

068 - Speak the Truth - Ephesians 4:25 - 2015-11-22

Call to Worship: Psalm 86:3-6

Scripture Reading: Zechariah 8:13-17

Sermon: "Speak the Truth" Ephesians 4:25

Benediction: 1 John 1:8-9

Ephesians 4:25 Therefore, putting away lying, "LET EACH ONE OF YOU SPEAK TRUTH WITH HIS NEIGHBOR," for we are members of one another.

Zechariah 8:16-17 These are the things you shall do: Speak each man the truth to his neighbor; Give judgment in your gates for truth, justice, and peace; (17) Let none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbor; And do not love a false oath. For all these are things that I hate,' Says the LORD."

Zephaniah 3:12-13 I will leave in your midst A meek and humble people, And they shall trust in the name of the LORD. (13) The remnant of Israel shall do no unrighteousness And speak no lies, Nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; For they shall feed their flocks and lie down, And no one shall make them afraid."

Colossians 3:8-10 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. (9) Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, (10) and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

INTRODUCTION

Oh, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we have come, at last to the ethical commands of Christ here in Ephesians 4. It has been a very good journey for us, as we have learned or been reminded of much regarding God's grace, His great love for sinners in Christ Jesus, His amazing power showed in raising us from the death of sin to new life in Christ, just as He raised Christ from the dead.

We have behind us just what we needed. Now we have ahead of us just what we need.

Oh, I grieve in my inner man over the sins I still commit. I long to walk by the Spirit and not do the works of the flesh. But I need so much the washing with water by the Word.

TEXT

Ephesians 4:25 Therefore, putting away lying, "LET EACH ONE OF YOU SPEAK TRUTH WITH HIS NEIGHBOR," for we are members of one another.

BODY

- I. Appreciate the Simple Beauty of How This Commandment Is Stated
 - A. The essential statement is: "Tell the truth" but it is put to us in a way that I find beautiful
 - B. Structure
 1. reason referring to something He has just taught us
 2. negative: prohibition
 3. positive: requirement
 4. reason referring to something He has just taught us
 - C. Scripture Quotation
 1. Paul is quoting Zechariah 8:16, which has been read this morning
 - D. APPLICATION:
 1. In the struggle against sin, make use not only of the commandment, but of the reasons
 2. Learn how God's law is properly understood
 - a) "Love your neighbor" is not enough; this needs to be expounded, as "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor."
 - b) Each of the 10 Commandments prohibits the worst offense in a category, but prohibits also lesser offenses
 - c) When God's law prohibits something, it requires the opposite at the same time
 - d) The prophets help us understand the law: Zechariah 8:16-17
 - (1) verse 16 says to tell the truth
 - (2) verse 17 says not even to think evil in your heart
 - e) Essential morality is the same always, whether in the past or today or the future
- II. Ponder the grace of God in giving you this command
 - A. It is His work in you to remove lies from your mouths
Zephaniah 3:10-13 From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, The daughter of My dispersed ones, Shall bring My offering. (11) In that day you shall not be shamed for any of your deeds In which you transgress against Me; For then I will take away from your midst Those who rejoice in your pride, And you shall no longer be haughty In My holy mountain. (12) I will leave in your midst A meek and humble people, And they shall trust in the name of the LORD. (13) The remnant of Israel shall do no unrighteousness And speak no lies, Nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth
 - B. This command is issued when the Lord has determined to do you good

1. Exodus 19:4; 20:1-2, 16 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."
2. Zechariah 8:15-16 So again in these days I am determined to do good To Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Do not fear. (16) These are the things you shall do: Speak each man the truth to his neighbor;
3. Ephesians 2:1-9 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, (2) in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, (3) among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. (4) But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, (5) even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), (6) and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, (7) that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (8) For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, (9) not of works, lest anyone should boast.

C. APPLICATION: Appreciate this commandment as a loving gift rather than a burden.

1. If you have been a student, you understand what it's like to have a school lesson or subject that you are doing just because it is required and to get it over with.
2. And you know what it's like to have a school lesson or subject that you enjoy, and study because you love it.
3. If your mind has been wrong about this commandment, and maybe all the commandments of the Lord, think rightly about God's grace in giving it to you.
4. Think what benefits the Lord is giving you, even just in this life
 - a) more peace and joy in your relationships
 - b) more quiet in your conscience
 - c) a better reputation among those with whom you work
5. Think what benefits the Lord is giving you regarding the work of His kingdom
 - a) more credibility for the gospel in the mind of people you know, even your own family
 - b) more strengthening of His church
6. Think what benefits the Lord is giving you regarding your eternal reward

- a) what you say in God's church that is not true will be burned up like straw
- b) what you say in God's church that is true will be like gold for you in the day of judgment

III. Understand the Virtue of Speaking the Truth

A. What it is

1. To say what is in accordance with the facts; to know what the facts are, and you speak as in keeping with those facts
 - a) not knowing what the facts are, because you have not taken the care to know them, and speaking anyway as if you do, does not count as speaking the truth
2. For example:
 - a) The Lord Jesus died for our sins, according to the scriptures
 - b) He was buried
 - c) The third day He rose from the dead, according to the scriptures
 - d) He commanded that repentance and forgiveness of sins be preached in His name to all nations; He commands everyone everywhere to repent
 - e) Everyone who believe in the Lord Jesus will be justified in God's sight

B. Where it comes from

1. The virtue of speaking the truth starts with God's being
 - a) The bible starts with this statement
 - b) God told Moses that His Name is "I am"
 - c) John wrote of the Lord Jesus, "In the beginning was the Word"
 - d) The Lord Jesus says at the end of the Bible, Revelation 22, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, Beginning and End, the First and the Last."
 - e) The statements of God's being set the tone for the whole revelation of God through the bible.
2. The virtue of speaking the truth is derived from God's character
 - a) We are told in both the OT and NT that God does not lie, and in fact cannot lie
 - b) The Lord Jesus said of Himself that He is the very truth
3. And so when we, who have been made in God's image, and who have been created anew according to God's image, in true righteousness and holiness, speak the truth, we are being true to that image of God
4. When we, who have been made disciples of Jesus Christ, speak the truth, we are being true disciples of His

IV. Understand the sin of lying

A. What it is

1. the Greek word is *pseudos*
2. to lie is to speak other than the truth

- a) there are more sophisticated definitions, but
 - (1) this is the essence of it, and
 - (2) this is how it is defined in this verse
 - (3) 1 John 2:21 I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth.
- b) of course it is a matter of the heart before it becomes a matter of the tongue
- c) of course someone can be deceived by actions of ours as well as by words
- d) but for now let's keep this doctrine as simple as it is in this verse

3. for example

B. Where it comes from

1. Ultimately

- a) John 8:44 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it
 - (1) The devil has no truth in him; therefore he has only the sin of lying in him
 - (2) He is the original liar and the source of all lies
 - (3) He, therefore, is the father of lies and of lying
- b) So, when sinners, under the sway of the devil, tell lies, they show that the devil is, in a sense, their father
- c) If a Christian tells a lie, he is not acting according to the new man that he is, but according to the devil, as if he were still under his power, when in fact he is not

2. More immediately

- a) pride
- b) fear of men
- c) presumption---thinking you know so much
- d) covetousness
- e) malice
- f) vanity

V. Consider the Body of Christ

- A. would the members of Christ, who is the truth, tell lies?
- B. would one member tell lies, which have the effect of separating?
- C. would one member tell lies, which have the effect of harming?
- D. would one member tell lies to one whom he loves with the love of Christ

CONCLUSION

Ephesians 4:17-25 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, (18) having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; (19) who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. (20) But you have not so learned Christ, (21) if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: (22) that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, (23) and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, (24) and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. (25) Therefore, putting away lying, "LET EACH ONE OF YOU SPEAK TRUTH WITH HIS NEIGHBOR," for we are members of one another.

Having looked at where the sin of lying comes from, let us consider how we may overcome it

E. If you are essentially a liar, a child of the devil, understand the seriousness of your lying

1. Revelation 21:8 But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."
2. think yourself a Christian, but know yourself to be essentially a liar?
3. repent and trust yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ

F. If you are a believer in Christ (this mostly from Bayne):

1. find out the cause, and take that away
 - a) pride
 - b) fear of men
 - c) presumption---thinking you know so much
 - d) covetousness
 - e) malice
 - f) vanity
2. use fewer words! Proverbs 10:19 In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise.
3. consider the dear saints around you (Ephesians 4:25)
 - a) members of one body!
 - b) does the eye lie to the hand, telling it the stove is not red hot?
4. look to Christ, in whom there is no lie

VI. Think of the nature of the Lord Jesus' commands for us

- A. there are good reasons
- B. they are complete
- C. they are enduring: Paul is quoting to the church what was prophesied by Zechariah and what was spoken at Mount Sinai

Ferguson (as others):

to press on them the exercise of some particular virtues

which do belong to all Christians of whatsoever rank or station equally

all of which are enjoined in the second table of the commands

Therefore

Bayne:

Colossians 3:9-10 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, (10) and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

putting away lying

JFB:

Greek "having put away" once for all

Gill:

a lie is a voluntary disagreement of the mind and speech, with a design to deceive, spoken knowingly and willingly

1. officious lie: which is told for the service of others, but this is not lawful
 - a. for evil is not to be done, that good may come of it
 - b. it is not lawful to lie for god, and therefore not for a creature
2. jocose lie: this ought not to be encouraged
3. a lie which is in itself directly hurtful and injurious
4. religious lie:
 - a. practical, as those whose practice is not according to their confession
 - b. doctrinal, as antichrist and his followers

springs and causes of lying

1. covetousness
2. malice
3. fear of men
4. tempting of the devil, the father of lies

it is a sin exceeding sinful

1. a breach of God's law
2. an aping of the devil
3. against the light of nature
4. destructive of civil society
5. very abominable in the sight of God

Bayne:

such as are the true members of Christ must avoid all lying
What it is to lie

to speak that which agreeth not with our mind, or which agreeth not with the truth of the matter, or which disagreeeth from both

if I say and think so, that it is 9:00, which it is but 8, it is a lie . . . grounded on a sinful heedlessness

True Christians must avoid all lying, for Zeph 3:13

this is to be conceived of all lies, not only hurtful ones, but delightful, officious lies, for all lies are alike in this text forbidden

1. 1 John 2:21b no lie is of the truth.
2. That which is in the nature evil, cannot be bettered by the end; now, a lie is in the nature evil, against truth
3. The Scripture indefinitely reproveth and condemneth lying, excepting no kind
4. Job doth shew plainly that one may not speak deceitfully for God's advantage Job 13:7 Will you speak wickedly for God, And talk deceitfully for Him?
5. If the Scripture maketh every idle word confemnable, much more every lying word, Matthew 12:36

How may we overcome this?

1. find out the cause, and take that away. labour against the cause, and the disease will soon cease when the ground is removed
 - a. pride, as the boaster's lie
 - b. covetousness, as the lie in bargaining
 - c. fear, as that of denying
 - d. vanity
2. accustom ourselves to few words Proverbs 10:19 In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise.
3. think of the judgment which God hath threatened against lying, and them that love lies Revelation 21:27

Concealments are not lies: such was Abraham's that Sarah was his sister; samuel's in saying that he went to sacrifice, 1 Samuel 15

Ferguson:

the sin of lying, forbidden in the ninth command

whereby a man doth speak what he knoweth or conceiveth to be untruth, with an intention and purpose to deceive

There is no sin more unseemly in a Christian, and more inconsistent with grace, than the sin of lying, there being no sin that maketh a man

1. more like the devil John 8:44
2. more abominable to God Proverbs 6:16-17
3. more shameful in the eyes of men
4. more hurtful to the sinner, as making him trusted by none

all kind of lying is intrinsically sin, and to be avoided, whether the pernicious, officious, or sporting lie

Let each one of you speak truth

Ferguson:

so that our speech may be conformed both to the thing itself, and to our conceptions of the thing

we are not bound to speak all the truth, and at all times, and to every person, but in some cases may and ought to conceal somewhat of it

Luke 9:21 And He strictly warned and commanded them to tell this to no one,
1 Samuel 16:2 And Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me."
But the LORD said, "Take a heifer with you, and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.'

when we speak, we are to speak nothing but truth

This is a general rule to be observed for the right understanding of divine precepts, that where a sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is also commanded, and where a duty is commanded, the contrary sin is also forbidden

Bayne (as Ferguson):

we must be careful that the thing be truth which we speak

what is is to speak the truth

1. to speak as I think
2. to think of this or that as it is

Zechariah 8:16 These are the things you shall do: Speak each man the truth to his neighbor; Give judgment in your gates for truth, justice, and peace;

Psalm 15:1-2 A Psalm of David. LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? (2) He who walks uprightly, And works righteousness, And speaks the truth in his heart;

When am I bound to speak the truth?

1. when authority, temporal or ecclesiastical, doth lawfully require
2. when God's glory or m neighbour's good is procured, or God's dishonour and my neighbour's hurt avoided by it
3. when circumstances of time, person, and place make it fit to be uttered

it doth warn us of our duty, that we do take heed that we get knowledge of that we speak . . . for many speak untruths by heedlessness and rash affirmations of that they thoroughly know not. This care to speak the truth will approve us to be the children of the God of truth, and be an evidence to us that we shall dwell in the heavens for ever.

Pattison:

The Christian is, by his new disposition, truthful.
The duty extends to every individual

Poole:

not only speak as things are, but act sincerely and candidly

JRY:

take care what political speech you pass on

with his neighbor

JRY:

take care not to treat this concept as the Pharisees did

for we are members of one another

Bayne:

for we are by the bond of love more straitly tied one to another
Love does not teach to lie
Do the members of the body, as the hand, doth it mock the mouth and deceive it?

Ferguson:

Though it be sinful to lie and speak untruth unto any, even to an infidel, Ezekiel 17:16, yet it is more sinful and most odious for believers and professors of the same faith, because of their nearer bonds

It is not sufficient to speak truth with his neighbor from a motive of self interest, but he ought to be acted from a principle of love towards those with whom he speaketh

Hodge:

there is a violation of the very law of their union for one Christian to deceive another this is not intended to exclude other grounds

The obligation of veracity rests on

1. the intrinsic excellence of truth
2. the command of God
3. the rights of our fellow men . . . that we should not deceive them

JFB:

One member could not injure or deceive another, without injuring himself, as all have a mutual and common interest.

Caldwell:

note this is the first thing Paul mentions
there is nothing more characteristic of the new life than "truth"
see how much of the NT material is about the Christian's association with the truth
there is nothing more characteristic of the old man than lies
there is nothing more characteristic of our old master than lies
there is nothing more characteristic of our new master than the truth
there is nothing that reveals our sinfulness than lies
there is nothing more destructive to the church than lies

Worrell:

love the truth
speak the truth
preserve our own good name and the good name of others (JRY: and of the gospel)

Gordon Dane:

our neighbor is anyone to whom we should do good, so someone bent on doing murder
we do not have to do good to him

neither to bear false witness nor to hear false witness

McDearmon citing Murray:

Principles of Conduct chapter "The Sanctity of Truth"

1. There is no moral justification for a falsehood.
2. In some circumstances it is right to withhold all or part of the truth for the purpose of concealment---that is, when the inquirer does not have a moral claim, either on any of the truth or on all of the truth. Concealment and deception are two different things.
3. The truth of a statement spoken is determined by the facts in the purview of the speaker, not by the limited knowledge of the inquirer or hearer
 - a. e.g. if inquirer does not know you homeschool, no obligation to volunteer that
4. In some circumstances wherein we act, truth is determined by the facts we see and interpret, not by the erroneous interpretations of others.
 - a. e.g. house lights on a timer

McDearmon:

Why be truthful? be truthful as God is truthful

SOURCES

Murray, John "The Sanctity of Truth"

Calvin, John commentary on Joshua

Augustine *On Lying [De Mendacio]* and *Against Lying [Contra Mendacio]*

Murray:

What does the Scripture mean by 'lying' as the prohibited thing and by 'speaking truth' as that required? May we under any circumstances utter what we know to be untrue, what we believe to be false? Are we always under obligation to declare what we know or believe to be true?⁷ May we affirm part of the truth and conceal the rest? These are the questions that inescapably arise, not only in the exigencies of life but in the interpretation of Scripture. We are compelled to come to terms with such questions because the biblical record supplies us with instances in which untruth was blatantly spoken and in which truth was concealed. Does the Scripture approve such conduct under certain circumstances?

are we to say that strong faith cannot coexist with the infirmities of unbelief? There is no ground upon which we may seek to justify the deception and untruth of Rebekah and Jacob.⁸ Jacob spoke and acted a lie, and this fact only enhances our astonishment at the sovereignty of God's grace and the faithfulness of his promise. In this instance we find no justification of the falsehood perpetrated.

We see, therefore, that neither Scripture itself nor the theological inferences derived from Scripture provide us with any warrant for the vindication of Rahab's untruth⁹ and this instance, consequently, does not support the position that under certain circumstances we may justifiably utter an untruth.

Augustine *On Lying*:

whoever utters that which he holds in his mind either as belief or as opinion, even though it be false, he lies not.

hat man lies, who has one thing in his mind and utters another in words, or by signs of whatever kind. Whence also the heart of him who lies is said to be double; that is, there is a double thought: the one, of that thing which he either [knows](#) or thinks to be [true](#) and does not produce; the other, of that thing which he produces instead thereof, [knowing](#) or thinking it to be false.

the fault of him who lies, is, the desire of deceiving in the uttering of his mind

none doubts that it is a [lie](#) when a person willingly utters a [falsehood](#) for the purpose of deceiving: wherefore a false utterance put forth with will to deceive is manifestly a [lie](#).

let us inquire, whether it be sometimes useful to utter a [falsehood](#) with will to deceive.

They who think it is,

advance testimonies to their opinion, by alleging the case of Sarah, who, when she had laughed, denied to the Angels that she laughed: of Jacob questioned by his father, and answering that he was the elder son [Esau](#): likewise that of the [Egyptian](#) midwives, who to save the Hebrew infants from being slain at their birth, told a [lie](#), and that with God's approbation and reward: and many such like instances they pick out, of lies told by [persons](#) whom you would not dare to blame, and so must own that it may sometimes be not only not blameworthy, but even praiseworthy to tell a [lie](#).

They add also a case with which to urge not only those who are devoted to the Divine Books, but all [men](#) and common sense, saying, Suppose a man should take refuge with you, who by your lie might be saved from death, would you not tell it? If a sick man should ask a question which it is not expedient that he should [know](#), and might be more grievously afflicted even by your returning him no answer, will you venture either to tell the [truth](#) to the destruction of the man's life, or rather to hold your peace, than by a [virtuous](#) and merciful lie to be serviceable to his weak health? By these and such like arguments they think they most plentifully prove, that if occasion of doing good require, we may sometimes tell a [lie](#).

those who say that we must never lie, plead much more strongly,

using first the Divine authority, because in the very Decalogue it is written You shall not bear false [witness](#); under which general term it comprises all lying: for whoso utters any thing bears [witness](#) to his own mind. But lest any should contend that not every lie is to be called false [witness](#), what will he say to that which is written, The mouth that lies slays the [soul](#): and lest any should suppose that this may be understood with the exception of some liars, let him read in another place, You will destroy all that speak leasing. Whence with His own lips the Lord says, Let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these comes of [evil](#). Hence the Apostle also in giving precept for the putting off of the old man, under which name all [sins](#) are understood, says

The reason why the [Divine Scriptures](#) contain not only God's commands, but the life and character of the just, is this: that, if haply it be hidden in what way we are to take that which is enjoined, by the actions of the just it may be understood.