

“Flawed” Standards

"Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see" (John 1:45f). Nathanael had a low estimation of the people from Nazareth and apparently one shared by many others. Although he was assured that Jesus was the one Moses and the prophets had written of, he was skeptical, none the less. The attitude he had toward the city might have been justly deserved, but the truth of the claims of Jesus was not negated simply because he was from the scorned city of Nazareth. Because Nathanael was a man in whom "there is no guile", his sincerity rose above his skepticism. In his encounter with Jesus he concluded: "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God. Thou art the king of Israel" (Jn. 1:49).

Unfortunately not all Jews were as honest. When Pharisees ridiculed officers who failed to take Jesus because "Never man so spake," they asked, "Hath any of the rulers or Pharisees believed on him?" Nicodemus heard and asked, "Doth our law judge a man except it first hear from himself and know what he doeth?" This was a potent question, but did not remove the prejudice of the Pharisees. They said: "Art thou also of Galilee? Search and see that out of Galilee ariseth no prophet" (John 7:45-52). Their standard of judgment was based upon where Jesus was from and that nobody who was anybody had accepted his claims.

Right or wrong; truth and error is not determined by where a man is from nor the integrity (or lack of it) of the people who live in the same city as he. Truth and error is not determined on the basis of what some highly respected preacher believes or teaches. Truth and error is not determined by the number of people who embrace a particular doctrine. Truth or error is not determined by fashionable buildings nor the eminent people who comprise a congregation. Truth or error is not determined by "what we have always done". Sadly, however, these are the standards that many follow to determine their course of life.

God's word is the only standard that determines truth (John 17:17). Only the truth sets man free, error never did, can, nor will (John 8:32). Still, not all people believe the truth, love the truth or want the truth. Paul warned that the day would come in which men "would not endure sound doctrine but, having itching ears, would heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts and turn away from the truth..." (2 Tim. 4:3f).

May we all love truth above all things and search for it. May we determine to "buy the truth and sell it not" (Pr. 23:23). May the only standard we use to determine truth be God's eternal word and should that word separate us from family, friends, loved ones, or even brethren, may we have the courage to choose to walk in the path that truth sets before us! A prophet long ago made this appeal: "Stand in the ways and see and ask for the old paths wherein is the good way, and walk therein and ye shall find rest for your souls..." (Jer. 6:16).

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