

Walk Honestly

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Bible Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

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1 Thessalonians 4:12. I'm going to read verse 11 and then when we get to verse 12, I'd like for us to read verse 12 together in unison. So be ready there at verse 12. I'm going to start reading in verse 11. 1 Thessalonians 4, I'm going to start reading in verse 11, when we get to 12, let's read that together. Verse 11 says this, "And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business," boy, there's a sermon right there in that statement, huh? I'd give invitation right there and we might have revival. Mind your own business. "Do your own business, and to work with your own hands," wow, "as we commanded you." Now verse 12 all together, read it with me, "That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing."

Walk honestly. A month or so ago, we just started and I didn't intend for it to become a little series but we started preaching on the walk of the Christian life and we looked at different statements in the Bible where it tells us that as a Christian we are to walk certain ways and if you remember, we had a message on we are to walk by faith and not by sight and we talked about trusting God, what God tells us in his word, we trust him, we have faith in God thus we follow his instructions because we have faith in him. That's walking by faith. Then we talked about in Ephesians we are to walk in love and to follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ and mimic him and how he showed love to people and compassion. Then we talked about walking as children of light. Then we also had one walking in wisdom. Walking in wisdom. I didn't intend to continue on in that but a week or so ago, I was studying through 1 Thessalonians and came across this statement once again, "Walk honestly." Walk honestly. I want to speak this morning about walking honestly.

We didn't pray, did we? No, let's pray. Well, the signs of old age is you get forgetful. Let's pray.

Father in heaven, we ask now your blessing on our message this morning and I pray that you would challenge each of us, maybe there are some folks that are listening in or here under the sound of my voice in one form or another that do not have assurance that their sins are forgiven and that when they die they go to heaven and not to hell, Lord, maybe there are some folks under the sound of my voice that desperately want their life to be changed, they're looking for purpose or meaning, there's something missing, Lord, I pray you'd use your word today that they would find that which is missing, they would get that

need met through the Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, many others of us know you as Savior, we have our salvation settled, nevertheless we have our Christian life that isn't all it ought to be and I pray that you would use your word today and challenge all of us to step up our Christian life, give attention to our spiritual well-being, our testimony in this old world. Lord, to accomplish that it has to be your Holy Spirit applying the word of God, not just my thoughts, so I yield my will to you and I present my body anew and I pray again with all my heart, Lord, to fill me with your Spirit and you speak through me and challenge and help us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Walk honestly. I read about a lady who was on her way home from work or wherever, she was coming home and she thought, "I'd like to get a chicken for the family and roast chicken for dinner." So she stopped by a marketplace and she went in and she told the fellow, she said, "I'd like a whole chicken. I want to cook it for my family." He was not the most honest man in the world and he reached down behind the counter and he reached down and he had one chicken left, so he got it out and he set it up on the scale and it weighed however many pounds, and she thought for a moment and she goes, "You know, I really need something bigger than that. Do you have another chicken bigger?" Well, that was the only one he had so being a dishonest man, he took the chicken down, put it back down in the container and he fiddled around like he was rooting around, brought the same chicken out, the only one he had, brought the same chicken out, put it on the scale and put his thumb on the scale and brought that scale up another pound and she goes, "Well, I really need more than that." She goes, "Tell you what, give me both of them." Caught.

Abraham Lincoln said honesty is the best policy. I study my Bible and I think Abraham Lincoln was mistaken. I don't think honesty is the best policy, I think for the Christian honesty is the only policy. There's never a circumstance, there's never a scenario when dishonesty should be a policy. The Bible says, speaking to Christians, to believers, walk honestly. Walk honestly.

If you would, now we're going to use our Bibles a good bit this morning and that's a good thing so I hope you have them handy, and I hope you'll turn with me to the various passages I want us to look at because I think they'll help us bring this whole thought together. If you would, go with me to John 8 and verse 44. Now keep your place here in 1 Thessalonians. We're going to, no doubt, end up back here before it's over. John 8:44. Jesus is speaking and the interesting thing, as you're finding your place there, the interesting thing is Jesus is addressing religious, Bible-believing, unsaved people. Do you know there is such a thing as somebody can be very religious and even believe the Bible and still be unsaved? Everybody aware of that, right? It's possibly a member of a Bible-preaching, good, strong church and yet never have trusted Christ as Savior. I saw a quote recently and I thought it was good, it says a lot of young people have been raised in church but have never been brought up in Christ. It's possibly a church member and yet be outside of the family of God. It's only through trusting Jesus Christ as our personal Savior that we can have eternal life, we can find forgiveness of sin. Salvation is only in Christ, not in the church.

So Jesus is addressing these very religious and they would have defined themselves as Bible-believers but they were not saved, they were trusting in their righteousness. Look what he says in verse 44. He makes a strong uncomfortable statement here. He says, "Ye are of your father," who? "The devil." It's unsaved people, never trust Christ. Jesus said, "Ye are of your father the devil," you've never been born in the family of God, and he goes on and he describes the devil. He says, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." Now look, he describes the devil. He says, "He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth," note that statement, "because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own," now look at this last statement, "for he is a liar," and then he adds on, "and the father of it." Hey, I've got some news for you: the devil is a very real being, just as real as God, just as literal as Jesus Christ is the literal Son of God. The devil is very very real. I like what Lester Rawl said, he said, "If there is no devil, I'd like to know who's doing all this devilry here around in our country."

The devil is real and Jesus said that the devil is a liar. The devil is a liar. Now in Corinthians, God tells us that the devil is the "god," small "g," the devil is the god of this world. Whether the world is aware of it or not, he is the prince of the power of the air. He is the god of this world and the god of this world is a liar. He's dishonest. He's dishonest. Many of us who have known the Lord any length of time, we've run into the devil, or at least his devils, and we've learned from experience that he's a liar. Can I get a witness? He's a liar. He's a liar.

If you would, come to the book of Matthew, the first book of the New Testament, Matthew 24, if you would. We're in John, just coming back toward the beginning of your Bible. Matthew 24, towards the end of the book there. Now Jesus told these Pharisees, these religious "Bible-believing" unsaved people, he says, "You're of your father the devil and the devil is a liar and he's the father of lies." Now we get to Matthew 24 and this is toward the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, he's about to be crucified, and the disciples come to him, if you would, notice there in verse 1, it says, "And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple," this is in Jerusalem, of course, "and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple." They were so proud and impressed. "And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." So Jesus wasn't quite as impressed with the building as the disciples were, that one of these days it's just going to be rubble.

Then verse 3, "And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be?" When is this temple going to be rubble that you just described? And then they asked this question, "and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Some people agree with me, that's a pretty interesting question. Anybody here ever get captivated by the signs indicating the return of Christ? Sure, a lot of books written on that, a lot of sermons preached, a lot of conversations. We look around us and we see things happening that the Bible describes will be characteristic of the last days. And so the disciples, like you and I, are intrigued and they're sincerely wanting to know, "What will be the signs of your coming? What

will be the signs of the end of the world? How do we know when this is going to come about?"

Then Jesus for about the rest of the chapter, he describes the world conditions previous to his return to earth. Now for those of us that know the Bible a little bit and have been studying this, we understand that what he's describing here are events that take place during the tribulation period. This is previous to the return or the second advent, we call it, of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth. He's not describing conditions before the rapture of the church. How many folks are familiar with what I'm talking about, you understand a little bit? The next event on God's prophetic calendar is the rapture of the church. In a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, the trump of God shall sound, the archangel shall shout and every single person that's been born again, every single believer is going to be caught up out of here and we'll go to be with the Lord. And by the way, at that same time, we notice in Thessalonians, the Holy Spirit is going to be removed from this earth. Now think with me. Every Christian removed from this earth. The convicting power of the Holy Spirit removed from this earth. What in the world do you think society is going to be when there's no salt and there's no witness, there's no light?

So they ask him, "What are the signs going to be?" And Jesus gives these descriptions. Now I said all that but this is what I want us to notice: there's a characteristic that Jesus points out that is going to be true of society in the days leading up to the return of Christ and do you know what that characteristic is? It's dishonesty. Dishonesty.

Look with me, if you would, at verse 4. Matthew 24, "Jesus answered and said unto them," now look, the very first words out of his mouth in response to that question, the very first statement, look at what it is, "Take heed that no man," what? "Deceive you." In fact, he goes on in verse 5 and says, "For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." The very first thing he says, "Do you want to know what the signs are when I'm coming, the signs of the end of the world? There's going to be massive deception, dishonesty." In fact, he reiterates that throughout his conversation here.

Look down at verse 11, "And many false prophets," false prophets, lying, dishonest prophets, "shall rise, and shall," what's that next statement? That's the third time he's made this statement in less than 10 verses. "Deceive many. Deceive many."

Then, if you would, come over to verse 23 and notice what he says, "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there," look at the last statement he made, "believe it not." Why would Jesus tell us not to believe this? Because it's, what? Not true. It's a lie.

Then, if you would, come over and look with me at verse...well, let's read on, verse 24, "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall," what? "Deceive the very elect." There it is again.

Come down to verse 26, "Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not." Now he's addressing the spiritual conditions during this time, but the emphasis here is upon dishonesty, deceit, lies.

So in John 8:44, Jesus told these unsaved religious folks, "You're of your father the devil. The devil is a liar. The god of this world is a liar." He tells his disciples on another occasion the conditions leading up to the return of Christ, the conditions in society and the religious world and all through society is going to be characterized by dishonesty and untruth. I get the impression looking at this statement that in these days that he's describing, you're not going to know who to believe and who not to believe. It reminds me of reading and watching the news. Amen or not? You don't know who to believe or not to believe. In fact, even within the professing Christianity, books and articles and blogs and programs, you don't know who to believe or not to believe. We are living in a day and age when dishonesty is a chief characteristic. You don't know who to believe or not to believe. You don't know who to trust and who you can't trust.

People ask me about all this stuff going on. I say, "I don't even know. I don't even know. I'm just going to try and live day-by-day, trust God, do what I think is best." I read one article and they convince me one way. I read another article, they got convinced the exact opposite. So I quit reading the articles. I like what the one fellow said, he said, "If you don't read the newspaper, you're uninformed." He said, "If you do read the newspaper, you're misinformed." And that's the world Jesus is describing leading up to the days previous to his return.

So the devil is a liar, the god of this world, the god that influences this world, the false god Satan. He's a liar and the father of it. There's no truth in him. Society and the conditions of society before the return of Christ are going to be characterized by deceit and dishonesty.

If you would, come back to 2 Thessalonians. Now we read from 1 Thessalonians, the next book, 2 Thessalonians. If you don't learn anything else this morning, I hope you learn that 2 Thessalonians comes right after 1 Thessalonians. We are just full of information. 2 Thessalonians and look with me, if you would, at chapter 2 and verse 8. Now Paul is writing under the inspiration of God to this church at Thessalonica, a tremendous church. In fact, he says he brags on the church at Thessalonica in the other churches he preaches at. He brags on them and he says that they are a model church, other churches should follow their example. I don't know about you, but the Apostle Paul saying that under the inspiration of God, I'm impressed with this church.

Now as great as they were, they had gotten some false teaching and somebody had come in there, and we're not told who, and had taught them and implied to them that the rapture had already taken place and they had missed it. And they were upset. How many Christians here if you found out the rapture already happened and you're still here, that would bother you a little bit? Yeah. I would be troubled by that. And so he's addressing that and he's explaining, "No, no, no, you're all right. That didn't happen."

But he makes an interesting statement and he addresses the most influential man in the world during the tribulation period, the one man that has more influence in the world than anybody living. Anybody want to guess who that would be during the tribulation period? The antichrist. And notice how he describes the antichrist in verse 8, 2 Thessalonians 2, "And then shall that Wicked be revealed," he's referring to the antichrist, "whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth," that's when the Lord comes back, "and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him," look at this, "whose coming is after the working of Satan," now watch carefully, "with all power..."

[baby crying] Sarah's teaching her to say amen already. How many people are so excited for Sarah and Joe? Man, what a blessing and God bless you, Sarah. I just wanted to draw attention to you there a little bit. [laughter]

Now let's get back to this because this is a serious subject here. "Even him," verse 9, speaking of the antichrist, "whose coming," look at this, "is after the working of Satan with all power and signs," what's that last statement? "And lying wonders." Look at verse 10, "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish." Do you know what I take away from that? That the antichrist is a liar. In fact, I want to suggest to you he is no doubt the most dishonest person that has ever or ever will live in all the history of mankind. It is hard for you and I to comprehend and grasp the wickedness of this man who will be the most influential man in this world.

Now what have we said so far? What am I saying? I'm saying this: the god of this world, Satan, is a liar. The characteristics of society in the days leading up to the return of Christ is going to be dishonesty and lying. The most influential man in the history of the world, humanly speaking, of mankind, the antichrist is a thorough liar, dishonest. Now in the midst of all of that, God says to you and I as believers, he said, "Walk honestly. Walk honestly." That is a complete contrast to everything that we live in. I like what Paul told the Roman believers in chapter 12 of Romans, he says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." And listen to what he says, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." Do you know what he's saying? We live in a world of liars, we live in a world that is characterized by dishonesty, the god of this world, the most influential political leader in history all dishonest, dishonest, dishonest. He said, "But you walk honestly. You walk honestly." Would you agree with me that sounds like somebody that's going to stand out, going to be different, distinct from everything around. Walk honestly. Walk honestly. In a world whose god, the devil, is thoroughly dishonest, in a world that is becoming increasingly more dishonest, in a world destined to be ruled by the most dishonest man who ever lived, God tells us to walk honestly. Walk honestly.

Come back to Thessalonians. You're not far away there, come to 1 Thessalonians 4:12. Notice what he says, 1 Thessalonians 4:12, our text, "That ye may walk honestly," and then he makes a statement following that up, "That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without." He's saying in an old sinful world, an old world that is so dishonest,

that is so untrue, that is so saturated with lies, you be honest. You be true. You be distinctively honest.

God instructs us to walk honestly. This old world, prosperity, in this old world the mentality and the values of the world you and I live, prosperity is more important than integrity. Right or wrong? I mean, people will lie to be able to become more prosperous. Anybody here agree with me on that? Yeah, dog eat dog, whatever it takes. There is survey after survey after survey I came across in studying this, the overwhelming majority of society says if you have to lie to get ahead, then it's okay. We live in a world where prosperity and personal success is much more important than personal integrity, doing right. We live in a world where being clever is more important than being honest and God calls you and I to be honest. I put down in my notes, for the Christian honesty is paramount. Honesty. Honesty. He says here in verse 12, he says, "That ye may walk honestly." By the way, he makes that almost identical statement in Romans 13:13 where he says to walk honestly. Walk honestly.

Now if you'll remember, we said in our previous messages on the Christian walk, we said that that term "walk" encompasses our whole lifestyle. When he says walk honestly, walk in love, walk by faith, he's talking about how we live our lives, he's talking about our conduct in life, the decisions we make, our behavior. Our lifestyle is to be characterized, is to be honest. This is much more, when he says walk I honesty, it is much more than simply not telling a lie. It is a life that is characterized by truth and honesty in my behavior, my conduct, my lifestyle.

The word "honestly" there has the idea of "to be morally upright; to conform to the truth," I like this definition, "to be characterized by integrity." And so he's saying to you and I as believers, he's saying, "Listen, your whole lifestyle ought to be characterized by truth, by integrity." I put this down, I just put it in my own words, just be a real Christian. Not a show, not hypocrisy, but a disciple of Jesus Christ in truth. In truth, in every aspect of my conduct, in every aspect of my lifestyle, in every aspect of my behavior, I am a true disciple of Jesus Christ. That's what he's calling us to.

Listen, this world has seen enough of hypocritical Christianity. Our young people have had enough of hypocritical Christianity. I believe our youth are looking for Christians who are for real. Moms and dads and elders, teachers, workers, Christians who walk honestly, who are genuine in every aspect. I read books, articles, get things in the mail on why we're losing our youth. I want to suggest to you, I think one of the primary reasons we're losing our youth is because of the phoniness of many adults. It doesn't matter what this world says and does, it doesn't matter what this world teaches and all of that. I think if you've got genuine, sincere disciples of Christ who are walking in truth, that can overpower anything this world throws at our children. Now I'm not saying we shouldn't protect them and shouldn't be careful, you follow what I'm saying? He says walk in honesty. Walk with integrity in your character, your behavior, your lifestyle.

It's interesting as I study in this here and you read on down, you begin verse 13 is where he's addressing this matter of the rapture had already, they had already missed the rapture

and he's saying, "Listen, don't be worried by that." And he gives the next several, the end of the rest of that chapter, he gives some of the clearest teaching on the rapture you're going to find in all the Bible, and I thought it was interesting as he's leading into this subject of the rapture of the church, the end days, the return of Christ, he makes this statement just leading right into it, he makes this statement, "Walk honestly." Your conduct, your behavior, your lifestyle be characterized by truth, integrity, genuine disciple of Christ.

Now I want to give you some thoughts on honesty real quick and maybe you'd want to jot these down. I put this one, number 1, honesty precedes salvation. I bounced that off of Pastor Matt earlier and he said, "Well, I don't know. I've got to think about that." But it's true. It's true. You say, "What do you mean, honesty precedes salvation?" By that I mean this: until we get honest about our condition as a sinner, we'll never find salvation. Follow what I'm saying? Jesus said, "I came to save sinners, not the righteous but sinners, to call sinners to repent." And until we get to the point as an individual before my Creator God, until I get honest about the fact that I have sinned personally against a holy God that created me in his image, that designed me to live a pure, sinless life and yet I've sinned, I've broken God's law. Most of us here are familiar with Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." All.

Occasionally when I'm out visiting, knock on doors, I was out this week, occasionally I'll knock on doors and I'll come across someone, I'll say, "Do you ever think about heaven and hell? Do you know for sure you're going to heaven when you die? Do you ever give that any thought?" And folks say, "Yeah, I think about it sometimes. Yeah." I'll say, "Do you know for sure you're going to heaven?" The typical answer I get is, "Well, I hope so. I think so. Maybe. Probably. Yeah, I probably will." I say, "Well, can I show you from the Bible how you can know for sure from the Bible that when you die you go to heaven, not to hell?" And most of the time they're interested, sometimes not much, but most of the time and the very first point we bring up is the fact that we have sinned against a holy God and we are under God's judgment because of our sin. That's why we go to hell, we've sinned against God. The wages of sin is death, separation from God, eternity in hell. Jesus taught that very clearly. And I'll get this statement sometimes, "Well, I don't really see myself as a sinner. Well, I'm not that bad. I might not be perfect but I'm not that bad that I go to hell." Do you know what the problem with that is? They're not being honest. We have sinned. We have sinned.

God gave us a lot of commands, God gave us a standard that must be met before we can be accepted by a holy God and that standard is a reflection of his holiness, and the holiness of God demands that standard be met, and you can summarize this standard of righteousness that's required in the law, the 10 Commandments. The 10 Commandments, one of the 10 Commandments, I think it's the fifth or sixth one, sixth or seventh, maybe the eighth, it's there somewhere but it says, "Thou shalt not bear false witness." That's a command of God. That is a requirement of God for a person to be accepted into his presence. God is truth and he says, "Thou shalt not bear false witness." Do you know what bearing false witness is? Somebody help me, it means what? Lying. How many folks here have ever in your life told a lie, raise your hand? Some of y'all are lying right

now. Yeah, we have. Let me ask this, now don't respond, how many of us here have told 10 lies in our lifetime? I had one guy ask a guy that one time and he goes, "Pfft, I blew that away a long time ago." A hundred? Now think about that, suppose in your lifetime, my lifetime, we told 100 lies, 100 times I have broken a clear command of a holy God that must be met if he's going to accept me into heaven.

We're sinners and then we don't even have the other commands, "Thou shalt not covet." Jesus said in Matthew, he says, "You've heard it said, Thou shalt not kill." He said, "I say to you if you think in your heart hatred towards another man, you're guilty of murder." The standard that God holds us to to be accepted by him and enter into his presence rather than going to hell, is beyond our ability to meet and we've got to be honest about that. "Well, I think I'd be good enough to get to heaven." You're fooling yourself. You're lying. We are not good enough, not by works of righteousness that we have done. In fact, Isaiah says the good things we do, our own righteousnesses are as filthy rags, obnoxious to God. Here comes an old sinner who's told lies, taking Jesus, God's name in vain, coveted, lusted, committed adultery, stolen, and they come and say, "Oh, I helped an old lady across the road. Here, God, this makes me acceptable." A holy God says, "That stinks."

So honesty precedes salvation. Nobody is ever going to find forgiveness of sins and eternal life until they become honest about the fact that you and I are sinners before a holy God and we need to be forgiven. We need a Savior to save us from our sins. Jesus said if you die in your sins, you're separated from God for all eternity in hell if you die unforgiven. So honesty precedes salvation in the sense that I need to, first of all, be honest about my true spiritual condition. In Acts 2, Peter preached under the power of the Holy Spirit, that sermon at Pentecost, and when he was done, those that listened to him, they said this, "What must we do?" Do you know what? They got honest. "You're right, we're sinners. We need salvation. We can't save ourselves."

So nobody ever gets saved until they become honest. Nobody gets eternal life, nobody enters heaven until they first get honest about our condition as sinners, and then also honest about our need of a Savior. I can't overcome my sin. I am so far in debt as a sinner to God. It would take 10 million lifetimes, couldn't pay for the sins I've already committed. I need a Savior.

I heard this week, again it was one of the preachers on the radio that made a great statement. They said if man's greatest need was money, God would have sent an economist. If man's greatest need was pleasures, he would have sent an entertainer. But man's greatest need was forgiveness, man's greatest need was salvation from God's judgment, and so God sent a Savior. A Savior.

I want to point out Mountain Lake Independent Baptist Church can't forgive your sins. This church can't save your soul. This church can't bestow eternal life. And by the way, neither can any other church. That baptistery, as important as baptism is, that does not wash away sins, that does not save a soul. Jesus Christ is the only Savior of mankind, the only way to find forgiveness. You can go and confess your sins to a priest all you want,

you need to come to Jesus Christ to find forgiveness. And we've got to be honest about that, got to be honest about that.

So honesty precedes salvation in the sense I've got to be honest about my condition as a sinner and my need of a Savior, and then I need to humble myself and then come and trust that Savior, Jesus, as my personal Savior. May 7, 1979, I bowed beside my bed in the attic of our house my dad and I were living in. He's a truck driver. He was out on the road. Monday night I called out as humbly and as desperate, "Jesus, I need you to forgive me and save me." And I'm here to tell you, God keeps his word. God forgave me and saved me and changed my life and I'm telling you what he did for me, he'll do for you. What he did for me, he'll do for you. And what he's done for millions, he'll do for you if you just trust Christ as Savior.

So number 1, honesty, I've got to be honest. Honesty is a prerequisite for salvation. In Revelation 21:8, let me just read that to you here real quickly. There's this phenomenal statement, notice what he says. He says, "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters," listen, "and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." I'll tell you, that's a powerful statement.

I was preaching back, I was youth pastor in Indianapolis for four years, and we showed up in April of 1987. Wow, that was the previous century. And we were there a week or two and the preacher said, "Brother Dennis," they called me Pastor Dennis, they said, "Pastor Dennis, I'd like for you to preach on Sunday night. You're new here, I want people to hear you preach." I said, "All right." I was geared up. God laid on my heart to preach on hell. I got up that night and I preached a message on hell and there were people there, it was a large church, 400-500. There were some of the bus kids that rode the bus in the morning we had brought back that night. And in my message, I referenced Revelation 21:8, and all liars, and in my very meek subtle way I preached and I mentioned that. At the invitation time, there were two twin girls that rode the bus, probably 13 years old, when I gave the invitation, those two girls made a beeline to the altar and I'm telling you, those twin girls were sobbing. Counselors came up and talked to them and I'm leading the invitation. They took them out, they had a side door, went over to some rooms where they counseled and they took the girls out. After we dismissed, they finally came back in and they came up to me and they said, "Pastor Dennis, we got saved tonight. We got saved." They're wiping their tears. I said, "That is wonderful, girls. I'm so happy." They said, "Do you know what? When you said about liars going to the lake of fire," they said, "we are such liars. We are such liars and we knew we needed to be saved. We didn't want to go to hell." Do you know what happened? Those two girls got honest about their dishonesty. They got honest about their condition and they knew they needed a Savior.

So honesty is a prerequisite to salvation. We've got to be honest about our condition as a sinner. Let me quickly in the little time I have left, number 2, I put this down: honesty is a priority in the Christian life. I mentioned Abraham Lincoln said honesty is the best policy, for the Christian, honesty is the only policy. It's a priority in the Christian life.

God instructs and expects you and I as believers, as disciples, to be honest in our conversation, in our lifestyle, in what we project ourselves to be as opposed to what we actually are. We need to be honest.

The Christian life is a lifelong process of being molded and transformed into the image of Christ. God's desire is for us to become like Christ in every area of our life. Read Romans 8, conform to his image and that's why God brings trials in our life and God brings tests and God brings blessings, and we have preaching and we study our Bible and we pray, we make decisions to, as God is working in our life, to become more and more like Christ. And I want to remind you that Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." What does he mean when Jesus says, "I am the truth"? What does he mean by that? Doesn't say, "I had the truth." He didn't say, "I know the truth." He didn't say, "I speak the truth." He said, what? "I am the truth." In other words, he says, "I am an embodiment of the truth of God." Every action he took was a base and a manifestation of the truth of God. Every word he said, every deed he did, every attitude he had, "I am the truth." And that's what God's conforming us to be. We need to be truth. There's a whole lot more than just not trying to rip a lady off selling her some chickens. This is our whole lifestyle. This is our whole conduct is to be true and genuine. Integrity.

Jesus was the embodiment of truth. I like in Job 23, this was my father's life verse, "And when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Let me go there. I was trying to quote that. Let me turn over very quickly. Job 23. Let me just read this to you. Notice what Job said. He said, "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined." Do you know what Job was saying? "I've walked honestly. I've walked honestly. God has sent trials that are overwhelming. I don't understand. But I stayed true and I walked honestly and I didn't put on a show." God said, "I'll bring you forth as gold. I'll bring you forth as gold."

So honesty, number 1, is a prerequisite for salvation. 2. It is a priority in the Christian life. 3. Honesty empowers our Christian witness. I learned something in my 60 years, I'm coming up in, what's today, the 11th? Less than a month, I'm going to be 61. Wow. And the gray hairs show the great wisdom and all that. Guys, while the choir was getting ready before church, the guys were sitting up there and they thought I couldn't hear them because they thought I was old and going deaf, and they were saying all these snide remarks about pastor and his hair and lack thereof. I'm trying to think why I pointed that out other than I got bitter about that. [laughter] But in all these years, 60 years of life and coming up on 42 years as a Christian, I've learned something: nobody trusts a dishonest person. Right or wrong? Let me say it another way: nobody respects a dishonest person. Listen, you can get a lot of attention, don't confuse attention with respect. Just because you've got everybody's attention doesn't mean you have anybody's respect.

Let me rephrase my original statement: nobody trusts a dishonest Christian. Like it or not, this world holds us to a higher standard than they hold themselves. Anybody find that out? "I thought you were a Christian." Nobody respects a dishonest Christian and let me say this, when you and I are phony in our Christian life, it's just a show, it's just talk and

there's nothing real there, there's nothing true, honest about it, we have little or no respect by those that are without. Right or wrong? I never knew anybody that got saved because of a dishonest Christian. I never knew anybody that came to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ because of a Christian who was a phony. But I've had people after people, in fact, I'm one of them, who saw and was influenced by a Christian who was genuine and real.

My dad, he's been in heaven for a little over a year, and I'm telling you, I've said this all these years, you people around here, you know I've said this: I saw in my daddy the reality of genuine Christian life and that had a profound impact on me and I'm a save man today because of a father who walked honestly. He was real. What he was at church is the same thing he was at home and the same thing he was on the tractor trailer. That's what God's calling you and I to. What this old world needs are some Christians who walk honestly. When we get phony just like them, when we're not different than the world, then our influence...

Do you know something I learned? I learned so many things in life. I learned that salt has flavor. My wife and I went to Arby's on Thursday and Arby's has new wrinkle fries. Anybody here have tried Arby's wrinkled fries? Don't. They're terrible. I mean, it tastes like cardboard. And so Kathy said, "I wish we had some salt we could put on here so at least taste like something." And so I hope.... does anybody here work at Arby's? [laughter] I just thought about that. If you like Arby's, God bless you, go get them. They're great. You'll love them.

But do you know what this old world, this whole world needs Christians who walk honestly because we will be salt when we do that, we're going to have influence. Anybody follow what I'm trying to say? And so honesty empowers our witness to this world and I've got to end with this: honesty pleases our Savior. Honesty pleases God. Now God speaks for himself in his word, but I can't help but think I'm positive that when you and I lie, when you and I put on a hypocritical front, how deeply that displeases our heavenly Father. Our heavenly Father, it pleases God.

A lady was on the beach in Florida, just a tourist or something, and a little boy came up to her. He had something in his hand. He came up and he said, "Do you believe in God?" The lady was a Christian. She goes, "Yeah, I believe in God." He says, "Good." He said, "Do you believe the Bible is God's word?" She said, "Yeah, I do." Just out of the blue, stranger, boy comes up. She goes, "Yeah, I believe the Bible." He said, "Do you read it every day?" She said, "Yes." He says, "Oh good, will you hold my quarter while I go swimming?" What was that little boy doing? He knew if she was a Christian and she believed the Bible and read the Bible, that was somebody he could, what? Trust his quarter.

God wants you and I to walk honestly, be somebody he can trust and somebody that can be for real and show this world what genuine Christianity really is. Amen?

Father in heaven, help us to walk honestly. I pray, Lord, that you would convict us where we put on a show, address those areas of our Christian life that need to be addressed,

and help us, Lord, if nothing else just to be for real in this old dishonest world, this phony world. Help us to be real disciples.

I wonder with our heads bowed, our eyes closed, I wonder how many would say, "Preacher, there are areas of my Christian life where I really need to work on. The Spirit of God has dealt with my heart this morning." And you'd say, "Preacher, pray for me. I want to be for real." Any like that, uplifted hand? "There's areas in my Christian life." Let's be honest. It's a lifelong growth, lifelong transformation but let's just be honest enough and say, "God, these areas need work," and then work on it. There needs to be some changes made. There needs to be some adjustments made. Let's be honest and say, "God, I want that to be right. I want it to be right." God bless you, hands all around.

I wonder if there's some this morning that would say, "Preacher, I need to be honest about my spiritual condition. I need to be saved. I don't want to die and go to hell. I want to know my sins are forgiven, that God's accepted me not because of my righteousness but because of Christ's. I'm going to trust him to forgive me and save me and make me acceptable to God." Is there any like that? "Preacher, I'm concerned about where I spend eternity and I want that right," and you'd say, "Preacher, pray for me." Is there any like that by the uplifted hand. "Pray for me." Any like that? God bless you. How about it. Any others? "I'm concerned about that. I'm concerned about it."

Now Father, bless our invitation. Help us, Lord, to trust you and be honest. In Jesus' name.