The Belt of Truth

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Date: 05 March 2023

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang. Thank you for joining us.!

And finishing up that study, they'll have a number of middle schoolers are teaching. And on Sunday mornings, they are with middle school and high schoolers and serving in that capacity.
And just thankful for their love for the Lord and their love for the local church. Both Mary and Kashawn are driving a great distance.
They both have jobs and lives that are going on during the week. And they are driving a great distance to be here and spend a lot of time to be here to invest. And our students are thankful for both of your investment.
And Joey, thankful for your leadership and the great job you do in making the Word of God preeminent with our students. There is something special about the students that are part of our church.
[1:19] They are a great, great part of our church. And I'm thankful for the people who lead that. I'm also thankful for so many volunteers who every Sunday morning spend time with our high school and middle schoolers.

We've got a lot of Sunday school teachers who invest in our students. Next week, we've got 80 or so of our middle school and high schoolers through their youth choir that are going to go on a mission trip.
And there will be adult sponsors who are taking off work and away from their families to do that. It takes a lot of people to have the kind of student ministry that we have here. And it certainly starts with great leadership with Joey and Lacey.
But it takes a lot of volunteers and parents and people who love the Lord to make that happen. It takes people who are faithful to give. Student ministry is an expensive thing.
It costs a lot of money. Joey, you're an expensive part of our church. Really expensive, actually. But we're grateful.
[2:29] What a great thing to get to spend money investing the lives of students and teaching and training them and give them opportunities to serve. I said this a couple of weeks ago.

I'll just say it again. And if I had a teenager, I would have them here every time possible. Because they are being taught the Word.
And they've got great people investing in them. Open with me to Ephesians chapter 6. As we continue our study through the armor of God.
I think you would agree with me that truth is under attack in our day. The quickest route to being opposed and ostracized is to say that you know the truth.
Objective truth. Things that are true, whether or not someone else believes it. And if you want to be on the fast track to having people oppose and confront you, just make it be known clearly that you believe in things that are true, absolutely true, always true, no matter who believes them.
[3:40] Our world today loves to live in the indefinite. The gray area. Where you have your truth and I have my truth. The problem with that whole philosophy is people who live that way don't really like it when you have your truth.

They like it when they have their truth and you have their truth. And if you take away an absolute standard, then the basis of truth just simply boils down to what each individual person feels or desires.
Which is a very dangerous way to decide what is true. This is, of course, no new thing, though, this question about what truth really is.

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John chapter 18. You don't have to turn there, but you might just make a note. John 18 in verse 33. Speaking, of course, of the end of the life of Jesus.
It says, Pilate entered into his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, Are you the king of the Jews? And Jesus answered, Do you say this of your own accord?
[4:48] Did others say it to you about me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done? And Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world.

If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.
Then Pilate said to him, So you are a king. And Jesus answered, You say that I am a king, and for this purpose I was born, and for this purpose I have come into the world to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice. And in verse 38, Pilate said to him, What is truth? It's a great question. What is truth? Jesus has made it clear that his purpose in coming into the world was not to be a king in the earthly sense, not to overthrow political kingdoms and thrones, but to witness to the truth.
[6:00] He came to tell the truth, witness to the truth, to be the very embodiment of truth. He says in verse 37 of Pilate, Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.

So the voice of Jesus is truth, and the test of what others say and believe, of whether or not it is the truth, is do they agree with Jesus?
This is the foundational aspect that we need to understand tonight. That Christ is the embodiment of truth, and that which is his word and the word of God, is our standard for what truth really is.
But here stands Pilate, a lifetime as one who was compromised, been in conflict, sought power, and has made his living in the gray area of trying to build his resume while saving his own skin.
His soul has grown weary, and years of seeking self-preservation, all cost has caused his soul to be numb.
[7:19] And when Jesus speaks of the truth, he callously and sarcastically inquires, what is truth? His life has been all about compromise.

What is truth? Well, what he inadvertently does is gives us a great question to consider. What is truth?
In Ephesians 6, as we look at this passage known as the armor of God, we come tonight to the first part of the armor. Look with me again at verse 10 that we studied a couple of weeks ago.
Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.
For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.
[8:25] 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 firm. Here's the first piece.

Verse 14. Stand, therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth. The word is aletheia, the belt of truth.
And there's some debate among theologians as to which way do we interpret this. Is this speaking of the belt of truth, as in that we are to believe the truth of who God is, the truth of the gospel, or is it saying it's the belt of truth that we are to be people who are truthful?
Is the emphasis on the truth, or is it on being truthful? Is the emphasis on what we know, or is the emphasis on what we do, how we speak, how we are known?
I think both are accurate, and both fit together. And I find myself with those who feel we don't have to make a distinction, because I think if we understand the Bible's teaching, to speak the truth, you must know the truth.
[9:45] But biblically, if you know the truth, you are to share the truth. The Bible never speaks of us, as believers, as simply taking things in, simply that it would terminate with us.

All that we know, we are to share. 1 Peter 3.15, as Kishon referenced, we are to give a defense, be ready to give an answer for the hope that we have within us. We are to know the truth, but we are to speak the truth, defend the truth, explain the truth.
truth. We are to not only believe that which is truthful, but we are to, with our life and words, be truthful in speaking the truth that we believe.

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So I think when we think about the belt of truth, we are to think in terms of, we are to live in the truth, the objective truth that is always true, the Word of God, the doctrine of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ.
We are to live in that truth, but we are to be truthful in speaking that truth. And I think sometimes we need to remind ourselves that one way to err is to speak things that are not true.
[10:56] Another way to err is to fail to speak things that are true. I suspect most of us in this room would not speak lies about God, but are we guilty of not speaking the truth about God?

To put on the belt of truth is to know and believe that which is true, but also to be truthful in speaking of the truth that we believe.
So let's look at a few things tonight. Number one, what did a soldier's belt do? Because remember, as we looked at a couple of weeks ago, I think Paul has two things in mind.
One is he is looking most likely at a soldier. He may even be chained to a soldier as he is thinking and writing this. And as I mentioned a couple of weeks ago, these elements of the armor of God actually come from the Old Testament, the book of Isaiah.
And so I think fresh in Paul's mind would be the Old Testament writing of Isaiah, speaking of the armor of God, and the actual soldier wearing that armor.
[12:06] Both of these things would no doubt be on his mind. And so to understand his metaphor, I think we have to think in terms of what does a soldier's belt do? Why does Paul reference it as a belt of truth?

One, a soldier's belt enabled them to engage in battle. It enabled them to engage in battle. The soldiers wore an outer tunic.
It would hang below their knees. There would be two holes on the side to put their arm, a hole at the top to put their head, and it would just hang on them down below their knees.
And as long as they were talking or just out walking, everything was fine. If they were just patrolling the streets, no problem. But if there was a need to run or a need to engage and fight, what you would have to do is take the bottom of that tunic, lift it up over your knees, you would tuck it up under your belt, enabling them to be able to move.
So tucking the garment up under their belt enabled them to run, enabled them to fight. The belt of the soldier was not for decoration. It was for battle.
[13:15] Now, it's important to understand. It gave them a sense of completeness. It gave them a sense of confidence that if something came up, they had to run.

Something came up, they had to fight. They had to wrestle. They could tuck that tunic up under their belt, and their legs would be free to move. We see this in the Gospels, Luke 12, 35.
Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning. That phrase, be dressed for action, can be rendered, let your loins be girded.
It means be ready to move. 1 Peter 1.13 Therefore, preparing your minds for action and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that we brought you with the revelation of Jesus Christ.
The phrase is, prepare your minds for action. Literally, it's gird up the loins of your mind. It's the same idea as a soldier putting a belt on.
[14:16] But a second thing the belt did for the soldier is it allowed weapons to hang from it. So you would take the belt, and they would tie it around, and they could hang a weapon on that belt. Much like today, you can hang a cell phone on your belt, or you can hang a pocket knife, or you can hang a gun on your belt, so they could hang a weapon on their belt.

The belt could be as wide as six inches. Sometimes soldiers would take two belts, crisscross them, and that way they could hang both a sword and a dagger there on their belt.
It also, that belt would serve as an anchor for the breastplate. As we'll look at here in a couple of weeks, the breastplate would be essential to wear, and they could tuck that breastplate into their belt, and that belt serves to keep that breastplate right where it's supposed to be.
Which is interesting, because if you look at a sword, a helmet, a breastplate, by comparison, the belt seems very unimportant. When if you're going into battle, you think about a sword, you don't think about a belt.
If someone is punching you, you think about a breastplate, you don't think about a belt. If someone throws something at your head, you think about a helmet, you don't think about a belt. But in reality, that belt is what enabled them to wrestle, enabled them to fight, enabled them to run.

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[15:35] That belt is what enabled them to hold and carry a weapon. That belt is what kept their breastplate right in place. It's a significant reason that Paul would start with the belt of truth, because the armor of God begins by understanding that if you don't know the truth, it doesn't matter what else you know.

It must start with the truth. If you're a soldier going into battle, you need a belt. If you're a spiritual soldier going into a spiritual battle, you must know the truth.
And if you know the truth, you must speak the truth. The second thing I want to show you is the belt of truth speaks of being prepared for action against the attack of the enemy.
That's what a belt did. The soldier wore the belt to prepare them for action. So in a spiritual sense, we must be prepared for the attacks of the enemy.
What kind of attacks should Christians be prepared for? Well, we know by just reading the Word of God. One of the things the enemy does is he tries to attack the truthfulness of God's Word.
[16:51] You see that in Genesis 3 with Adam and Eve. You see that in Matthew 4 with Jesus being tempted in the desert. He attacks the truthfulness of God's Word.

I was thinking last week about years and years ago, Marsh and I were on a cruise and having a great time. And we were there with eating with people we did not know.
We were just assigned to eat with this group of people. Wonderful, delightful people. Had a great time. There was a lady, older lady in the group. And toward the end of the week, somehow the conversation got to religion, which just made everybody kind of nervous and squirmy.
And this lady said, she was an older lady, had this real rough, raspy, gravelly voice and this really long, bony finger.
And she pointed this finger and she said, don't you believe that it doesn't matter what you think just as long as you're sincere.
[18:03] Don't you agree that it doesn't matter just as long as you do your best. Well, I'm on vacation.

I'm, by nature, a fairly nice guy. I don't go looking for fights. Certainly not on vacation. And not with old women.
So what was I going to do? I could say yes, I agree. And deny the gospel. I could say nothing. Hear me. And deny the gospel. You need to understand that. One of the ways we deny the truth is by staying silent.
So, it's a question of truth in that moment. The lady was questioning the truthfulness of the word of God and the legitimacy of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
[19:13] And so I had to tighten the belt of truth. I had to gird myself and speak the truth.

I hope in a winsome way. I hope in a gracious way. But I had to say in a very awkward, uncomfortable vacation dinner. No, I don't agree with that.
You have to tighten the belt of truth. It's one of the things that the devil does. It's one of the things that the devil does. He attacks the word of God. Now, I want to be really clear.
My hesitancy in sharing that story is it makes me sound good because I did the right thing. I want to be very clear and honest with you. There are plenty of times I've not said what I should have said. There are plenty of other times where I should have been much more bold.
I don't tell that story because I want you to think I always do it right. I don't. I don't tell that story to make myself the hero and think, oh, the pastor always. No, I need God's grace because of times I should have been much more vocal, times I should have been much more clear.
[20:25] The Lord also would tell us to be prepared for attacks on those who not only love the word of God but also those who love the Lord himself. This could result in persecution.

This could result in people ostracizing you. But if you're girded with the belt of truth, you understand that we as believers have no choice but to proclaim the truth.
This is who we are. If somebody doesn't like the truth, it should not impact what we say. Truth is truth.
We've got to be prepared for battle in the truth as it may be attacks the enemy would throw on us against our personal holiness or against our personal purity, temptation.
The enemy would love to lure you into sin. And if he can't lure you into sin, he may just try to distract you.
[21:22] One of the ways that we gird ourselves with the belt of truth is to remind ourselves of the truth that we must make every day count for the kingdom.

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Every day count for the kingdom. I want you to see thirdly that the belt of truth speaks to the reality of the gospel message.
I go back to Pilate standing there with Jesus in front of him. And he's trying to determine, what am I going to do with Jesus? Are you claiming to be a king?
Because if you're claiming to be a king, then you're a threat to Rome. And if you're a threat to Rome, I've got to deal with this. But if you don't claim to be a king, I really want to have nothing to do with you. And Jesus says, I in front of you am the very embodiment of truth.
And the question becomes, what is the reality of that message of who Jesus is? Well, when we think of the belt of truth, we think of the word of God, that we are to be people who know, believe, and live the word of God.
[22:36] We are to fill our minds with the truthfulness of God's word. It's amazing to me how many people say they believe the Bible is the very word of God, but never read it.

That's a strange thing. Or people who say they believe the Bible is the word of God, but don't obey it. That's a strange thing. There's some kind of disconnect there that we should not be comfortable with.
If we believe this is the truth, then we ought to live according to the truth. And so later on in the gospel armor, Paul's going to reference the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.
And I think the distinction between the belt of truth and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, is the sword of the Spirit is knowing the Scripture. It's knowing specific parts of the Bible that we go into battle with.
The belt of truth is this overarching gospel-centeredness with which we live. We are to believe who God is, who Christ is, and then live out that truth.
[23:43] And then we take the sword of the Spirit, which is knowing the word of God, and use that in spiritual battle. But if you don't believe the truth of who God is, we won't understand how to use the sword of the Spirit.

Why would you memorize Scripture if you're not convinced it's the word of God? Why would you memorize Scripture if you're not convinced it's the very truth of God? And so to rightly use the sword of the Spirit that we'll look at in a few weeks, we have to first gird ourselves with the belt of truth and remind ourselves that there is absolute truth, and that absolute truth is the very word of God.
You don't go into spiritual combat without knowing the truth of God. It also means that we are to understand the reality of the gospel message as it relates to the person of Jesus Christ, because John 14, 6, you know these words.
Jesus said, I am the way and what? The truth. And I'm the life. To put on the belt of truth is to embrace not only the word of God, but it's to embrace the very person of Jesus and all that he taught.
Just this week, I was listening to a so-called pastor talking about how there are parts of the Scripture that he believes and other parts of the Scripture he doesn't concern himself with.
[25:13] I heard other people talking just recently about how there are parts of the Bible they believe and other parts of the Bible they don't believe.

Well, the question is, if you're going to gird yourself with the belt of truth, what you are saying is I believe in all of the word of God and I believe in the person of Jesus Christ and what he believed, I believed and what he says is the authority of my life and God's word is our standard and regardless of what society may think or feel about that, we are believers.
We have nowhere else to go. He has the word of life. That's what it is to gird yourself with the belt of truth. Now, there's a danger here for religious people.
2 Timothy 3, 6 and 7. Listen to these words. For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.
There are people who love to read and love to study and love to debate and love to argue and they do not love Christ.
[26:40] To gird yourself with the belt of truth is to gird yourself with the very embodiment of truth and to clothe yourself in Jesus Christ.

Ultimately, people who do what he warned against the scripture I just read are people who become very well-read, intellectual, educated, unbelievers who die and go to hell.

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You can go to hell being uneducated or educated. You can face judgment having never understood systematic theology or having spent your whole life arguing it.
But if you do not love the truth and know the truth and submit yourself to the truth, then all you're learning is of no value.
We must love the truth and the embodiment of that truth is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. So it comes down to this, to put on the belt of truth is to love Christ.
[28:02] It is to love Christ. And then fourthly, what does the truth do for the believer? If we put on the belt of truth, what does the truth do for us?

Let me just give you three things real quickly as we close. Number one, the truth saves us. Make note of John 8, 31 to 36. I just want to read some scripture here as we close to get the word of God in your mind tonight.
John 8, 31. Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.
They answered him, We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say you will become free? Jesus answered them, Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.
The slave does not remain in the house forever. The son remains forever. So if the son sets you free, you will be free indeed. The truth saves us.
[29:09] Then the truth sanctifies us. John 17. Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you.

For I have given them the words you gave me. And they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you. And they have believed that you sent me. Sanctify them in the truth.
Your word is truth. The word saves us. The truth sanctifies us. And then thirdly, the truth secures us.
Romans 8.31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?
Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died. More than that, who was raised.
[30:15] Who was at the right hand of God. Who indeed is interceding for us. The truth saves us. The truth sanctifies us.

And the truth secures us. Which is why, back to Ephesians 6, verse 14, Stand therefore, here's the first thing, having fastened on the belt of truth.
This is where it starts for us. Believe the truth, live the truth, share the truth. And our perfect representative of this is Jesus Christ Himself.
I want to wrap, we'll wrap this up. I want to show you something I think is pretty interesting. I mentioned that in Isaiah, it references the armor of God. These things that Paul is drawing out here comes from the Old Testament.
In Isaiah 11, Israel is turned away from God. God promises to send a Messiah to deliver them. Let me read to you Isaiah 11, verse 5.
[31:26] Righteousness shall be the belt of His waist, and faithfulness the belt of His loins.

The Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament, translates the word faithfulness there with aletheia, same exact word found in Ephesians 6, verse 14, translated as the belt of truth.
Righteousness shall be the belt of His waist, and truthfulness the belt of His loins. See, when Paul writes this, he's not only thinking of the Roman soldier who would wear a belt, he's thinking of Messiah in Isaiah 11, who is our perfect representative of wearing the armor of God.
This is about Christ, our perfect and faithful representative, perfect in righteousness, perfect in faithfulness, perfect in truthfulness, and we clothe our self in Him, which is why in verse 14, look at your first word, stand.
We stand against the enemy because we are clothed in Christ. We stand against attack because we know the truth.
[33:03] We engage in spiritual battle because we have all that we need because we have Christ. And so we put on the belt of truth, believing the truthfulness of who Christ is, and living and

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speaking the truth of who Jesus is.

So as we think about His perfect fulfillment of this, and Christ is our representative, it's fitting for us to think about His sacrifice in our place on the cross.
As we prepare to receive the elements, let me invite you to bow your head and close your eyes with me tonight. Thank you. Thank you.
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