

## The Belt of Truth

Ephesians 6:14

- 10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.**
- 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.**
- 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.**
- 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.**
- 14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,**

The late philosophy professor, Allan Bloom, began his best-seller, *The Closing of the American Mind* [Simon and Schuster, 1987], stating (p. 25),

There is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of: almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative. If this belief is put to the test, one can count on the students' reaction: they will be uncomprehending. That anyone should regard the proposition as not self-evident astonishes them, as though he were calling into question  $2 + 2 = 4$ . These are things you don't think about.

He goes on to point out that although these students may be varied in backgrounds and religious beliefs, they are unified in their allegiance to relativism and equality of ideas. The danger they fear from those who hold to absolute truth is not error, but intolerance. And tolerance is the supreme virtue that our educational system has inculcated for many decades.

Bloom was not a Christian. He was a Jewish philosopher at a secular university who was pointing out the absurdity of intellectual relativism. It effectively shuts down rational discourse, education, and all attempts to improve society by resolving problems. But it is firmly entrenched in our educational system and in our society at large.

The problem with throwing out absolute truth is that when we do, we are also discarding absolute standards of morality. Many college students cannot bring themselves to say that the Holocaust was evil (see Bloom, p. 67). One student said (in *Reader's Digest* [Feb., 1998], p. 75), "Of course I dislike the Nazis, but who is to say they are morally wrong?" While these students deplore what Hitler did, they express their disapproval as a matter of personal preference, not as a moral judgment.

I wish that our cultural tolerance of sin and rejection of moral absolutes were only outside the church. But this non-biblical worldview also has a grip on many Christians. A study by George Barna shows that one-third of all adults (34%) believe that moral truth is absolute and unaffected by the circumstances. It probably doesn't surprise us that two out of three adults don't believe there is an absolute moral truth. But Barna's study also showed that slightly less than half of the born again adults (46%) believe in absolute moral truth. (Barna Survey Examines Changes in Worldview Among Christians over the Past 13 Years, March, 2009).

When the apostle Paul tells us how to stand firm against these evil spiritual forces, in Ephesians 6 he lists six pieces of spiritual armor to put on. And the first of these is

the belt of truth. If we understand and employ the the belt of truth, it will help us to stand firmly against the philosophical and moral relativism of our day.

In our study of Ephesians 6 so far we have learned that all believers are caught up in the Great War between God and Satan. The enemy can't have our souls, but he will stop at nothing to destroy our lives. He has two weapons. The first is the world and its lies, the external weapon. The second is the flesh and its desires, the internal weapon.

Jesus has already won the war. He gave Himself to free us from sin and He rose in victory from the grave. But, that doesn't stop the devil and his forces from fighting us today. That's why Paul tells us to **"stand."** To stand is to make a fight. The opposite of making a stand is to give in. Look closely at v. 13.

Paul says, **"Therefore,"** that is, "because you understand that you are involved in this great conflict..."

We are to **"take up the whole armor of God."** Paul was probably chained to a Roman guard as he wrote this letter. Though the guard wasn't in full battle gear, Paul had known many Roman soldiers. He used the metaphor of a soldier's equipment to explain the spiritual equipment God has given us to defeat the enemy.

We are to use the **"whole armor."** We can't pick and choose our gear. We need every piece.

We need the armor that we might be able to **"withstand in the evil day."** When is the **"evil day?"** Everyday that we struggle with sin and **"wrestle"** with the forces of hell is **"the evil day."**

Christ is our armor and He has won the ultimate victory. Yet we must make our stand. When Martin Luther was condemned as a heretic before the Diet of Worms for proclaiming that faith alone in Christ alone brings salvation, he said, *"My conscious is captive to the Word of God... Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise."* We cannot do otherwise either.

**"Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth..."** (6:14).

For the Roman soldier, the girdle or belt was a leather apron-like piece that extended down to the thighs, protecting the lower abdomen and upper legs. The soldier tucked his robe or tunic into it so that he could move quickly and without encumbrance in the battle. In the Bible, the loins are often a metaphor for strength. Girding yourself has the idea of displaying power and courage. The main idea of a soldier girding his loins was that he was ready for vigorous action. Paul's point in telling us to gird our loins with truth is that we cannot be ready to fight the enemy if we are not strong and ready with God's truth.

The truth here includes both God's truth as revealed in His Word and the truthfulness and integrity of the believer. As I said last week, the armor is a metaphor for Jesus Christ. He is the truth. If we put on Christ as the truth, then surely we will live as truthful people.

As you know, the Book of Ephesians is structured on the idea that the truth of our position in Christ is the foundation for practical righteousness. Chapters 1-3 set forth what God did for us when He saved us and placed us in Christ. Chapters 4-6 then spell out how we must live in light of these truths. We see this in how the word *truth* itself is used in Ephesians.

1:13, **"In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise"**

4:15: **"but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—"**

4:21: **"if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus"**

4:24: **"and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness"**

4:25: **"Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another."**

5:9: **"(for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth)"**

The foundation for truth is the gospel of Jesus Christ who is the embodiment of truth. As a result of our being new creatures in Jesus Christ through the gospel, we are to be truthful people. So putting on the belt of truth involves being ready for battle against the enemy by girding ourselves with the truth of the gospel and by being truthful people. But first, we need to answer the question:

## **I. What is truth?**

Pilate asked Jesus this question at His trial. Jesus had said to him (John 18:37), **"For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."** Jesus implied that there is an identifiable body of knowledge that is "the truth," and that Jesus Himself testified to the truth. What does the Bible say about truth?

### **A. God is the truth.**

The Webster dictionary defines truth as "conformity to fact or reality...." Something is true if it is "conformable to an essential reality" (*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* [Merriam Webster], p. 1267). Thus *truth* does not refer to our subjective perceptions of reality, but to what *"really exists external to ourselves"* (Tackett). Since God is the only essential reality in the universe, He is truth and the standard for all truth. Jesus referred to God the Father as **"the only true God"** (John 17:3). If He is the only eternal, self-existent Being, then He is the truth, the only unchanging reality in the universe. He cannot lie (Titus 1:2).

### **B. Truth is stable, firm, and reliable.**

Psalms 89:14 says of God, **"Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Mercy and truth go before Your face."** Psalm 117:2 declares, **"the truth of the LORD endures forever."** The Hebrew word for truth was often used of things that had proved to be reliable, firm and stable. Thus it often refers to God's faithfulness to His covenant promises. As the God of truth, we can put full confidence in His word. In the New Testament, Paul often uses *truth* to refer to the gospel message itself, which is reliable and must be trusted (Eph. 1:13).

### **C. Jesus Christ is the embodiment of God's truth.**

John 1:14 states of Jesus, **"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of**

**grace and truth.**" Jesus said (John 14:6), **"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."** As we have seen, Jesus claimed that His reason for coming to this earth was to testify to the truth (John 18:37). He claimed to speak the truth (John 8:45, 46). He prayed (John 17:3), **"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."** So if we want to know the truth, we must come to know God through the One who was the embodiment of truth, Jesus Christ.

#### **D. God's Word is His revelation of truth.**

Jesus prayed (John 17:17), **"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth."** Paul referred to the Bible and its central message, the gospel, as **"the word of truth"** (2 Tim. 2:15). Therefore, any deviation from God's Word is error or falsehood. The New Testament writers use very strong language when it comes to God's word of truth. They often warn us of 'false teachers' and insist that Christians stand on the truth of the scriptures. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, **"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."**

#### **E. God and His Word of truth are absolutely true in every culture and in every age.**

While certain things in the Bible are clearly culturally, the moral commandments of the Bible stem from God's unchanging holy nature. They are true for every culture in every age. The gospel consists of truth about who we are in God's sight—sinners that have rebelled against Him. It consists of truth about who Jesus is—the sinless Son of God who took on human flesh through the virgin birth, who lived a sinless life, and who died on the cross to pay the price that we as sinners deserved. The gospel declares that God offers forgiveness for all sins and eternal life to any sinner that repents of his sin and believes in Jesus as Savior and Lord.

That simple but profound message of the gospel has transformed the lives of both primitive, illiterate cannibals and of highly educated university professors. We must hold firmly to the idea of God and His Word as absolutely true in every culture and in every age.

So if that is what truth is, then,

### **II. How do we put on the belt of truth?**

As I already stated, the belt of truth refers both to the objective truth that God has revealed in His Word and to the truthfulness that must characterize us as believers. So to stand firm against the enemy,

#### **A. Arm yourself with the truth of the gospel.**

Paul writes (2 Cor. 4:4), **"whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them"** If people get saved, it is because God opened their blind eyes. He shines "in their hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). To put on the belt of truth, you must have been born again by God's word of truth (James 1:18). You can say with the man born blind whom Jesus healed (John 9:25), **"one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."**

While sincere believers differ over non-essential teachings, on the core truths of the

gospel, we must agree or we are not Christians in a biblical sense of the word. Demons have false doctrines that they promote (1 Tim. 4:1). Satan and the demons deceive unbelievers in many ways, but especially with regard to the gospel (2 Thess. 2:9-12). If the enemy assails you with doubts, go back to the bed-rock of the gospel: Who is Jesus Christ? Are His claims true? Did He die for my sins according to the Scriptures? Was He raised from the dead as the many New Testament witnesses testify? Have I experienced the change from blindness to sight?

Our Christian walk depends on putting on the new man, created in righteousness and holiness of the truth (4:21-24). The truest thing about you is not what you feel. It is not what others say or think about you. The truest thing about you is what God says is true. To stand firm against the enemy, gird yourself with the glorious truths that Paul sets forth in Ephesians!

### **B. Arm yourself with truthful behavior.**

Back in chapter 4 Paul commands us, (4:25), **“Therefore, putting away lying, “Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,” for we are members of one another.”** If we are not walking openly before God and truthfully with one another, the enemy has an opening to attack us. If we practice lying and deception, not only do we erode trust, which is at the heart of close relationships. We also join forces with Satan, who is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44). So to stand firm against the enemy, we must gird ourselves in daily experience with the belt of truth: the truth of the gospel and truthful behavior.

Peter Singer, who has been called the one of the most influential philosopher alive, teaches ethics at Princeton. He is credited with starting the animal rights movement. For him, the notion of same-sex marriage is intellectual child’s play. It has already been logically decided and it’s time to move on to polyamory. Singer argues that any kind of fully consensual sex between two or 200 people is ethically fine (*World* [Nov. 27, 2004], p. 32). He even says bestiality is “not wrong inherently in a moral sense.” It is not wrong, says Singer, for parents to give birth to a child so that they intentionally can kill him and transplant his organs in an older child! And, it would be ethically okay to kill one-year-olds with physical or mental disabilities (*ibid.*, p. 33)! This man teaches *ethics* at the university where Jonathan Edwards was once President!

How do we stand against this sort of blatant attack on the morality of the Bible? How do we guard ourselves from falling into the moral relativism and tolerance of our degraded culture? Gird yourself with the belt of God’s absolute, unchanging truth. Want to win your personal battle against the devil? The first step is to belt on the truth. Immerse yourself in the truth of God’s Word and deal truthfully with others.