

## Buy the Truth, and Sell it Not

Rev. J. J. van Eckeveld – Proverbs 23:23a

Sing: Psalter 248:1 - 4  
Read: Proverbs 23:19-35  
Sing: Psalter 64:1 - 3  
Sing: Psalter 428:4  
Sing: Psalter 417:1

Congregation,

You can find the text for this sermon in Proverbs 23, in the first part of verse 23, where we read, “Buy the truth, and sell it not.”

We will consider three thoughts:

1. A Priceless Treasure--for God's Word speaks about *the truth*.
2. An Urgent Exhortation--for God's Word encourages us to *buy the truth*.
3. A Serious Warning--for God's Word tells us to *sell it not*.

### 1. A Priceless Treasure

Congregation, I suppose we are all familiar with Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. A very well-known passage in this book describes the travels of Christian and Faithful through the town of Vanity and their encounter with the townsfolk at the local fair. In this passage, it becomes apparent that the way to the Celestial City leads through the middle of this Vanity Fair. And, indeed, the Lord places His children in the middle of this world. Even though they are not of this world, they must live in this world.

So, Christian and Faithful come to Vanity Fair and, in Bunyan's words, “there they stirred the people and caused quite the hubbub.” For one thing, their clothes do not match the townfolk’s dress.

Secondly, they do not join the vain conversations of the people at the fair.

And lastly, Christian and Faithful stand out because they do not pay attention to the wares that are being offered for sale. It seems, according to the merchants, that they do not value these things. They don't even want to look at the items laid out in the market stalls. When the merchants call out to them, they even stop their ears, turn their eyes heavenward, and cry with the language of Psalm 119:37, “Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity.” And, when one of the merchants mocks them by asking, “What wilt thou buy?” their answer rings out: “We buy the truth.”

What a precious answer in the midst of all this vanity and worldly temptation. Here, in the marketplace of Vanity Fair, Christian and Faithful stand alone in their convictions. It would be so much easier for them to buy something small. It would save them from all the mockery and enmity of the townsfolk. But they can not and they will not. “Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity.” And they resolutely cry out to their tempters: “We buy the truth!”

Congregation, for it to be well with us on our travels to eternity, we must be like Christian and Faithful. At Vanity Fair, there are many thousands who are singing and dancing their way to their eternal destination--and they go lost! Only the truth will set us free. Christian and Faithful cry out against the noise of this world, “We buy the truth,” because they know the Proverbs of Solomon. For this sermon, our text is taken from Solomon’s words of wisdom which we find in Proverbs 23:23a, “Buy the truth, and sell it not.”

Proverbs 23 is a collection of various proverbs and when we read them, we are easily impressed with Solomon's wisdom. But, congregation, beyond Solomon, we should behold Christ. It is true what Matthew writes of Him, “Behold, a greater than Solomon is here” (Matthew 12:42).

Has He already instructed us? In this portion of Scripture, Solomon admonishes us to “buy the truth.”

Dear listeners, we all know that the truth is always diametrically opposed to a lie. But what is the fundamental cause of our state of damnation? That we have believed a lie! After all, the fall in Paradise was nothing other than mankind believing a lie over the truth. In Adam, we all believed the word of Satan over the Word of God. And now that Paradise has been lost, we, in Adam, are all under the power of the lie.

Christ declared this message to the pious and self-righteous Pharisees, “Ye are of your father the devil” (John 8:44). Congregation, the devil is the father of all lies, he is the liar of all liars, the original liar, the arch deceiver ... and we have believed his lies. We have opened our hearts and ears for the lies of this father of all lies. Congregation, know that the devil has never, ever spoken the truth; he does nothing but lie and deceive. Even when he uses a Bible verse, he distorts it and pulls it out of context, giving it a different meaning and interpretation than what the Holy Spirit originally intended. Remember, the devil has never spoken the truth.

Young people--know that the devil lies! When he says to you that it won't be all that bad if you die unconverted, he lies. He also lies when he tells you that not everything in the Bible needs to be taken literally, like Balaam's donkey speaking to him, or Jonah

surviving for three days in the belly of the fish, or the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

And this, congregation, is how the devil also continues to lie today. He lies when he represents sin as desirable. He lies when he represents the service of God as slavery and hard work. He lies when he tells you that you are too sinful to be saved, and that there is no possibility of salvation for you anymore. He lies when he tries to convince you that Jesus is not a compassionate Saviour who is willing to save sinners.

Congregation, consider how deep our misery is. We would rather believe the lies of Satan than the Word of God! Since our rebellion in Paradise, we lie fallen under the power of the father of all lies. And because of that, all of life is a lie.

The lies in this world are innumerable. Lies in the media, lies in advertising, and lies between people; lies on and off the pulpit and maybe, most of all, lies at funerals.

The power of the lie is incredible, and we have opened our hearts and ears to the father of all lies. It began in Paradise and has remained that way throughout all the ages. And so it continues in every man's heart and every man's life.

It is not our doing that truth is still spoken in our day. It is purely because of God's goodness that the lie is yet restrained. That is why there is still an outward love for the truth; that is why people don't want to be fooled by lies; that is why we turn away from people we don't trust or people we consider untrustworthy.

It is only because of God's longsuffering goodness and common grace that the power of the lie has been tempered and that there still is a desire for the truth. Parents want their children to speak the truth. Teachers want their students to be truthful. A judge wants a witness to speak the truth. Office-bearers want their church members to speak the truth, also in spiritual matters.

Through the common goodness of God, there is still room for the truth, in spite of the power of the lie. Otherwise, our society would utterly collapse into chaos.

But, congregation, over and against all of this--the lie, and the power of the lie--stands the Word of God and our text, “Buy the truth.” To which truth does God's Word refer? Think of the high-priestly prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ when He prays to His Father with these solemn words from John 17:17, “Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth.” That, ultimately, is the truth to which Solomon refers when he writes, “Buy the truth.” And so, connecting our text and the words of Christ, the truth is God's Word, the Holy Scriptures, our Bible.

And why is this Word the Truth? Simply and fundamentally because the Lord is the God of Truth and because the Holy Spirit is a Witness unto this Truth. Remember; in actuality, it is the Holy Spirit who authored the Word of God.

Pontius Pilate questioned Jesus on this topic, “What is Truth?” (John 18:38). And similarly, also today, there are many people who ask themselves the same question, “What is truth?”

Is it even possible that man will be able to answer this question? There are many sacred books, such as the Koran for Muslims and the sacred texts of the Hindus. We are exposed to many religions which all lay claim to the truth, each with its own beliefs and principles.

In this confusion, then, who can tell what truth is? Some say that truth is so all-encompassing, and has so many facets and aspects, that every form of religion has at least some elements of the truth, and collectively they complement one another. Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, etc., all the world’s religions have an element of truth, and by being open and studying one another’s religions, we can come closer to the ultimate truth.

Congregation, what a contrast to the high-priestly prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ, “Sanctify them through Thy Truth: Thy Word is Truth” (John 17:17).

You may wonder how we know that the Bible, this Word of God, is indeed the ultimate Truth. We know this because of the witness of the Holy Spirit. What does this witness consist of? That, congregation, is more readily experienced than described. It is established through the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of His children, whereby they feel and experience the power of the Word of God in such a way that they are fundamentally convinced to the very core of their souls, “Thy Word is Truth.”

The witness of the Holy Spirit is the Witness of the Truth in the heart. Have you ever read your Bible with that experience? And what about you, dear young friends; you read your Bible, don’t you? I hope you have your quiet time every day, the time that you pick up your Bible, read it, and bow your knees, praying, “Lord, let the power of Thy Word also be revealed in my heart!”

And, congregation, young and old, have you read the Bible in such a way that it resonated in your soul, “Thy Word is Truth”? Did you feel in your innermost being that these are not the words of man but that this is God’s own Word, that this is the Lord speaking?

The witness of the Holy Spirit causes the power of the truth of God’s Word to be felt in the deepest recesses of our hearts--to be felt in such a way that we acknowledge the truth in humble confession. All of our self-excusing arguments come to an end, and we plead guilty when the truth of God’s Word condemns us and places us before God in all our shame and misery. But then the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom is all mercy and grace, is also believed.

Have you ever read your Bible in this way? Have you ever sat in church with this frame of mind? Did you ever experience the Holy Spirit’s powerful application of the

truth of God's Word to your soul in such a way that you felt like you were sitting in church all by yourself? Did all other things fall away, as it were, and did you experience that the Lord does not speak as the scribes, but as One having authority?

When the witness of the Holy Spirit is in our hearts, then there is no doubt; then we clearly experience, “Thy Word is Truth” (John 17:17).

Oh, congregation, the truth of God's Word is such a priceless treasure. Do we treasure His Word? Do we realize its value when we may possess it in our homes, when we may read it and have it preached to us from Sunday to Sunday?

Or is this all just normal? Do we take it for granted that we may freely go to our house of worship and listen to the truth of God's Word every Sunday? There are many places in this world where this freedom does not exist.

And why is this truth of God such a priceless treasure? Congregation, in a world of lies, in a world full of questions, in a world that even today still echoes the words of Pontius Pilate, “What is Truth?”--God's Word tells us the truth.

“Thy Word is Truth”; the truth of God. This Word of God tells us the truth about God. It tells us about God in His exaltation, majesty, and holiness; it speaks of God's righteousness and justice, but also of His mercy and grace; it declares God's love for a sinner. But, we also find the truth about ourselves in God's Word. It also tells us the truth about who we are: entirely lost in sin, entirely guilty before God, and entirely unrighteous in His eyes; it also describes us as people travelling to eternity, travelling to our eternal destination.

But, congregation, the same Word of God also proclaims to us the truth about Christ. It proclaims the miracle of the Lord creating and opening a way to salvation--in which all His virtues are glorified, in which His righteous justice is fully satisfied. It is a way of salvation in and through Christ, His beloved Son. It is a way of salvation and redemption in and through His wounds and His blood.

Oh, congregation, that Word of God, that truth of God, is a priceless treasure! It points us to the way of salvation; it declares to us the miracle of God's grace. God's Word breaks us down to the fundamental core of our being, namely, that we are sinners before God; but it also points us to the perfect Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, such a precious, invaluable, priceless treasure!

And, today, the Lord still wishes to use His Word to convert people unto Him, to draw sinners out of utter darkness into His wonderful light.

Once again, congregation, why is God's Word such a priceless treasure? Because it contains Christ. Luther once wrote that Christ can be found on every page of God's Word. If you read the books of Moses, you will find Christ. The offerings, the Old Testament ceremonial laws, are they not all about Christ? Read the Psalms, and you will find Christ. You will hear Him cry out in Psalm 22:1, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”

Read the Song of Solomon; you will see no one else but Christ in the Bridegroom,

who “is altogether lovely.”

Read the prophets, and they will point you to Christ. Read the New Testament; is it not filled with Him and with His perfect mediatorial work? Is it not full of His humiliation and exaltation? Once more, congregation, isn't the Word of Truth a priceless treasure?

How does Christ come to the sinner? That is really all that matters. How does He come to me? Always through His Word, congregation: never outside of His Word; always through His Word! Calvin speaks of Christ coming clothed in Scripture. Congregation, if you remove Christ from Scripture, what remains? Christ Himself said, “I am the Truth.” He is the great focal point of the Word of truth. He is truth personified.

And now our text continues by showing us the further necessity to “buy the truth.” So it not only speaks of a priceless treasure, but in the second point, we are also directed to *an urgent exhortation*.

## **2. An Urgent Exhortation**

“Buy the truth.” These words make us think of a marketplace which you may typically find one day a week in a downtown square. In Vanity Fair, there is also such a public market and there are many goods for sale--the same wares that the market of this world has to offer today. The world offers you everything you need to live your life in the lusts of your flesh, in sin and iniquity. The merchants of the world call to you: “Come closer, come and fully enjoy the wares we have to offer!” There are a myriad of choices at this market--all goods designed to captivate you and make you forget God. How shiny, how attractive, all these treasures are!

Christian and Faithful also walk amongst all these enticements in Vanity Fair. But they do not fit in among the townsfolk. With their clothing, their speech, and their lack of interest in all these worldly wares, they do not conform to the world around them.

What about us, congregation? Do we stand out because we do not conform to this world? Christian and Faithful stop their ears and turn away from all the glitter, crying out, “Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity.” Can you, with a clear conscience, pray in the same way while you are captivated by all the glitter and glamour the world has to offer, or when you are in the grip of modern media?

Oh, congregation, consider how all this only leads to your eternal destruction. Oh, consider the Word of God, which warns us, “The world passeth away, and the lust thereof” (1 John 2:17).

But, congregation, there is another marketplace, the marketplace of the gospel, the marketplace of free grace. And at this marketplace, the truth of God’s Word is offered. The wares of God’s truth are laid out on the vending tables of this marketplace. At the marketplace of the gospel, you will find God’s truth displayed and recommended for purchase. When you come to church, you visit the marketplace of free grace. God’s servants are the merchants, and Christ Himself calls you, and invites you by them. “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Congregation, that voice, that call, is still heard in the marketplace of truth, the marketplace of free grace. Even today, Christ Himself is present in this marketplace: He is present in the garment of His Word, in the garment of the truth, and in the garment of the eternal gospel.

Today, He still bemoans unconverted souls, as He did so many years ago over impenitent Jerusalem when He said, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” (Matthew 23:37).

Christ still prays, still invites, and still calls out to sinners! He is wisdom incarnate, as we saw in the Book of Proverbs, and as such, Christ can be found in Solomon’s Proverbs. He can be heard speaking, while the people hurry on in their busyness, saying, “Unto you, O men, I call; and My voice is to the sons of man” (Proverbs 8:4); and “Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding” (Proverbs 9:6).

Also today at the market of free grace, He, by the means of preaching, calls to you, “Buy the truth.” Today, the greatest treasure of all is being put on the market: it is being offered, presented, and urged upon you by God Himself and sincerely recommended--the priceless, invaluable treasure of God’s Truth. Congregation, today is market day. Will you just let this market day pass? The divine Vendor is calling out to you: “Buy the truth.”

And what is the price? Normally, when you shop at a public market, you will want to know the price of the beautiful things offered. “What is the price?”

Well, congregation, on the one hand, we may say that it is free; no cost to you whatsoever. “Come, buy ... without money and without price” (Isaiah 55:1). At the marketplace of the gospel, all wares are freely given away, out of grace, without money and without price.

“But,” you may ask, “how is this possible?” Well, there is One who has paid the price! Christ Jesus, the Saviour, the focal point of all truth; He, who declares of Himself “I am the Truth”; He has paid the price! And for Him it was not free; it was an incredibly high price, the price of His own precious mediatorial blood.

And now, today, this truth, these precious wares, are being offered to you at the marketplace of the gospel. In fact, they are offered to you for free, out of free and sovereign grace!

There is no need for your contribution, nor are you allowed to contribute; it is all out of free grace. Congregation, at the marketplace of the gospel, the greatest treasures are obtained freely.

Has it become a source of wonder in your life that at the marketplace of the gospel the wondrous call is heard, “Come, buy ... without money and without price”?

Do you know for whom this becomes a wonder? For beggars who are conscious only of their guilt and trespasses. Would you like an example of such a beggar, congregation? An example from the Old Testament? Consider David when he composed Psalm 51, and we read his words reflected in Psalter 140, verse 1:

*God be merciful to me,  
On Thy grace I rest my plea;  
Plenteous in compassion Thou,  
Blot out my transgressions now;  
Wash me, make me pure within,  
Cleanse, O cleanse me from my sin.*

Congregation, in these words we can recognize a repentant beggar who only knows of his guilt and debt; a beggar who only knows of his sin and transgressions; he is one who has learned to confess his guilt before God. Indeed, such a penitent has learned to confess with David, “Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight” (Psalm 51:4).

For such penitent people, it becomes a wonder that at the marketplace of the gospel, all wares are free. Such a beggar will experience that if ever a gift is received from God, it can only be out of free and sovereign grace. Congregation, for penitents and beggars, it becomes a wonder that the call is heard at the marketplace of the gospel, “Come, buy ... without money and without price!”

Another example of such a beggar is found in the New Testament. Congregation, look at the temple. Can you see him standing there at the back? His head is hanging down and his hand is pressed on his chest, “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13). He only knew of one sinner: himself. He had become the greatest sinner of



all. His heartfelt cry was, “O God, if Thou ever looks upon me, it can only be out of free grace.”

Are there such beggars among us today? Are there people here with empty hands, empty pockets, having nothing but debt and guilt? Oh, then it becomes such a wonder when at the marketplace of free grace, you may hear the call and invitation resonate in your heart: “Buy the truth.” Yes, “Come, and buy ... without money and without price.” Because the costly price has been paid, congregation! The Lamb of God, the Perfect Saviour--He has paid the price.

Do you know what our misery is in all of this? By nature, we are too wealthy for this gospel marketplace, this market of free grace. We still have our pockets full of valuables and we don't want to lose them.

Congregation, in the marketplace of the gospel, we can be too rich, but we can never be too poor. What do we read about Christ? Although He was rich, He was willing to become poor; He became poor so that poor sinners might forever be rich.

“Buy the truth.” And what is the price? On the one hand, we may say that the price is “nothing,” for it is all out of free grace. But on the other hand, we must say that the price is infinitely high, because the market of free grace will teach you that you will need to lose everything in order to gain everything. That is why Christ said, “For whosoever will save his life”--and that’s what we all want, don’t we?--“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it” (Luke 9:24).

Congregation, the Lord Jesus Christ made this so clear in the parable of the Pearl of Great Price. We must lose all our little pearls in order to obtain that one Pearl of great price. I must lose my worldly pearls, my worldly idols, my money, my possessions, my position in the world, my work; yes, even my wife, my husband, my children. All the things I lean on and the things I am attached to as if those are everything in my life.

But, congregation, I must also lose my religious pearls, my heartfelt tears that I cried in moments of despair and guilt. If those tears are the grounds of my conversion, if they are my saviour, I must lose them. And the same goes for my precious prayers that I offered up from the depths of my heart and which mean so much to me; if I find my salvation in those, I must lose them.

And then there are the precious talks I had with God’s children. If I consider them my grounds of salvation, I have to lose them. And the same goes for my good works, my self-righteousness, and my resolutions.

Oh, congregation, when all these are weighed in the balance of God's justice, then it will also apply to us, “Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting” (Daniel 5:27).

Congregation, we must lose so many, indeed, all of our own pearls in order to obtain that one Pearl of great price, that Truth of God. Then I must become a poor and destitute beggar.

And, congregation, there is a place for such beggars in the marketplace of the gospel. And then, when I stand there without my little pearls, with empty hands and mountains of debt and a sin-wasted life, then it will become such a wonder that I may hear, “Come ye, ... come, buy ... without money and without price.” Then, thank God, I do not have to contribute anything; then all is paid by the blood of the Lamb.

“Buy the truth.” Congregation, what does this buying consist of? Nothing less than saving faith! Saving faith, which loses everything outside of Christ and outside of God's Word. Saving faith, which teaches me to flee to Him who is Truth, and to lean and rest on Him alone. Saving faith, which unites me with the truth. In this saving faith lies the purchasing power that enables the believer to embrace the truth in Christ.

And how will I know whether I have purchased that truth? Congregation, if you have purchased something precious, then you will treasure it dearly, then you will be deeply attached to it, and then you will guard it carefully.

Similarly, all those who have learned to purchase the truth through the power of faith will also treasure that truth dearly and above all else. Then the words from Psalter 333, stanza 4, echo in our hearts:

*Sweeter are Thy words to me  
Than all other goods can be;  
Safe I walk, Thy truth my light,  
Hating falsehood, loving right.*

Then you become, as it were, one with the Truth. Then you become one with God's Word so that you may experience its truth in the deepest recesses of your heart.

Those who become buyers of the truth will, in the deepest sense of the word, experience the truth of who God is and who they are before Him. Such a guilty and debt-ridden sinner will fall at His feet, crying out, “Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned” (Psalm 51:4). Then I come to stand before the truth of God's holy justice and I will come to understand together with the psalmist that “O Lord, Thy perfect righteousness is in Thy judgments shown” (Psalter 338:1) and that “Jehovah's truth will stand forever” (Psalter 425:5).

Then I will learn to bow before God's justice and give myself over to His judgment.

But, then I may also experience the truth of Christ's work and the miracle of free and sovereign grace. When I may experience that, then it is the Christ of Truth who conquers my heart, who draws me unto Himself. Yes, then it is Jesus Himself who draws my heart, my hands, my feet, and my eyes--my entire being--unto Him. Then faith will teach me, as unworthy and damn-worthy as I am, to rely entirely on Him and His righteousness. That is how the truth will set me free.

But, congregation, not only does God's Word speak of an urgent exhortation, there is, lastly, a serious warning.

Let us first sing from Psalter 428, verse 4:

*Thy precepts have I hid within my heart,  
Lest I should stray and fall into transgression;  
O teach Thou me and unto me impart  
Thy statutes for a permanent possession.  
In all Thy judgments Thou most righteous art;  
Thy truth I praise in rapturous confession.*

### **3. A Serious Warning**

“Buy the truth, and sell it not.” We have together seen what buying the truth entails; but, apparently, there is also a selling of the truth. What does this mean? Is it possible to lose salvation? Is it possible that when you, through faith, have purchased the truth and are united with the truth, can again lose that truth? Is there then no perseverance of the saints? All of Scripture tells us that God preserves His children from falling out of grace, so what does this “selling the truth” mean?

Actually, God's Word tells us to be careful with the truth; don't squander it, don't cast it away, don't distort it, don't spoil it, don't ignore it. Do not be a window shopper at the marketplace of the gospel. There are enough spectators at the market. They can even discuss the truth from a distance, but they make no purchase; they can look at the truth and not buy it.

Dear congregation, do not be such a passive spectator, be a purchaser!

Selling the truth--what does that look like? It is what people do when they sit in church every Sunday hearing the truth, but ignore it. There are always birds that pick away the seeds of truth, and you sit in church with your heart filled with the cares and concerns of this life.

Maybe you sit in church looking intently at the pastor, but your thoughts have wandered far off. In reality, you hardly hear what is being said. Or maybe you do hear it, but as soon as you are out of church, you join in idle talk and conversation. The birds pick away the seeds of truth. That is also what's meant with “selling the truth.”

The same holds true for all those who break with the truth. There are young people who consider all this religion to be over the top and too much of a good thing. They say, “Surely it can be a little less demanding or a little easier. After all, what is truth? Prove that what I hear on Sundays in church is the truth!” Their motto is seize the day, live life to the fullest! And thus, they break with the truth. They sell the truth, even though they all wear the mark of truth on their foreheads, even though they have been raised with it and under it. It is possible that years later that truth comes back to haunt them, for the truth remains exactly that, the truth, and it cannot be denied.

We live in a time when many leave the church; when many people sell the truth in one way or another.

There are young people who are blinded by the glittering treasures of this world and fill their hearts with them: they sell the truth.

There are also people who have been deeply impressed with the truth, who have sat in church with tears in their eyes, who were not able to sleep because of convictions of death and eternity, or who were deeply touched by the blessedness of God's people. Spiritual matters were on their mind, and there were impressions of the truth, but they didn't last; they faded away. There was no depth and they eventually returned to their daily routines. That too, congregation, is a selling of the truth!

In his second letter to Timothy, Paul speaks of one of his fellow labourers in the ministry, “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world” (2 Timothy 4:10). Demas, of whom Paul had high expectations. Demas, who we also would have expected to stand for the truth. But Demas loved this present world; Demas sold the truth.

And then there are other people, for whom the truth is choked out by their cares. The daily concerns of life fill their hearts in such a way that the truth is pushed away; it is choked out.

For example, in their trials and afflictions, they say, “Is this the way God deals with people? Why do I have to go through this deep way of affliction?” And they become rebellious under their yoke and full of enmity against God. They break with the truth, and the truth is choked out.

“And sell it not.” Congregation, how is it with you? This is such a serious warning, also for you! Would you rather partake in the glamour and glitter of this world? Would you rather enjoy the enticing wares of Vanity Fair? Congregation, do realize that by selling the truth, you will perish eternally, you will remain under the power of the father of lies, and you will go lost with him forever.

Today, Christ is still present at the gospel marketplace. He still bemoans those who are unconverted; today, He still invites you and calls you. But if you harden your heart, then the day will come that He will have you in derision; then He will scorn your fears and mock your destruction.

“Buy the truth, and sell it not!” Congregation, pray for God's servants who must preach and promote this truth, for they, too, can make the mistake of selling the truth. A preacher can sell the truth by distorting its meaning, by softening its cutting edge, by blending it with falsehoods, or by providing the congregation with weakened or false grounds for salvation--grounds that cannot bear fruit for eternity.

Preaching God's truth rightly is a great responsibility for every preacher, for the merchants of the gospel market. Law *and* gospel; death *and* life; justice *and* mercy.

God is the God of truth, both in His promises and in His threatenings. Christ says, “I am ... the Truth” (John 14:6). And with those words He assures us that no one has ever been deceived by Him. And the Holy Spirit is also known as the Spirit of Truth; He leads and guides into all truth.

Oh, congregation, in light of all this, it is truly terrible to sell the truth. Bow your knees and let your prayer be, “Oh send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me” (Psalm 43:3).

Happy are they who have purchased the truth in the marketplace; who became, as it were, united by faith to the truth in such a way that it became their life. For them, this truth became the experience of their heart and the life of their soul. Happy are they who come to know the truth in such a way that it becomes the power of God unto salvation.

Then the truth sets them free from the power of the lie, because on Golgotha Jesus crushed the head of the father of all lies. In this manner, the truth sets them free from the power of sin because Christ broke its dominion.

The truth will set us free from the curse of the Law because Christ bore that curse on the cross of Golgotha. The truth will set us free from eternal judgment because the judgment of God came over Christ and the punishment for sin was meted out to Him. Yes, then the truth will set us free to praise and glorify God in all eternity.

Here below, the battle against the lie remains, especially against the lies that live within me every day. But then, in eternity, the truth of God will set His redeemed free from the lie forever. “Buy the truth, and sell it not.”

Congregation, the wares that are for sale at Vanity Fair and the market of this world are varied and many. The one item is more tempting and enticing than the other. But know that those wares will never satisfy your heart. They will drag you to your eternal destruction. The Vanity Fair of this life below will someday, most assuredly, come to a terrible end.

Are you like Christian and Faithful? You should make time to reread that portion of Pilgrim's Progress once again at home. And notice then how Christian and Faithful do not conform to the clothing and language of the others at Vanity Fair, and also notice their lack of interest in the wares offered up for sale. They stop their ears to block out the tempting offers from the merchants. They say, “Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity.” And, contrary to the clamor of the market, they cry out: “We buy the truth!”

Again, congregation, are you like Christian and Faithful? You know what happens to Faithful, don't you? After having been falsely accused by the townsfolk of Vanity Fair, he was falsely convicted by Judge Hate-Good, he suffered abuse and torture, and he was, ultimately, burned at the stake. But, as he died in the flames, a chariot behind the watching crowd waited for him, and it carried him, accompanied by the sound of trumpets, through the clouds straight to the Celestial City gate.

And, congregation, there the lie is forever destroyed. There, all pain and suffering is forever gone. And there the heart will be forever satisfied with the God of Truth.

Amen.

Closing Psalter 417, stanza 1:

*Send forth, O Lord of my salvation,  
Thy light and truth to be my guide,  
O let their rays, in my privation,  
Lead me unto Thy habitation,  
Where 'neath Thy wing I'll be supplied  
With grace Thou wilt provide.*