

HAMMOND FIRST BAPTIST PULPIT

Sunday Morning Sermon January 18, 1970

“Truth Is Fallen in the Street”

By Dr. Jack Hyles

Chapter 5

“And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.” Isaiah 59:14

There is a story, a very interesting one, and I ask you to listen carefully to the introductory part of the message. If you miss the first part, you will miss the entire purpose of the sermon.

There is a story about Darius, the king of Persia, who gave a great feast for 127 of his governors and famous people. Four men of the king's guard entered into a contest at the request of Darius, the king of Persia, to speak a word or sentence that would impress the king and impress those present. The one who spoke the most powerful word was to be given a necklace of gold and a place of honor at the king's court. Four men from the king's guard were chosen.

One man stood to speak a strong word. He said, “Wine is strongest. Wine is strongest.” Then he proceeded to give his case for the reason “wine is strongest.” He told of the influence that wine has on the lives of people. He told of the influence that wine has on the homes of the nation and on the land of Persia. He presented his case and shouted again, “Wine is strongest.”

A second stood and gave his “word” and that word was, “The king is strongest. The king is strongest.” Then he proceeded, with eloquence, to tell why he thought the king was the strongest. He told of the influence the king had upon the lives of all the people. He explained how, at the king's command, thousands of people obeyed and how the entire empire was effected by just the command of the king. He shouted in closing, “The king is the strongest.”

The third man stood and shouted these words, "Woman is the strongest!" Then he proceeded with eloquence to explain the influence that woman has on man, the fact that man has lived, sacrificed, and died for a woman and then he shouted again, "Woman is strongest."

And then the fourth stood and shouted his sentence. He said, "Truth is strongest!" Then he gave his argument for truth. By the time he had finished his argument for truth, the great crowd of people at the feast of Darius were shouting, "Great is truth! Great is truth! Truth is greater than wine. Truth is greater than the king. Truth is greater than woman. Greatest is the truth!" The winner of the strongest statement was that member of the king's guard who shouted, "Truth is strongest!"

I want to speak this morning on this subject, "Truth Is Fallen in the Street." In Isaiah 59:14, we find the most unusual statement.. "And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter." Now follow me carefully as I give you the teaching of the Scripture.

Here is a thoroughfare, like the Kennedy Expressway or the Dan Ryan Expressway. It likens life to a street, or an expressway, and it says that there has been something fallen in the street. Truth has fallen in the street. Because truth has blocked the street, equity cannot get by. Consequently, judgment is turned away backward. Judgment drives down the street, comes to a blockade, and finds that truth has fallen in the street. There is no way to get by it. Judgment turns and walks back.. There is no proper judgment. Why? Truth has fallen in the street.

It goes on to say, "Justice standeth afar off." Justice comes down the road and wants by, but justice cannot get by. Why? Because justice, like judgment, is built on truth. If there is no truth, there is no justice. If there is no truth, there is no judgment. Judgment is turned away backward and justice stands afar off and says, "I can't get by." Why? Truth has fallen in the street.

I want you to listen very carefully this morning and hear my message on the subject of truth. The Bible says, "Truth is fallen in the street and equity cannot enter." Here are three travelers who need to travel down the street. The first is judgment. He drives down the street and finds that truth has fallen and blocked the street, and so he turns and goes back. Then justice comes down the street and finds that truth has fallen and blocks the street and he has to stand afar off.

Next equity comes down the street, and equity finds that truth has fallen, and, because truth has fallen and is blocking the traffic, equity cannot enter. Consequently, there is a traffic jam. There is a blockade of traffic. Why? All because truth has fallen in the street.

I was coming back from O'Hare Field one night (boy, that's the story of my life) at two o'clock in the morning. I came down the Kennedy Expressway. All of a sudden, traffic was blocked and cars as far as I could see ahead. I waited about 45 minutes and finally moved up an inch or two. If I ever fall from grace, it will be on the expressway. There is nothing in the world that irritates me more. If I had somebody there who could cuss, I would have asked him for some cuss words. If I had known one, I would have used it.

I finally reached the accident at three-thirty in the morning. I hadn't had any sleep all night, and I wanted to get home and get a few hours sleep. I had to work the next morning. There was a big truckload of oranges, and it was turned over. That was the greatest thing I'd ever seen, but not at three-thirty in the morning. I don't want orange juice at three-thirty in the morning! Oranges everywhere! Oranges on this side of the street, on that side of the street, and rolling down the street.

The accident reminded me of the day I went to O'Hare Field and was late for a plane. (That's the story of my life, too.) I had some grapes with me. I didn't know that grapes would get wet, and I put them in a sack. I didn't know that there was a hole in the bottom of the sack. I was running to the plane with a sack of grapes in my hand. The grapes all fell out, and grapes rolled everywhere. Folks couldn't get by and they were walking on their tip-toes, trying to get by, and I was leaving a trail of grapes behind me. Grapes of wrath all behind me!

When somebody blocks the street, nothing can get through. An ambulance cannot get through. Somebody going to the hospital in a car can't get through. Why? The street is blocked, that's why.

The writer, Isaiah, looks at his generation and says, "We have one great problem. Judgment has to turn and go back. Justice has to stand afar off. Equity can't go by. Why? Truth is fallen in the street."

Now, that's why the confusion is in our colleges today. You want to know why we have communism in our colleges? You wonder why they are capturing deans and holding hostages, the presidents of universities? You want to know why the hippies run wild?

By the way, have you been on a campus lately? How many of you have been on a campus of a state university in the last three years? Raise your hand, would you please? Look around. Look around. Keep your hands up. You see, you don't know what's going on. How many of you have not been on a campus of a state university in the last three years? Raise your hand, please. No wonder we still deify these places where communism runs like a river. We don't know what's going on.

I spoke a few months ago at a Southern Michigan Sunday School Convention. It was held on the campus of Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. I could not believe what I saw. When I was a kid they called those folks "tramps";

now they call them "students" at the Western Michigan University. I could not believe it.

You know what the trouble is? I'll tell you what the trouble is. Truth is not truth anymore. We are going to have confusion. We are going to have riots. We are going to have our communist hot beds. We are going to have our Students for a Democratic Society. We are going to have burning of our buildings. We are going to have trouble. We are going to have anarchy until somebody says, "Let's get truth up again. Let's quit blockading justice, and equity, and judgment, because truth has fallen in the streets."

Truth. You go to the average college today and they will say, "There is nothing to truth; it is all relative. Don't be dogmatic; don't be authoritarian. Don't make any statements as positive statements. We are all searching for part of the truth. Everything is relative. Nothing is right." Ladies and gentlemen, I advance to you this morning that two plus two is still four, like it always was. Truth shall rise again. The problems in our schools today are from the fact that we have quit exalting truth. Truth is fallen in the streets and equity cannot pass.

That's what's wrong with our churches. Do you know why we have empty churches this morning? Because there's no truth. Truth has fallen in the streets. Equity cannot pass. Judgment turns around and goes back. Justice stands afar off. Truth has fallen in the streets.

Listen. Check the churches that are on the move today. Check the churches that have the crowds today. In every case, there's a man of God who says, "Thus saith the Lord—this is truth." As long as truth is relative, as long as an authoritarian position is unpopular, as long as a preacher stands in the pulpit and doubts the Word of God, then casts reflection upon the interpretation of the Bible - our churches will languish in failure, in mediocrity. Somebody has got to stand up and say, "This is truth! This is truth!"

If you want our churches to be full again, if you want our churches to grow again, if you want our churches to influence our society again, you're going to have to prop truth up and say, "This is true, and this is error; this is right, and this is wrong."

Somebody said not long ago, "I came to Hyles' church and he's a rabble rouser." You better know I'm a rabble rouser. You better know it! I believe truth and I believe error! I believe right and I believe wrong! And nobody ever walks through those doors back there and wonders what our stand is, or what our position is. Why? Because we hold up truth. As long as truth stands up, righteousness can get by, equity can pass, judgment can go by, and justice can be meted out. When there is no truth, the Cassius Clay's can just stick their tongues out at our government and still walk around free men on the streets. As long as there is no truth, when truth falls in the streets, hippies can defy our nation, burn their draft cards, laugh at our laws, and still walk around free men on the streets.

There's only one great problem we face in America today. Somebody is going to have to get back to holding up truth so justice, equity, and judgment can pass in the streets.

I heard something very sad last week. The Spurgeon Tabernacle is no longer using its auditorium. It used to have five thousand seats; now it has seventeen hundred. I've been there twice. Now they are not even using the auditorium. They are meeting in a classroom somewhere; just a handful of people come.

What's the great difference? I'll tell you what it is. There will never be a virile Christianity, there will never be a Christianity or a church that will affect and influence society until the church comes back and says, "This, ladies and gentlemen, is truth!" As long as the Bible may or may not be so, justice will not pass, judgment will have to go back, and equity will not be able to pass in the street, until we come back to saying truth is truth and this is true!

There are three things I want to say about truth. 1. **Truth does not die.** Truth does not die. Did you hear what I said? Truth does not die. It falls in the street, but it does not die in the street. Truth does not die.

Oh, I know what they say, and you've heard them say it in the school. A perverted teacher stands up and says, "This is a new age. We have to change with the changing of time." You tell that teacher that Jack Hyles said, "Truth does not die." I'll go a step further than that, God says, "Truth does not die!" Truth may fall. And when truth falls, havoc, anarchy and chaos are inevitable. Truth does not die. Truth is always the same. Two times two is still four.

The Bible is still the Word of God. Jesus Christ is still the virgin-born Son of God. Our natures are sinful by birth. Christ died for sinners. Ye must be born again to go to Heaven. There is a Heaven that has golden streets and gates of pearl. There is a Hell that has fire.

I heard a famous preacher say on the radio just the other day, "Hell may not have fire." Well, if I believed that, I would get out of the ministry. If I believed there was no Hell, I would close my Bible. If I believed there was no Hell, I would stop preaching. If I believed there was no Hell, I would not work day and night. If I believed there was no Hell, I would not travel all across this country. If I believed there was no Hell, I would not tell people how to be saved. Why? Because I believe the Bible is true. Truth does not change. Truth never changes.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, just because you have a degree doesn't change truth. The Bible is still true. Christ is still God's Son. Hell is still hot. Hell is still fire. Heaven is still real. Salvation is still available. The new birth is still a necessity, if you go to heaven. Truth does not die. Truth does not die.

2. **Truth needs help.** Truth needs help. Truth is fallen in the street and equity cannot enter. Judgment drives down the street and tries to get by and cannot,

so it goes the other way. Why? Because truth is fallen in the street. Justice comes down the street and tries to get by and has to stand back; justice cannot pass because truth has fallen in the street. Equity tries to pass, but can not enter because truth is fallen in the street. Truth does not die, but truth needs help.

Don't you recall that story of the Ethiopian eunuch on the road to Gaza in *Acts 8*? Philip is coming down through the desert place, and he sees the eunuch in a chariot reading the Prophet Isaiah. *Isaiah 53* is the object of his vision. Philip comes down and sees him reading it.

Philip cries, "Hey, do you understand what thou readest?" The eunuch replies from his chariot, "How can I, except some man should guide me?" If there is one chapter in the Bible that would tell a man how to be saved, it is Isaiah, Chapter 53. If there is one chapter in the Old Testament that pictures Jesus Christ dying for sinners, it is Isaiah, Chapter 53. If there is one chapter in the Old Testament, the Scripture he had available at that time, that would tell him easily and simply how to be saved, it is Isaiah 53. And yet, he shouted, "How can I, except some man should guide me?"

Ladies and gentlemen, truth needs help. Truth needs a man. Truth needs proclaiming. Truth needs preaching. Truth needs declaring. And that's why the writer inspired the Apostle Luke to quote the eunuch saying, "How can I, except some man should guide me."

When I came to the First Baptist Church of Hammond, the church believed basically then what she believes today, except we didn't bark it quite as loudly as we do today. One of the first Sundays I was here, I stood in front and preached on a few things and against a few things. I want to make this plain, too, to you young preacher boys. I don't believe you can be a Bible preacher and not preach a negative message as well as a positive message.

Coming from our seminaries and colleges and theology classes today is a lot of garbage. They say, "Just preach positive!" Tell John the Baptist that. He said, "You generation of vipers, go back to your seat until you get some fruit mete for repentance and then get up and come back down the aisle." The Bible is full of preaching, warning people of the wrath of God.

When I came to First Baptist Church in Hammond ten and a half years ago, one of the deacons, a very fine man, came to me and said, "Pastor, you are pretty strong on a few things." I said, "I'm just getting started. I'm pretty strong on a lot of things. I have just mentioned a few so far." But he said, "Now, we don't have to have it like that. We have our position in our minutes." I said, "It will be more than in the minutes. From now on it will be in the pulpit." It will be in the pulpit. Put it in the minutes and it will block traffic. Put it in the pulpit and it will open up the thoroughfare.

Truth is fallen in the street. Truth doesn't need to be in the minutes. Truth needs to be in the pulpit. Nobody in ten and one-half years has ever walked

through those doors and wondered whether we believe the Bible is the Word of God or not. Nobody. Nobody has ever sat in the pews and wondered about our position or this preacher's position about the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I may have preached too long, and I may have preached too loud, and I've planned to do that this morning. Sometimes I may not use the best grammar, but I do try to use the best grammar possible. I may not use the best homiletics, but I try. But there's one thing you can say, my precious brother. When folks walk through that door, they walk out knowing that I believe the Bible is true! I believe that Jesus Christ is God's Son and that you must be born again. Once truth falls from this pulpit, it will block traffic, and the way will not be made plain, and people will not be at this altar on their knees.

Truth is fallen in the street! Once it stood erect. Once truth was standing saying, "This is the way. This is the way. This is not the way. This is not the way, and this is not the way, but this is the way." Once truth stood and pointed the way. But let me stop and say this, dear friends.

3. Without truth, there is no way. Now listen to this. Without truth, there is no way. The One who said, "I am the way," said in the next word, "I am the truth." When the truth falls, the way falls. For He who is truth is also the way. That is why equity couldn't get by, because truth had fallen and with truth the way fell. That's why judgment could not get by; it had to turn back. That's why justice could not get close; it had to stand back. That's why equity could not enter; it had to turn back because truth had fallen in the street.

I heard the story many times, as you have, of John Wycliffe. John Wycliffe was, of course, martyred for his stand. They hated him so much they dug his body up, burned his bones, and drowned his ashes. They put his ashes in the Avon River, and then they went down to the sea, and on down to the small seas and on down to one of the oceans. They hated John Wycliffe that much. It was not enough to kill him. They did not want his body lying whole, or intact, in the grave. They dug his body, burned his bones, and drowned his ashes in the river. Fox wrote about that and said that God made it so, for the ashes and the body of John Wycliffe was as his message. His ashes were placed in the Avon, and from there they floated to the sea, and from there they floated to the small seas, and from there they floated to the oceans, and from there, around the world. For the truth that John Wycliffe preached cannot die, and his body did as his truth. It went around the world.

My young friends this morning, and my old friends alike, our nation totters on the brink of communism. If you do not believe that, then you can call me all you want to call me; but, brother, we're not that far from being a socialist nation today. I mean we totter on the brink! Why? I'll tell you why! Truth is no longer truth. Right is no longer right. Integrity is no longer integrity. There is nothing black. There is nothing white. Everything is a cloudy gray.

God give us some teachers who say, "It is truth. It is truth. It is truth!" And when we do, we will raise some politicians who will stand for truth. We will have some leaders who will stand for truth, but not as long as we do not say, "This is right and this is wrong and this is truth and this is error." Nobody is dogmatic anymore. Nobody is authoritarian anymore. Nobody says, "This is it," anymore. Consequently, truth falls in the street. When truth falls in the street, the way also falls and people cannot find the way.

Everybody today is looking for the answer. Everybody wants the way out. Our President, God bless him, wants the way out. I think he is, as men go, a good man. I think he is a great improvement over what we had before, though he's not from Texas! But if he wants the way out, he won't find it by having Norman Vincent Peale in the White House for preaching services. If he wants the way out, he ought to have Hyles there or somebody who is going to say, "This is right."

Somebody ought to stand in the White House and say, "The liquor you are drinking is wrong!" Somebody ought to stand in the White House and say that it is wrong to mollycoddle communists. Somebody ought to stand in the White House and say, "The Bible is still true!"

When truth falls in the street, the Supreme Court becomes confused. When truth falls in the street, our Congress knows not what laws to make. When truth falls in the street, our President gropes in darkness. When truth falls in the street, our young folks become anarchists. When truth falls in the street, every man does that which is right in his own eyes — for that which is truth is that which he thinks is truth and he becomes own God, his own leader, his own president, his own king, his own power. His mind becomes the object of his worship and he will obey only himself because truth is relative!

If every man seeks what he thinks is truth, then truth stumbles in the street and equity cannot get by; justice cannot get by; and judgment cannot get by, because truth is fallen in the street.

Churches where the truth is preached have no serious problems. One of the strangest things about our church is we get along so well with each other. We don't have any serious problems. At least, not as far as I know. It has been nine or ten years this July 13th since our church has had anything but perfect harmony. A preacher came to visit our church and said to me, "If I preached like you did, our folks would kill me." I said, "If you don't, your folks ought to kill you."

Why? Why do we have harmony? Because truth is erect. We oftentimes have visitors come, especially on Sunday night, when I have a little longer to ramble. They come on Sunday night and while I'm preaching I'll get off on mini-skirts or maxi-coats or some brand. These visitors look around to see how y'all are taking it. Before they laugh, they want to be sure you folks are laughing. They

come after the service and sometimes say to me, "Those folks are with you." Sure. Truth always opens up the way. It is error that blocks the traffic.

The churches that have trouble have a preacher who will try to go around truth, or he makes truth what the people want to hear. Truth always opens up the thoroughfare. Truth always allows equity to pass and always allows judgment and justice to pass. Truth, when it is standing erect, always points the way! But when truth falls in the street, equity cannot enter. And as I said a while ago, when truth falls, there is no way.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I say this and I believe this from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet: Truth must be preached whether popular or unpopular, whether accepted or rejected, whether liked or hated.

Ten and one-half years ago, when I became Pastor of this church, I promised God I would preach what I thought was the truth. I may have made some mistakes; no doubt, I have, but I have preached what I thought was the truth. From this pulpit and the one that burned in the old auditorium (this pulpit was made in the likeness of that one, same dimensions exactly) For ten and one-half years, we have not minced our words. We have done our best to be faithful to the truth.

Now, in so doing, we have pointed people to the One who is the truth, for He who is the truth is the way. Now follow me carefully. "I am the way, the truth, and the life." *John 14:6*

I want Brother Terry and Brother Hand to help me here a minute. I want to show you something. Hold my hand if you would, please. God the Father (or God the Trinity — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) said, "I am the way the truth and the life." The Trinity is all one person. He did not say, "I am the way, and someone else is the truth, and someone else is the life." No. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life.

Brother Terry is the way. I am the truth. Brother Hand is the life. When truth falls in the street, Christ is not exalted, for He is the truth. That means the way also dies. Is that right? And when the way dies, life dies. Is that right? It is truth that initiates the way. It is the way that brings you to life. All of it hinges on the truth. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." *John 8:32* Say it, fellows. Bound together in Christ's trinity is truth, way, and life. If you have no truth, you have no way. If you have no way, you have no life. First you've got to have the truth.

If the truth is not preached, you won't know the way, and if the way is not known, you will not have life. That means if you want to live in Heaven, and if you've got an ounce of sense you do, you will want to go to Heaven when you die. There was a famous author who, as he died, looked up and said "Oh, God, let there be a life after this one, and may there be something for me to do when I get there so I can be busy."

You want eternal life! What man doesn't want to live after death? Listen, the rankest atheist wishes there were a God. The man who laughs at Heaven and laughs at life after death, wants to live as long as he can. I can prove it. When the man who says there is no Heaven and no life after death gets sick, he goes to the same doctor we do. He wants to live as long as he can and, though he does not believe in life after death, he wishes it to be true. If you want to live after you die — now follow me — if you want to live after you die, that's life. Do you want life? Of course you do. Our medical scientists are working day and night to give us life.

A diphtheria scare has swept the southside of Chicago and yesterday, in one little clinic alone, thousands of people were lined up to get their shots. Why? They want life! To live as long as he can is something that beats in the breast of every man. And, if he can, to live after he dies. Life! Whether you are talking about abundance of life on this side of death or eternal life on the other side of death, you want life.

If you want life, you've got to find the way. If you find the way to life, you've got to find the truth. For once truth falls in the streets, the way falls. Judgment goes backwards. Justice stands afar off and equity cannot enter. You have lost the way. You have lost the way and the only way you can have the way is to have the truth.

Where is the truth? The Bible is the truth. Every word of it is true. When this truth falls in the street, we lose our way and man dies without God. When this truth is picked up off the street and held and preached for right, man can find the way through Jesus Christ to life and life eternal.

What is the truth? Truth says that all of us are sinners. What is the truth? The truth is, as sinners we are lost. What is the truth? The truth is, Jesus Christ became sin. He was the perfect substitute accepted by God, and on the cross bore our sins in His body on the tree. What is the truth? The truth is that Christ was buried and our sins were buried with Him.

What is the truth? The truth is that Christ rose from the dead and lives forever at the right hand of God. What is the truth? The truth is that Christ is coming back from Heaven to earth again to receive all of His own to Himself. What is the truth? The truth is, when He comes, the graves will open, the dead in Christ shall rise and meet the Lord in the air.

What is the truth? The truth is that those whose bodies have decayed in the grave shall become like the Lord Jesus Christ, and those of us who live at His coming and are saved will be caught up to meet Him in the air. What is the truth? The truth is: In order to go to Heaven, you've got to receive Christ as your personal Savior. What is the truth? The truth is not that you get baptized or join the church or live a good life or turn over a new leaf. The truth is: You have to get born again.

What is the truth? The truth is if you get born again, you receive Christ, by faith, as your Savior. What is the truth? The truth is you can be saved this morning. What is the truth? The truth is: If you, right where you are, would acknowledge the fact that you are a sinner and that Christ died for your sins and receive Him personally as your sacrifice and your hope for Heaven, you could be saved. What is the truth? The truth is you could walk out that door with your name in Heaven, if you would trust the Savior today. That's the truth.

Truth has stood again in the pulpit and will as long as we are here. Truth has not fallen in the street, and because truth is not fallen, the way is still plain: You can live forever by faith in Jesus Christ.

Let us pray.