

The "Boundaries" of Truth

The teachings of the Bible normally come in groups of two. Sometimes they may be mentioned together in the same context; at other times they aren't. But either way, they never conflict with each other. People may misunderstand and misrepresent one, and (as a result) distort the other - perhaps unintentionally - until they appear to form a "contradiction." But if accepted "as is," and undistorted, the two truths *need* each other. They complement each other, rather than contradict each other. [Note the difference between the word "complement" (something that completes, or goes along with something else, a counterpart) and a "compliment" (an expression of approval, admiration or praise)!]

These truths are like the parallel rails of a train track: both are needed, or the train will crash. They are like fences on either side of a narrow path, keeping the traveler from wandering astray. When people stop keeping the truths parallel, and try to bring them together as one, the two truths "crash." When people take away one of the "fences," there is no limit (at least in one direction) in how far they can stray from the truth.

It is not our nature to view these truths as parallel. Normally, we focus on one and (inadvertently) de-emphasize, distort or deny the other. As a result, we go astray *without ever knowing it*. Furthermore, the absence of the one truth creates a "vacuum" or "void," into which error can creep. Many false teachings have started with something that was *true*, but the proponent of the teaching had a one-sided focus on that one truth, and neglected its complement.

This issue is the cause of many conflicts among people. When one person focuses on the *one* truth and another person focuses on the *other* truth, it results in serious irreconcilable disagreement. People often become hostile enemies, when, if each had started with a focus on *both* truths, they could have become close friends.

Applying this Principle to Understanding the Bible:

First of all, don't just "apply" this principle, if the only reason is because you read about it in an article. Look in the Bible and find out for yourself whether or not this principle is true. Your perspective about the truth (God's Word) should be based on the truth itself, not on what someone tells you to believe.

If your studies lead you to this same conclusion, you will probably agree with these two observations:

- Many (perhaps *most*) of the disagreements people have about the Bible are caused by people *not* accepting both complementary truths. In contrast, when people *do*

accept this perspective, they cannot help but reach similar views. They might not reach complete agreement in everything, but the "boundaries" keep them from straying very far apart. They will both be traveling in the same direction, on the same path.

- A failure to accept complementary truths, and to keep them parallel to each other, is the reason some people claim that the Bible is full of contradictions. (They view the complementary truths as though they were contradictory.) It is also one of the reasons some people say that you can prove "anything" with the Bible. Once you destroy one of the "boundaries" (using the "fence" illustration), there is nothing to limit how far you can stray. (This can also happen when people tear verses out of context. These two methods often go together.)

A More Detailed Look at These Issues:

About "Parallel Truths"

- "Parallel truths" may sometimes be described as looking at one truth from two different viewpoints - like two sides of one coin. However, we must be careful if we use this analogy, because we must not emphasize the "one" aspect (like the *one* coin), to the point that we forget the "two" aspect (like the *two* sides of that coin).
- The "parallel" nature of these truths (the fact that we need to keep them separate) does not mean they are *unrelated*. They always go together. Yet at the same time, we must acknowledge that they *are* different truths or viewpoints. If we tried to treat them as though they expressed the *identical* truth, we would have to distort one or the other, to make them "fit" together. It would be like trying to bring the two rails of a train track together: something is going to crash!
- Keeping the Bible as the reference point is essential. Merely claiming to believe in two "complementary" principles does not guarantee that what one believes is true!

How Can We Arrive at Such a View, When it Does Not Come Natural to Us?

- The Bible does not *force* people to adopt a proper interpretation of it. It allows us to decide whether we are going to accept its message the way it has been given, or modify it so that, from our perspective, it "makes more sense." Unfortunately, the more a person adds to (or subtracts from) what it says, the less he will be holding on to its true message. Merely "believing" that one's viewpoint is correct will not

cause it to *become* correct, if the "believer" has not accepted the Word the way God gave it.

- Until Jesus changes our perspective (one aspect of repentance and conversion), it is our *nature* to distort the Word - though we may not realize we are doing so. Ever since sin entered the world, it has been human nature to modify the Word (even if unconsciously) so that it "makes better sense" to us, or to ignore (or downplay) passages which do not fit our views (or which make us feel uncomfortable). Jesus came to bring us back to God - and to a right understanding of reality. (Even if we claim that we hold to "complementary truths," our "complementary truths" are just as likely to be "complementary errors," until we allow God's Word to *define* our reality.)
- Developing this perspective doesn't occur instantly. It requires an on-going spirit of humility and submission to the Word. Before Jesus changes us, each of us has a lifetime of living, thinking and doing things the *opposite* way - whether that "opposite" is *openly* opposed to Christ, or *secretly* opposed (like a counterfeit). We also live in a culture that promotes the opposite way. It will take us a lifetime to undo all the damage. Major foundational changes may occur rather instantly, but the total change will not be complete until the day we see Christ.

Some additional comments

- Probably *all* the teachings of the Bible have "complements." More than that, probably all the truths that are a part of creation, or of human relationships, have "complements." The disagreements people have in *any* area of life tend to occur for the same reasons as the disagreements they have with the Bible. In *any* area of life, people who *don't* accept the complementary nature of truth - and this category includes most people - will tend to focus on *one* of the truths; and people who *do* accept this concept - the minority group - will tend to focus on *both*. Those with a one-sided focus will have a greater tendency to reach conclusions that (whether directly or indirectly) contain error, and this will result in tension between them and their opponents, as well as with those who accept *both* truths equally.
- When we stress *our responsibility* to submit our thinking to the Word, we must remember that, as with other truths, this one has a complement! The complement has to do with what *God* does in our hearts and minds, to bring us to that change. The Spirit of God must illuminate our minds, so that we can understand the Scriptures. Without the work of the Spirit, we cannot come to a full knowledge of the truth. [Note, however, that we cannot use this truth as an excuse for *not* fulfilling *our* own obligation to search for it! That would be using the *one* truth as an excuse for denying, or ignoring, the *other*!]

The only "drawback" to having such a perspective: Opposition from those who *don't* hold to it!

When others have taken sides in an argument, each focusing on only one of the truths, the person who accepts *both* truths, will often find himself in partial agreement with people on *both* sides, yet at the same time in partial disagreement with them. He will discover that he does not fit in either group.

Normally, the people who have taken sides in such an argument will be unable to comprehend the perspective of the person who accepts *both* truths. Because of this, they will not accept him when he tries to emphasize both. At one point, they may claim that he supports *their* view; yet at other times they will claim he holds to the views of the *opposing* side. (It all depends on which aspect of truth they hear him expressing at that moment.) Sometimes *both* sides may claim that he is on their "side" - or they may both reject him. They may accuse him of saying things he never said - especially if they think he is expressing their opponents' view. (They may falsely accuse him of saying things that they *wrongly* believe are the "logical conclusions" of what he said.) If they hear him express *both* complementary truths at the same time, *both* sides may simply dismiss what he says, claiming that he is being "inconsistent"!

When we find ourselves opposed by seemingly everyone, we may be tempted to compromise, for the sake of acceptance into one group or the other. But we need to remind ourselves that the Day of Justice will come, and we will *all* stand before the Judge of the universe. The One we will be standing before at that time is the *only* one we really need acceptance from. So instead of compromise, we need to maintain our integrity and remain faithful to him, his Word, and everything that pertains to the "reality" that God created!

Some Additional Comments about "Boundaries"

As far as I can tell, *all* truths have complements. This would be consistent with the nature of creation, which itself reflects the nature of God.

The nature of God? Remember that Scripture describes God in two *complementary* ways - as both "unity" (one) and at the same time, "plurality" (three). People sometimes use the word "trinity" to describe this - though at the same time, many people misunderstand the full significance of that word.

In the article "The 'Boundaries' of Truth," I say that "probably" all truths have complements, simply because I *haven't* examined 100% of all truths! So far, I have *not* found any that *don't* have complements.

If you examine the articles on this website, you will see that many of them illustrate how this principle "works." There are many issues, which people argue about, and people on each side quote Scripture to "back up" their perspective. But what they don't seem to understand is the fact that *both* sets of verses are present in the Bible! If we would be willing to admit that *both* sets of verses are present, and would stop using one set of verses to "interpret" the other set (each side of the argument starting with the *opposite* set of verses), we might come to a real point of agreement!

When dealing with topics that people argue over, the articles on this website attempt to focus on that "point of agreement" which is able to accept *all* the verses. This includes topics that people frequently argue about, such as articles about God's sovereignty vs. human responsibility, the role of God vs. people in salvation, the "trinity," etc. But even with topics that are rarely a cause for disagreements, this concept will often be evident.