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Lord's Day Morning  
February 15, 2009  
'Things God Hates' Series  
#7

## "A False Witness Who Utters Lies"

John 8:31-59

### Introduction

Who here has never told lie? There are lots of sins that we could talk about where at least initially you might plead innocence. But lying is not one of those sins. We will all readily admit that we have lied. Why is it so easy to lie? A lie is a little bit like one of those roadside flairs that you'll see from time to time driving down the highway. Those flairs indicate the presence of a wrecked or broken down vehicle. So a lie is an indicator of heart that is in trouble.

God calls us to be men and women of truth and of truthfulness. We are to stand upon the truth of the gospel and God's true Word and we are to speak nothing but truth. And yet at times we find that we have spoken a lie without having premeditated it or before we even realize the words are out of our mouths.

This morning we come to the sixth item in the list of things that God hates – a false witness who utters lies. As we study this we are going to examine the reasons we lie. And we are going to look at God's answer for overcoming such lies.

[John 8:31-59]

All through the Bible we are introduced to God who time and again is called *the true God*. He's called

that not only because He is not a false God, but also because He is the God of truth. The thing that makes Him the one true God is the truth.

- John 3:33 - *He who has received His testimony has set his seal to this, that God is true.*
- Rom. 3:4 - *May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar,*
- I John 5:20 - *And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.*

You see the very nature of God is true. Numbers 23:19 says *God is not a man that He should lie, nor a son of man that he should repent. Has He said and will he not do it? Has He spoken and will He not make it good?*

There is a great contrast between God and us. While God can do nothing but bear witness to the truth, we are inclined to lie. Before we look at some of the specific kinds of lies that we tell and what we can do about it, let's lay out a few truths about lying to get us started. General things you should know about lying.

If you are unregenerate – not a Christian - you will lie because you have a lying nature. Or as Jesus said here to the Pharisees, *you are liars because you are of your father the devil who himself is a liar and the father of lies.* The mouth speaks that which fills the heart. Consequently:

- You will lie to yourself about your own goodness.
- You will lie to God about your intentions and deeds
- You will lie to one another to make yourself look better

You can see how it all began in Genesis 3. Then ultimate answer to a lying tongue is that we need a regenerate heart. We are told to put off lying and deceit. You will not be able to do that unless and until your heart has been changed by God. But even then, even those who are in Christ, still will struggle. James said if you could control your tongue you'd be perfect. So rather than coming at this with an air of self-righteousness, let's admit that it can be a problem for us. Then we can begin to find the victory by God's grace. So let's get started

There are lots of reasons people tell lies.

Some reasons are more wicked than others. But for each reason we have for lying, God has a counter truth that will help us to overcome. We will look at these in descending order. From the most understandable reasons for lying to the most wicked reasons.

#### 1. To Protect Someone Else.

On the surface this seems noble and maybe even sacrificial. The person you want to protect may be innocent and your lie may be viewed as a means to protect them from evil. So you have Rahab's lie to protect the spies hiding on her roof. Or David's wife Michal lying to Saul about David being sick so that she could help him escape Saul's attempt to murder him. Or David lying to the priest Ahimelech in an attempt to protect him from Saul and receive provisions from him. In times of war, deception is used to mislead the enemy as part of accepted biblical war strategy. What did God think about these lies? Honestly, these stories are more stories about God's grace and mercy than they are about the ethics of lying. Lying is never commended in the Bible and it is something we need to understand

God takes very, very seriously. We never find God promoting a lying tongue.

Most of the time when someone lies in order to protect someone else, they are lying to help hide or cover their sin. Achan's family lied for him to protect him from God's wrath, and they were punished because they then shared in his guilt. Sapphira lied to Peter to cover Ananias' sin. Jacobs' sons lied to Jacob to protect each other because they'd sold Joseph into slavery.

As tempted as you may be to lie for another person, when you do, you will only serve to shield them from the hand of God. And I would suggest that you never should come between God and His dealing with another person. Whether God wants to rescue them or discipline them, when you lie for someone else, you do them no favors.

2. For Self-Preservation or because of Fear. Peter lied about knowing Jesus because he was afraid of what they might do to him. Abraham lied twice about the identity of his wife because he cared more about his own skin that he did about hers. The Gibeonites lied about who they were because they feared death and judgment.

Maybe you've lied to because you were afraid. Have you ever had a professor ask *Who in this class believes in the Bible?* And you know by his attitude that anyone who raises their hand is going to face the full fury of his intellectual wrath and be publicly ridiculed. Or in the work place – co-workers can have a way of backing a Christian into a corner and somehow making it seem risky to stand up for the truth. So you can find yourself nodding ascent to something you don't believe.

God has a promise for you when you are afraid of the truth or the consequences of standing

up for the truth. Matthew 5:10-12. *Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

So what does Jesus say? That He won't let that happen to you? No! He says He will bless you when it does happen. So the question you should answer now, before you find yourself in that kind of situation is, are you *willing* to be persecuted and ridiculed for your faith. God wants you to speak the truth – even when it is hard.

3. So that they might personally profit. Jezebel and Ahab lied about Naboth in a public trial so that they could put him to death and steal his vineyard. Ananias and Sapphira lied to the church so that they might receive fame and glory.

People lie all the time so that they might gain something. Politicians lie about their past so they can gain votes. Taxpayers lie about their income and deductions so they can gain financially. Laborers lie on their time cards so they can get credit for work they didn't do. Students lie about their school assignments to bolster their grades.

This kind of lying is motivated by selfishness and self-centeredness. At its heart is an unwillingness to trust God to provide, a blatant discontentment and a belief system that says your happiness is connected to what you have.

But here is the truth. You can't lie to God. It is possible to lie to others and get away with it. But Jesus promised in Luke 12:2-5 *there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. Accordingly, whatever you have said in the*

*dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms will be proclaimed upon the housetops. I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!* He's talking about God.

Listen, you can lie and gain the whole world, but in the end you will forfeit your soul.

#### 4. To Punish Another

Perhaps you see this in the home with your kids sometimes. *He did it!* Why do kids love to see their siblings get in trouble? But of course it's not a child's issue. Potipher's wife lied about Joseph just because she was angry with him for not sleeping with her. She determined to tell a lie to punish him. And there are lots of examples of people lying in trials to secure a guilty verdict against an innocent party. There were false witnesses that accused Stephen of sin, Paul and of course in the greatest act of a false witness uttering lies, there were those who falsely accused Jesus before the Sanhedrin.

You may or may not be guilty of telling gross lies against another person, but have you ever talked about someone you don't like – or someone you're having conflict with – telling certain things about them to put them in a bad light? To bring them down? To cause others to have an unfavorable opinion? We can tell half truths. Or truths out of context. I fear that too often in the church we are guilty of not speaking kindly and charitably about someone else – and we actually twist the Scriptures by claiming that we are *just telling the truth*, when in fact we are looking for ways to subtly punish someone we have conflict with. In

reality we are not speaking the truth, we are uttering lies.

God's solution of course is to resolve our conflicts. If we speak the truth, we are always to do it in love. We are commanded to build up one another and to season our words with salt. Gossip, slander, and back biting have no place among the people of God.

### 5. To Cover Up Our Sins

Some of you are fans of baseball. Right now in major league baseball they are dealing with the ongoing affects of illegal steroid and performance enhancing drug use. If you've followed the story at all you've probably heard some of the 5 year old interview clips where famous star athletes are recorded as answering a direct question, *Have you ever taken steroids or performance enhancing drugs of any kind.* One superstar was arrogant enough to say *I've always been good enough and far enough ahead of everyone else in terms of my performance that I've never needed that kind of thing to be on top.* And now of course, 5 years later, they admit that they were taking at that very time.

But even as we are quick to condemn that kind of blatant lying, as Christians we at least understand. In our sin, our natural defense mechanism is to lie and hide our sins. Adam and Eve hid from God and tried to cover up what they'd done. And so has everyone else since. The Bible is filled with dramatic stories of deceit and elaborates schemes of lying to cover sin.

But again God has a different answer – complete, humble exposure. Proverbs 28:13 says *He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion.*

Psalm 32:5 - *I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord"; And You forgave the guilt of my sin.*

The hardest thing to do is admit our sin. We are capable of going to extraordinary lengths to make sure no one knows. But let me tell you – as long as you hide your sin you will be chained to its evil. Freedom comes when you acknowledge your sin. *Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed.* As you sit here today, I wonder if you are hiding your sin. I'm not suggesting that you stand up and proclaim it to everyone. But God does say that your freedom and forgiveness will come as you confess it to God and acknowledge to those whom you've sinned against or who can help you.

God hates a false witness who utters lies. Would you make a commitment today to tell the truth? God is the one true God and the God who is true. If you are to be like Him, you too will speak nothing but truth.