

HOW TO STAND FIRM IN THE LORD: WEARING THE BELT OF TRUTH

Ephesians 6:14

Are you aware¹ that this morning Satan wants to poison your thoughts and emotions away from the purity of God's truth? His attacks center in two areas: your mind and your emotions. Jesus calls Satan the Father of Lies in Jn. 8:44. Jesus warns us that we face the onslaught of the Devil in the realm of lies vs. truth daily. That means to stand for the Lord today we must:

BE ON GUARD FOR THE FATHER OF LIES

The Father of lies wants to *snatch* the Word of God from you.

The Father of lies wants you to *think* that sin is not so bad.

The Father of lies wants *you to learn laugh* at sin on television or at the movies.

The Father of lies wants to *destroy* your conscience so it will no longer warn you.

The Father of lies wants to *entertain* you with sin so that you won't think it's as evil as sin really is.

The Father of lies wants to *drown* you in a sea of sin so that you become very tolerant of it.

He wants *fill* your mind with doubts, lies, immorality, and false doctrine.

He wants to *debilitate* your will and get you to do things you shouldn't do

He wants to *twist* your thinking by putting sinful ideas to appealing music.

He wants to *confuse* your emotions by corrupting your desires and drawing your affections to the wrong things.

DRESSED FOR DANGER

To counter Satan's attack the Lord has told us we need to get dressed for war. In His Word He has told us just what will insure momentary and continued victory. In his letters to the First Century churches, Paul uses many pictures from the daily life to communicate truth about the Christian life.

There are four areas prominent in Paul's inspired writings: **illustrations from building** ("You are the temple of God"), **illustrations from farming** ("Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap"), **illustrations from athletics** ("Run the race") and

¹ 981227AM

illustrations from the military (“Put on the whole armor of God”). It is our purpose as a church over the next few weeks to examine whether we are fully dressed as soldiers of the Lord in our Armor of God.

Armor for Paul was more than pictures from daily life of the nearly omnipresent Roman Legionnaires. Very literally, the “whole armor of God” he describes is a picture of Jesus Christ. In verses 14-17 is a list of the combat equipment that the Holy Spirit issues to every believer at the moment of salvation. By faith and obedient experience we find Christ is:

Get list last time/merge

1. **WE WEAR HIS TRUTH** as the guide of all our ways. John 14:6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me. Christ, saturates us with the Word of God and it becomes part of our very life.
2. **WE WEAR HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS AS** the guardian of our souls. 1 Corinthians 1:30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, 2 Corinthians 5:21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. This armor is imputed righteousness. It is Jesus Christ, not ours but His righteousness.
3. **WE WEAR HIS PEACE** as the shoes to walk through life. Ephesians 2:14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,
4. **WE WEAR HIS FAITH**, as our shield in battle. Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.
5. **WE WEAR HIS SALVATION** as our helmet. Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
6. **WE WEAR HIS WORD** as the sword of the Spirit when we are letting His Word dwell in us. Colossians 3:16-17 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

So in the truest way, when we trusted Christ, we received Him as our armor. Paul told the Romans “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 13:14). By faith, put on the armor and trust God for the victory. Once and for all, we have put on the armor at the moment of salvation. But there must be a daily renewal. When King David put off his armor and returned to his palace, he was in greater danger than when he was on the battlefield (2 Sam. 11). We are never out of reach of Satan’s devices, so we must never be without the whole armor of God.

WE MUST WEAR OUR ARMOR.

Lets read our text this morning Ephesians 6:10-17

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,¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;¹⁶ above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;

The Full Armor of God : Wearing the Belt of Truth

Matthew 6:13b; Ephesians 6:10-17

Truth Given

Truth Received

Truth Worn

Benefits of Wearing

Dangers of Neglecting

Led by Spirit of Truth John 14:17; 16:13

Saved by Word of Truth James 1:18

Message of truth the Gospel Eph. 1:13

The Person/Source of Truth John 14:6

Sanctified by the Word of Truth John 17:17

Liberating truth Jn 8:32

What are the protective clothes that our Great God has for us?

In Ephesians 6:10-17, we see six clear articles we are actually commanded to wear.

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.

Pray

We just read no less than the chief spokesman for Christ's Church, the Apostle Paul describe the must-wear gear to survive the deadly powers of spiritual wickedness. The questions are we each wearing today:

THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD WE ARE EACH TO WEAR

1. **Belt of Truth** (v.14a) Vital to every soldier was this belt from which all tools of battle hung. This belt also held the soldier's robe together. To the Christian soldier a belt of truth means that we are surrounded by "honesty," "truthfulness," "integrity," and "sincerity" that every part of our life is governed by truth. Dishonesty brings defeat! If we are not belted, if our life is not held in by truth, any type of dishonesty will bring defeat to our lives.
2. **Breastplate of Righteousness** (v.14b) The soldier's breastplate was a heavy piece of armor that completely surrounded the body. To the Christian soldier this means a pursuit of personal, daily righteousness. We learn confession and repentance of sin can only maintain this. Impurity will bring defeat, so say no to sin daily.
3. **Shoes of Peace** (v.15). The sandal soles of the soldier were impregnated with heavy, spike-like hobnails, which gave him a good footing, and also kept him safe from stepping on sharp objects. If you injure a soldier's feet he's out of commission. To the Christian soldier this piece of armor is a call to both "readiness" and "peace of mind." If our hearts are not kept in peace by Christ, then anxiety will bring us defeat!
4. **Shield of Faith** (v.16). To a Roman soldier, his shield was a portable metal-banded wall, which he hid behind in battle. It was 5 feet high, 3 feet wide and served as the deflector from the flaming darts of the enemy. Our Shield of faith extinguishes all the flaming missiles of the evil one. But doubt will bring defeat!
5. **Helmet of Salvation** (v.17a). A soldier never was far from his helmet. Nearly any object on the battlefield could immobilize a soldier if his head was unprotected. So to the Christian soldier the meaning of the helmet is assurance of salvation. A Christian who is not assured that he has salvation is just totally immobilized because he's unsure about everything. He's unsure about God's promises, His Word, His protection. He's unsure about his destiny, his purpose in life. Lack of assurance brings defeat!
6. **Sword of the Spirit** (v.17b). Quick and deadly was the sword of a soldier. Vital to any victory was the hand-to-hand combat, which ended in the defeat of the enemy. To the Christian soldier this victorious sword comes only through a personal command of the Scriptures. This is essential to effectiveness in battle. Neglecting the Word breeds weakness and will bring defeat in our lives

ARE YOU STANDING OR FALLING?

God calls each of us to stand in joy, peace, hope, and love.

Satan, the world, and our flesh call each of us to fall into anger, anxiety, fear, and selfishness.

We face the unseen but real world of *kosmocrators*. Spirit beings of immense powers of evil. These enemies are already defeated by Christ, but their deadly powers are only resisted by us when walking in step with the Spirit of God.

The most complete guide to standing and not falling into sin, discouragement, hopelessness, uselessness, and emptiness is right here before us in Ephesians 6. The key to powerful ministry is right here. The way God has planned for our lives to magnify the Lord and unleash His Word is right here.

There are six pieces of Roman armor to which God adds the spiritual power of prayer. What an amazing set up God has designed for fruitful, powerful, and lasting ministry. But everything hinges upon our conscious choices to obey what God has asked us to do.

Paul said it three times in Ephesians 6: stand, stand, and stand.

- **Stand in the abundant life** God gave us when His Spirit filled us, or fall into the empty life of grieving and quenching Him.
- **Stand in the life of peace** that passes understanding that Christ purchased for us, or fall into the anxiety of the cares of this life.
- **Stand in the life of hope** that God's all powerful attributes offer us, or fall into doubting God's goodness and questioning God's plan.

THE ARMOR GOD IN WHICH WE STAND

Simply stated, standing in all that Christ offers to us was summarized by Paul in Romans 13, as "putting on Christ" (v. 14) as our "armor of light" (v.12).

What are those six pieces of armor?

1. BUCKLED UP BY THE BELT OF TRUTH (EPH. 6:14A):

Roman soldier had a thick leather belt that held their gear in place and could cinch up their tunic for battle. Normal dress for a soldier was a large square of material with head and arm holes that draped loosely over the body. In any combat that looseness of the garment ended. No tangles were desired, and the belt held fast the cinched up tunic.

Truth is to hold us up, hold us in, and protect us from falling. This belt of truth is much like the restraints we strap around us when we get into one of those dangerous, high speed twisting, turning rollercoaster rides at some amusement park. The belt and bars that hold us are designed to keep us safe no matter how fast the car spins, twists or drops. We are held in. Truth holds us in.

This word (aletheia) means both the content of truth, and the truthfulness of our life. God wants both. He wants us to know the content of truth and live the integrity of truthfulness. Truth means we have the readiness to obey; we have the integrity of commitment to truth; and we are opposed to all deception, dishonesty. We have no loose ends of our life that dangle and trip us up. We are girded, belted, strapped in by truth.

1. Knowing the truth saves us. (Jn. 8:32; 17:3)
 2. Eating the truth sanctifies us, which means it makes us useful to God. (Jn. 17:17)
 3. Surrendering to the truth transforms us (Rm. 12:1-2)
 4. Obeying the truth stabilizes us (2 Tim. 2:4; Heb. 12:1-2)
- Our lives are to be surrounded and held together by truth we know, believe, and practice.

1. **BELT OF TRUTH.** Vital to every soldier was this belt from which all tools of battle hung. This belt also held the soldier's robe together. To the Christian soldier a belt of truth means "honesty," "truthfulness," "integrity," and "sincerity" surrounds every part of our life.

WARNING: *Dishonesty brings defeat!*

- ✓ Then he said in verse 14, "having girded your loins with truth." So this guy is first of all, taking this long garment of Roman soldiers. To get the idea, imagine that you just took a big sheet and cut a hole for the head and pulled it over your head. Presto, that would be what a tunic would be in the ancient world. Can you imagine trying to do anything with this sheet flapping and flopping all around you? You'd look like a ghost - especially if you are going to battle, it would get all wrapped around you and fly up over your face and so they had to put a belt on to hold it and keep it from flapping up. But if you wanted to run and that was all the way down to the ground, you had to pull it up and tuck it in your belt. It would be kind of like taking your bedspread and cutting a hole in it and pulling it down and then trying to go running. You have to put a belt on and then tuck it in. And that's what he's talking about - having your loins girded with truth - putting on your belt.

2. **BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.** The breastplate was a heavy piece of armor that completely surrounded the body. To the Christian soldier this means a pursuit of personal, daily righteousness. We learn confession and repentance of sin can only maintain this.

WARNING: *Impurity will bring defeat!*

- ✓ Again, the picture is one of the heat of battle. There are spears flying, arrows flashing toward their targets, projectiles from catapults whizzing with deadly penetrating power and even hand to hand combat with swords in hand. Who would ever venture out without the protection of the encasing armor over the vital organs of life?

3. **SHOES OF PEACE.** The sandal soles of the soldier were impregnated with heavy, spike-like hobnails, which gave him a good footing. To the Christian soldier this piece of armor is a call to both "readiness" and "peace of mind."

WARNING: *Anxiety brings defeat!*

- ✓ Now, you know, we live in a dump. I guess you have transfer stations here but when I grew up we used to take our trash to the dump. I guess that's not a popular description of it anymore, but it was really the dump. I mean it was smoldering, burning garbage, broken glass, and nails everywhere and every time you drive in there you were always worried that you would puncture your tires. And we would shovel off all that trash and rotted stuff and you just would look around - it would look terrible. Rusted tin cans - sharp edges - all types of pointed things and flies everywhere. That was the dump. That's what the world is like, spiritually speaking. Would you ever walk through a garbage dump barefooted in the dark?

You wouldn't walk through it barefooted in the light. And that's what he's talking about right here with this third piece and we're going to have fun with that. How do you keep from puncturing your feet as we walk through the world? Its having our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

4. **SHIELD OF FAITH.** To a Roman soldier, his shield was a portable metal-banded door, which he hid behind in battle. This shield served as the deflector from the flaming darts of the enemy. To the Christian soldier faith extinguishes all the flaming missiles of the evil one.

WARNING: *Doubt brings defeat!*

- ✓ He said. There's stuff flying all the time - watch out! There are arrows, deadly sharp, some even burning with fire, all aimed your way. Take your mobile wall of protection. Stand behind this refuge and escape the missiles that are coming your way!

5. **HELMET OF SALVATION.** A soldier never was far from his helmet. Nearly any object on the battle field could immobilize a soldier if his head was unprotected. So to the Christian soldier the meaning of the helmet is assurance of salvation.

WARNING: *Lack of assurance brings defeat!*

- ✓ Why? So you don't get knocked out. I mean, who would carry their helmet down here. If there was all kinds of like, can you imagine a construction worker, you know, with stuff they're welding up there and beads of metal are falling down and hitting all around him. Can you imagine the guy just walking along holding his helmet, you know...thunk! "Oh, man I can't understand why it's hitting me." Well, put your helmet on. Well, right here in verse 17 he says take your helmet. Make sure it's on. Make sure its functioning like it should.

6. **SWORD OF THE SPIRIT.** Quick and deadly were the swords of a soldier. Vital to any victory was the hand to hand combat, which ended in the defeat of the enemy. To the Christian soldier this victorious sword comes only through the personal memorizing of the Scriptures. This is essential to effectiveness in battle.

- ✓ **WARNING:** *Neglecting the Word breeds weakness.*

And finally, watch out. Sometimes the battle gets up close and personal. Sometime there will be face to face encounters with enemies. And then only one thing will do, you must attack with the weapon of victory. And for the soldier there was only one, the short and lightning like stabs of the battle sword.

HOW DO WE GIRD UP OUR LOINS?

The girdle of truth (v. 14a). Satan is a liar (John 8:44), but the believer whose life is controlled by truth will defeat him. The girdle holds the other parts of the armor together, and truth is the integrating force in the life of the victorious Christian. A man of integrity, with a clear conscience, can face the enemy without fear. The girdle also held the sword. Unless we practice the truth, we cannot use the Word of truth. Once a lie gets into the life of a believer, everything begins to fall apart. For over a year, King David lied about his sin with Bathsheba, and nothing went right. Psalms 32 and 51 tell of the price he paid.

Truth is the way God's saints serve: Josh. 24:14; 1 Sam. 12:24;

Truth is written on the hearts of God's saints: Prov. 3:3.

Truth is the way God's saints worship: John 4:24,

Truth sanctifies God's saints: John 17:17,19.

Truth is obeyed by God's saints: Rom. 2:8; Gal. 3:1.

Truth rejoices God's saints: 1 Cor. 13:6;

Truth is manifested by God's saints: 2 Cor. 4:2.

Truth approves God's saints: 2 Cor. 6:7,8.

Truth is the language of God's saints: Eph. 4:25;

Truth grows as a fruit in God's saints: Eph. 5:9

Truth guards God's saints: Eph. 6:14.

Truth is what God's saints meditate upon: Phil. 4:8;

Truth is loved by God's saints: 2 Thess. 2:10.

Truth accompanies God's saints: Tit. 1:1.

Truth purifies God's saints: 1 Pet. 1:22.

Truth Abides continually with saints, 2 John 2.

Girding of our loins with truth means that tunic had to be tucked in and girded around them. You know what this was? A **CALL FOR PREPAREDNESS IN THE TRUTH**. Now turn to Luke 12:35. Our Lord talks about this, spiritually speaking, to his disciples. He reminds them "be dressed in readiness", or, "be girded - to put on what you need for what's coming." Why? Verse 35 - "and keep your lamps alight and be like men who are awaiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast." What he's talking about is, be perpetually on the alert. That's what this girding up the loins was about. He said if you're in the battle and if you are going to be involved, he says "gird up your loins, put on your belt. So it has to do with the whole idea of being committed and being ready to go into battle. And that commitment of being ready to go into battle means that we are prepared.

Secondly, it was a **CALL TO COMMITMENT TO THE TRUTH**. Roman soldiers wore at least three wide belts or girdles when they went out into warfare. These were thick

leather things because in the ancient Roman times, a lot of guys lost it when up close in battle these little short daggers, when they were all kind of clunking shields with each other, they would pull out their daggers and they would try and stick somebody, you know, and knock them out by sticking them in the stomach. And so they started wearing these very wide, thick, 3-deep leather girdles. And so the guy would take his dagger and go like that, and uumph, it wouldn't go in. And those guys that wore that 3- fold belt - this girding of their loins - were ready for battle. They were committed. They were saying "I'm going to go out and battle and I don't want to be defeated, I'm going to stick with it. And that's what the Scriptures are talking about it.

Finally, it was A CALL TO OBEDIENCE OF THE TRUTH. How are you going to know you are committed to the truth? You're going to be committed to having your loins girt about with truth. The Scriptures have a lot to say about that.

We will believe and obey Romans 12 says that it starts by GIVING OUR LIFE BACK and saying it's not mine anyway, it's yours.

We will believe and obey I Corinthians 9 says we have to KEEP BEATING our body down.

We will believe and obey II Timothy 2 says you've got to count the cost and decide, that any cost, you are going to FOLLOW CHRIST.

We will believe and obey Hebrews 12 says we have to run the race LOOKING UNTO JESUS.

The tragic condition of

NOT BEING GIRDED BY TRUTH

Paul was looking at these soldiers that were guarding him and he says "if you're going to go out and fight", he looked at the guy next to him, he says "you've got to make sure first of all, that you have pulled in all the loose edges of your life, all of the billowing tunic that's all around." Just imagine wearing a big sheet and having it blowing in the wind. And that's how most people's lives are - they're kind of fluttering in every direction. Paul says if you are going to be victorious, you've got to pull all that in. Put on your belt and gird up and say "I'm going to be in the battle. I'm in this, I've counted the cost. I'm in this, I'm one who is going to beat down my fleshly desires to get out. I'm in this for the duration. I'm in this - I've yielded my life to Christ." And he says you can stand firm if you have girded your loins with truth.

Truth - the Word of God.

Loins - the center and seat of life and the outflow of the life.

The idea that everything that comes out of my life will be truth and everything that is

issuing forth from my life, will be bounded and guarded by the truth of God's Word.

The reason a lot of Christians are defeated, their minds are wandering, their hearts are divided, their concentration is broken, they have not girded up their spiritual loins to battle. They haven't yield and focused and calculating the cost and said I'm going to discipline and bring myself under...I'm going to pursue righteousness with all that I am.

As the truth of God penetrates your mind it attacks and demolishes the sin it confronts.

John 17:17 was what Jesus told us,

Mt. 4 He demonstrated it! Jesus said the way we become holy is through the Word.

Remember this book will keep you from sin and sin will keep you from this book!

THE GREAT BENEFITS OF WEARING THE TRUTH

There are seven byproducts of wearing His truth:

GOD CLOTHES US WITH PROSPERITY JOSHUA 1:8 [Think of taking the reins from perhaps the greatest leader who ever lived. A man, who could talk to God face to face, led 3 million people for 40 years, a judge, prophet and priest. What is the prescription to follow such a monumental man? Meditate on the Word!]

GOD CLOTHES US WITH FRUITFULNESS PSALM 1:2 [At the front door of the longest book of the Bible is a secret recipe for spiritual success. God wants us to prosper and bear fruit. How? Meditation!]

GOD CLOTHES US WITH PEACEFULNESS IN TRIALS PSALM 35:28 [No one in scripture has more of their life laid bare than David. His affair, family problems, job stress, people problems, enemies, Satanic attack and more. How did you do it Dave? Meditation on the Word!]

GOD CLOTHES US WITH STABILITY IN ROUGH SEAS PSALM 37:30 [Is your boat rocking? Starting to list, sink? What is the sure-fire way to stabilize things? Meditate on the Word!]

GOD CLOTHES US WITH REFRESHING WORSHIP IN DRY TIMES PSALM 63:6 [Are you running fast and thin? Do your nights and days run together? How many times have you wished for a quiet day at a mountain, seaside or forest retreat with just your Bible and a cup of coffee? God says, the coffees on and I'm waiting at every turn of your life. Turn your car, bus, sink, computer workstation, desk or whatever into an altar. How? By meditating on the Word!]

GOD CLOTHES US WITH A LIFELONG TESTIMONY TO GOD'S FAITHFULNESS AS OLD AGE COMES PSALM 71:24 [Ever want to end up as sweet as some of the precious saints you know. They die serenely, enduring those last long and pain filled days

with a strength and peace that only comes from God. Where did they get that in life and into the shadow of death? By meditating on the Word!]

GOD CLOTHES US WITH COMFORT IN ADVERSITY PSALM 77:12 [Do you feel it is too hard to even go on? Does the enemy seem to be winning? Are the problems multiplying like weeds? God has a solution and it is simple and powerful. What/ Meditating on his Word!]

Wearing his truth! Well, that's the first piece of armor. And I'll tell you what, each one of them gets better. It's a building process that Paul gives us and I think that we're going to enjoy our journey. Let's begin that now with the commitment in our hearts and in our lives that we are going to focus on what Christ has done for us and let that help us draw on his power and be conquerors this week.

140112 The Discipline of Truth

This first discipline is foundational to everything. Everything we are as believers today is tied to the Truth. Think of the connection we all are to have to the Truth today:

First, we know that the Truth is a person of incomprehensible importance. Listen to a verse most of you already know by heart. Jesus said:

John 14:6 (NKJV) “I am the Way, **the Truth**, and the Life.”

Jesus Christ is the Truth

Jesus Christ is the Truth. He is the basis of life, truth, and all that matters. So the Discipline of Truth is all about a Person of immense importance to us. More than anything else, the Truth of Jesus Christ, who He is, what He has done, and what He wants is more important than anything else.

This first lesson of the Discipline of Truth is:

To know WHO Jesus Christ is.

To understand WHAT Jesus Christ has said.

To want to love Him by choosing to live HOW Jesus Christ has clearly instructed us to live.

So this first discipline is a check on the place that the Lord Jesus Christ has in our life as our source of Truth. Everything starts with Jesus Christ as Truth. Jesus tells us that further into the Gospel by John as He says:

John 17:3 (NKJV) “This is life eternal”

So first, the Discipline of Truth starts by knowing Jesus Christ as the most important Person of all. That starts everything. Knowing Him is salvation. But when we know Him, what happens?

Second, we know that the Truth is a power that sets us free from the imprisonment of sin. The Discipline of truth continues in the life of a believer by liberating us. We want to know the truth and live the truth. Before we can ever defend the truth we have to know it and live it. Listen to what else Jesus personally teaches us about this discipline of truth. When we apply His truth to our lives, something supernatural happens:

John 8:32 (NKJV) And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

Jesus Christ the Truth Liberates Us From Bondage

How does sin imprison us? Fearfulness is a form of sin that imprisons believers. This type of fear is not from God.

Paul told Timothy that “God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a strong mind”. Truth liberates us from the prison house of fear where we are captives, and liberates us to trust, follow, and walk in the newness of life in Christ.

Are you exercising yourself in the Discipline of Truth? The Discipline of Truth starts by personally meeting Jesus Christ by faith, bowing before Him as Lord and Savior. Receiving by faith His salvation. Then living each day asking Him to liberate us from the imprisoning power of sins like fear, impurity, bitterness, or jealousy.

The Discipline of Truth sets us free from living under the imprisoning power of fear. Fear imprisons us, but Christ the Truth liberates us.

Sin can also imprison us with impurity, with pride, with doubt, with jealousy, or with any other of the sins of the flesh. Sin imprisons, but the truth of Jesus Christ sets us free. How? By asking for freedom. It is that simple.

Believing God enough to walk before His Throne by faith and confess: “Almighty God, I believe what You say. I am a prisoner of fear, or impurity, or bitterness, or whatever. I ask you to set me free.”

That instant God responds. We are freed. That is the power of God, the supernatural work of God in us. But, why are we not then free from that particular sin, or even all sin from then on? Why do we go from the spiritual bliss of forgiveness and liberation to defeat and coldness towards God after a while? Simply stated, it is because we neglect God's Word.

Look back at John 17:17 with me, because there we find another dimension of the Truth. We have already seen:

- First, we know the Truth is a person of incomprehensible importance.
- Second, we know the Truth is a power that sets us free from the imprisonment of sin. **But now:**

Third, we know the Truth is the Book God wrote that Sanctifies us.

In John 17:17 Jesus Christ explains to us the heart of the Discipline of Truth:

John 17:17 (NKJV) “Sanctify them by Thy truth. Thy Word is Truth”.

Our growth in Christ, which is called sanctification, is based upon the Word of Truth the Bible. The Truth that saves, liberates, and keeps us is the Bible.

The Bible will keep us from sin; and sin will keep us from the Bible.

JESUS CHRIST WANTS US EXERCISED BY FEEDING ON TRUTH

Jesus said that we can only live in a spiritually healthy and fit way, by daily feeding upon the sanctifying Word of Truth (Mat. 4:4). We have to eat His Word each day or we grow weaker that day.

How many days are going by between your feedings upon the liberating and sanctifying truth of God? That will measure how weak you are spiritually today.

But there is more. Jesus added another dimension to the Discipline of Truth. Truth is also the Spirit that guides us through life. Jesus shared with His disciples on that last night before the Cross, that when He sent His Spirit to indwell each believer of the New Testament church, that He would come into us as the Spirit of Truth.

BIBLICAL ILLITERACY LEADS TO DEFEATED BELIEVERS

The longer I live, the more alarmed I get at the growing trend of Biblical illiteracy and the lack of Biblical discipleship in today's church. Just as the decline in church attendance, Bible reading, and even Bible carrying can be seen in each new generation—the corresponding decline in even knowing the Bible (Biblical illiteracy), and obeying God's Word (Biblical discipleship) is showing up in the woefully powerless lives of so many believers[2].

Fourth, we know the Truth is surrendering to follow the Spirit of Truth. To desire each day to know and follow the way of Truth, led by the Spirit of Truth, based on the Word of Truth, so that we are walking as the followers of the One who said He was the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH

Truth is a Person that brings Life, a Power that liberates us from sin's imprisonment, a Book that feeds and keeps our lives healthy and fit, and a Way that we follow that is guided by the Holy Spirit. Listen to John 16:13 (NKJV):

“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth;”

How do we know the Truth? It is written down. The Word of Truth of the Bible is God's Word and it is central to everything.

The Holy Spirit of Truth has inspired and recorded the Word of Truth so that we as believers can exercise ourselves in the Discipline of Truth!

Only by receiving this Word of God can we be saved because “faith comes by hearing” the Word of God (Romans 10:17); and by allowing God's Word to enter our being as the “implanted Word” (James 1:21).

That Word feeds our spiritual lives (Mt. 4:4), and lights our pathway so we know where to

go (Ps. 119:105).

That Word is our only defensive weapon (Eph. 6:17) against the wiles of the attacks from the savage beast called the Devil that prowls around seeking to devour us as believers (1 Peter 5:9).

Now back to the Discipline of Truth. In 1 Timothy 1:10 Paul calls the truths contained in the Bible sound doctrine.

1 Tim. 1:10 (NKJV) for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine,

THE EXERCISE OF SOUND DOCTRINE

The word “sound” means healthy. When we know, and feed upon the true doctrines of God's Word we are healthy.

Look at how often here in 1 Timothy 4, Paul mentions proper, orthodox, or sound doctrine, and the imperative to know those true doctrines so that we can protect ourselves from false, deadly, unhealthy “false” doctrines.

1 Tim. 4:1, 6, 13, 16 (NKJV) Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will **depart from the faith**, giving heed to **deceiving** spirits and **doctrines of demons**, ⁶ If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the **good doctrine** which you have carefully followed. ¹³ Till I come, give attention to **reading**, to exhortation, to **doctrine**. ¹⁶ Take heed to yourself and to **the doctrine**. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

When we know and surrender to the Truth of God's Word we want to know, follow, live, and defend the truth.

WHAT ARE THE ESSENTIAL TRUTHS?

Some of the most foundational truths that are most being abandoned in these last days are the truths Jesus Christ Himself held, taught, and defended. Here is their list of the seven essentials, and the guide to use to uncover when someone is a false-teacher and on a course of “falling away”.

Jesus Believed & Taught the Doctrine of: INSPIRATION: Jesus taught and affirmed the Inspiration and Reliable Historicity of the Bible (Jn. 10:35).

Jesus Believed & Taught the Doctrine of: CREATION: Jesus taught that Adam was the first human, and that He created Him and everything else that Genesis 1 says that He did (Mark 10:6-7).

Jesus Believed & Taught the Doctrine of: PROPHECY: Jesus taught that everything the Bible says about the future including Heaven, Hell, Israel, and the Church were true and going to happen exactly as the Scriptures say (Mat. 5:18).

Jesus Believed & Taught the Doctrine of: DEPRAVITY: Jesus taught the reality of sin and affirmed that mankind is fallen and not basically good, but we are all born as sinners (Jn. 8:44).

Jesus Believed & Taught the Doctrine of: SUBSTITUTION: Jesus taught that He was the only way of salvation for those who received by faith that He became sin for sinners to save them (Jn. 12:32).

Jesus Believed & Taught the Doctrine of: IMPUTATION: Jesus taught the damnable errors of every religion of human achievement and works righteousness (Lk. 16:15; 18:13).

Jesus Believed & Taught the Doctrine of: DEITY: Jesus taught that He was God the Son, the Creator of all, the Redeemer for sins, and the Judge before whom all would answer who die in their sins (Jn. 5:28-29; 10:30).

So how do we stay healthy minded, sound in our doctrine, and followers of Jesus Christ the Truth? By:

GETTING STARTED IN A WEEKLY PLAN OF EXERCISES IN TRUTH

Like physical exercise, spiritual exercise requires discipline, daily effort, and ongoing commitment. Just like daily exercise strengthens our muscles, so our daily spiritual disciplines can strengthen our “spiritual muscles.”

The five classic Biblical disciplines are exercises that ought to be part of every Christian’s life:

The Discipline of Bible Study: Reading the Truth of God’s Word

The Discipline of Communication: Praying the Truth of God’s Word

The Discipline of Memorization & Meditation: Applying the Truth of God’s Word

The Discipline of Worship: Attending public worship built upon the Truth of God’s Word

The Discipline of Surrender: Giving time, money, and abilities to God’s service based on obedience to the Truth of God’s Word

[1] “godliness” is a key word in 1 Timothy, occurring seven times: 3:16; 4:7,8; 6:3, 5, 6, 11.

[2] Research, that points to Biblical illiteracy and ineffective discipleship keeps getting published. Here is what Christian researcher and author George Barna reported, as he surveyed people who considered themselves to be “Christians”:

- **Less than half of all adults can name the four gospels.**
- **A majority of professing Christians struggle to identify more than two or three of the disciples.**
- **60 % of Americans cannot name even five of the Ten Commandments.**

- **40% of Americans believe that when Jesus Christ was on earth He committed sins.**
- **50% believe that anyone who is generally good or does enough good things for others during their life will earn a place in Heaven.**
- **40% believe that the Bible, the Koran and the Book of Mormon are all different expressions of the same spiritual truths.**