

Proverbs on Lying

Part 2 – Spiritual Dangers

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Four Lakes Church of Christ
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Good morning and welcome to the Four Lakes congregation! We are glad you are here, and if you are visiting this morning or joining us online or on the phone, we are glad to have you with us as well. We'd like to ask that you fill out a visitor card online if you can, or you can use one of the cards from the pew in front of you. Whatever works for you, we would love to hear from you, and we invite you to pass along any questions or prayer concerns.

Thank you for allowing me to be away last week, to speak at the lectures up in Minnesota! We had a very good trip, even though it was very brief! We studied the book of 1 Peter, and if you are interested in learning more about 1 Peter yourself, I have emailed a PDF copy of the lecture manuscripts to most of you here today. If you'd like a copy, send a message to info@fourlakeschurch.org, and I would be glad to get that to you. And we also have some hard copies in the cubbyholes for those of you who do not have email. I've also put some extras in the upper left back there.

On our way home from Minnesota, we stopped for worship in Rice Lake, Wisconsin, where Life Verlooy is preaching. Life preached here a year or two ago. He actually works for the state of Wisconsin and comes to Madison for a day or two every two weeks, and I have preached up there several times through the years. But they have sold their small and very old building right in Rice Lake, and they have purchased some property just north of town. They have a small house and a pole shed, and they have been worshipping in the pole shed until they can build a new facility on that property. So, we got to worship in a shed last week! And it was wonderful! One thing I really appreciated was that our family was on their prayer list. They had a very simple one-sided half-sheet bulletin, and on their list they had "Ron and Emily." And I think I said to Keola, "I think that's our Ron and Emily!" And then I noticed that they had "Ray" on that list as well. That's my dad! And then, they actually prayed for my brother-in-law and my dad by name. And I took that as some encouragement for us. We also need to be praying for people by name, and if we could do more of that, I would appreciate it.

We are here this morning preaching the same message Life is preaching this morning several hours north of here, that God loves us and sent his only Son to this earth to die for us; he was buried, and he was then raised up on the third day. This is the gospel, or the good news. We obey this good news by believing the message, by turning away from sin, by publicly stating our belief that Jesus is the Son of God, and by being buried with him in baptism. And we do have several examples to share this morning, starting with an update from

Sompov, which I believe is in Cambodia. And this may be our first update from Cambodia over the past four years we've been doing this. I wish we had more information, but a friend from California posted online and says that "Our hardworking evangelist in Sompov, Bunthoeurn Ly, baptizing Sreynich Seng, one of his computer students today. Please help me welcome our new sister in Christ, Sreynich. The newly planted church in Sompov is growing day by day! Glory to God!" To me, it looks like they are using some kind of a planter here. Whatever it takes, but we are thankful for the good news from Cambodia this week.

This next one comes from a friend who preaches down in Buford, Georgia. They start by quoting Acts 22:16, which says, "***And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.***" And then they say that, "The Lord has washed AJ's sins away through the waters of baptism! Church, it's time to celebrate because we have a new brother in Christ! Many have prayed, encouraged, planted, and watered... and today, God gave the increase. Join us as we PRAISE THE LORD for the greatness and power of the Gospel! Another ONE has been saved through Christ!" What a happy young man! Good news from Georgia.

This next update comes to us from the Heritage Place congregation down in Birmingham, Alabama. They say, "We were blessed to have two souls put on Christ in baptism, Sedahia & Jeremiah Owens. What a wonderful day we have had at Heritage Place!" We have two more very happy people this morning! Good news from Alabama!

This one comes to us from a congregation down in Tulsa, Oklahoma. They say, "We are so excited for Cory's decision to put Christ on in baptism! The angels in heaven are rejoicing!!"

This next one comes to us from a gospel preacher in Kenya who says, "Praise be to the God for his blessings, at this morning Lord's Day, We immerse another precious soul, a grandma of 79 age for the remission of her sins to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38)."

There are many more we could have shared this week, but this last one comes to us from the Henry Street congregation in Gadsden, Alabama. They posted the baptism of Pam Lyman and explain that, "This was a great faith moment as she is battling a spinal issue. But when there is a will, there is a way when God leads and empowers us! She would not be denied in coming to Christ. She is a great inspiration to us all! Welcome to the family of God!" This is actually a screenshot from a video, but she is strapped to a board, they transfer her from the gurney (in the foreground), and seven or eight brothers gather around and lower her into the water, an amazing thing to see.

As always, we are sharing these by way of encouragement: If you would like to study God's plan for your life, if you have any questions or concerns, please get in touch using the contact information on the wall up here (or on your screen at home). If you are joining us on the phone, you can send a text or give me a call at 608-224-0274.

This morning, we return to our long-term and very sporadic series of lessons from the Proverbs! And once again, to give us some sense of progress, I am sharing a new slide I created several weeks ago, to try to illustrate where we've been and where we are headed. And by way of reminder: This is not a reference tool, so don't worry about the fine print. The point is to show our progress as we transition these verses from white to red. Red is what we've studied on and off over the past several years, and white is what's left. I've updated it since our study two weeks ago, and we have now studied 316 out of the 915 verses in Proverbs, or 35%.

This morning, as we continue changing the rest of these verse references from white to red, I want us continue in our two-part series-within-a-series by getting back to those verses that emphasize the danger of LYING. We have a total of 20 verses on this topic, and by way of reminder, the message is very simple: God hates lying! And since God hates lying, we should, too! Two weeks ago, we studied fourteen of these proverbs emphasize the PRACTICAL dangers of lying (in other words, why lying is bad for us and for those around us here on this earth). We noted that lying is disgusting behavior, it's foolish and shameful and treacherous and destructive, we noted the practical danger of a false witness (society itself depends on witnesses telling the truth), we noted the danger of slander (which is simply gossip that is false), it's better to be poor than to be a liar, and we also noted how someone who lies is pretty much just as bad as someone who beats his neighbor to death with a maul (and we had the maul up here to illustrate that).

Today we come to the remaining six of these proverbs emphasizing now the SPIRITUAL or ETERNAL downsides of lying (in other words, why lying is so offensive to God and what this means for us spiritually). And as mentioned two weeks ago, there is some overlap, but this is how we have arranged our study of these proverbs on lying – all under the larger thought that God hates lying, and we should, too!

1. **So, let's get into it with the first of the remaining six proverbs, and let's note King Solomon's warning in Proverbs 12:19 where he says that, "Truthful lips will be established forever, but a lying tongue is only for a moment."**

So, as we transition from the practical dangers of lying and move toward the spiritual dangers, I hope we notice that we are now talking about eternity here. We have a contrast (as we often do in Proverbs) – on one hand, those who tell the truth will be *"established forever,"* but on the other hand, those who lie will only endure *"for a moment."* And with this reference to the lying tongue being only for a moment, I think Solomon is recognizing that there are times when lying may seem like the way to go. There are times when lying may actually work. There are times when lying may save us. There are moments when lying may help us avoid some consequences. There are moments when lying may get us what we want.

However (and this is a big however), Solomon also wants us to know that the lying tongue is only temporary. And any victory gained as a result of lying will be a short-term victory to say the least. And we know this. If you've ever lied, then you know that there was probably a reason for telling the lie. Maybe we lied and gained an unfair advantage, maybe we avoided punishment for something we had done, maybe we avoided taking the blame for something. But we also know that lying is complicated. Lying is hard work. It's hard to keep up with a made-up story! And so eventually, we tend to get caught – if not in this life, then certainly in the life to come. Solomon, then, wants his sons to know this, that *"a lying tongue is only for a moment."* On the other hand, *"truthful lips will be established forever."* So, it almost seems as if we have a contrast not just between consequences here in this life, but it's almost as if we have a contrast between this life and the life to come, *"Truthful lips will be established forever, but a lying tongue is only for a moment."*

And don't we see this elsewhere in scripture? Over in Revelation 21, John hears a voice from the throne offering life to those who believe and obey, and in contrast, the voice says (in verse 8), *"But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."* So again, lying may work on a very temporary basis, but lying is not a long-term solution. Several years ago, someone turned in a sermon request card asking for some "fire and brimstone preaching." Well, here it is! Those who lie will be cast into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone!

2. As we return to the Proverbs, we come to Proverbs 12:22, where King Solomon warns his sons that, ***“Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, but those who deal faithfully are His delight.”***

So, here again, we have a spiritual aspect of lying. And I hesitate to make a distinction between the practical and the spiritual, since things that are spiritual are practical and things that are practical are spiritual, but I do hope we notice that sometimes lying gets us in trouble with those around us, and there are other times when lying will get us in trouble with the Lord; and that’s what we find here when King Solomon recognizes that ***“Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord.”*** An ***“abomination”*** is something that is disgusting or detestable to the Lord; something that hated, or abhorred, or despised, causing a great dislike; it’s something that is repulsive, or vile, or shameful. We look up other uses of this word in the Law of Moses, and other things that are an ***“abomination”*** are found in Leviticus 18:22, where God said, ***“You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination.”*** Other abominations listed in this chapter include offering your children as burnt offerings to Molech, or having relations with your brother’s wife, having relations with both a woman and her daughter, having relations with your mother, and so on. We have more in Deuteronomy, including practicing witchcraft, contacting the dead, worshiping the sun moon and stars, men wearing women’s clothing and women wearing men’s clothing, and so on. This is all under the Law of Moses, of course, but this is the Law that Solomon and his sons were under, and Solomon explains that ***“Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord.”*** Today, of course, it’s easy to dismiss certain lies as being morally acceptable, “a tiny white lie” as some might describe it. But lying lips are an ***“abomination,”*** Solomon says.

On the other hand, ***“Those who deal faithfully are [God’s] delight.”*** So, God doesn’t just think that lying is an abomination, but he honors those who deal (or act) faithfully. I think we touched on this two weeks ago, when we noted the importance of following through. When we promise to do something, we do it! That’s what’s going on here. On one hand, some people will lie, but on the other hand, God delights in those who do what they have promised. And like the word ***“abomination,”*** the word ***“delight”*** is also used elsewhere in scripture. Throughout Leviticus and Deuteronomy, the word describes God’s pleasure in being offered an acceptable sacrifice. The word is used in Ezra 10 describing God’s pleasure in those who had the courage to separate from their pagan wives. And the word is scattered throughout the Psalms and Proverbs, indicating God’s pleasure in his people – he delights in hearing their prayers, he delights in their obedience, he delights in those who are faithful and honest. And that is what we find right here. Lying is dangerous just from a practical point of view, but lying is also dangerous spiritually and eternally, ***“Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord.”***

3-4. The next two are very similar, so let’s look at these together. In Proverbs 19:5, King Solomon says that, ***“A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who tells lies will not escape.”*** And in Proverbs 19:9, he says that, ***“A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who tells lies will perish.”***

So we notice that the first half of these two proverbs is identical, ***“A false witness will not go unpunished.”*** And this is where we get back to the idea of a ***“false witness.”*** And the picture here is of lying under oath, perhaps in a courtroom. Somebody is on trial. So, this is somebody perhaps lying about what he or she has seen. As we discussed two weeks ago, our entire criminal justice system depends on witnesses telling the truth under oath. This is important, extremely important! And this is the message in both verses.

By the way, if you are concerned with the repetition here, ask yourself whether you’ve ever had to tell your own kinds something twice within a few seconds. Most of us as parents (or as children ourselves) can probably understand the repetition here, ***“A false witness will not go unpunished.”***

In the second half of each verse, the message is slightly different, ***“he who tells lies will not escape,”*** as opposed to ***“he who tells lies will perish.”*** Although the wording is slightly different, the message is the same:

Those who bear false witness will be held accountable. And again, if not in this life, then in the next. There is no escaping this. And we actually have a psalm from King David on this. In Psalm 5:5-6, King David praises God as he says, ***“The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes; you hate all who do iniquity. You destroy those who speak falsehood; the LORD abhors the man of bloodshed and deceit.”*** And what I hope we notice from this somewhat parallel statement in the psalms is that God actually ***“abhors”*** (or hates) the man of bloodshed and deceit. I know we may hear people say that God hates the sin but loves the sinner. And we understand the thought behind that statement, but we should probably recognize the fact (from scripture) that God actually does hate those who commit certain sins, like lying.

And let’s remember, God’s position on this has not changed from the Old to the New. In Acts 5, we have the terrifying account of Ananias and Sapphira lying to the Holy Spirit concerning the amount of their offering, and they both dropped dead on the spot because of it. And not only that, but Paul connects the Old and the New in some areas in 1 Timothy 1:8-11, when he says, ***“But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted.”*** Or, as Solomon has said, those who bear false witness ***“will not escape,”*** but will ***“perish.”*** We must not embellish the truth, or exaggerate some story we’re telling. We must not massage figures in our favor, and we must not allow certain statements to go uncorrected when they are in our favor, but we must speak the truth at all times, knowing that those who bear false witness ***“will not escape,”*** but will ***“perish.”***

5. This brings us the next one as King Solomon says in Proverbs 21:6 that, “The acquisition of treasures by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor, the pursuit of death.”

Someone has compared lying to being on death row without knowing it. To lie is to have a death wish. The first part of this proverb addresses lying to gain wealth – under reporting income on a tax document, using fraud to make money, using false advertising to promote a product, and so on. Years ago, we went to sell an old green Toyota Corolla, and we had been cheated when we bought that car a year or two earlier, and it was ever so slightly tempting to try to cover up those issues for the next guy. But I can sleep a bit better now, knowing that we told the truth on that sale. But to deceive for financial gain is compared to a ***“fleeting vapor.”*** Like warm breath on a cold day, it doesn’t last. And lying is pictured as ***“the pursuit of death.”*** We may not realize it at the time, but when we choose to lie, we are choosing death, and Solomon wants his sons to know this sooner rather than later: Realize it now, he’s saying to his sons, so that you can choose life instead.

And to illustrate this from the history of God’s people, we only need to consider what would happen years after these words are written, in 1 Kings 21. In 1 Kings 21, we read about a guy named Naboth who had a very nice vineyard next door to the summer home of King Ahab. King Ahab, though, wanted a vegetable garden, and he wanted to put his new garden right on top of Naboth’s vineyard. Well, King Ahab offered Naboth a better vineyard somewhere else, he made a pretty good cash offer, but Naboth wasn’t interested. This was a vineyard that had been passed down from his fathers. So, Ahab went back home and started pouting. He wouldn’t even eat. And when his wife, Jezebel, came home, she basically says, “You’re the king, and you can do what you want!” I’m paraphrasing a bit, but that’s pretty much what she said to her husband. And then she hatches a plan. They invite Naboth to a fancy dinner, but they hire some guys to come to that dinner and to publicly lie, testifying that Naboth had cursed both God and the king. And based on this testimony, Naboth is taken out and stoned to death. And when Jezebel tells her husband that Naboth is dead, she basically tells her husband, “This is great news! Here’s your vineyard!” However, when King Ahab is checking out his new vineyard, God sends the prophet Elijah with a message, ***“Thus says the LORD, ‘Have you murdered and also***

taken possession?” And then he says, *“Thus says the LORD, ‘In the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth the dogs will lick up your blood, even yours.’”* King Ahab pretends he doesn’t know what Elijah is talking about, and Elijah responds by saying, *“I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the LORD.”* And then he says that, *“The dogs will eat Jezebel in the district of Jezreel.”* And that is exactly what happens. In the next chapter, King Ahab is killed in battle (a random arrow hits him right in a gap in his armor), and the dogs lick up his blood that pools in the chariot. Not long after, when a new king takes over, he comes to Ahab’s home where Jezebel has tried to disguise herself with makeup, he has her thrown off the wall, there’s a splat, she’s trampled by horses, and the dogs lick up her blood and eat everything except for her skull, her feet, and the palms of her hands. And they realize at that point that Elijah had spoken the truth. And just as King Solomon had spoken years earlier, *“The acquisition of treasures by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor, the pursuit of death.”*

6. We’ll close today with Proverbs 21:28, where King Solomon also says that, *“A false witness will perish, but the man who listens to the truth will speak forever.”*

We’ve already covered the *“perish”* part of this (in the first half). We know that someone who lies will *“perish.”* Maybe here in this life, but definitely in eternity (as we have already noted). A liar will always be discovered. But let’s focus on the second half of this proverb, where Solomon says, *“...but the man who listens to the truth will speak forever.”* The truth has a way of winning over the long run. And that seems to be the big idea here in this this proverb. Truth wins. And, in fact, let’s notice that it’s not the person who SPEAKS truth who will endure forever, but the one who *“LISTENS to the truth will speak forever.”* So, we wrap it up this morning with an emphasis on not just telling the truth, but listening to the truth as well.

Conclusion:

This morning, then, we have wrapped up our study of LYING in the book of Proverbs. We’ve looked at some of the PRACTICAL consequences of lying (some of the practical dangers), and today we have looked at some of the SPIRITUAL dangers of lying. All of this brings us back to where we started. Two weeks ago, I said that these two lessons would be simple and straightforward: God hates lying, and so should we. And this is why we’ve had scripture readings from the apostle Paul before these two lessons. Two weeks ago, we read from Colossians 3, where Paul told us to put aside all anger, and wrath, and malice, and slander, and abusive speech, and then he said, *“Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self.”* And then today, we heard from Paul in Ephesians 4, where he also wrote about putting aside the old self, he spoke of being renewed, and then he said, *“Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE of you WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another.”* This morning, let’s recommit to always speaking the truth. God hates lying, and so should we.

As we close this part of our service, let’s go to God in prayer:

Our Father in Heaven,

We praise you today for being a God of truth, and as your people we want to be people of truth. Forgive us for those times when we have been less than honest in the past, for times we have exaggerated, for times when we have slandered, or gossiped, or lied. We want to be more like you and your Son. We pray that you would empower us to always speak the truth in love.

We come to you in Jesus’ name. AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com