

THE BELT OF TRUTH, JN.8:32, +

Spiritual Warfare #1

◆ **Intro:** It's been observed that smallpox, ambush, bullets, cannon fire, icy rivers, long marches; nothing could kill General George Washington, it seemed. Two horses shot from under him. Four bullet holes in his coat, but never struck by a bullet himself. Nothing could kill Washington, it seemed....except his doctors. Common knowledge of the day was that if you were ill, a disease could be bled out of you. The diseased blood would be gone, and the body would replace it with fresh healthy blood. So when General George Washington caught a cold after the establishment of the new nation, his doctors proceeded to help him bleed, ...eventually to death. Three times a pint of his blood was drained from his body. (Have you ever donated blood and felt a bit woozy afterward? All they take is a pint and no more.) When that didn't make Washington better, doctors drained a full quart. Then to drain more disease, they induced vomiting, and gave him laxatives to drain his bowels. They blistered his hands and feet to drain fluid out through his skin. General George Washington, the father of our Nation, survived the Revolutionary War, only to be unwittingly put to death by his friends. But today we know better, because today we know more truth about medical health and the human body than we did in 1799, the year Washington died.

◆ Paul in his letter to the Christians in Ephesus tells us that in this difficult life there are powers at work that we may not see, but are spiritual and deadly. They are part of the reason human life is messed up, fallen and stained by sin. In the last chapter of Ephesians he describes weapons, spiritual weapons or armor that we can use to survive.

◆ "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our

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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. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled round your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,”
Ephesians 6:10-14, NIV.

◆ Over the next several weeks we’re going to look at each piece of armor and what God’s word has to help us win over negative thoughts, habitual sin, and social decay. Lets start with the first one Paul mentions.

◆ **1. What is the Belt of Truth?**

◆ Paul urges us in Ephesians 6 to use the spiritual armor in our fight against forces of evil and darkness. The very first one he mentions is the first one a Roman soldier in the first century would put on: the belt. For the soldier, the belt not only was wide and protected his belly, it also fastened other pieces of armor to him, like the breast plate, and the sword. Paul is telling us that the number one weapon in fighting the lies of sin and satan is the truth.

◆ A. Now there are two options for interpreting the Belt of Truth. One option is that truth refers to personal integrity or honesty. There is logic to this, since these are biblical virtues that lead to health. For example, when a wife makes a digging comment to her husband and he responds maturely asking what that’s all about –if an honest conversation ensues they are both better off.

◆ **Distraught Wife:** “I don’t know why I’m the only one who does anything around here!”

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- ◆ Hopefully mature husband: “I sense some frustration in that statement. Want to tell me what’s bothering you?”
- ◆ Now if she says, “You never this... and you never that...” things will not likely go well. But if she is open, and honest with *herself* and shares something like, “It’s been a crazy day, I feel overwhelmed, there is so much to keep track of with the kids and I really need your help.” ...things will likely proceed better. So Truth here could refer to being a non-deceptive, open and plainly honest individual. Certainly a good, and biblical principle.
- ◆ B. Option two is that the belt of truth stands for objective reality, the way life really is or ought to be. Having the right information, and the right belief about something. Carry that further and we arrive at the conclusion that truth is a knowledge of God and his ways. Now which did Paul mean by his picture language of the Belt of Truth? Based on all the other uses of the term “truth” in the letter to the Ephesians, we must conclude Paul is talking about knowing God’s objective and factual truth, his words, instructions and commands. In this it is similar to the sword of the spirit (we’ll look at that later in this series), as well as the gift of discernment, that is, the ability to tell truth from falsehood and right from wrong. God is by definition truth.
- ◆ Jesus said
 - ◆ *“My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.” John 17:15-17, NIV.*
 - ◆ *““When the Counsellor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify*

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about me.” John 15:26, NIV. “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.” John 16:13, NIV.

◆ Contrast that with this...

◆ *“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” John 8:44, NIV.*

◆ God is called the “God of Truth” in the Bible. Satan is titled the “Father of Lies.” Truth is like the light. Falsehood is like the darkness. We stumble in the darkness. But we can leap accurately in the light. And in the same way, human salvation depends on truth, both eternal salvation and daily salvation or victory. A false religion selling you salvation through any way besides the death of Jesus on the cross for the payment of your sins, is actually selling you death instead of salvation.

◆ *“Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me.” John 14:6, NIV.*

◆ Truth is what is right, good, god-like, and worthwhile and real. It is the same in science and in scripture, in biology and in theology.

◆ **2. Why is truth important?** Error, in the medical realm killed GW.

That’s what error does. That’s why God is so in favor of truth. Error leads to demise. Truth leads to life. Sometimes folks think that truth doesn’t matter that much as long as you mean well. Sincerity, they think, is what’s important.

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◆ Good intentions and well-meaning mean very little without truth.

You might think that as long as you are sincere you are on a good path. You would be wrong. Washington's doctors were sincere. They wanted to save him. They wanted to help him. They meant well. They were sincere, as was the view of their whole society and medical field at the time. Washington sincerely trusted and approved of his doctors methods. But they sincerely ended his life.

◆ B. You probably have guessed it by now, but one reason truth is so important is that *in a fallen world, we are surrounded by lies*. Deceit is the way of sin itself and rises up from hell. Why is it that mafia wives don't seem to know where their husbands money comes from? Why doesn't she ask why the chauffeur looks like a piece of heavy farm machinery in sunglasses? Why doesn't she wonder at the fact that the FBI never stake out other houses in her neighborhood? Why do alcoholics and drug abusers typically go through years of denial?

◆ The answer is that there is a spiritual war going on. For the evil to draw people in it must try to look good. It must lie. A prostitute does not approach a client with "Hi, if you pay me money you can share my body, receive a few venereal diseases, totally preoccupy your mind with a few minutes of excitement such that you will eventually see nothing in your wife, probably leave her, and ruin the mental stability of your offspring who will probably grow up without much of your presence or attention, with a partial side affect of flunking out of High School." That's the truth. But most of us are intelligent enough to notice it spelled out. N. Plantinga puts it, "To do its worst, evil needs

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to look it's best. Evil spends a lot on makeup. Even Satan, who looks heroic to rebels, must masquerade as an angel of light in order to look merely plausible."

◆ And so counterfeit money needs to look like the real thing. Con-artists need to be artistic. And Satan must appeal to our God-given appetite for something good for us. It's going on all around us right now in America, something like this...

◆ Our desire for goodness leads us to being kind and fair. Our desire for fairness leads us to acceptance of others as people even with flaws. Our acceptance of people leads to the notion of tolerating their right to believe differently than we do (maybe as unfair or unkind folk.) Our emphasis on toleration leads to relativism, the assumption that nothing is really true or right in the first place. Our relativism leads to a fear of making judgments, or believing in universal morals. Our fear of moral judgments leads us to rely on how we *feel* at a given moment, or emotion, or pragmatism (what seems to work for now, even if it doesn't in the long run). Our reliance of feeling and pragmatism leads us to confusion about who we are and what we should do because emotions change with the scenery. Our confusion leads us to sin, that which is ultimately absurd and unhealthy, but chosen voluntarily by us as though it were good. Case in point, take the current media, and White House passion over freedom of **gender identity**: what has been considered mental illness throughout human history (boys who want to be girls and vs), is today celebrated as courageous and loving. Last week the Obama Administration sued

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North Carolina for not forcing transgender bathrooms but leaving it to the businesses to decide. They and also wrote a letter to every school district in the nation commanding them to open their locker rooms and bathrooms to either sex a student chooses to identify as (by the way, people who suffer with transgender confusion represent .3% of the population) The White House has no authority to do this in the first place, but more significantly it illustrates how far we've fallen from caring about truth. Truth is you are either male or female down your very chromosomes. It's common sense and simple biology. Being confused about how you feel about that doesn't change reality. It is foolish, immoral and vastly unintelligent to pretend so, and yet our society is falling for the lie as though it is a freedom we should courageously protect.

◆ Finding absolute truth is important as the basis for the choices we make and the hope of any decent existence. So...

◆ **3. How do I buckle on the belt on Truth?** The primary way to use the Truth is to speak it into life. Say the truth to yourself and to others.

◆ A. Neil Anderson explains that we do not have to out shout evil and wrong. We have to out-truth it. For example, suppose suddenly find that you are married, but have a tremendous physical desire for a person you are not married to, and your mind becomes filled with fantasy about that person, and if only for a moment (or maybe longer) you begin to think that you truly would be happy if only you could be alone with that person instead of your spouse. It happens all around us.

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- ◆ I suggest to you that you speak out loud to yourself and to the spiritual realm something like this: “No, it’s a lie. I am NOT in love with so-and-so. It will NOT bring my life joy to chase that person. I do NOT want to be thinking these things. The world would not be a better place if we just all ran off and slept with whoever excites us at the moment. This is a lie. Get behind me satan!” You can apply this to any temptation that you know in your head is contrary to the wisdom of God, but you see, in daily victory it is not enough to know the truth. You have to give it life. Speak it!
- ◆ Lets say you don’t feel like getting up and going to worship God on Sunday. Or, lets say your child doesn’t want to. And you think, big deal, it’s certainly not good to “force religion” on my kid, or it’s no big deal that I’m not interested in what God thinks. I’d encourage you to stop right then and there and say to yourself, “What’s the real truth? The Bible says if you want to ruin your son, leave him to himself. The Bible says to not neglect to gather in worship with other believers. I’ve been thinking lies. Get behind me satan.”
- ◆ Lets take another example: you do something wrong: cheat on a test; take money that’s not yours; lie to your parents -whatever. Then you start thinking things, right? “I’m probably not a real Christian. God-followers don’t do what I did. How could God love me? I don’t even like me! There’s no hope. I’m a loser. I might as well quit trying...” I know you’ve heard these things in your head because I know that’s how the evil one works. The Bible calls satan the “accuser”. What do we do in those moments to avoid falling into depression and hopelessness?

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- ◆ I suggest again that you search the Truth and speak it, or write it, or pray it. “No I renounce this hopeless feeling. Get behind me, satan. The Bible says there is no condemnation for those in Christ. (Rom. 8:1) I confess to you God, what I did. You said if we confess you will forgive. Forgive me. (1John 1:9)
- ◆ B. Lets take a few public matters in our country as another place full of error. In the USA a minority of people actually think that a woman can marry a woman and a man a man. Unfortunately our laws now reflect this minority. This is both unscientific and ungodly. Also, many folk think that a human inside the womb is not a person, but after it’s outside a womb it is. Furthermore, Hollywood certainly believes hooking up as frequently as possible is healthy and actually leads to joy. Target has made all its restrooms open to men or women at any time.
 - ◆ Now just as a demon doesn’t have to leave you alone if you don’t renounce it, so on a larger scale, neither does social evil have to leave or change if we don’t speak up. There are spiritual forces at work in government, in courts, in Washington DC, on board rooms at CBS and NBC. Do you really want to let them rule your world? Speak your faith into your world! Speak God’s good ways into our politics. Join the 1.2 million others boycotting Target. For goodness sake, don’t be part of half the country that doesn’t even vote! If you are a follower of Jesus and you don’t vote, you are like a soldier going into battle in his underwear alone, unarmed. You can’t say, “Oh I don’t get involved with armor, and uniforms and weapons for war.” It doesn’t matter if you like war, you’re in one!

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◆“Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.” Ephesians 6:11, NIV.

◆Buckling on the belt of truth means filling your life with the things God says. And then speaking them into your environment.

◆**Conclusion:** George Washington, the Father of our nation said, “It is impossible to rightly govern a nation without God and the Bible.” He also said, “What students would learn in American schools above all is the religion of Jesus Christ.” "It is the duty of all Nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey his will, to be grateful for his benefits, and humbly to implore his protection and favors." What are you doing to put God’s truth into your week or in your nation? Know what the Bible calls the Church? The Pillar and Foundation of the Truth (1Tim.3:15) And yet I hear Christ-followers surprised when a church takes a stand, or raises political issues, or speaks about public affairs –as though we should leave that alone. We are mistaken, gravely mistaken.

◆“The gods of other nations are merely idols, but the LORD made the heavens! ...O nations of the world, recognize the LORD; ...Let all the earth tremble before him. Tell all the nations that the LORD is king. ... He will judge all peoples fairly. Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice! ... For the LORD is coming! He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness and all the nations with his truth.” Psalms 96:5-13, NLT.