

Intro: Centuries ago, the prophet Amos spoke of a famine: “Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord God, “When I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, But rather for hearing the words of the LORD” (Amos 8:11).

Brothers and sisters, we live in an age of unparalleled access to information. Literacy is among the highest in history worldwide, the advent of the internet has increased the amount of information that can be shared to breakneck speed. Yet, where is truth? Information and education are good things, but they are not truth. With all this information, we are living in a famine of God’s Word. Within our own ranks of “Christianity” the western church is surrounding herself with teachers that tickle ears and salve souls with the false teaching that God cannot really be known. With certainty that nothing is certain, mystery has been elevated to the heavens and man’s wisdom has become the golden calf of our day.

So, what are we to do? Give in and accept the seemingly humble task of wondering, of uncertainty, of the journey to nowhere in particular? NO! God has revealed Himself so that He would be known, not wondered at any longer! Christ came to earth to show us with certainty who He is (Heb 1:2; 1 John 5:20), so that we would know Him. Our God has revealed mysteries and communicated truth to us, because God is truth. It is with certainty that we depend upon His Word to show us who He is, and it is with glad submission that we gather all of our experiences and life under His authoritative gospel. It’s time to be men, to gird up our loins with truth, so that the devil who so desires us to distrust Jesus and to trust our own perceive wisdom (or lack thereof) would not be able to lead us astray. To God be the glory for His self-revelation, and I pray for the Church that the Holy Spirit will move with great power so that we truly believe with certainty that God is who He has said that He is, He did what He said He did, and that He will do what He has promised to do.

Stand! (imper)

Followed by a series of participles which then expound the “how” of the imperative, to stand. These participles all have an objective and a subjective part to them.

Stand Against the Devil by buckling up the belt of truth

- i. Objective: Christ is the truth which we believe
 - a. gospel –
 - ii. **Ephesians 1:13** In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,
 - iii. **Colossians 1:5-6** because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel,⁶ which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing - as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth,
 - iv. **1 Peter 1:22-23** Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,²³ since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;
 - a. Jesus –
 - v. **Ephesians 4:21** assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus,
 - vi. **John 1:14** And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.
 - vii. **John 8:31-32** So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."
 - viii. **John 14:6** Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

- ix. Subjective: The Church proclaims and lives out the truth of Christ
 - a. church is the support and pillar of the truth –
 - x. **1 Timothy 3:15** if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of truth.
 - a. speak the truth in love to each other –
 - xi. **Ephesians 4:25** Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.
 - a. walk in the truth of the LORD –
 - xii. **Psalm 86:11** Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name.
 - a. worship in truth –
 - xiii. **John 4:24** God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."
 - The "belt" was central to the armor for it held both the scabbard for the sword and the breastplate in place
 - A soldier would tuck in his garment so that he had the freedom of movement (long tunics would restrict leg movement)

iv. Satan's primary strategy is to keep us from trusting in Christ and His Word.

- a. Genesis 3:1-7
 - i. Satan questions the *certainty* of God's truth
 - 1. "Did God really say...?"
 - 2. "That's not what He meant!"
 - ii. Satan denies the truth and introduces a "new truth"
 - 1. "You will surely not die"
 - 2. **Job 1:8-11** And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?"⁹ Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason?"¹⁰ Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.¹¹ But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face."
 - 3. **Luke 4:6** and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will.
 - iii. Satan questions the nature or character of God
 - 1. "God knows that you'll be wise as Him"
 - 2. "He doesn't really want what's good for you"
 - 3. "Trust your own wisdom, not His Word"
- a. Satan works to keep men from the truth, or to keep the truth from men.
 - i. **Mark 4:15** And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them.
 - ii. **2 Corinthians 4:3-4** And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing.⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.
 - iii. **2 Thessalonians 2:9-10** The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders,¹⁰ and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.
 - i. Satan has even deceived many that the proclamation of Christ is not necessary for salvation
 - a. The gospel saves when it is proclaimed, heard, and believed

- b. Eph 1:13 – the gospel of truth *which you have heard*
 - c. Eph 4:21 – you were *taught* Jesus
 - d. Col 1:5 – you have *heard*
 - e. Rom 10:14 – how will they believe if they have not *heard*?
- b. Satan wants to get us to trust in our wisdom and knowledge, rather than *believe* what God has said and done
 - i. **1 Timothy 6:20-21** O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge," ²¹ for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you.¹
 - ii. **1 Corinthians 4:6** I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers,¹ that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another.
 - i. Walking in truth is not a question of “do you understand everything?” but rather of “do you believe what the Lord *has* said?”
 - ii. God has given us the truth in Christ. Satan seeks to turn our attention away from the truth and away from Christ, by enticing us to seek a knowledge which is not only beyond Christ, but which is beyond or twists the revelation of Scripture under the perceived words of “reason” or of “wisdom”. Over and over again in Scripture Christians are warned against the pursuit of this forbidden knowledge:
 - a. **Colossians 2:6-8** Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. ⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits¹ of the world, and not according to Christ.
 - b. **Colossians 2:23** These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.
 - c. **1 Tim 6:20** – see above
- c. Satan mixes in the appearance of truth with the lie that destroys faith in Jesus:
 - i. Satan uses philosophies and the appearance of righteous truth to deceive
 - a. **1 Timothy 1:6-7** Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, ⁷ desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.
 - b. **2 Peter 2:1-2** But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. ² And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed.
 - c. **2 Corinthians 11:13-15** For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵ So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.
 - ii. Satan uses the Word of God to deceive us as well by giving it to us incompletely
 - a. Luke 4:9-13
 - b. Today, a major deception is that “doctrine is marginal” and any division or disagreement on truth isn’t that big of a deal
 - i. “Just love each other and don’t get caught up in doctrine”
 - ii. Loving each other is good, even commanded of the Lord (John 13:34)
 - 1. The lie, however, is that love never draws any lines, never divides over truth, never says “No! This is not OK!”

2. The truth divides, even when we love our enemies

- a. **Matthew 10:34-40** "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. ³⁶ And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. ³⁷ Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸ And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ⁴⁰ "Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.
 - b. **Titus 3:10** As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, reject him,
 - c. **2 John 1:9-10** Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. ¹⁰ If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting,
- d. Satan appeals to our flesh, not a submission to the truth of God's revelation.
- i. **1 Corinthians 1:17** For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.
 - ii. **1 Corinthians 2:1-5** And I, when I came to you, brothers, ¹ did not come proclaiming to you the testimony² of God with lofty speech or wisdom. ² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ³ And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, ⁴ and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.
 - iii. **Colossians 2:1-5** For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, ² that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴ I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. ⁵ For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.
- xiv. What is the truth of the gospel?
- a. The right side of repentance and the left side of faith in Christ, buckled at one point of truth
 - i. If you remove repentance, the belt falls off
 - ii. If you remove faith in Christ, the belt falls off
 - iii. Both repentance from our own self-salvation AND dependence upon Jesus Christ alone for our salvation is the essential truth of the gospel.
 - iv. The gospel is truth — it is a message, a set of claims to be believed and followed.
 - a. It includes the fact that we are weak and sinful, that we seek to control our lives by being our own saviors and lords,
 - b. AND that God's law was fulfilled by Christ for us, that we are now accepted completely (righteous) through His blood, though we are still very sinful and flawed, and so on.
 - v. This also means that this gospel truth has a vast number of implications for all of life.

- c. It is our job to bring everything in our lives in line with the thrust or direction of the gospel, which is truth. We are to think out its implications in every area of our lives, and seek to bring our thinking, feeling and behavior in line in order to defend ourselves against the enemy
 - d. The gospel truth is radically opposed to the assumptions of the world, which the devil will try to use to distract us and defeat us through unbelief. Since we live in the world, we have embraced many of the world's assumptions. See the schemes!
 - e. Christian living is therefore a continual realignment process of bringing everything in line with the truth of the gospel, repentance from our own self-dependence and depending upon Jesus Christ and His work alone for our acceptance before God.
 - a. **see Galatians 2:14**
- v. Here are *some of the* gospel-promises that are TRUE in Christ:
- i. "In Christ there is no more condemnation" Rom 8:1
 - ii. "In Christ you have been made holy, so walk holy" Eph 1:4; 4:27; 1 Pet 1:15-16
 - iii. "In Christ you have been made complete" col 2:10
 - iv. "Christ is the Head over all things" 1:10; Col 2:10
 - v. "In Christ you are righteous before God" 2 Cor 5:21
 - vi. "In Christ's blood you are cleansed from all sin" 1 John 1:7

"The Church of Christ is continually represented under the figure of an army; yet its Captain is the Prince of Peace; its object is the establishment of peace, and its soldiers are men of a peaceful disposition. The spirit of war is at the extremely opposite point to the spirit of the gospel.

Yet, nevertheless, the church on earth has, until the second advent must be, the church militant, the church armed, the church warring, the church conquering. And how is this?

It is in the very order of things that so it must be. Truth could not be truth in this world if it were not a warring thing, and we should at once suspect that it were not true if error were friends with it. The spotless purity of truth must always be at war with the blackness of heresy and lies." ~Charles H. Spurgeon

The enemy wants to get us to distrust the revelation of God and instead to trust our own wisdom and our own reason. There are many out there claiming today that it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you *follow* Jesus. The question immediately becomes "which Jesus?" Is it the Jesus of Scripture, who died as a substitute in our place, bearing up the wrath of God (Is 53) so we would be made righteous by faith? Or is it the reconstructed Jesus, devoid of miraculous power and atoning blood, made merely a rabbi to show us how to live? See the scheme of the devil and the dangerous doctrine of unbelief and self-salvation.

So buckle up the belt of Truth in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Beware of the devil's schemes to deceive us into trusting ourselves and our perceived wisdom, rather than trusting in the revealed Word of God. The way things REALLY are is what is True, and God has shown us who He really is and how He really works to redeem us and to accept us as His children: through repentant faith in the blood (Rom 3:25; 1 Pet 1:17-19) of Jesus Christ. (2 Tim 3:15)