

The Whole Truth Is in the Whole Church

by Tom Macartney

The whole truth is found in the whole church, and we must recognize our limitations and interdependence in order to promote unity and avoid division.

Scripture: Matthew 7:15, Matthew 16:18, John 14:6, Galatians 3:26, Colossians 1:18, 2 Timothy 2:16

Topics: "Church Unity", "Spiritual Humility"

Description

Tom Macartney preaches on the importance of unity within the church of God, emphasizing that spiritual truth is found within the fellowship of born-again believers. He warns against false versions of Christianity and the dangers of division caused by pride and the belief that one's understanding of truth is the whole truth. Macartney highlights the need for humility, acknowledging that while we may have received revelations from the Lord, we must remain open to learning from others and recognizing that the whole truth is found in the whole church centered around Christ.

Transcript

If we believed this, it would have a far-reaching effect on our thinking and actions. It would cripple our archenemy, spiritual pride. It would stop us paying mere lip-service to the truth of the unity of all believers. Do we realise how much we are losing because of our confused and divided state as the church and how much dishonour we are bringing to the Lord? But first, let us be quite clear what we mean by 'the church' within which the truth may be found.

In the New Testament there is only one church, the church of God, which Christ called His church when He said, I will build my church. The church belongs to Christ alone. It consists of those, and only those, who through redeeming grace, saving faith and new birth have been born into the family of God. There is no other church. Spiritual truth will be found within this fellowship alone.

Unhappily we cannot rely on finding the truth in the professing church or hearing it from its leaders. One week's listening to religious programmes on television and radio will show the number of different and false versions of Christianity around today. Since Bible times there have always been false prophets.

The family of born-again believers is the church about which we are speaking. Yet this family which should be one in this divided world is itself rent by divisions of every kind and unable to present a united front and answer to a dying world.

Now one of the chief causes of division is our tendency to think that our understanding of the truth is the whole truth, whereas this is only to be found in the whole body of true believers of every age. Christ alone is the truth, the whole truth. In Him alone is there no error. In Him alone is the heart, mind and will of God fully revealed. As He is also the Head of the whole church, it follows that no section of it, whether identified denominationally, theologically, by some emphasis of truth or experience or in any other way, can have the whole truth. In every part of the church something of the truth is to be found; that is why we need one another so much and particularly those who see things differently from us. Let brothers who are poles apart on certain issues sit down together and each will learn something in the school of Christ if he listens and speaks with humility. Christ the truth is communicated to us by the Spirit of truth, through the scriptures the word of truth, within His church the temple of truth.

We should of course only listen to those who are sound in the faith once for all delivered to the saints, and to those whose teaching and testimony are consistent with the whole Bible. Unhappily the church has always been beset not only by those who have gone completely astray as far as the truth is concerned, but also by those who have gone out of bounds beyond what the scriptures clearly reveal. Of such we are warned to beware. They are often wolves in sheep's clothing deceiving the unwary with their borderline teaching. The bolder their claims the more cautious we should be. Beware of those who claim to have inside knowledge of the mind of God, and those who draw to themselves.

As we think of the countless denominations, nondenominational fellowships and groups of every kind into which the church is divided, it is obvious that Christians of every persuasion have something of value to share with their brethren; yet all of us are wrong in some respects if we did but know it. Our contributions will not be of equal value, nor necessarily true--this will depend on how much we have learned in the school of Christ, where the Holy Spirit is teacher, the Scriptures the text-book and Christ the only subject.

It is humbling of course to admit our dependence on one another, but blind insistence that we are right, that we have it all, that we alone have the Lord's ear, that everyone should join us, is the sure way to spiritual poverty, deception and division.

Let us remember too that emphases, often badly needed and quite right in their place, whether of teaching or experience, are not the whole truth. Emphases on God's plan and order for His church, its worldwide commission, the way of holiness, the need for sound doctrine in a day of widespread error or for a recovery of the presence, power and true gifts of the Spirit, to mention but a few, are often made central and become the cause of division. We must not insist that what we have seen, experienced or think is the one and only thing that everyone else needs. However important, it must never become the basis of full fellowship. Christ is greater, He is our centre. We are not of course thinking of the central truths of the gospel upon which all true Christians are agreed, but of those important yet non-essential points on which sincere Christians often disagree.

Shall we then abandon what we believe the Lord has shown us of Himself, His thoughts and ways, and the convictions we believe to be God-given? Certainly not, for we are under an obligation to share what we have received. But we must abandon the pride of our hearts which presumes that what we have seen is all there is to see, and allow for the possibility that we may be mistaken, that we may have misunderstood the Lord, wholly or in part, and for the fact that we still have much to learn.

Let us take the low road of humility like Paul who said, "I know in part," and he knew as much of the truth as any man has ever known. Uncompromisingly faithful to his trust to share what the Lord had revealed to

him, he was not guilty of that pride which has marred the testimony and endangered the lives of so many. To insist that we and our party are sole custodians of the truth or that we alone are on the wavelength of the Spirit, is to condemn ourselves to the narrowness of our own particular insights or experiences. Always reading the scriptures according to our own interpretations we must inevitably think and live inside a closed circle, and contribute to a divided church. The whole truth is in the whole church.

Let us seek grace to break down the barriers and find ways of showing that we value one another. While humbly bearing testimony to what the Lord has shown us, let us concentrate on things beyond dispute. Let us concentrate on Christ, the Christ of the scriptures, crucified, risen and exalted to highest heaven, our King and our Head. Then we shall know something of the liberating power of the truth and taste something of the powers of the age to come when, "He comes to be glorified in his saints."

Bible references: Matt. 7:15-16; 16:18; John 3:3; 8:32; 14:6; 16:12-15; 17:17, 21; Gal. 3:26-28; Col. 1:18; 2 Thess. 1:10; 1 Tim. 3:15; 2 Tim. 2: 16-19; Heb. 6:5; 2 John 9; Jude 3

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/tom-macartney/the-whole-truth-is-in-the-whole-church/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net