

WEEK 2 — THE BELT OF TRUTH

Text: Ephesians 6:13–14

Big Idea: We stand against the enemy's lies by fastening our lives to God's truth.

INTRODUCTION — THE NATIVE LANGUAGE OF THE ENEMY

There are thousands of languages spoken around the world. Most of us have one language that comes especially naturally to us—our native language. We don't have to translate it in our heads; it simply comes out. Interestingly, Jesus describes Satan as having a native language. In John 8:44, Jesus says there is “no truth in him” and that “when he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” Satan's native language is lying. Deception is not merely something he occasionally does; it is fundamental to his character and his work.

This is exactly how we first encounter the enemy in Scripture. Genesis 3 does not introduce Satan through some dramatic display of supernatural power. He begins with a conversation and a question: **“Did God really say...?”** His first recorded strategy is deception. This makes Paul's first piece of armor especially significant. After warning that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, Paul says, **“Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist.”** If the enemy traffics in lies, God prepares His people to stand in truth.

There is an important Old Testament background to Paul's imagery. Paul did not invent the armor of God. Isaiah 59:17 describes God Himself as a warrior who “put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head.” Isaiah 11:5 describes the coming Messiah: **“Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist.”** The word translated “faithfulness” carries the idea of firmness, reliability, and trustworthiness. The Messiah is characterized by what is true and dependable.

This changes how we understand the armor. Paul is not simply handing Christians a collection of spiritual tools; he is telling us to put on **God's armor**. We are clothing ourselves in what characterizes God Himself—His truth, righteousness, salvation, and faithfulness. **We stand against the character of the enemy by clothing ourselves in the character of God.** The enemy is false; God is faithful. The enemy deceives; God is true. The enemy asks, “Did God really say?” and the people of God stand by fastening themselves to what God has said.

1. THE ENEMY TRAFFICS IN LIES

Genesis 3 gives us a pattern for how deception works. Satan begins by questioning God's Word: "Did God really say?" He then contradicts God's Word: "You will not certainly die." Finally, he attacks God's character by suggesting that God is withholding something good from Adam and Eve. Beneath the temptation to eat the fruit is a much deeper temptation: **Can God really be trusted?** Before Eve's behavior changed, something changed in what she believed about God.

That strategy continues today. Does God really love me? Can God really forgive me? Is God really good if He allowed this to happen? Do I really need to obey Him in this area? Can I really trust God with my future? Wouldn't I be happier if I simply did what feels right? The enemy does not necessarily need us to stop believing that God exists; **he simply needs us to stop trusting Him.** Nearly every temptation to sin contains somewhere within it a temptation to believe something untrue about God.

This raises an important question: if Satan is a liar and we know he is a liar, **why are we still so susceptible to his lies?** One reason is that his lies rarely feel completely false. They often attach themselves to something real. You failed, and the lie becomes, "I am a failure." Someone abandoned you, and the lie becomes, "Everyone eventually leaves me." You prayed and nothing changed, and the lie becomes, "God doesn't care." You committed a terrible sin, and the lie becomes, "God could never use me again." **The most believable lies often contain enough truth to get through the door.** The enemy takes a real experience, wound, fear, failure, or emotion and gives us a false interpretation of it.

We are especially susceptible to these lies when we are hurting, afraid, ashamed, disappointed, or spiritually weak. **Hurt** can interpret suffering as evidence that God does not care. **Fear** can convince us that everything depends upon our control. Shame tells us to hide. **Disappointment** can slowly become suspicion toward God. **Long seasons of waiting** can make us wonder whether God is ever going to come through. The circumstances themselves may be real, but the conclusions we draw from them may not be true.

Sometimes deception works for another reason: **we want the lie to be true.** James teaches that temptation also operates through our own desires. The enemy does not always need to create a new desire; sometimes he simply gives us justification for one already inside us. "I deserve this." "Everybody does it." "God understands." "This is just who I am." "I need to do what makes me happy." **The most dangerous lie may be the one I want to be true.**

[Space for personal story].

2. GOD'S TRUTH EXPOSES THE ENEMY'S LIES

Jesus makes an important connection between spiritual protection and truth in John 17. He prays, "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one," and then says, **"Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth."** Protection from the evil one and sanctification by truth belong together. One of the primary ways God protects His people from deception is by forming them through His Word.

Spiritual warfare, therefore, is not primarily about becoming fascinated with demons or identifying Satan behind every difficult circumstance. It is about becoming so deeply formed by God's truth that we learn to recognize what does not sound like Him. **If we do not become familiar with the voice of truth, eventually lies stop sounding foreign.** God's Word teaches us what is true about God, ourselves, sin, salvation, and the world so that we have something more reliable than ourselves by which to interpret reality.

This matters because our minds, desires, culture, and even our emotions are not infallible. **Our feelings are real, but they are not always reliable interpreters of reality.** I can feel forgotten without God having forgotten me. I can feel worthless without being worthless. I can feel condemned when Scripture says there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. I can feel afraid without actually being abandoned. I can feel as though obedience is getting me nowhere without obedience having become meaningless. You can even feel positive feelings and be wrong! Jonah was so at peace in his disobedience that he took a nap on a ship while everyone else was awake!

The Christian response is not to suppress emotion. The Psalms teach us to bring fear, anger, grief, confusion, and disappointment honestly before God. But we bring those emotions into His presence and then allow God to tell us what is ultimately true. **Truth interprets my feelings; my feelings do not get to redefine truth.**

This takes us back to Isaiah's description of the Messiah. He wears faithfulness around His waist because God can be trusted. His character is reliable. His promises are trustworthy. His Word does not change because our circumstances change. My feelings may change tomorrow. My circumstances may change tomorrow. Other people's opinions of me may change tomorrow. **But the truthfulness of God does not change.** That is what we fasten ourselves to.

3. TRUTH MUST BE LIVED, NOT MERELY KNOWN

The Old Testament also gives us the image of truth and faithfulness being physically attached to God's people. Proverbs 3:3 says, "Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart." Truth and

faithfulness were never intended merely to be information that we possess. They are meant to become part of who we are.

Paul similarly says to have “the belt of truth buckled around your waist.” Truth is not sitting on the shelf; it is attached to us. Putting on the belt of truth means bringing what we **believe, say, and live** into alignment with what God has revealed. There is a significant difference between knowing something is true and actually fastening your life to it. I can know that God provides and still live terrified about money. I can know that God forgives and still live buried beneath shame. I can know that God is sovereign and still try to control everyone around me. I can know that my identity is in Christ and still build my life around other people’s approval. **Truth becomes armor when truth moves from something I know to something I stand on.**

Truth therefore requires obedience. Every time I choose obedience when my desires are telling me something different, I am fastening myself to truth. When I forgive even though my feelings tell me to hold onto the offense, I am fastening myself to truth. When I trust while fear tells me to take control, I am fastening myself to truth. When I confess while shame tells me to hide, I am fastening myself to truth. The belt of truth is more than correct doctrine; **it is a life increasingly aligned with the God who is true.**

GOSPEL CONNECTION — JESUS IS THE TRUTH

Isaiah anticipated a Messiah clothed in righteousness and faithfulness, and then Jesus comes. He does not merely teach the truth; He says, **“I am the way and the truth and the life.”** Jesus is the perfectly faithful One Isaiah anticipated. Where Adam and Eve listened to the serpent and distrusted God, Jesus faced the tempter and remained completely faithful to His Father. Where humanity has believed the lie, Jesus trusted the Father. Where we have been unfaithful, Jesus remained faithful.

At the cross, the faithful One gave Himself for people who have believed lies, followed our desires, distrusted God, and gone our own way. Our defense against deception is therefore more than trying harder to think correctly. **We fasten ourselves to Christ.** When the enemy says God does not love us, we look at the cross. When he says our sin is too great, we look at the cross. When he says death wins, we look at the empty tomb. When he says God has abandoned us, we look to Jesus.

We do not defeat lies by convincing ourselves that everything will be okay. We defeat lies by fastening ourselves to the One who is true.

RESPONSE — WHAT LIE HAVE YOU BEEN BELIEVING?

Some lies become so familiar that we no longer recognize them as lies. We have worn them so long that they begin to feel like reality, or even identity: “I’m not enough.” “I’ll never change.” “God has forgotten me.” “My sin defines me.” “I have to control everything.” “God could never forgive me.” “I’m alone.”

The invitation is not simply to identify the lie but to **replace the lie with truth**. “I’m not enough” meets the truth that God loved me enough to give His Son (John 3:16). “I’ll never change” meets the truth that God is transforming me into the image of His Son (Romans 8:29). “God has forgotten me” meets the promise, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). “My sin defines me” meets the declaration that in Christ I am chosen, holy, and God’s own possession (1 Peter 2:9). “I have to control everything” meets the truth that God is at work in all things for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28). “God could never forgive me” meets the announcement that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1).

The response, then, is to **name the lie, bring it into the light, replace it with God’s truth, fasten that truth around your life, and stand**. The enemy may keep speaking, but **you don’t have to believe everything you hear**.