

# The Truth of God

## *Personal Breakthroughs:*

**Luke 8:10-18**

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In the 1600s when King Louis XIV ruled France, he had a prison in which one inmate wore a mask of black velvet cloth. No one knew who he was. Novels have been written and movies produced imagining his identity. A movie entitled, *The Man in the Iron Mask*, a Three Musketeer sequel, imagines that this man was a secret, identical twin to King Louis with a birthright to rule. For dramatic effect, the velvet mask was changed to iron; and with the assistance of the Musketeers the man's identity and destiny is confirmed.

I see a parallel in life to this fictitious story. Our true identity is similarly masked. The Bible sees us so differently than we see ourselves. Indeed, Satan messed with Jesus' identity. "If you are the son of God," Satan tempted, "turn these rocks to bread." "If you are the son of God," Satan baited, "take a leap and prove it." Satan challenged Jesus' self-understanding.

Satan messed with Jesus' identity, and he masks ours. Every day we are slimed with lies that degrade and disfigure what God has made of us. Satan smears us with the unbecoming grime of sin, deception and condemnation. In our minds and hearts he sows notions that we are unattractive and unrelated to a holy God. He robs us, if he can, of our rightful standing with God. Consequently, we need help removing the mask. We need help seeing ourselves.

When Jesus prayed for his disciples and all believers, he noted we live in a hostile world. He prayed not that we would be removed from it, but protected in it. He then prayed:

***Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.*** (John 17:17, NIV)

The term, *sanctify*, means “make holy.” It isn’t the truth that makes us holy. Our holiness is a gift. Christ’s work on the cross makes us holy; however, God’s word is the truth that helps us live into the holiness that Christ purchased for us. The Apostle Paul wrote:

***Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.*** (Ephesians 5:25-28, NIV)

Have you ever seen shows where people have had a make-over? It is amazing what we can look like if we are washed up, cleaned up, dressed up, and even primed up. Also, have you seen the before and after pictures of weight-loss programs? Without weight-loss, transformation happens because expert hygienists treat what we already are so that it reveals our dignity and beauty. With weight-loss, disciplines for a season reveal the health and beauty we’ve been given.

In the case of you and me, Christ cleans us up through “the washing with water through the word.” In other words, the way we think and act must go through a process where Christ washes us. Christ washes away thoughts, opinions and beliefs we hold about ourselves and others. He addresses the attitudes we act on. Now, even as Jesus prayed that we would be made holy in our minds and hearts through the truth of God’s word, the Apostle Paul added the ingredient of “water through the word.”

When Paul writes this, he discusses the work of husbands with their wives. He tells us men to look at Christ’s work with the church as our example in relating to our mates. We’re to help our wives become all they can be. Christ is doing that for us believers in the washing of water through the word. In other words, we are prepared for Jesus not by taking a shower or a

bath, but by applying water to ourselves directed by God's word. This appears to be a reference to baptism where we are washed as we respond with water to God's promise and command.

Even as we use water to clean up and make ourselves presentable, Christ uses the water of baptism to claim, name and even relocate us. We are baptized into Christ, so that we may be saints living in Christ Jesus. The Bible calls us saints in Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:2).

According to the word, you live, not in Rochester, but in Christ Jesus at Rochester. If you live in Rochester, you are affected by its language, customs, laws, troubles and prosperity. If you live in Christ Jesus, you are affected by his language, customs, laws, challenges and blessings wherever you go. So having been baptized into Christ through faith, are you living in Christ Jesus? Are you embracing your revealed identity and the life it holds?

You can live like a pauper though you're rich. You can live like a slave though you're free. You can live like the prodigal son who ate pig's food though he was a son of a wealthy man. His heart was hardened so that he could not see his father's love.

We can suffer hard hearts too. We can read truth from the Bible, hear it from the pulpit, see it in a situation, but never understand its meaning for us. The truth sits idle in our minds, like seeds on a hardened path. Soon the birds come and snatch it away. We are no better off having heard then if we never heard. Have the words of God's love for you, been snatched away, so that you don't feel his love? Has the truth of your identity in Christ been lost, so that you don't understand who you are and where you live each day? Are you hard-hearted?

We can suffer faint hearts. We can receive God's word with joy and begin to change; but then, we encounter bad weather. We're deceived or betrayed by someone. Perhaps, the very person who sowed the word falls into serious sin. The church splits. The job crashes. We are stung by death. We are defeated by some temptation. The word and promise now seem unreal.

We lose faith. We lose our grasp of the truth in testing. We're faint-hearted. Are you faint-hearted?

Some truth finds our hearts ready and receptive, but we focus on the wrong things over time. We focus on problems. We focus on responsibilities. We focus on things that choke out what God is growing in our life. The cares of this life choke out the truth of our life in Christ Jesus. We are half-hearted with the truth, and eventually it escapes us. Are you half-hearted?

If King Louis' twin had not given himself to embracing his identity, he would have lost it again. Either he would learn what is necessary to rule and takes the steps of risk, or he would again be locked in a mask and ruled by his wicked brother. Louis' twin had to act with speed and dedication, for his mask did not come off in a vacuum.

The Bible reveals that we do not live in a vacuum. The forces we contend with in life are not neutral. They are formidable, and they oppose our relationship with God. The devil, who is the father of lies, seeks to deceive you and separate you from your royal partnership with God. What you do, right now, with the word you are given is important.

There is no personal breakthrough as long as your heart is hard and you refuse to hear. There is no personal breakthrough unless you face the hurt of the past, so that your belief stands the test of adversity. There is no personal breakthrough for the faint-hearted. There is no personal breakthrough unless you quickly and continually act on the truth you have received. It must take precedent over other cares and concerns in your life. No breakthrough is promised to the half-hearted. Breakthroughs come to those who whole-heartedly welcome the truth.

Today is a day of breakthroughs. Do you believe the slime of Satan or God's word? Is your heart ready for God's truth? Let's ask God to make your heart ready for his truth.