

Week 2 — Love the Truth

We're continuing in our Spiritual Warfare series in Ephesians chapter 6 by spending our second week on the Belt of Truth. Last week we talked about the importance of believing the truth. This week, I want to press into the importance of loving truth and how that helps us stand firm against the enemy. It is one thing to believe the truth, but to love it changes our allegiances. Satan believes the truth, but he does not love it.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:10, Paul says people perish because they “refused to love the truth and so be saved.” In context, Paul is warning the church about deception, falsehood, and Satanic opposition. But notice where he locates the deepest problem. It is not merely that they did not know the truth. They did not love it. Their pleasure was in unrighteousness. That means the battle is not only in the mind. It is also in the heart.

BIG IDEA: Satan’s lies take root where our hearts love something more than Christ. So, if we are going to stand firm against the enemy, we must not only know the truth; we must love the Truth.

Transition: Our question today is how can we grow in our love for the truth? I propose three things: We need to love Jesus, diagnose our competing loves, and cultivate our love for the truth.

1. **Love Jesus:** Because Jesus is the truth, loving truth means we must love Jesus. (Loving Jesus means we love His person, His work, and His commands.) *The battlefield of truth is, at its core, a battle over our affections for Jesus*
 - a. **Loving Jesus for who He is.** (Person) – He is God!
 - Holy, Compassionate, Gracious, Merciful, Just. What is not to love about Him? Taste and see that He is good. Do you know Him? Have you tasted?
 - Application: When we recognize how perfect Jesus is, and that He is our perfect Shepherd, the lies of the enemy begin to lose their pull. We still may be tempted. We still may struggle. But we know His voice and we know His goodness. And because we know just how good He is, we want to follow Him rather than the voice of a stranger.
 - b. **Love Jesus for what He has done:** Work - (Past, Present, Future.)
 - Past Work - “Christ in our place”. Christ lived in our place, died in our place, and rose to secure our place. When you love that news (christ in our place)—when you wake up and it still strikes you as astonishing that Christ earned your righteousness, payed your debt, and guarantees your future, you will not be easily deceived by the enemy. Because no lie can compete the best news ever!
 - Present - And His work is not only past. Right now, He intercedes for us, shepherds us, and holds us fast to himself.
 - Future work - One day he will bring you safely home, he will judge the living and the dead, he will bring an end to this broken world, and He will make all things new.
 - Application: When is the last time you were moved emotionally by the person and work of Christ? When is the last time you rejoiced in Christ?
 - c. **Love Jesus by loving His commands** – Loving Jesus’ person and work creates a love for His commands. How do you view Jesus’ commands?
 - Here is the reality: if you love God, you will love what He loves. And God loves holiness. When you love holiness—when God’s commands are not a burden but a delight—you are able to stand firm against the enemy. Jesus said, If you love me, you will obey my commands. The fruit of our love for Christ is a growing desire for His commands and increasing obedience to Him.

- The enemy's tempts us to love anything and everything in such a way that our affections for Jesus are lessened. How we view His commands tells us what we truly believe about His Person and His work. It reveals how much we love Him. A lack of love for Jesus' ways reveals a lack of love for Jesus. Jesus' commands are not the enemy of our joy; they are the path to joy and life. Do I only love God's truth when it comforts me, or also when it corrects me?

Transition: The enemy often deceives us by offering exactly what our sinful hearts already want. So, to stand firm against the enemy by wearing the belt of truth, we need to be able to diagnose what loves are competing with Jesus in our hearts?" When a good thing becomes a ruling thing, it has become a competing affection (idol).

2. **Diagnose Competing Loves:** Reputation, Comfort, Autonomy, Self-Protection – There are many things that compete for our affection, let me just name 4 that we all tend to struggle with today for the sake of time.
 - a. **The competing love of reputation** – love of being liked, honored, respected. Loving the approval of man more than the truth of God. Some of us will not share the gospel, take a biblical stand, say the hard thing, or make the right but unpopular decision, because we are more concerned with what people think about us than with what is true. We have traded the truth for approval. Whose approval has become your love?
 - **Gospel truth to believe** – God is glorious. The praise of men fails to compare to the praise of God. God is the most glorious.
 - b. **The competing love of comfort** – Loving ease more than transformation and holiness. Following Jesus is not a life built around preserving comfort. Yes, Christ gives deep comfort to His people, but He will not leave us comfortable in the sin that is destroying us for our good and His glory. Transformation is not a pain-free project. God brings transformation through conviction of sin, the renewal of our minds, and the accountability to change. Sometimes He brings change through discipline, because He loves us. This happens best in Christian community. Do not get comfortable with your sin. What you tolerate today you will be comfortable with tomorrow. What you are comfortable with tomorrow will destroy you one day.
 - **Gospel truth to believe** – God is good and we can trust him to bring about our good even when it costs us. He is committed to working all things together for the good of those who love Him. (His people.) Our good is our sanctification.
 - c. **The competing love of autonomy** – **Love of being in control.** Most of us do not reject Jesus or His commands altogether; we accept Him selectively, on our terms. We want Jesus as Savior but still reserve the right to decide where His lordship applies. When I already know what God says but still want final authority over whether and when it applies to me, that reveals the competing love of autonomy.
 - **This one is so hard, especially in our country, especially in our community.** Some of us live in smaller communities because we want less authority in our lives. We hate HOA's, city and township ordinances, big government, and we desire land, freedom, and self-governance. We have been disciplined in a culture of "don't tread on me." But that same instinct can quietly train our hearts to say the same thing to Jesus and His Word.
 - Some of us already know what God's Word says about an issue... a relationship... or a situation in our lives. But we avoid those places in the bible like a plague or seek to justify ourselves before God. Some of you may not fully know what God's word has said, but you have a suspicion, and you want to hide behind the idea that ignorance is bliss. You refuse to look too closely—because you are afraid of the change it might require.

Loving the truth means choosing to align your life with what God says—even when you don't like it.

- Gospel truth to believe - God is greater than me - His Word judges me; I do not judge His Word. God's commands are good and living outside of them is not good for me.
- d. **The competing love of Self-Protection:** Love of feeling safe. A lack of love for Christ and His ways is revealed in the sin/brokenness that we protect from Him. We can know/diagnose if and where we might have a self-protection problem by looking at the places in our lives that remain unchanged/unhealed.
- Sometimes we protect sin because we love it. Sometimes we protect brokenness because we are afraid of what healing will require.
 - Blind Bartimaeus cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" He was blind physically, but not spiritually. He knew where to find healing and he wanted it. He was not afraid of the shame of crying out publicly to Jesus. It makes no sense to hide from the One who came to bring us into the light, give us freedom, and provide healing—but our sin nature and the enemy tell us to stay hidden.
 - Some of us fear being exposed—the consequences, the shame, or the changes exposure would bring. Common lies: "I need this to have joy." "If people really knew, I'd be done." "It is safer to hide." "Grace is for other people, not for this."
 - **God's truth:** God is gracious. Confession is not the doorway to condemnation for the believer; it is the doorway back into the light and freedom and healing. God is gracious. Confession is not the doorway to condemnation for the believer; it is the doorway back into light, freedom, and healing. Christ died for your sin; you do not have to pretend you do not have any. Christ rose for your justification; you do not have to build your identity on being seen as perfect. The church is a group of sinners in need of a Savior and should be a grace-filled place to bring sin into the light. Come to Jesus and be healed. Stop protecting yourself from light, freedom, and healing

Transition: So now we have some tools to help us diagnose our heart problem, let's move toward how we can cultivate love. A heart problem requires a surgeon who is our Savior, not just a strategy for getting well. If you have been selective about the truth—loving it when it's convenient, dodging it when it costs you then the only way into freedom is to cultivate love for the truth. How do we do that?

3. **Cultivate Love for the truth: (reveal, confess, repent, replace)** (We must reveal the lie, confess the sin, kill what feeds it, and replace it with life in Christ.) If you feel overwhelmed, do not hear this as a checklist to perform to earn Jesus' love. Hear it as a path to walk *with* Jesus, who already loves you and walks with you step by step.
- a. **Reveal the lie -Name it:** We have to start here. Behind every sin is a lie about God. The goal is not to stare at your sin all day, but to see the lie so you can get rid of it. The sin is clear: I am doing what I should not do or not doing what I should do. Name the lie behind your action or inaction. Ask questions like:
- What does this sin reveal about what I am believing about who Jesus is? Who is He truly?
 - What does this sin reveal about what I am believing about what He has done?
 - Why do I feel or believe that I need to do this, or not do this?
 - What does this lie reveal about my greatest affection?
 - A few examples:
 - If I am afraid to speak the truth because I crave approval, I do not just need courage; I need to believe that God is greater and more glorious and His approval matters more than theirs.
 - If I am afraid to end an unhealthy relationship, I may believe God does not care for me or is not enough for me.

- o If I fear giving up control, I may believe I can handle things better than God.
 - o If I am hiding sin, I need to remember the gospel: I am not perfect—that is why Jesus died. Pretending is not walking in truth; it is living in deception. To hide sin is to destroy myself.
- b. **Confess the sin – agree with God** - After diagnosing our sin problem by recognizing the lie(s) we are believing, the next step is confession. Confession is agreeing with God about what is true and where you have believed a lie and/or acted out of it. Confession is not you surprising God; it is you agreeing with Him so He can heal you. Agree with Him about where you have loved comfort, reputation, preference, or hiding more than truth.
- “Lord, in this sin (name it) I have loved approval more than faithfulness, forgive me, and strengthen me in the truth to stand firm..”
 - “Lord, in this sin (name it) I have loved comfort more than holiness, forgive me, and strengthen me in the truth to stand firm..”
 - “Lord, in this sin (name it) I have loved control more than trust, forgive me, and strengthen me in the truth to stand firm.”
 - “Lord, in this sin (name it) I have loved hiding more than walking in the light.”
 - Before we talk about killing sin and putting on new life, remember this: if you are in Christ, you are not confessing to *earn* His love. You are confessing because you *already* have His love, and He is committed to freeing you.
- c. **Repent – Kill it**
- Depending on the Spirit, take decisive action. Do not manage it. Do not negotiate with it.
Kill it
 - The Puritan pastor and author John Owen put it bluntly: "Be killing sin, or sin will be killing you." Owen did not mean, "try harder in your own strength." He meant, by the Spirit, do not make peace with what Christ died to forgive and destroy.
 - What we feed grows. Killing sin is an ongoing battle. We can kill it off for a day or a season, but if we pick it up again and feed it again it will grow again. We must starve our sin to keep it dead. Ask Jesus to help you "hate your sin."
- d. **Put on truth – Starve the sin, Feed your love for Jesus.**
- Cultivating love for truth is not just about stopping a sin. It is about putting on new life by reorienting our hearts toward Christ so that the truth we have been running from becomes the very thing we now run to in joy. We do that by starving the lie and feeding our love for Jesus with the truth of Christ.
 - Feeding our love for truth (Jesus) - Set our eyes and mind on the things of Christ—look up to the things above, where Christ is. Knowing Christ helps us taste and see that the Lord and His ways are good. This is not just a call to think good thoughts. It is a call to deliberately fix our attention on who Christ is and what He has done. As we do that, we are putting on new life, and the truth becomes beautiful to us.
 - The more time we spend beholding Christ—in Scripture, in prayer, in worship, and in community—the more our hearts are drawn toward truth and away from the lies that compete for our attention.
 - o We do not fight the lies of the enemy simply by gritting our teeth, bearing down, and trying harder to refuse them. That is religion. A works based behavioral modification plan of failure. We cannot change apart from Christ and His strength. We keep sin dead by feeding our love for Jesus.
 - o This is not passive. We put on the new life by scheduling time in the Word instead of time online, by showing up to community instead of seeking more time alone, and by replacing worry time with prayer time. As we do these things, truth stops feeling like a burden and starts feeling like life and freedom.

o We need to gaze upon Christ in Scripture until our restless hearts find peace. We need to worship until truth becomes beautiful again. We need to practice obedience quickly, before our hearts harden, and walk with believers who will help us put on new life and love truth when we are tempted to avoid it.

This week, do not try to fix everything. Ask the Spirit to show you *one* lie and *one* competing love. Name it, confess it, take one step to kill it, and take one step to feed your love for Jesus.

Closing: We began this series on spiritual warfare with the call to stand firm, to put on the full armor of God. Over these two weeks we have seen that the belt of truth is not simply something you know—it is someone you must love

The enemy goes after your affections. If your love for Jesus and His ways is waning, the enemy will work his way into your life for your destruction. We fight and win by believing the truth and loving the truth. We stand in Christ's strength, not our own.

Some of you do not need more application. You know exactly where this sermon lands in your heart, because God has been speaking to you for a while about your misplaced love. You already know the truth God is pressing on your life. You know the relationship you need to end. You know the habit you need to kill. You know the compromise you need to make right. You know the conversations you have been avoiding. You know the obedience you have delayed. The issue is not that God has been unclear. The issue is that another love has been competing for your heart.

Some of you can feel your heart resisting even now. You want to explain it away, defend yourself, minimize it, or move on quickly. But hear this: Jesus does not expose you to destroy you. He exposes what is killing you so He can lead you into truth, freedom, healing, and life. Yes, it hurts. Yes, it humbles us. But it sets us free. The Truth—Jesus Himself—sets you free. Do you believe that today

If all you can pray today is, "Jesus, help me," and take one step into the light, come. Come and be healed by Jesus today. The enemy wants to destroy you with lies. But Jesus frees you by the truth. So turn your eyes upon Him.