

The Truth About Lying

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Introduction.

- A. The message of the Bible about sin is not a particularly nuanced one. God's word teaches quite plainly that all sin is evil, that all sin separates us from God, and all sin will cause us to be eternally lost if we continue in it. Now, for most of us, this is not a particularly pleasant message because all of us sin.
- B. To soften the blow, what we do in response is set up our own imagined human hierarchy of sin. The sins that we want to say are most significant are what we put at the top of the hierarchy, and through some strange coincidence, the sins that we tell ourselves are worst are the sins that we aren't actually tempted to commit. If we've never been tempted to commit murder, we're perfectly content to get up on our soapbox and talk all day long about how murderers are wretched and evil and worse than everybody else. By contrast, though, when we consider sins like lust, that just about all of us have been guilty of from time to time, we find a lot more leniency in our hearts. We start thinking to ourselves, "Well, it's not really that bad, and everybody does it, so God must not really have much of a problem with it, right?" We turn sin into something that's OK.
- C. One of the main problem areas where this transformation occurs is in the area of lying. Of all the sins we can think of, this is perhaps the most common. I suspect that every single one of us has lied before, so in our heart of hearts, we want to pretend that lying is OK. We group lies into categories, and claim that some lies are bad, but that "little white lies" are things we're allowed to get away with, and strangely enough, whatever lies we want to tell are the acceptable little white ones. Now, all of that rationalization might help us sleep better at night, but we need to recognize that not a bit of it is true. God doesn't regard lying with any more favor than he regards murder or adultery or any other sin we care to name. This is something each one of us needs to understand and apply in our lives, so this morning, let's look at the truth about lying.

I. Four Truths.

- A. The first truth we have to understand about lying is about its origin. We can believe whatever we want to, but the truth is, **IT IS BORN OF THE DEVIL**. Now, this sounds harsh. It makes lying sound much worse than we want to believe it is, but it is entirely accurate. Look at what Jesus says about lying in John 8:44. Satan is the one who is the father of all lies. That means that when we are moved to lie, it is because of him.
- B. I have to confess that this is a Scripture with particular meaning to me. Truth be told, back when I was in eighth or ninth grade, I was a horrible liar. Every time I was about to get in trouble, I would just do what I could to lie my way out of it. My dad caught me at that one too many times, and he decided he had to do something about it. He didn't spank me or ground me. Instead, he took an index card, wrote John 8:44 on it, and put it on the wall above my desk in my bedroom. Then, he said to me, "Matt, you're a liar. I can't trust you anymore, and I want you to think about that. Every time you are tempted to lie, here's something else I want you to think about. When you lie, you are following the devil's will and doing the devil's work, and you need to think about that until you change. I'm going to leave that index card on your wall until I believe I can trust you again." I did think about that. I thought about it a lot, and pretty soon, I stopped lying.
- C. That's far from everything, though, that the Bible has to say about lying. God's word also reveals that **IT BELONGS TO THE OLD MAN OF SIN**. This is the point that Colossians 3:9 gets across. Here's what Paul is trying to tell us: Before we became Christians, we lived according to our own lusts. We saw something that we wanted to do, and we did it, because we were the ones in control of our lives. By contrast, though, when we become Christians, we give control of our lives over to God, and from then on out, we promise to do only what He wants. Lying doesn't belong to that new person. Lying isn't part of the will of God. Instead, lying is something that we do when we return to the way we used to be and rebel against our Father.
- D. Just as lying belongs to the old man of sin, so too **IT DISTORTS OUR REASON**. This is hard to see, but it may be the most important point of all. You see, the problem is that once we begin lying to others, we also start lying to ourselves, and self-deception is deadly. We start telling ourselves that our motives are pure when in reality we're driven by anger, greed, or lust. We start telling ourselves that the bad things that happen to us are the result of others being unfair when in reality, they are the result of our own bad decisions. We start telling ourselves that we're doing what's right, when in reality we are serving evil.
- E. If we embrace the path of self-deception, not only will we ruin our earthly lives, but we will also destroy our relationship with God. Look at what David writes in Psalm 15:1-2. The only one who can be with God is the one who speaks truth in his heart. It is impossible for us to go to heaven unless we learn to be honest with ourselves in the times when that honesty is most unpleasant. Lying destroys that crucial vision of ourselves.
- F. The Scripture also reveals to us that **LYING ENABLES OUR SIN**. Let's just ask ourselves, folks: When is it that we're tempted to lie? Do we lie in connection with righteousness, in the context of good works that we are proud to claim? Or do we lie when we are about to do evil and want to promote it, or have done evil and

want to cover it up? The fact is, friends, that lying has gone hand-in-hand with other sins for thousands of years. We see an example of this in the story of Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, in 2 Kings 5. Here's what has just happened. Elisha has just cured the leprosy of Naaman the Syrian, and in return, Naaman offers Elisha a reward. Elisha refuses it because he knows that the healing came from God, not from him. Gehazi, though, wants to get his hands on Naaman's treasure, and we see what goes on in his head, starting with 2 Kings 5:20-22. Gehazi's greed, his desire to claim what he has not earned and has no right to, finds its expression in lying. His behavior here is not any morally different than if he had gathered a band of robbers, overwhelmed Naaman and his servants, and taken what he wanted. It was still stealing, and when we use lying to get what we want, we're stealing too. We're stealing someone else's right to make their own decisions.

II. Three More Truths.

- A. When we think about lying, we also need to see that **IT BETRAYS THE TRUST OF OTHERS**. We touched on this earlier, but we need to give it our full attention now. Paul makes this observation in Ephesians 4:25. Here's what he's saying: As Christians, we're like different parts of the same body. We're united, and one of the things that unites us is the trust we have for one another. When we start lying to one another, lying destroys that trust, and it tears the body of the church apart. This is not just true of churches. Families depend on trust. Workplaces depend on trust. Friendships depend on trust. Once any of that trust is severed by lying, none of those things work anymore. That's part of the destructive power of lying.
- B. However, the consequences of lying aren't limited to earth. It is also true that **LYING ENRAGES GOD**. We see this clearly in the story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. This couple had conspired together to sell some property they owned, give part of the proceeds to the church, but lie and say they'd given it all. We learn about the response of the apostle Peter and of God in Acts 5:3-5. Ananias lied to God, and God struck him dead on the spot. Sometimes people get the idea that the God who sent Jesus to die for our sins is too nice to punish evil, but folks, this story happens after Jesus has already gone back to heaven. God hated sin in the first-century church, and He hates it in our church today. The time of miracles is over, of course; I don't think we can expect to see liars struck dead today, but the punishment of God is still inevitable.
- C. This is why our last point about lying is true, which is that **LYING CONDEMNS US TO HELL**. Revelation 21:8 doesn't mince words about this. Back when my sister and I were little, we knew a song about Revelation 21:8 that we used to sing at each other when we thought the other was lying, but this is no laughing matter. God doesn't recognize the category of the little white lie. He doesn't buy into all of our excuses about why we had to lie. Lying is a sin, period, and if we go to the judgment without repenting, it will send us to hell, period.

III. Three Solutions.

- A. All of this makes abundantly clear that lying is spiritually deadly, but this would be a grim sermon indeed if we didn't spend some time looking at how we can solve our problems with lying. I'd like to propose three quick, solutions, and the first of these is **DON'T PRACTICE EVIL**. Remember, friends, we don't lie about things we're proud of. We lie about the nasty little secrets we have that we don't want the person we're talking to to know about. Those secret sins we commit are actually doubly bad. We sin when we practice them, then we sin again when we lie about them. That means that when we get those hidden evils out of our lives, we're killing two birds with one stone. Let's be righteous people. Let's lead lives we don't have to lie about.
- B. A second way we can fight against lying in our lives is to **REMEMBER THE CONSEQUENCES**, not just spiritually, but physically. One of the problems with lying is that lying is almost never a solution to the problem. It is only a postponement. We might get away with the lie for now, but down the road, we are likely to have to deal with consequences that are much more painful than if we'd just told the truth in the first place.
- C. Let's look at this in an example familiar to every married man here. You're getting ready to go to a nice party, you're five minutes late already, and the wife comes out of the bedroom in a dress and asks, "How does this make me look?" You love your wife, but you think the dress makes her look like a bag lady. If you tell her so, you're afraid that she'll get all hurt and mad, and besides, you know that if you tell her you don't like it, she'll go back in, spend another 15 minutes putting on another dress, and then you'll REALLY be late. So you lie.
- D. What happens because of that lie? Well, first of all, because of your selfishness, your wife is now going out in public dressed like a bag lady. It matters to her to look nice, but you've just flushed that down the toilet because you didn't have the guts to tell the truth. Sounds like the way Christ loved the church, doesn't it?
- E. Worse, still, what if someone at the party, whether from love or malice, does have the guts to tell the truth? Then, your wife comes home in tears and demands, "Why didn't you TELL me I look horrible?" Then, you either have a REALLY unpleasant conversation, or you lie again, which may not be believed in any case. And all that mess is just from a "little white lie". What happens when we lie about something important?
- F. The third and most important way that we can win our battle with lying, though, is to **LOOK TO GOD FOR HELP**. Maybe we're ingrained liars. Maybe the battle is too tough for us to win on our own. However bad it is, though, it isn't too tough for God to win. If we turn to Him and ask for His aid, He will give us all we need.

Conclusion. If you don't feel like you have that kind of relationship with God, now is the time to change it.