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**BUYING THE TRUTH**  
**A SERMON**  
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**DELIVERED BY**  
**C.H. SPURGEON,**  
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*"Buy the truth, and sell it not."  
-- Proverbs 23:23*

John Bunyan pictures the pilgrims as passing at one time through Vanity Fair, and in Vanity Fair there were to be found all kinds of merchandise, consisting of the pomps and vanities, the lusts and pleasures of this present life and of the flesh. Now all the dealers, when they saw these strange pilgrims come into the fair began to cry, as shop owners will do, "Buy, buy, buy--buy this, and buy that." There were the priests in the Italian row with their crucifixes and their beads. There were those in the German row with their philosophies and their metaphysics. There were those in the French row with their fashions and with their prettinesses. But the one answer that the pilgrims gave to all the dealers was this--they looked up and they said, "We buy the truth; we buy the truth," and they would have gone on their way if the men of the Fair had not laid them by the heels in the cage, and kept them there, one to go to heaven in a chariot of fire, and the other afterwards to pursue his journey alone. This is very much the description of the genuine Christian at all times. He is surrounded by vendors of all sorts of things, beautifully got up and looking exceedingly like the true article, and the only way in which he will be able to pass through Vanity Fair safely is to keep to this, that he buys the truth, and if he adds to that the second advice of the text, and never sells it, he will, under divine guidance, find his way rightly to the skies. "Buy the truth, and sell it not."

Is not the parable we have just read a sort of enlargement of our text? When the merchantman all over the world had travelled to find out some pearl that should have no flaw, some diamond of the purest water fit to glisten in the crown of royalty, at last in his researches, he met with a gem

the like of which he had never seen before, and, knowing that here was wealth for him, in the joy of his discovery, he sold all that he had that he might buy that pearl. Even so, the text seems to tell us, that truth is the one pearl beneath the skies that is worth having, and whatever else we buy not, we must buy the truth, and whatever else we may have to sell, yet we must never sell the truth, but hold it fast as a treasure that will last us when gold has cankered, and silver has rusted, and the moth has eaten up all goodly garments, and when all the riches of men have gone like a puff of smoke, or melted in the heat of the judgment day like the dew in the beams of the morning sun. Buy the truth. Here is the treasure. Cost it what it may, buy you it. Here is the piece of merchandise which you must buy, but must not sell. You may give all for it, but you may take nothing in exchange for it, since there is nothing that can be likened unto it.

With this as a preface, let us now come straight up to the text, and we shall notice:--

I. THE COMMODITY THAT IS SPOKEN OF. "Buy the truth." I shall not speak tonight of those common forms of truth that relate to politics, to history, to science, or to ordinary life, yet would I say of all these--buy the truth. Never be afraid of the truth. Never be afraid in anything of having your prejudices knocked on the head. Always be determined, come what may, even though truth should prove you to be a fool, yet to accept the truth, and though it should cost you dear, yet still to pursue it, for in the long run they who build mere speculations, fancies, and errors, though they may seem to build suitable structures for the time, shall find that they are wood, hay, and stubble, and shall be consumed; but he that keeps to what he knows, to matters of fact, and matters of truth, builds gold, silver, and precious stones, which the trying fire of the coming ages shall not be able to destroy. I would sooner discover one fact, and lay down one certain truth, than be the author of ten thousand theories, even though these theories should for a while rule all the thought of mankind.

But I speak now of religious truth. Buy that truth; buy that truth above all others. And here we must have three heads. First, in the matter of doctrinal truth, buy the truth. Holy Scripture is the standard of truth. To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no truth in them. "Thy word is truth." Here is silver tried in the furnace and purified seven times. Speak of Infallibility? It is here in this

Book. Here is an infallible witness to the truth of God, and he that is taught of the Holy Spirit to understand it gets at the truth. Now, dear brethren, do aim to get the right truth, the real truth, as to matters of doctrine. Count it not a trifle to be sound in the faith. Think no error to be harmless, for truth is very precious, and error, even when we do not see it to be so, may lead to the most solemn consequences of mischief. In this world we see too much of salvation without Christ--I mean we meet with many who believe that they are saved because they have been baptized, or confirmed, or passed through the ceremonies of the church to which they belong. They have not looked to the precious blood; they are not depending simply upon the finished work of the Redeemer, but something else than Christ has become their confidence. Now, avoid that, and buy the truth, which lies here, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." We hear too much nowadays of regeneration without faith--the supposed regeneration of unconscious babes, the new birth of people through drops of water, when they are not able to understand what is performed upon them. I beseech you believe that there is no new birth where there is not a confidence in Christ, and that the regeneration which does not lead to repentance and faith, which is not, indeed, immediately attended therewith, is no regeneration whatever. Buy the truth in this matter. Stand to it that it is the work of the Holy Spirit in rational and intelligent beings, leading them to hate sin, and to lay hold of eternal life. Alas! we have in some quarters too much of faith is trusted in, which is not practical. Men say they believe, but they do not prove it by their lives. They remain in sin, and yet wrap themselves up in the belief that they are God's chosen ones. From such turn away, and remember that a faith without works is dead, and only the faith that changes the character, sanctifies the life, and leads the man to God, is the faith which will save the soul. We must see to it that in our doctrine we bow our judgment to the teachings of Scripture, and try to be conformed to all the revelation of God, and especially to all the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ. May we not fall into one error or another. Scylla is there and Charybdis is there, and he is a happy helmsman who can steer between the two. You shall fall into this ism or into that, unless you keep to the truth. Never mind whether you can make the truth always consistent to your own judgment or not. If it is the truth, believe it; and though it should seem to contradict another truth, yet hold to it, if it is in the Word, waiting till clearer light shall reveal to you that all these truths stood in a wonderful harmony and consistency which, at first, you could not perceive. In doctrine, buy the truth.

But, secondly, buy experiential truth. I know not another word to use; I mean truth within, the truth experienced. See that this be real truth. How easy it is to be deceived with the notion that we are converted when we still need to be converted; to fancy that, because we have the approbation of our minister and of our Christian friends, we must, therefore, necessarily be the people of God. There is only one true new birth, but there are fifty counterfeits of it. In this respect, then, buy the truth. Let me have you beware of an experience which has a faith in it that was never attended with repentance. I am afraid of a dry-eyed faith. That faith seems to me to be the faith of God's elect, whose eyes are full of tears. If thou hast never felt thyself a sinner, never trembled under the law of God, never felt that thou hast deserved to be cast into hell, I am afraid thy faith is a mere presumption, and not the faith that looks to Christ. Beware of an experience that lies in talk, and not in feeling. Mr. Talkative, in Bunyan's Pilgrim could speak very glibly about religion; no man more so than he; he was fit to take the chair in an assembly of divines; but it was not heart-work; it was all surface-work. Plough deep, my brethren. Feel what you believe. Let it be with you real homework, soul-work, the work of God the Holy Ghost--not a temporary excitement, not head-knowledge, not theory. May the truth be burned into your souls by the operation of the Holy Ghost. In this respect, buy the truth. Alas! we see nowadays in many professors a great deal of life without struggle, and I think I have learned that all spiritual life that is not attended with struggles is a mistake, for Isaac, the child of the promise, is sure to be mocked by Ishmael. No sooner does the seed of the woman come into the world than the seed of the serpent tries to destroy it. You must, and will, find a battle going on within you if you are a believer. Sin will contest it with grace, and grace will seek to reign over sinful corruptions. Be afraid of too easy an experience. "Moab is at ease from his youth; he hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel; for the time cometh when the Lord will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled upon their lees." There must be strivings within, or we may well beware of such an experience. And I think I have noticed a growing feeling abroad of confidence without self-examination. I would have you hold to believe God's Word, but do not take your own state at haphazard. Do not conclude that you are a Christian because you thought you were ten years ago. Day by day bring yourself to the touchstone. He that cannot bear examination will have to bear condemnation. He that dare not search himself will find that God will search him. He that is afraid to look himself in the face has need to be afraid to look the Judge in the face when the great white throne

shall be placed, and all the world summoned to judgment. Confidence is quite consistent with self-examination, and I pray you in this thing buy the truth, and seek to have a religion that will bear the test--a true faith, a living faith, a faith that moves your soul, a deep-rooted faith, a faith which is the supernatural work of the Holy Ghost, for the time cometh when, as the Lord liveth, nothing short of this will stand you in good stead.

Again, I spoke of three sorts of truth--doctrinal truth, experimental truth, and now practical truth. By practical truth I mean our actions being consistent, and those of a right and straightforward course. In this matter, buy the truth. You profess to be a Christian: be a Christian. You say that you are a follower of Christ: follow him, then. You know it is right to be a man of integrity and uprightness: be so. Let no dirty tricks of trade, let no meannesses, let none of those white lies which degrade commerce nowadays, ever come across your path, except to be reprobated and abhorred. Walk straight forward. Learn not to slack. Do not wish to understand policy, and craft, and cunning. Buy the truth. It will shame the world yet. He that speaks out his mind, says what he means, and means what he says, does the just thing, does the right thing, fears no man, and lifts his head boldly in the face of all creation if it dares to whisper that it will enrich him by his doing wrong--that is the man that buys the truth practically. You know how it can be carried out in commerce readily enough, in the parlour, in the drawing-room, and in the kitchen. There is a truthful way for a shoe-black to black shoes in the street, and there is a lying way of doing it. There is a truthful way of doing the commonest actions, and there is a false method of doing the very self-same thing. In this respect, then, buy the truth, as to the straightforwardness, the clean, sharp transparency of your moral character and of your Christian conduct. Never seem to be what you are not, or if you must for a while be in that position, count that you are unfortunate, and escape from it as soon as you can. Never do what you are ashamed of; it matters not who sees. Think always that God sees, and with God for a witness you have enough of observers. Only do that which you would have done if all eyes were fixed on you, and you were observed even of your most cruel critics. Never stifle conscience. Carry out your convictions. If the skies fall, stand upright. What God's Holy Spirit tells you, that do. What you find in this Book, carry out. If you bring any mischief to other people through it, that is their business. If I keep on the right side of the road, and run over anybody--that is his fault; he should have kept out of the way. I would not run over him if I could help it, but I cannot turn aside from the right road. Stand in your place. Let

malignant eyes look at you, but, like the sun, shine on, and if others envy you, yet fret not because of them, neither be you grieved to act the truth, but in this respect again fulfil the text and "buy the truth."

So have I shown you what the commodity is--doctrinally, experimentally, and practically. "Buy the truth." Now let us come and think specially to the first part of the text.

II. HOW THIS COMMODITY IS OBTAINED. "Buy the truth." Let us correct an error here. Some might suppose that Christ, and the gospel, and salvation--all of which are included in the truth--can be bought. They can, but they cannot. They can in the sense of the text; they cannot in any other sense. You cannot purchase salvation; merit cannot win it. Christ's price is, "Without money and without price." Has not the prophet so worded it? "Yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." Salvation is of free grace, and is from the very necessity of its nature, gratis. You cannot merit it; you cannot earn it. It is not of the will of man, nor of blood, nor of birth, but "he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion."

What, then, does the text mean? I will try to expound the Word. It means, first, to be saved, give up everything that must be given up, in order to your receiving the free salvation. Every sin must be given up. No man shall go to heaven while he lives in, and favours any one, sin. A man may sin and be saved, but he cannot love sin and be saved. Give up, then, thy drunkenness, if that be thy sin. Give up, then, thine unchaste living, if that be thy sin. Conquer that angry temper, that love of greed--whatever it is that keeps thee back from Christ. Buy the truth, and give up these. Thou wilt not merit salvation then; but if this must be given up, let it not stand in thy way. Give it up, man! Since thou canst not have thy sin and have Christ too, get a divorce from thy sin and take holiness, and take the Saviour. Thou must also give up all thy self-righteousness. Some are trusting in their prayers, some are trusting in their tears, their repentances, their feelings, their church-goings, their chapel-goings, and I know not what men will not trust in. Give them all up. They are all lies together. There is no reliance to be placed on anything you can do. Come and trust what Christ has done, and if it be, as it certainly is, needful for you to give up your own righteousness to win Christ and be found in him, then do it, and in this sense part with all you have that you may buy Christ. Yourself, your sinful

self, and your righteous self--oh! that you might be willing to part with both, that you might buy the true salvation!

And the text means this, again, that if, in order to be saved, it should cost you a deep experience and much pain, yet never mind it. It is better that you should bear all that and get the truth, than that you should escape without this heart-searching work, and be deceived at the last. If the price at which you shall have a true experience is that of sorrow, buy the truth at that price. Be willing to let the doctor's lancet wound you, if thereby he shall heal you. Be willing to lose the right eye or the right hand, if thereby you shall enter into life eternal.

It also means this--buy the truth; that is, be willing at all risks to hold to the truth. Buy it as the martyrs did when they gave their bodies to be burned for it. Buy it as many have done when they have gone to prison for it. Buy it if you should lose your situation for it. Lose your situation sooner than tell a lie. Like the three holy children, be rather willing to go into the fiery furnace, than to worship the image which Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Run the risk of being poor. Do not believe, as all the world says, that you must live. There is no absolute necessity for it. Sometimes it is a grander thing to die. Let the necessity be, "We must be honest; we must do the right; we must serve God," for that is a far greater necessity than that of merely living. Count all things but dross that you may be a true man, a godly man, a holy man, a Christly man, and in this sense make sacrifice of all, and thus "buy the truth."

I think that is what the word means. I expound it to mean this--give anything and everything, sooner than part with Christ, part with the living work of grace in your heart, or part with the integrity of your conduct. And now let me:--

III. PARAPHRASE THESE WORDS. "Buy the truth." Then I say, buy only the truth. Do not be throwing away your life, and your abilities, and your zeal, and your earnestness, for a lie. Some are doing it. Thousands of pounds are given to erect edifices for doing mischief. Multitudes of sermons are preached, very zealously, to propagate falsehoods, and sea and land are compassed to make proselytes, who shall be ten times more children of hell than they were before. Buy only the truth. Do not buy the glittering stuff they call truth. Never mind the label; look to see if it be truth. Bring everything that is propounded as truth to the test, to the trial. If it will not

stand the fire of God's Word, then do not buy it; nay, do not have it as a gift; nay, do not keep it in the house. Run away from it. It doth eat as doth a canker; let it not come near you. Buy only the truth.

"Buy the truth" at any price, and sell it at no price. Buy it at any price. If you lose your body for it, if you lose not your soul, you have made a good bargain. If you lose your estate for it, yet if you have heaven in return, how blessed the exchange! You certainly will not need for it to lose your peace of mind, but you may lose everything else, and you shall make a good bargain. Come to no terms with Christ. Throw all into the soul-bargain. Let all go, as long as you may but have truth in the doctrine, truth in the heart, and truth in the life, and Christ, who is the Truth, to be your treasure for ever.

Buy all the truth. When you come to the Bible, do not pick and choose. Do not try to believe half of it, and leave out the other half. Buy the truth--that is, not a section of it that suits your particular idiosyncrasy, but buy the whole. Why need you break up pearls and dissolve them? Buy all that is true. One doctrine of God's Word balances another. He who is altogether and only a Calvinist probably only knows half the truth, but he who is willing to take the other side, as far as it is true, and to believe all he finds in the Word, will get the whole pearl.

Buy now the truth--buy tonight the truth. It may not be for you to buy tomorrow. You may be in that land where God hath cast for ever the lost soul away from all access to the truth, where truth's shadow, cold and chill, shall fall upon you, and you, in outer darkness, shall weep and wail, and gnash your teeth, because you shut out truth from you, and now truth has shut you out, and all your knockings at her door shall be answered with the dolorous cry, "Too late, too late! Ye cannot enter now!"

Thus I have paraphrased the text. Buy only the truth; buy all the truth; buy at any price the truth; and buy now the truth. Briefly let me give you:--

IV. THE REASONS FOR THIS PURCHASE. You want the truth, and you will never be received by God at last unless you bring the truth in your right hand. Only the truthful can enter those gates of pearl. You want the truth now. You are not fit to live any more than to die without an interest in the truth as it is in Jesus. Accept Christ to be truly yours, so truly yours as to make you true. You know not how to fight the battle of life at all without



the truth. Your life will be a blunder, and the close of it will be a disaster, except you buy the truth. God grant that you may buy the truth now. You need it. You need it now, and you will for ever need it. Oh! I would to God that that hymn we sang should not merely be heard by you, but felt by you:

*"Hasten, sinner, to be wise,  
And stay not for the morrow's sun."*

Oh! that fatal "tomorrow"! Over the cliffs of "tomorrow" millions have fallen to their ruin. Tomorrow, ay, tomorrow! Here are these put-offs, and these delays, and yet God has never given you a promise of mercy tomorrow. His word is "Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." A better day shall never come than this day. Oh! that you would accept it now.

*"If you tarry till you're better,  
You will never come at all."*

And till times are more propitious, if you wait, you will wait on for ever and for aye. God grant you may buy the truth now, for the text is in the present tense, for now you need it. Let me direct you to:--

V. THE MARKET WHERE YOU CAN BUY IT. These are the words of Jesus Christ when he appeared to his servant John, "I counsel thee, buy of me," said he. There is no place where truth can be found in its power and life, except in Jesus Christ. Truth is in his blood; it will wash away what is false in you. Truth is in his Spirit; it will eradicate what is dark and vile in you. His love will make you true by conforming you to himself. Come to Christ. Bring nothing with you. Come as you are, empty-handed, penniless, and poor. The rills of milk and wells of wine are all with him. He is the banquet-giver, and the banquet too. To trust him is to live. To look to him alone for salvation is to find salvation in that look. Oh! that these simple words might point someone to the place where he shall buy the truth! And now let me repeat my text again, "Buy the truth."

Do not misread it. It does not say hear about the truth. That is a good thing, but hearing is not buying, as many of you tradesmen know to your cost. You may tell people where to go, but you do not want them merely to hear; you are not content with that; you want them to buy. Oh! that some of you, my hearers, would become buyers of the truth! I know some of you. I happen to look about, and find out here and there one--some of you, whom

I know, and respect, and esteem, and pray for I had thought that you would have bought the truth long ago, and it often staggers me why you have not. Oh! that you were decided for God! I am afraid I am preaching some of you into a hardened state. If the gospel does not save you, it will certainly be a curse to you, and I am afraid it is being so to some of you. Do think of this, I pray you! Why should you and I have the misery of doing each other hurt when our intention is on both sides, I am sure, to do that which is kind and good? Oh! yield you to my Master. The Light of the World is with his hand at your door knocking tonight softly. Do you not hear the knock of the hand that was pierced? Admit him! He comes not in wrath; he comes in mercy. Admit him! He has tarried long, even these many years, but no frown is yet upon his brow. Rise now and let him in. Be not ashamed. Though ashamed, be not afraid, but let him in, and blushing, with tears in your face, say to him, "My Lord, I will trust thee; worthless worm as I am, I will depend upon thee." Oh! that you would do it now, this moment! The Lord give you grace to do it! Do not hear about it only, but buy the truth.

Do not merely commend the truth by saying, "The preacher spoke well, and he spoke earnestly, and I love what he said." The preacher had almost rather that you said nothing than that, if you do not buy the truth. How it provokes the salesman when a customer says, "Yes, it is a beautiful article, and very cheap, and just what I want," and then walks out of the shop. Nay, buy the truth, and you shall commend it better afterwards, and your commendation shall be worth the hearing.

And, I pray you, do not stand content with merely knowing about the truth. Oh! how much some of you know. How much more you know than even some of God's people. You could correct many of my blunders. But ah! he that knows is nowhere unless he also has. To know about bread will not stay my hunger; to know that there are riches at the bank will not fill my pocket. Buy the truth, as well as know it; that is, make it your own. And do not, I pray you, intend to buy it. Oh! intentions, intentions, intentions! The road to hell--not hell--that is a mistake of the proverb--the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Oh! ye laggards, pull up the paving-stones and hurl them at the devil's head. He is ruining you; he is decoying you to your destruction. Turn your intentions into actions, and no longer intend to buy, but buy the truth.

And do not tonight wish that the truth were yours, but buy it. You say the cost is too great. Too great? It is nothing. It is "without money and

without price." Do you mean, however, to say, that it is too great a cost to give up a sin? What, will you burn in hell rather than give up a lust? Will you dwell in everlasting burnings for ever, sooner than give up those cups that intoxicate you? Must you have your silly wantonness, and lascivious mirth, or any kind of sin? Must you have it? Will you sooner have it than heaven? Then, sirs, your blood be on your own heads. You have been warned. I hope you are sober, and have not yet gone to madness, and if you be, you will see that no pleasures of an hour can ever recompense for casting yourselves under the anger of God for ever and for ever. Buy the truth. Do not merely talk about it, and wish for it, but buy, buy the truth. And then, lastly:

VI. A WARNING AS TO LOSING THE PURCHASE. "Sell it not." My time has gone, and therefore, as I never like to exceed it, there shall be but these few words. When you have once got the truth, I know you will not sell it. You will not, I am sure, at any price; but the exhortation, nevertheless, is a most proper one. There have been some who have sold the truth to be respectable. They used to hear the gospel, but now they have got on in the world, and keep a carriage, and they do not like to go where there are so many poor people, so away they go where they can hear anything or nothing, so that they may be respectable. Ah! I have the uttermost contempt for this affectation of gentility and respectability that leads men to be so mean as to forsake their Christian friends. Let them go; they are best gone. Such chaff had better not be with the wheat, and those that can be actuated by such motives are too base to be worth retaining.

Some sell the truth for a livelihood. I pity these far more. "I must have a situation; therefore, I must do what I am told there; I must break this law of God and that, for I must keep my family." Ah! poor soul, I pity thine unfortunate position, but I pray that thou mayest have grace even now to play the man, and never sell the truth, even for bread.

Some sell the truth for the pleasures of the world. They must have enjoyment, they say, and so they will mingle with the multitude that do evil, and give up their Christian profession.

Others seem to sell the truth for nothing at all. They merely go away from Christ because religion has grown stale with them. They are weary of it, and they go away. I shall put the question painfully to all, Will ye also go away? Will ye to be respectable, will ye to have a livelihood, will ye to have

the pleasures of sin for a season, will ye out of sheer weariness--will ye go away? Nay, we can add:--

*"What anguish has that question stirred,  
If I will also go!  
Yet, Lord, relying on thy Word,  
I humbly answer, No."*

Sell it not; sell it not; it cost Christ too dear. Sell it not; you made a good bargain when you bought it. Sell it not. Sell it not; it has not disappointed you; it has satisfied you, and made you blessed. Sell it not; you want it. Sell it not; you will want it. The hour of death is coming on, and the day of judgment is close upon its heels. Sell it not; you cannot buy its like again; you can never find a better. Sell it not; you are a lost man if you part with it. Remember Esau, and the morsel of meat, and how he would again have found his birthright if he could. Remember Demas; remember Judas, the son of perdition. You are lost without it. It is your life. Skin for skin, yea all that you possess, part with for it, and be resolved, come fair or come foul, come storm or come calm, come sickness or come health, come poverty or come wealth, come death itself in the grimmest form, yet none shall separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus your Lord, and none shall make you part from the truths you have learned and received from his Word, the truths you have felt and have had wrought into your soul by his Spirit, and the truths which in action you desire should tone and colour all your life.

God bless you, dear friends, and keep you, and when the Great Shepherd shall appear may you have the mark of truth upon you, and appear with him in glory.