



ISSUE

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Faithful Sayings

BULLETIN OF
THE OL-
SEN PARK
CHURCH OF
CHRIST

Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM

10:00 AM

11:00 AM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter

Brady McAlister

Jeff Nunn

Deacons:

Ryan Ferguson

Ben Hight

Blake McAlister

Walker McNear

Sam Nunn

Lance Purcell

Justin Smiley

Kevin Wise

Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

Theft, Cheating, Lying, and Other Dishonest Behaviors

By Kyle Pope

The Holy Spirit led Paul to pin these words to the saints in Ephesus: **“Therefore, putting away lying, ‘Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,’ for we are members of one another”** (Eph. 4:25, NKJV). Paul’s wording in the middle of this verse is drawn from Zechariah. To people who had returned from the Babylonian exile and were working to rebuild the temple and their relationship with God, the Lord told Zechariah:

“For thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Just as I determined to punish you when your fathers provoked Me to wrath,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘and I would not relent, so again in these days I am determined to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Do not fear. These are the things you shall do: speak each man the truth to his neighbor; give judgment in your gates for truth, justice, and peace; let none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbor; and do not love a false oath. For all these are things that I hate,’ says the LORD” (Zech. 8:14-17).

To restore or maintain a good relationship with the Lord, Zechariah and the people were told, (in Paul’s wording), **“Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor.”** God sees our treatment of others and holds us accountable for it. That means not only that honest, fair, and just treatment of others will allow things to go smoother for us in our relationships with one another but our very relationship with God depends upon it. We cannot love God and do things He hates.

A Message for Today

This is an important lesson for us today! In many areas of life, we may imagine we can claim to have a saved relationship with God while practicing the behavior Paul and Zechariah rebuked.

Stealing. No one is looking and you slip that candy bar into your pocket at the convenience store. Someone has wronged you, so you “get even” by taking something that belongs to her. A man drops his wallet. You turn it in—but first you help yourself to some of the money inside it. You borrow money then forget (or refuse) to pay it back. Your neighbor’s newspaper was thrown just outside his driveway. That makes it “fair game,” right? No!

All of these things might seem minor, but Scripture condemns them! God hates

“robbery” (Isa. 61:8), and the partner of a thief is said to hate his own life (Prov. 29:24). The thief deserves shame (Jer. 2:26) and to act in this way is to follow the example of Judas, the betrayer of Jesus (John 12:6)! Any hopes one places in joys that come from theft are “vain” because “**power belongs to God**” (Psa. 62:10-11). The Holy Spirit says, “**The wicked borrows and does not repay**” (Psa. 37:21a). So, even when society may sympathize with some types of stealing, the thief will be called to account for his actions (Prov. 6:30-31). Ultimately, taking what doesn’t belong to us does not bring satisfaction. The wise man wrote, “**Bread gained by deceit is sweet to a man, but afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel**” (Prov. 20:17).

Cheating. The test is hard, so you glance over at your friend’s paper. An essay is due at school so you find (or buy) one someone else wrote and put your name on it. You’re weighing produce at the grocery store and you lift the scale just a little to lower the price. You notice that the salesmen forgot to charge you for that extra feature on your bill, but you remain silent. Your employees are entitled to some special benefit, but you don’t mention it to them. It’s time to figure your taxes but you don’t declare some income, or take deductions that aren’t allowed—then smile, sing, pray, and worship God acting as if everything is fine!

God has always condemned cheating. In the Law of Moses, He commanded:

You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a heavy and a light. You shall not have in your house differing measures, a large and a small. You shall have a perfect and just weight,



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a perfect and just measure, that your days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD your God is giving you. For all who do such things, all who behave unrighteously, are an abomination to the LORD your God (Deut. 25:13-16).

We should note this behavior is considered unrighteous and the Lord views it as **“an abomination.”** The wise man echoes this, writing, **“Dishonest scales are an abomination to the LORD, but a just weight is His delight”** (Prov. 11:1). Do we truly want to please the Lord? Then we must do things that delight Him. In the days of Amos, the Lord rebuked those who looked forward to the conclusion of times of worship so they could make profit **“by deceit.”** The Lord told them—and any who would act this way—**“I will never forget any of their works”** (Amos 8:4-7).

Lying. A politician says one thing when speaking to a particular audience, but the exact opposite when speaking to another. Someone needs our help and we quickly say, “Sure, I can help,” but we never follow through. A man and woman stand up before God and witnesses and promise to be faithful to each other “until death do us part.” Then, as the years and common interests grow further apart, they go their separate ways forsaking their word, their families, and their covenant before God.

A **“false witness”** is among those things the Lord **“hates”** (Prov. 6:16-19). **“Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, but those who deal truthfully are His delight”** (Prov 12:22). The deceitful tongue is **“a deadly arrow”** as it speaks **“peace”** to one’s neighbor while plotting to do him harm (Jer. 9:8). Jesus called His disciples to a level of honesty that did not consider some statements binding and others not. He prohibited swearing (Jas. 5:12) and taught them to let their **“‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’”** and their **“‘No,’ ‘No’”** (Matt. 5:37). The Christian must recognize, **“One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much”** (Luke 16:10, ESV).

Called to Better Things

In the text we noted earlier, Zechariah told the exiles who were striving to restore their relationship with the Lord to, **“speak each man the truth to his neighbor,”** not to **“think evil in your heart against your neighbor”** and not to **“love a false oath”** (Zech. 8:14-17, NKJV). Disciples of Christ, in a similar light, are told to recognize the high standard of conduct to which children of the King of Heaven are called. Paul wrote, **“Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator”** (Col. 3:9-10).

The heart that lies and practices deceit does not imitate the behavior of its Creator—it seeks to take advantage of its neighbor. The wiseman prayed, **“Keep falsehood and lies far from me”** (Prov. 30:8a). This should be the prayer of the Christian! The heart that would cheat and steal to gain profit cares nothing for the loss it imposes upon its neighbor. It ignores the command of its God and shows ingratitude for all He



has already provided. The wise man continues, **“give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown You and say, ‘Who is the LORD?’ Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God”** (Prov. 30:8b-9).

The Israelite who had stolen from his neighbor

was commanded to make restitution greater than the value of the item taken. An ox was to be restored fivefold and the sheep fourfold (Exod. 22:1). This recognized the harm inflicted upon the one who suffered the loss and the value it would have brought to him during its absence. In Christ, we are taught, **“Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need”** (Eph. 4:28). Honest work must replace dishonest gain and a concern for the needs of others must replace a desire to gain advantage over them. The one who **“loves and practices a lie”** will be excluded from eternal life with God (Rev. 22:15). That tells us the importance of maintaining honest behavior. We are not talking about things that have only temporary consequences—**“The truthful lip shall be established forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment”** (Prov. 12:19).



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We are so glad that you joined us today.
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