people—the same. The same hope for Nicodemus, the same hope He gave Mary Magdalene, the same hope. He was the Door; He was Life for every human being.

There's no indifference in Him, that's why He said, "I am the Truth. I am the Life. I am the Way". But people still today have not understood that. I hope that we might perceive it, in that very simple language of Jesus.

The disciples had a problem; possibly the same problem that we have today. The disciples had a problem, but very easy to solve for Jesus. For Jesus, it was very easy to solve it. But for us to solve a problem is something very complicated. For us to solve the problem of our families, it's a very complicated problem. And the conclusion to which we arrive in order to solve the family problem is divorce. That's our solution.

But for Jesus, separation was not the solution. Rupture was not the solution. And much less when I say, "I love you"—less. Because we say, "I love you" and then we divorce, because we do not know Him.

When Adam and Eve separated themselves from Him, when Adam and Eve broke apart from God, He did not separate them. Notice how He solved the problem—so simple the solution: "I will die for you, so that you might not be separated from Me. So that you might not be apart from Me. I will die for you. I will empty myself for you, because of you, for your family, for this human race."

What a simple way of solving things—without lawyers; without courtrooms; without a judgment. "I will come down, because I love you and I forgive you and I place in the deep sea your sins. I am your substitute so that I might come to be your example, so that you might also learn to die to yourself, to deny yourself, to be poor in spirit."

So simple a plan; if we experience it, there is the essence of God's simplicity. It can't be explained but you can experience it. Nicodemus, the wise man, he couldn't understand it and he was a wise man, he was a professor and he was an expert, more than any of us, in Hebrew, in Hebrew thought, but he had not experienced it.

The Lord told something very interesting to Nicodemus. The Lord told him, "If you want to see the Kingdom of Heaven." See—not to possess—only to see—not to possess. To the poor in spirit, the Lord told them, "Yours IS the Kingdom of Heaven. You are the heirs", to the poor in spirit. But to Nicodemus, who was not yet poor in spirit, He only told him that he had to be born again in order to see. At what distance would he see it?

But the disciples, to the disciples He said something even more concrete—much more concrete. Matthew 18:1, 2 & 3, and see the way in which Jesus explained things. He would explain things with acts. He explained the Kingdom of Heaven with the grain of wheat; with the man who went to sow; with a very simple act; with something with which they were very familiar. “The kingdom of God is like the sower who went out to plant.”

But here we find some rich disciples, full of themselves, anxious for a high place, anxious to have a position. From where had they come from? From where had they come from? They were coming from a level where it was impossible to reach any position, but in this human rupture and this spiritualistic disintegration in which we participate, when they saw Jesus, they became great. They desired to have power. They wished to have authority and to have a great position. Amongst themselves they began to discuss who was the greatest. Rich! They were rich! Rich in themselves. They did not know the nature of the kingdom.

They had renounced, they had renounced—they renounced things, but to leave things—to renounce things, is the easiest thing. But to renounce our own self, that’s something different. Leave the boat. Leave the employment. That’s easy. To leave our self—that is redemption. That is to become poor in spirit—poor of ourselves, poor in our essence, come to the conclusion that my moral essence is only leprosy, filthy rags—that is very difficult to our complicated, spiritualistic mind.

The enemy has given us a false value and we believe in that false value. And the more we believe in ourselves the more difficult it is to trust in Jesus’ word. “If anyone wants to follow Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.”

How simple Christ’s formula for salvation. There is no complicated word in that. There’s no technical term. We don’t need a dictionary for that, because our Lord is very simple and Truth is very simple.

Let us hear what it says here: Matthew chapter 18. “At the same time came the disciples to Jesus saying, ‘who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’”

For the disciples it was already a familiar term, ‘the kingdom of heaven’. From the same moment that Jesus was baptized He announced the kingdom of heaven. So up to this moment the kingdom of heaven was a familiar term. So they asked Him, with their human values, ‘who will be the greatest in heaven?’

The greatness of this is the answer of Jesus, and the simplicity of this, the truth in this, is Jesus’ answer to them. It was not a philosophical answer. It was not a theological answer and it was not an ideological answer. It was not an abstract answer, it was a very concrete answer.

“And Jesus called a little child”; called a little child. What a way to answer.

A tremendous problem—“Who is the greatest among us, Jesus?” He could not hurt them. It wasn’t His plan to offend them. It was not His plan to make them feel inferior. His plan was to redeem them. His plan was to restore them. His plan was to show them the kingdom. Let them participate the kingdom without offending them, without hurting them, without breaking their values—just reaching them in the most special manner so that they could perceive the kingdom. And at the same time they could experience their shame and they could experience their leprosy—experience their leprosy with a redemptive motive, because we can show someone else their leprosy with the motive of putting him down and not of redeeming him. With religion it is so easy to show who is more.

“And Jesus called a little child and set him in the midst of them.”

A child; what did the disciples do with the children? “They bother us! Get out!” They would reject the children.

Oh, But Jesus did not despise the children. Jesus was not bothered by the children. They were an object of redemption and He said of the children, "Of theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Jesus said of us, the adults, the kingdom of heaven does not belong to us. It isn't ours because we are complicated, but children are simple. Oh the children! But adults, we don't trust; we are suspicious of each other; we approach each other in a defensive manner; but children—they trust; they give themselves; they are open—completely—they still are one, notwithstanding the fact of sin and our fallen condition. What an agent God has given to us that even in children you still can perceive that innocence and purity.

And He put the child in the midst of them, and then He spoke. Hear what He said: "Amen" that's the word translated for 'verily'. It's the word for truth. It's the word for assurance; certainty; what is reality; what is authentic; what really is; without any abstraction.

"Verily I say unto you except ye be converted." The Hebrew word 'chou'[sp] is to become—it is an act, it is a reality; if you do not become. And the Lord, understanding by inspiration the conflict in the language, the Lord added another verb in order to compliment the first verb so that we might understand that the experience of salvation is an act. It's not a declaration; it is not a forensic act; it's not an idea; it's an act. It's an event; it's an experience—in us; in the disciples; and in anyone. And if that doesn't happen, we will never see the kingdom of heaven.

If you do not convert—and He adds, "and become" and it's from the verb 'be', 'being'. Very interesting—first the action—then the state of being. First the action—if you are not converted and then 'be' and that's an inflection of the verb 'to be' and the verb 'to be' is God's verb and fortunately in our human grammars, that is still that way.

God in His mercy has permitted something with the verb 'to be' because that verb does not indicate action. The verb 'to be' implies nature, our constitution, a state of being; it's a state of being. Our Lord Jesus used the most simple language and He used the act of a child because the child was a child and was in the condition of a child. The child was a child. But we are adults and adults are incredulous, they have unbelief and adults—we suspect, and we have a defensive attitude because we are filled with ourselves.

"Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore..."

And this indefinite pronoun 'Whosoever', is a very common pronoun in Jesus' usage. Whoever! That pronoun has nothing exclusive about it—anyone—with which condition? That empties himself. Whoever descends—who descends his spirit—whoever descends. Whoever comes down. In whatever circumstance—in whatever circumstance—in every circumstance!

My loved ones, in the context of sin, God's guidance is for us to descend—is to come low. But in the realm of sin, the direction of spiritualism is to exalt and lift up ourselves; is to go up—is to be up. But in God's direction is to go down.

Oh if Adam had humbled himself before Eve, he would not have accused her. He would not have justified himself. He would not have invented the religion of self-justification. But Adam was not empty, he was already full of himself and instead of recognizing his leprosy, he accused the leprosy in her. And that is our problem. He became an adult. He stopped being a child.

Verse 4 "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Do we want to be the greatest? Do we want to be the greatest—you and I need to become children through God's grace. Will we permit this to the Lord? The kingdom is yours—is ours. We shall be of the 144,000 if we permit this.

May God Bless you!