

Colossians 4:6, LD 43 Sermon

Possible intro: Pilate's question to Jesus, **What is truth?** Rings out all the louder.

2018 Article of the Scientific American they begin asking, "Is truth an outdated concept?" Go on to quote the 2005 word of the year, "Truthiness." A word created by Talk Show host Steven Colbert that means "The truth we want to exist."

In 2016, one of the final words in contention for word of the year was "Post-truth" referring to a culture where objective fact is no longer viewed as important as feeling and perception.

The intriguing thing about this article is that it was written in a scientific journal written by atheists. They actually had a quote that showed how people attacked the idea of discovering truth by rational thought as "a hegemonic weapon or patriarchal oppression."

Remarkable in today's culture. People say the same things about the Bible! Hegemonic weapon of patriarchal oppression. The goal was to defend objective truth in a scientific world – the funny thing is that they had to write an ad to do so. The relativism of our world was so great that a scientific journal had to put pen to paper saying, Don't listen to the "extraordinary popular delusions, and the madness of crowds."

Against all this Jesus stands and says two things, key for us today. First, **I am the truth.** Second – **don't bear false witness.** Be children of truth.

High calling!

Challenge: what would you rather do: tame a wild lion? Or apply this sermon? Easier to tame a wild lion, or charm a snake, than to apply this sermon.

Reason its tough to tame the tongue, is because before you tame the tongue, you have to tame the heart. Jesus says "Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks." (Mt. 12:34?) Before you say something that's unkind about someone, you think something that is unkind about someone. Before you respond in anger to what someone has said, you assume that what they are saying was said in a certain spirit. So before you say anything you have assumptions that need to be changed in order to speak in a way that honours the Lord.

And the idea in the Bible about taming the tongue and learning how to curb our language is that we don't always speak the first thing that comes to mind. We don't always show our emotions The British – more reserved. They learn how to control their expressions. Why? Because they know that what is inside, that wants to come out, is not always wise and not always good. So they learn to think before they speak, and be swift to hear and slow to speak and slow to anger.

The reason that is a discipline, and the reason that is something we need to obey and work on is because it is an outflow of an understanding that our hearst are duplicitous and our minds are not always kind. Because of that we have to curb the expression of what we think lest we hurt others by the evil that lies within our own hearts.

That comes out specifically in this command in the idea of not bearing false witness. But as every command has negative it also has a positive, and that is that we need to use our words to impart grace to those who hear us. IN the words of Ephesians 4 edify those around us. That is not only for the Christian, but whoever we deal with, whether they know Christ or they don't. We need to speak in a way to impart grace to them, and of course Col. 4 is in the context of a non-believer. We want to impart grace to those we speak to who don't know God through the words we choose and the way we choose them. 4 Points

1. What it means
2. How we fall short
3. How Christ fulfills
4. How we grow in grace in this regard

1. What it means

Command calls for truth, and truthfulness. This is a constant category ascribed to Christians in the Bible. They follow the One who is the **way, the truth and the life.** Jesus Christ. They are now **of the truth**, and they are to be characterized by truth.

We generally think of sin, and great sin, as things like murder, or adultery, or blasphemy – and those are great sins. But the concept of lying has a prominent place in the Bible.

When Jesus is teaching about Himself, the Pharisees rejected Him, and this is what Jesus said to them in John 8:43. **Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. Hew as 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 (out of his own character) for he is a liar and the father of lies.**

Pretty extreme picture painted there. To think of one of the primary characteristics of the devil being that he is a liar. And we know the power of lies in Scripture, don't we. It was the lies of the devil that lead Adam and Eve to rebel against God – deny Him, and serve the devil when they thought they were just satisfying themselves.

When the devil comes with his accusations, he comes with his lies – his half truths. He quotes the Bible to Jesus, but never truly, never rightly, only in his twisted, lying way. He is beautifully pictured in the Lord of the Rings character, Wormtongue. Wormtongue is a servant of the enemy who comes as a helpful advisor to a good king. But by whispering lies into his ear, he corrupts the king, and destroys the king, making him old and weak, making him lose sight of hope, until the light shines in the midst of the darkness, and the lies melt into shadow before the coming of the truth.

Lies are significant. Revelation 21:8 **The cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire...which is the second death.**

Rev. 22:15 **Outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters and whoever loves and practices a lie.**

The distortion of truth, whether through exaggeration, or omission of information, or outright lies, is to use the tools of the enemy. Hence God calls us to **put away lying, so that each one may speak truth to his neighbour for we are members of one another.**

What does it mean? Don't be someone who promotes deceit, lies, with your mouth. Be one who stands for truth, and integrity.

Practically, of course, this means we don't tell lies. We don't become *mean* of course. I read a book once, non-Christian book, about different cultures in the world. Spoke of hot weather and cold weather cultures – Canada is a COLD weather culture. Hot weather – prioritize relationship, and peaceful conversation, and do that more than efficiency and even truth. Cold weather cultures prioritize truth and efficiency, not so much relationship.

Example – hot culture – love your hair, even if they don't. Cold culture – Dutch – it makes your face look fat. Don't mean to be rude, they would appreciate hearing that if they were asking. Tell it like it is!

Not be rude. Quote from Eph. 4:15 coins the phrase that is so important in this regard **Speaking the truth in love.**

But be truthful.

Bible doesn't just speak of truthfulness though, it speaks also of gossip. Town talebearer was once confronted for her gossip – she responded, "I never gossip – everything I share is true."

Pr. 11:13 – A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret.

Pr. 16:28 – A perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends.

Pr. 26:20 – Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down.

Nothing wrong with conversation! But if our conversation is tearing down others, creating walls between people, repeating conflict and trouble and making things worse – we are sinning, whether we are speaking the truth or not. We are breaking the ninth commandment.

Not only what we say, but also how we hear. Twist no one's words, condemn someone rashly without a hearing. Effects how we listen. That we are to listen in such a way, and take someone's words in such a way that we don't make them worse than they are – we don't twist them to make them sound bad.

That, certainly, is part of gossip. To retell the story, but with an emphasis that puts someone in a little poorer light. Don't twist words – don't you love this brother or sister? Don't repeat what they've said that was bad, and in speaking with someone don't take the worst spin or slant on what they are saying. Always give the judgment of charity, the judgement of grace. Presume the best.

So the command affects how we speak, and it affects how we listen.

But it also positively affects our speech – the idea in the Catechism of doing what we can to defend and advance my neighbour's honour and reputation.

If you were here last week we mentioned briefly, in connection with the command to steal, that God calls us to have a care for our neighbour. If we find our neighbour's goat wandering in the field, for example, we can't take it as our own. We are commanded by God to care for that goat so we can return it, in good health, to our neighbour.

A positive side. Here also – we actively have a care for the reputation and name of those around us. We proactively guard the reputation of others.

This doesn't mean we lie about them! If we are a reference for someone, and we know them to be lazy and unwilling to work, we don't say, "Well I must advance my neighbour's reputation" so we tell the job they are hardworking and diligent. That is not the idea. But the idea is that we look for opportunities to fight against gossip, or uncharitable talk, and when people practice these things in front of us – we stand up for love. We defend, and we promote their good. We tell people to stop gossiping.

And to remain silent while someone else is being bashed – through gossip – even if it has a kernel of truth – or through outright lies, that is to participate in the sin.

Imparts GRACE, and is with grace. Undeserved kindness. God's riches at Christ's expense. Towards OUTSIDERS – insiders as well – Eph. 4:29 **Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification that it may impart grace to the hearers.**

Think – will my words (are my words) imparting grace to others. Remarkable – shows how truth functions. Not just truth – but truth that imparts grace.

Words seasoned with salt. Why do you put salt on food? Make it taste a little better! Bring out the positive flavours. Grace should bring out the positive in your speech and in your discussions.

Great challenge for our words. Think of our speech and ask – how can I put salt on it? How can I include gracious thoughts that will help the language and message be more edifying – more glorifying to God?

Reflect on conversations with that kind of a focus – work on it in the future.

2. **How do we fall short?**

Speak without thought. Words to attack. Love the words of James on this score **With the tongue we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men who have been made in the image of God – out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. MY brethren these things ought not to be so.**

Tell lies to make ourselves feel better. Twist words to make our arguments appear stronger (even with non-Christians!). Put worst slant on someone else's actions so we have an excuse for our own inappropriate behaviour.

In all these things we break the command.

3. **How Christ fulfills**

Few neat places to look in the Bible. The temptations of Jesus. The devil comes with his twisted quotations of Scripture. Jesus meets him with truth.

That was for you. He endured temptation *for you*. Jesus didn't have to listen to the lies of the devil. He wasn't subject to temptation in Himself. But He became man, so that He might be tempted in all ways as we are (Hebrews 4:15) **yet is without sin**. He met every temptation with truth so that He could be the spotless Lamb of God – slain before the foundation of the world.

Victor over the lies of the devil when He stands at the right hand of God to intercede for you. Zechariah 3, the tempter stands by to **accuse Joshua**. And the Messenger of the Lord speaks out, and the LORD says **"The LORD rebuke you Satan! IS this not a brand plucked from the fire?"**

How does Christ fulfill? Identity in Christ. Devil comes along to challenge what God has done. And Jesus won't let the lies win out. **Romans 8 – Who can bring a charge against God's elect, it is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is ever at the right hand of God who also makes intercession for us. Who [then] shall separate us from the love of Christ?**

Defends His people with truth. Sometimes we think we have to *fear* truth. Adam and Eve, we sin, we feel guilty, and we hide our sin. But you don't need to hide your sin anymore. We are children of light and we can let our deeds and our thoughts, and our words see the light, because Christ has paid it all.

Devil bring his lies – this is who they *are*! Jesus cries out from the right hand of the Father – no, this is what they *were*. **But they were washed, they were sanctified, they were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.**

How else? (point 4 – Spirit of truth to lead us into all truth. To bring to mind all that Christ has taught us.) Truth is the joy of the Christian because it is into truth that we are to grow.

And we can't separate the Capital T truth – the Bible – through the Spirit, from a life of TRUTH – still capital T. Truthfulness, following the One who is the truth.

Lies hide sin, and they hide the truth of God's word to us. When we hide our sin, and lie about it, and conceal it from God. The devil doesn't just want us to do that because it leaves us feeling dirty, or guilty. He wants us doing that because when we hide from the ONE who is truth we hide from ALL His truth. The truth of His mercy. The truth of His forgiveness.

Grow in it – through knowing the truth of the Gospel, rejecting the lies of the devil.

More – knew **how to answer each one**. Dr. Zack Eswine – categories of hearers. Went through the Proverbs gathering Proverbs on the *simple (naïve)*, *the fool*, and *the scoffer*. Progression – saw this in Jesus dealing with people. The simple (woman at the well), He is kind and gentle. The fool, He will not speak much with – words are wasted. But He will ask questions to make them think about things for themselves, and will use parables because they won't hear a direct rebuke. Scoffer – WOE TO YOU!

Freeing us to be honest men and honest women. Not allowing slander because we know what that does – to identify someone by their weakness – to remind someone of their sins – or to remind others of someone else's sins – that's the devil's work. God won't do that to you. Don't you to others.

To protect – not with lies – but with truth. New creations. To identify and view people in such a light. Beautiful thing.