

Stand Firm, Wearing The Belt of Truth

By Mark Jarvinen

In my introduction to this series last week, I made the point that **"the Christian life is not a playground - it's a battleground."** Paul says it best in **Ephesians 6:12**, where he writes:

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

Satan and his forces form an **"organized demonic conspiracy,"** which although they were defeated in the ultimate sense at Calvary, are, nevertheless, at work in the world today to thwart the forward progress of the Kingdom of God. Through a variety of strategies and tactics, Satan seeks to discourage and immobilize Christians by blinding them to the truth concerning their true identity in Christ. Paul's word to Christians is to:

"be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes" (vv. 10-11).

In this series of messages, we will look at each piece of this armor and discover how it will equip us to stand firm against the enemy and his schemes.

Verse 14 says, **"Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist."** The RSV translation says, **"Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth."** Based on this translation, I guess this first piece of armor could actually be called the **"girdle of truth."** I'm glad for the more current translation, **"belt of truth,"** for obvious reasons. I don't think many of us associate a "girdle" with the armor of a warrior. Yet the imagery is

powerful, especially when we understand the garb worn by a Roman soldier in battle. In New Testament times, soldiers wore flowing robes under their armor. When the time for battle finally arrived, and swift mobility became necessary, a soldier would tuck these flowing robes into his belt to allow greater freedom of motion. This reference to "***girding up the loins,***" is used in several places in Scripture and implies "***getting ready for action.***" In this sense, the belt was a foundational garment. After all, what good was the rest of a soldier's armor if he couldn't move in battle? Also, we should not understand the belt to be a sash-like piece of cloth or a narrow strip of leather like the belts we use, but rather a leather apron that helped protect the soldier's loins and which served as a kind of sheath for carrying and protecting a soldier's sword.

During this series of messages, we will see that each piece of armor and the body part it protects is analogous to some aspect of the spiritual life, and how the application of that aspect to our lives will protect us from Satanic attack and help us claim the victory that is already ours in Christ.

And so, today we look at the foundational piece of the soldier's armor, which Paul refers to as "***the belt (or girdle) of truth.***" What role does "***truth***" play, in a foundational way, to help us stand firm against Satan and his forces? Truth here is a reference to the **Word of God, the Bible**. There is a two-fold aspect in which we are to "put on truth."

I. GIVE ASSENT TO THE TRUTH OF GOD'S WORD .

Someone once stated that spiritual warfare is ultimately a battle for the minds of mankind. I tend to agree. Biblical truth must first of all be understood

and believed in the mind before it can influence the way we live. You can't live a victorious Christian life without being convinced that the Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of God and the final authority in matters of faith and practice. One who has doubts here is sure to stumble and fall. Remember how the serpent caused Eve to fall into sin by saying, **"Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" (Genesis 3:1).** Satan wants to cause doubt regarding the authority of God's Word.

The first question that must be asked when attempting to determine whether a religious group or a certain religious practice is valid must be **"What does the Bible say?"** We live in an age of relativism and tolerance in which varying viewpoints on almost any subject are given equal footing in the public square. A **2017 Gallup Poll** found that 47%, less than ½ of Americans, still think the Bible is the inspired Word of God. The same survey found that only 24% of Americans believe the Bible is the literal and inerrant Word of God, the lowest percentage in the 40 years that Gallup has tracked this question. Therefore, it requires great courage today to say **"I don't believe such and such, because I don't trust that the Bible is true,"** or **"I do believe this is so, BECAUSE THE BIBLE SAYS SO!"** As children we sang the chorus **"God said it, I believe it, that settles it."** In our multi-cultural age that sounds way too simplistic and unsophisticated, so alarmingly black and white. Life has become so complex and truth so many sided that we resist affirming it, lest we appear too narrow-minded or offensive. It seems that everybody has their own spin on the truth nowadays. Therefore, **"Why should I believe the Bible to be absolute truth?" critics ask.**

Furthermore, skeptics ask, **"If the Bible is absolute truth, why are**

there so many `brands of Christianity,' all claiming to have a corner on the truth?" In fairness, we must admit that there are areas of doctrine that are subject to theological interpretation. This fits Satan's agenda perfectly. He prompts the church to use truth against itself in order to divide us from one another and lessen our influence for Christ on the world. Over the years, Christians have tended to divide themselves into "camps," called denominations, from which they have often engaged in theological hairsplitting, which has only polarized and isolated ourselves from one another. I liken it somewhat to the controversy in the social arena over **abortion**, in which many, while claiming to be pro-choice, actually abhor the idea of killing unborn children. Yet, when pressed, they staunchly believe in a woman's right to choose what happens to her own body, particularly where pregnancy has been caused by rape or incest. What many "pro-choicers" don't realize is that fewer than 5% of all pregnancies are caused by rape or incest. And so rather than uniting around the "pro-life" cause, which seeks to protect the rights of the unborn from abortions of convenience, as in 95% of cases, they rally around the rights of the 5% of women who have been victimized, and thus muddy the waters of public policy. Thankfully, the pro-life cause has made significant strides in recent years.

The point I'm making with respect to Christianity is that although doctrinal distinctives in secondary matters of faith do exist, there is a core of Biblical truth around which all true Christians can and must unite, which distinguishes Christianity from all other religious expressions. From the objective Word of God we can distinguish truth from error, particularly in what the Bible teaches regarding the person and work of Jesus Christ. I've always believed that true Christians have more around which to unite than to be

divided. Sadly, denominational walls still do exist among otherwise sincere believers, limiting the effectiveness of our witness for Christ.

Another problem centers around a growing trend toward **Biblical illiteracy**, even in the church. Although the Bible remains atop the best-seller list, people are reading it less. Cults are on the rise today because Christians don't know enough Bible to distinguish truth from error. Truth and error are all the same to someone who is ignorant and therefore calls everything truth. **William Gurnall**, a Puritan author, tells of a covetous man who hugged his many bags of gold. He never opened the bags or used his treasure, and thus when a thief broke in and emptied the bags of the gold and filled them with pebbles, he was just as happy as when he still had the gold. **Friends, the truth of God's Word can be likened to the gold in Gurnall's story. Sadly, for many the Bible is a bookshelf relic or a decoration on the coffee table, more than it is the owner's manual for life.** They've never opened the bags to discover the gold inside. The majority today are hugging their bags of pebbles, living with a view of the world shaped more by the cultural values of **possessions, power, and prestige**, than by a world view shaped around Biblical truth. They've embraced the hollow shell of humanism and naturalism instead of the Christian gospel of peace through knowing Christ.

If we want to stand firm against Satan, we must read, understand, and apply the Bible to our lives. An hour per week in church won't do it. Consider that the average American watches 3 hours per day of television or 9 years over an average lifespan. If over that same lifespan you attend church one hour per week, you've logged only 4 months of total time. Nine years versus 4 months. What is likely to have more impact? How many of you are

engaged in a daily devotional reading, or better yet, a systematic study of God's Word? **Being grounded in the truth of God's Word is vital to standing firm against the devil's schemes.** Knowing the truth is vital to our spiritual health and vitality, but knowing the truth must also lead us to live the truth, which brings me to my second and final point today.

II. ASPIRE TO LIVE THE TRUTH OF GOD'S WORD.

One of Satan's tactics is to divide and conquer. He seeks to divide people over the question "**What is truth?**" but also over the question "**How does one live the truth?**" If Satan can't stop someone from believing the Gospel of Christ unto salvation, he seeks to undermine that person's effectiveness as a "**doer of the Word**" by dividing his loyalty and affections. The word for this is "**duplicity**" - or a divided heart. Satan wants to sidetrack believers by enticing them to live with one foot in the world and the other in the Kingdom of God. And so, instead of building their spiritual houses on the solid rock of Christ and His Word, many build a duplex, with one part on the rock and the other on the sand. Not surprisingly, such a building usually crumbles. Through duplicity, Satan gains leverage to discourage us through fear and anxiety, and immobilizes us with doubt and lethargy. Jesus knew the folly of duplicity and warned his followers of it in **Matthew 6:24**, saying, "**No one can serve two masters....**" **How long can one live a double life and endure as a Christian?**"

By contrast, according to **Psalm 51:6**, "**God desires truth in the inward parts.**" Remember that the belt of truth covers a soldier's loins or "private parts," where no one else is allowed to look. This raises the question for us: "**Who are we in private, when no one else is looking?**" God wants the

truth of His Word to affect the beliefs and values by which we live so that who we say we are corresponds with how we live. I heard recently that the single greatest cause for stress among Americans today is something psychologists call "**incongruence.**" In other words there is too large a gap between a person's public and private persona.

Another word for "**truth in the inward parts**" is "**integrity.**" Paraphrasing **Psalm 51:6, "God desires integrity."** Those of you who are math students know that an "**integer**" is a whole number. Do you see the similarity between the word "integer" and the word "integrity." A person who walks in integrity is a person with a whole or undivided heart, whose inner and outer lives are becoming increasingly congruent. Of course, we don't subscribe to the notion of sinless perfection in this life, but it is God's desire that we become increasingly "**conformed to the likeness of His Son,**" as the Apostle Paul speaks of in **Romans 8:29.**

I have a friend in another city who is trained as a lay assistant in his church, helping people become restored to lives of integrity after having given Satan a foothold in some area of their moral life. He shared with me the story of a man he helped, (anonymous to me) who was active in his church and confessed that he was a cross-dresser, and had a problem with pornography. My friend and his partner in ministry led this man to the place of repentance and forgiveness, and later helped him clear his basement of the pornographic material he had kept hidden there. At the time my friend shared this story with me, the man was walking in the freedom he had discovered in Christ.

How many of us here today have things to hide? How many have secret

sins of which no one is aware? God desires truth in the inward parts. We do well to remember that although no other human being on earth may know what we've attempted to hide, God knows. King David attempted to cover-up his sin of adultery with Bathsheba, but God sent Nathan the prophet with the indictment, "***You are the man.***" **Why did God send Nathan?** Was it any of his business what the king did in his private life? God sent Nathan to confront David, because He loved David so very much. God couldn't stand to see David ruin his life through duplicity. David had always been a man after God's own heart and God wanted it to stay that way. God didn't want Satan to gain the upper hand in David's life. And so, in His kindness and mercy, God led David to repentance.

Friend in Christ, God feels the same way about you. Is there some hidden thing in your life that needs to be brought to light? The old nature resists the acknowledgement of sin. But Satan's power in your life lies in the fact that you're keeping it a secret. Yield to Christ. Confess your sin before God and receive His forgiveness. Give up duplicity and put on integrity. That's what putting on the belt of truth is all about. Notice that the belt of truth is the first piece of armor mentioned. It is the foundation piece of the full armor of God. It's where your victory over Satan and his forces really begins. Put on the belt of truth and walk in the victory Christ won for you at Calvary. Yield to Christ daily and walk in the freedom He provides. **A-men.**