

Lying is not for You, Christian

Ephesians 4:25

Halifax: 16 March 2008

Introduction

Last week I showed you how coming to Christ changes your whole life from the very roots so that you live in an entirely different way than those who are outside of Christ...

- Rather than walking in the futility of your mind,
 - You now walk in the truth...
 - You put off the old man and put on the new man that is created in true righteousness and holiness.
 - You whole direction changes.

But you must understand what we are taught as we move on into verse 25 today...

- The change that comes to a believer is not in the abstract...
 - It affects your life in very specific and concrete ways...
 - There is a replacement of the old way that grows corrupt with the new way that grows to be more and more and more like Christ.
 - v. 25> You put off lying on put on truth telling.
 - v. 26> You put off sinful anger and put on reconciliation.
 - v. 28> You put off theft and you put on hard work and generosity.
 - v. 29> You put off rotten speaking and put on words that edify.
 - v. 31> You put off hatred and put on love
- It is not just that you quit doing wrong, but it is that you start doing what is right.
 - You have not really changed until you become the opposite of what you were...
 - A thief who has not yet learned to give is still a thief even though he might not be actively stealing...he is just between jobs.
- I believe it will do us much good to look closely at some of these specific changes that are to be taking place in our lives as believers...
 - If you belong to Christ, these wonderful changes are changes that you are to make in your life by the grace of God that is now working in you.
 - We are going to take them up one at a time...
 - This week, we are going to look at verse 25 about putting away lying and putting on truth telling—
 - next week we will look at putting away sinful anger—and so forth...

- I want to encourage you to look on these calls to change not with the eyes of despair, but with the eyes of hope...
 - that this is the abundant life that Christ has for you to walk in—
 - It is the life that He brings you into through His saving grace when you trust in Him!
 - The goal is not to beat you down, but to raise your hope that by His grace and power,
 - the new life described here is a life for you!

You will notice that verse 25 begins with the word **therefore!**

- Paul is tying this to what he has just been talking about...
 - **Therefore**, because you have learned Christ and been taught by Him so that your whole life has been turned in a new direction...
 - putting away lying, let each of you speak truth with his neighbour....

I. Paul shows that putting away lying is something that goes along with your conversion to Jesus Christ.

- A. He seems to indicate that lying is a part of every person's life who is outside of Jesus Christ...
1. He does not say, "If you were a liar when you were a Gentile,"
 - but rather "Putting away lying,"
 - as if this was something that they all had before conversion.

TRANS> This is most certainly the case...

2. Before a person is converted he is, at his very core, a desperate liar.
 - a. Don't misunderstand...
 - I don't mean to say that every one who is not a Christian cannot be trusted in business or relied on to keep their promises.
 - There are some whose word is as good as gold in their dealings with others...
 - In fact, some of them, I am ashamed to say, outshine those who name the name of Christ...
 - A business man in the Bible once told me that often those who advertised themselves as a Christian business were the ones he had to watch out for...
 - If he saw verses quoted on their business card or the fish symbol, it was all too often the mark of an unscrupulous man.

TRANS> But however honest those without Christ may be,

b. There is something fundamentally false about every one of them...

- In short, they have not believed that testimony that God has given concerning His Son...
 - that is, assuming that they have heard the gospel...
- And even if they have not heard, they are still necessarily a liars at heart...
 - otherwise, they would be unable to live...
- If a sinner accepts even what natural revelation teaches about God and about himself through...
 - He would be swallowed up in utter despair and terror.
 - We all share a certain dishonesty that denies what, if we were honest, we know to be true.

B. And until an individual finds mercy in Christ, he tries to cope with the truth by taking refuge in lies...

- There are two ways you try to comfort yourself by believing lies:

1. First, you try to change the truth about God...

- You simply cannot deal with a god who has appointed a day when He will swallow up every human being who knows not Christ in His fiery wrath...
 - Israel was unable to bear even a vision of God's holiness at Sinai...
 - and that even when they had His promise of forgiveness held forth to them in the sacrifices He had appointed for them.
- This is the root of idolatry...
 - All their life long, men ease their minds about God's judgement by pretending that God is something different than He is...
 - They make up gods according to their own fancy because they cannot bear to think about God as He is...
 - Sometimes, they even go so far in their denials that they actually say there is not god...
 - They actually dream that they are somehow self-created...
 - But even if they do not go to this extreme,
 - they all concoct lies about Him—
 - either that He is totally detached and has little interest in us...

- or that He is corrupt like we are and so is not bothered much by our corruption...
- They say things like,
 - “God would never send anyone to Hell” or
 - “I think God is in all of us—in the good things we do...”
 - Well did John Calvin comment,
 - “The human heart is an idol factory.”

TRANS> Outside of Christ, you would all change the truth about God and believe a lie...

- It is the only way you are able to cope...
- 2. And secondly, you not only change the truth about God, but you change the truth about yourself...
 - a. In particular you deny the truth about your sinfulness.
 - You do not accept the original sin that lies deep in your heart until God’s Spirit comes and lays you bear...
 - We do not confess the depths of our selfishness, our covetousness, our ingratitude, our hardness of heart toward God, our wicked and perverted desires, our malice and envy—
 - Yes, even after conversion, though there is a general acceptance of our depravity, there is still much resistance to admit what we really are.
 - b. Religious people who are outside of true faith are the worst at doing this...
 - They sometimes even take God’s law and claim that they are keeping it...
 - “I never killed anyone, they say... I never committed adultery”
 - And they completely ignore the fact that it is the Lord who gave the commandments...
 - the Lord, who sees not only our outward actions, but the very thoughts and intents of the heart!
 - What a cesspool!
 - c. But there are others who are arguably even more deniers of the truth of their own condition...
 - There are those who break the commandments even in the letter and claim all the while that they have a good heart and mean well!
 - This is a very great deception!

- They claim that what I called the cesspool of the human heart is a pristine fountain of purity!

TRANS> The only refuge that those outside of Christ have is a refuge of lies—whatever form it may take...

- It is in lies about God and lies about themselves that they find comfort...
 - It is by lying that they cope with the truth...
 - This is so much a part of us that the Bible says we come from the womb speaking lies.

II. But there is a radical change in your attitude to the truth that comes about when you come to Christ.

A. The truth that was once your very worst nightmare...

- The truth that you lived to avoid—
- The truth **from** which you continually sought refuge
 - now becomes the very place you **find** refuge
 - Truth, which once terrified you, becomes your greatest comfort!

1. As the Heidelberg Catechism so beautifully expresses it:

- Question 1: What is thy only comfort in life and death?
- The Answer?
 - That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ; who, with his precious blood, has fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation, and therefore, by his Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto him.
- a. Oh consider what you have in Jesus Christ if you are a believer!
 - You have the absolute and complete forgiveness of sins—
 - What could be more certain to us, though our sins be as many as the stars of heaven,
 - than that the One who is God's Son, having poured out His life as an offering for those sins,
 - has fully atoned for every last one.
 - What could be more certain of obtaining God's pardon?
 - And not only that,

- But when we consider that He was willing to go to such extreme lengths to secure our pardon,
 - can we not also be certain He will complete His work in us to purify us and to make us holy?
 - Can we not be certain that He who did not spare His only Son for us will freely give us all things?

- b. With Christ as your Saviour, there is no more need to take refuge in lies...
 - You don't need to deny the holiness of God.
 - You have no reason to deny your sin...
 - You have a perfect Saviour who guarantees complete salvation to you, and whose promises were confirmed when God raised Him from the dead.
 - This is the truth about Jesus Christ!
 - Truth once condemned you, but now, after God has opened your eyes to the truth of what Jesus has done, the truth sets you free!

TRANS> Now you can see why the scripture refers to salvation as it does...

2. Conversion is often referred to simply as “coming to the knowledge of the truth.”
 - or as believing the truth or as receiving the truth.
 - In Christian conversion, God effectually calls us to come to Him by sending His Holy Spirit to us...
 - The Holy Spirit is the one who forces the truth upon us so that we see clearly our need of Christ as well as God's rich provision in Christ.
 - Then we are constrained to come to Christ and believe.
 - We have no alternative!
 - Clearly, we see there is nowhere else to go—
 - He has the words of eternal life, and there is nothing else that can satisfy a spiritually awakened sinner.
 - There is no merit in it—
 - Once you understand that you are drowning and that there is a life line that has been thrown to you,
 - what else can you do but reach out and take it?
 - Once you have been awakened to the truth that is in Jesus,
 - You come to delight in the fact that God is pure and holy,

- and you almost joyfully admit what you are in your sin because you see that God saves you...
- There is laughter that salvation should be provided for one so loathsome as you.
 - It is so marvellous—
 - The truth is now your friend.

TRANS> A Christian, therefore, is one who has turned from lies to live in the truth!

- He has turned (or perhaps I should say, “been turned”) from a refuge of lies to a refuge of Christ who is truth.

B. This complete change in your attitude to the truth causes you to behave differently toward the truth.

1. Of course it does...if the truth has become something you are now drawn toward—

- if it has become that which comforts you and saves you and gives you hope,
- it is going to have a profound effect on your walk—on the way you live.

2. It causes you to become one such as Paul describes in Ephesians 4:25—

a. One who may be described as:

- “putting away lying,” and as “speaking the truth with your neighbour.”

b. Obviously, the more you lay hold of the comfort that is found in the truth...

- the more you see in the gospel the depth and breath and height of the love of Christ...

- The more you will learn to speak the truth.

- Your new attitude toward the truth will show itself more and more in your walk—in your conduct toward those around you...

- You will take less and less refuge in lies and more and more refuge in truth...

- Instead of making excuses and trying to justify yourself, you will learn to freely confess what you have done in hope.

- You will become what Martin Luther called a bold sinner...

- Not that you will sin more—but that you will more freely admit it when you do sin.

- Instead of coping with what you don't like by denying it, you will cope with it by telling the truth about it.

- Instead of suppressing the truth, you will be found confessing the truth.
- And this will affect you right down to the very details of your life.

TRANS> But of course the change is not perfected all at once...

- There is a turn around in your attitude to the truth and in your behaviour regarding the truth as soon as you come to Christ...

III. But putting away lying is a life-long process...

A. You need to see that the old way of coping is deeply ingrained in your very roots...

1. What I mean is, resorting to lies is something that comes very naturally to us.

- We are part of a fallen human race for whom this is second nature...
- Paul has to admonish us, even after we are converted, to put away lying and to speak the truth...
 - because we often resort to our old way of lying to cope with whatever we don't like...
 - It is still easy for us to distort the truth about God—to make Him less holy or less pure...
 - It is still easy to flatter ourselves—
 - If you are a believer, you are at last able to confess your sins, because you know there is mercy in Christ...
 - but you often deny them at first...
 - It's still a struggle.
 - You men,
 - Don't you find it hard when you have been negligent to your children to go to them and confess your sin?
 - Or when you have been unrighteous in your anger toward your wife, to go to her and ask her to forgive you?
 - Don't you want to pretend you never did wrong at all?
 - That's the old way.
 - That's the way of taking refuge in lies...
 - That's what Paul is telling you to put away from you...
 - You women, you children, is it not the same for you?

- When you have done wrong, isn't it often your first reaction to justify yourself—to make excuses?
 - to say,
 - “not me, I was not gossiping—I was just sharing...
 - “not me, I was not unfriendly—that person was too hard to talk too... or I am just shy...
 - “not me, I was not wasting my time... I was just doing research on the internet.”

TRANS> This method of coping by telling lies is so deeply ingrained in us that we have to consciously put away our lying as a way of coping with what we don't like.

2. Let me illustrate this for you with some examples...

- a. First take Joe—Joe did not like the truth that is all terrain vehicle's transmission was about to go...
 - When Joe took his ATV in for service, he was feeling a little sorry for himself because his money had been a little tight.
 - Then when the mechanic, who has a very sharp eye for such things, told him that the transmission was starting to fail, Joe really felt sorry for himself...
 - He decided to sell his ATV...
 - and of course he wanted to get as much as he could for it...
 - He wished it did not have a bad transmission because then he could sell it for a better price...
 - Now what do you suppose Joe did when a buyer came?
 - Joe knew about the faulty transmission, but he also knew that most people—probably even most mechanics—would not be able to tell...
 - So Joe said nothing about it other than that it had been working great up until that time...
 - That was true, wasn't it?
 - Joe was not lying, he was just not telling everything he knew!
 - But you see Joe ought to have told in such a situation.
 - He knew something was wrong and he should have let the buyer know what he knew.
 - Joe was taking refuge in a lie—
 - He did not like the truth, so he hid the truth!

- Now there are times when it is proper to hide the truth,
 - a general does not have to tell the enemy army what his strategy is...
 - but this was not one of those times.
 - Joe needs to trust the Lord to give him what he needs.
 - You see, the problem here is that Joe didn't like the portion that the Lord was giving him...
 - and so, instead of going to work a little extra, or learning to budget and rejoice in having less when God so orders it,
 - Joe turned to the old way of lies.
 - He should know that His heavenly Father only gives what is best for him as his child!
- b. Robert did a similar thing...
- 1) He had been out looking for a new job as a machinist, and it wasn't going very well.
 - But there was this really great job for a small company that had great pay and great benefits.
 - The only problem was, Robert was afraid that he might not be fully qualified for the position.
 - When he went to the interview,
 - he found himself exaggerating a little about his experience and skills—he started to correct himself, but was hesitant to do so—
 - he might appear dishonest...
 - 2) You see how easy it is to slip into lying...
 - Perhaps you feel a little inadequate or a little inferior...
 - so you exaggerate about your past achievements or your skills or whatever...
 - Instead you should rejoice in what God has given you and learn to use whatever experience and skill He has given to you for His glory.
 - You are not God, and you cannot change the truth by lying about it—but that is just what you are trying to do.
 - 3) Let me tell you what happened with Robert.

- He was put on his first job and it was a little over his head...
 - He was unsure about a couple of procedures, but he did not want to ask because then he would betray his lie...
 - He prayed and everything turned out okay—he was greatly relieved.
 - But then the next job came along...
 - This one involved a piece of equipment that was worth fifteen thousand dollars.
 - Robert went to work, and once again, he came to a point where he was unsure about what to do...
 - but how could he ask now?
 - With much prayer, he guesses...
 - The machine is switched on and suddenly there is a terrible grinding noise inside.
 - Roberts work had failed...
- 4) Once you tell the first lie, you get yourself into a snare from which you cannot escape...
- But why would you want to have a job if God has not given it to you?
 - Robert wanted that job...
 - If he had told the truth, the Lord might have given it to him anyway—and then he could have done it with a good conscience—
 - he could have asked questions when he needed to.
 - Robert forgot that he is reconciled to the living God through Jesus Christ...
 - Instead of loving the truth, he thought he could gain something by telling lies.
- c. Then there is Julie...
- 1) Julie is just the opposite of Robert...
- The club Julie is in needed a secretary, but Julie insisted that her writing skills were very poor.
 - The truth is, she is an excellent writer...
 - The truth is, she did not want to take on the job...
 - Instead of just saying so, she resorted to a lie.

- 2) Here again, Julie did not like the circumstances her heavenly Father had put her in...
 - So instead of loving truth—the very truth that set her free in Christ—she resorted to lies.
- d. Next consider Tim...
- 1) Tim is trying to ascertain if he is called to the ministry...
 - He preached in a Sunday school class at church and everyone went on and on about how great it was—
 - they didn't really think it was that great, but they wanted to encourage him.
 - 2) But with all the positive feedback, Tim decided to terminate his pursuit of a career in engineering and go into the ministry.
 - He spent four years in seminary while under the care of presbytery...
 - The presbytery—except for one presbyter who was known to be hard to please,
 - all spoke very highly of Tim's preaching and progress as a student...
 - They didn't really think what they spoke, but they did not want to discourage him.
 - 3) Tim began to seek a call, but no church ever called him...
 - Here he had spent four of the best years of his life preparing for something that he was not gifted by God to do...
 - His own well-meaning friends had deceived him.
 - They did not like to be in the awkward position of having to tell him that he did not have the gifts of ministry...
 - so instead of trusting God with the truth, they resorted to lies.

TRANS> These illustrations show how easy it is for us to live in a way that is quite inconsistent with our calling in Jesus Christ.

- We are so used to dealing with our problems by this method of deception that we will be in need of Paul's exhortation for the rest of our lives...
 - “putting away lying, let each of you speak truth to His neighbour.”
 - It's something you have to keep on working at...
 - We need all the help we can get...
 - Paul knows that...

- B. So now I want you to see the additional reason he gives us to put away lying...
- He says we should each speak the truth to our neighbour because we are members of one another.
1. I call this an **additional** reason, because, as we have already seen,
- the main reason for putting away lying and speaking the truth is because of the new life we have in Jesus Christ...
 - because we are now friends with the truth instead of enemies of the truth...
 - because while the truth once condemned us, now, it sets us free...
 - That is the main reason for putting away lying and speaking the truth,
 - But knowing the struggle we still have with lying,
 - Paul gives us this additional reason to help us turn away from it...
- a. But what is this additional reason?
- 1) What does he mean when he says we are members of one another?
 - He means that we are tied together with each other as neighbours...
 - God has made us social, covenantal beings, so that our lives are bound up together.
 - What one person does effects others who are members with him in society...
 - We are tied together with members of our family—
 - if you don't do your work in the home, you deprive the whole family of that labour...
 - If you are hard to get along with, you burden the other members...
 - In the same way, we are members in the church—
 - whether we look at the worldwide church or at the local congregation...
 - we are tied together with each other
 - Likewise,
 - we are members of a nation—fellow citizens—we are bound up together and if we commit a crime, it is a crime against the whole municipality or even the nation if it is a federal offence.

- 2) As Christians, we are, of course, supposed to love our neighbour as ourselves.
 - We are honour the fact that God has put us together as families and churches and nations...
 - And we are to love the other members of the society.
 - b. Paul is reminding us in this place that lies are destructive to our neighbour because we are members of one another...
 - That is why we ought to tell the truth.
 - How wrong it is for us to do what is destructive to our neighbour when Christ came and did so much good for us as our neighbour!
 - If He has redeemed you, who are you to go and tell harmful lies to your neighbour?
 - God has bound us together as families and churches and nations in order that we might do good to each other...
 - but it is our great sin that we take what ought to be for good and use it to do evil!
 - This is great wickedness.
2. How do lies bring harm to others?
- a. First of all, they do so in a very general way—
 - When we tell lies, we influence our neighbours to continue to live in the way of the fall—
 - to cope by resorting to falsehood...
 - Lying is so much a part of us that the Bible says we come from the womb speaking lies...
 - We often point out to people who try to deny the problem of lying that nobody has to teach little children to lie...
 - That is true enough, but it is also true that we do teach them to lies...
 - We are members of one another—we are together in families and together in churches and together in cities and nations...
 - and there are lies that all the members share in...
 - Let a pastor come and start to deny the infallibility of the scriptures and see how quickly the bulk of the congregation will follow him.
 - Let parents worship idols and their children will embrace their idols.

- Let a nation decide that something as violent and degrading as aborting our own children is okay and see how quickly people will embrace it.
 - What are we to do in these situations?
 - We are members of one another... we are to speak the truth in all our societies for the good of the whole...
 - Let us speak up when we hear lies!
 - The exhortation is not only to refrain from lies—but also to speak the truth!
 - Don't let the lie stand in your presence if there is opportunity to speak to it!
- b. Secondly, lies are destructive to our neighbour in very personal ways—
- 1) Consider the examples I gave you before...
 - a) Robert was a member of the machine shop he went to work for...
 - He not only brought financial loss to the company, but also damaged their reputation.
 - His actions will affect the owners as well as all the rest of the employees...
 - I may even lead to lay offs because of lost work.
 - Robert lied in the excitement of getting a new job—
 - He acted in utter disregard of his neighbour.
 - b) And of course Joe certainly was far from loving his neighbour as himself when he sold the defective ATV to his neighbour!
 - c) And then there was Tim...
 - Everyone thought they were being nice to him when they told him how great his preaching was...
 - but in fact they were bringing much harm to him...
 - He will either have to go back to school to get training for something else, or just try to get whatever job he can...
 - Five years were wasted because of the lies of friends.]
 - As fellow church members, they should have cared enough to tell Tim the truth.
 - Sometimes we are more worried about being nice than we are about being honest...

- It's hard to see a parent making a lot of mistakes in their parenting,
 - and its even harder to go to them to talk to them about it...
 - but we are members of one another and you are to speak the truth!
- 2) But now let me give you an example that shows how even an unintentional lie can cause great harm to a neighbour...
- Mrs. Watson was stopping by to return a casserole dish to a young mother in the church who was the wife of a ministry student.
 - As she made her way up the sidewalk, she was shocked to hear the children screaming in terror...
 - with Laura, their mother screaming after them...
 - "I'll tear your arms and legs off and roast you in the fire place."
 - Horrified, Mrs. Watson turned without going to the door and went immediately to speak to the pastor...
 - "It was awful, the children were so frightened, I've never heard a mother speak to her own children like that... I didn't know what to do."
 - The pastor assured her that he would notify the session and that they would keep an eye on things.
 - She told him what had happened and the pastor assured her that he would keep an eye on things...
 - Later that week, the pastor had a brief visit with Don, Laura's husband...
 - He asked him if everything was okay with he and Laura and the children...
 - "He didn't seem to know anything about it," he explained to the elders. "I didn't know what else to say."
 - One of the elders spoke to two families in his district and asked them if they had seen any problems...
 - They were attending a bible study on parenting that Don was leading.
 - Both families informed Don that they did not wish to continue as their schedules were quite busy.
 - Don and Laurie could tell that something was wrong—everyone seemed funny around them—
 - and the session suggested that Don take a little break from preaching for a while.

- A few weeks later, Laura called Mrs. Watson to ask if she would baby sit...
 - Mrs Watson, after speaking to her husband, decided that it might be good—maybe she could help...
 - While she was there, it was time for the children’s naps...
 - With much enthusiasm, little Tina began to tell Mrs. Watson about what their mother did to help them wake up after their nap.
 - “She pretends that she is the big bad wolf and she says, ‘I’ll tear your arms and limbs off and roast you in the fire.’”
 - Mrs. Watson was struck with shame!
 - Unwittingly, she has spread a lie throughout the whole church...
 - What should she have done? What should the pastor have told her to do when she spoke to him?
 - She should have gone to Laura to ask her about it...
 - Then the whole thing could have been resolved.
 - How careful we need to be to make sure that we always speak the truth—for we are members of one another.
- c. And now in closing I want to show you how lies are destructive because they make us cold toward our neighbour.
- Seven year old Junior accidentally threw a rock through the window...
 - When his parents asked him about it, he lied and said that he had not done it.
 - Instead of using God’s way of repentance to deal with the problem, Junior took refuge in a lie.
 - After this, Junior began to become bitter toward his parents—sort of cold and disrespectful...
 - Church became boring to him and he did not get much out of family worship.
 - I’ll tell you why...
 - When you tell a lie, it is a sin that divides you from those you lie to.
 - The problem is, if you were successful—if they believed the lie—then they don’t know that you sinned against them...
 - so they will not be able to call you to repentance as they do when you do something that they can see...

- Your relationship with them is broken until **you** repent, and so is your relationship with God...
- He does not supply you with His grace and things will only get worse and worse until at last you repent.
- God does this because He loves you—He chastens you to bring you to repentance...
- But the bad thing about lies is that you keep the sin going until you admit what you have done.