

THE SERMON NOTEBOOK

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(Proverbs, No. 9)

SUBJECT: WISDOM IN SPEECH (3 of 6)

TITLE: LYING AIN'T COOL

TEXT: PROVERBS 12:22

INTRODUCTION. You don't have to spend very much time around young people today before you learn that some things are "cool" and some things are not. "Cool" has been "in" for a long time, but now a lot of people have graduated to "awesome." Well, I am not going to keep you waiting today. The world may see some lies as "cool", but only the truth should be considered "awesome". The simple fact is:

I. A LYING TONGUE IS ONLY "COOL" TO THE WORLD.

A. The World May See Lying as Expedient.

Perhaps you heard the one about the young Christian who was still trying to learn how to study the Bible, and since no one provided any instructions, he began thumbing through his Bible and browsing where ever he chose. He concluded that all of it is good, so he decided on a flip and point approach - he would flip the Bible open and drop his index finger on a verse and read it. Ready, set, go! The Bible fell open and he dropped his finger on a line and read, "Judas went out and hanged himself." Not seeing any lesson in that for himself, he decided to start over. This time he looked down at the words, "Go thou and do likewise." Shaking his head, but not giving up, he tried once more - "What thou doest, do quickly."

Maybe you heard about the man who flipped his Bible open and dropped his finger on the page and read, "A lie is an abomination to the Lord." He closed his Bible and tried again - "But a very present help in time of trouble." I have been amazed over the years at how many church members express just this attitude - "A lie is an abomination to the Lord...but a very present help in a time of trouble." I even had a pastor to tell me once that he knew a pastor who had his secretary to tell callers he was "in Monroe" if he did not want to be disturbed. He called his special "study" the "Monroe" room. If the first pastor was being misrepresented, the second one had committed a serious offense. Some church members tell their children to tell callers they are not at home. Others cross their fingers when they compliment someone else "I love your hair," or, "That's the most beautiful baby I have ever seen." And all the time you are thinking, "What can I say?!!!"

Now, let's get one thing clear before we go any further. Only God is absolute Truth, and only God has never misrepresented the truth in one way or another. I don't know how many people I have heard say, "I can't stand a liar!" I agree - but I find it particularly loathsome when I am the liar. And make no mistake about it, I have lied. I remember coming in from school and telling my parents that

school would be out for Halloween. When Mother told me she would take me to see a school board member and ask him, I declared, "If someone came in and told you I was dead you wouldn't believe it!" She insists that I said, "If I came in and told you I was dead you wouldn't believe it." They laughed at me for years.

I cannot remember a time when I deliberately concocted another lie like that - but I have been guilty of lying many times since then. I really try to avoid it, even when asked about someone's casserole, and I hope they think I am complimenting them when I say, "Wow! I have never tasted anything quite like that." I am tell the truth, but I am hoping they think I liked it. A half-truth is a whole lie - but a very present help in time of trouble, right?

A lady asks, "How do you like my new dress?" Or, "Isn't she the most beautiful baby you have ever seen." What do you say? A lady had a new baby in one of our serves and everyone was coming by to see the infant. One man walked by and said, "Humph. I have never seen a new born baby that was beautiful." Was he being honest, or just rude? When we look at the sin of lying, please make a commitment to make an application of this message in your own personal life before pointing your finger at someone else.

B. The World Sees Some Lies as Amusing or Entertaining.

Certain magazines publish lies and half-truths weekly, and many people read them and believe them. Entertainers make millions - shall we say, "stretching the truth"? Sadly, some politicians have done the same thing.

My maternal grandfather was the most interesting person I have ever known, and over the years I have heard a lot of people say the same thing. One reason we all enjoyed Granddaddy was that he was a practical joker - and a practical joker sets people up by lying to them. He could string someone along for days and even weeks in is old south deep drawl (with a slight stutter that became pronounced only when he was excited or frightened) with such sincerity and timing that you were sure he was telling you the truth - this time. Especially since you were having to draw it out of him.

He lived in a house on our "lower place" for sometime before we built him a house closer to our house. We all wanted him to stay with us but he thought he was imposing. There was one house past the house on the lower place on the way from the country store near the Quitman County line, west of Sledge, MS. The Mondays lived a half-mile beyond Granddaddy and Jane walked about a mile to the store once or twice a week. She often stopped and visited with Granddaddy for a few minutes in the front yard.

One day Jane told Granddaddy she was worried about Bill (her brother). He was in poor health and his condition seemed to be deteriorating. So, Granddaddy said, "Jane, I will come down there and pray for Bill and he will get well. After that, every time she saw Granddaddy she asked, "Mr. Lee, when are you going to come pray for Bill?" He put her off with excuses until she made the request one day in the presence of my mother. When Jane left she asked what she was talking about and

when he told her she proceeded to give him the lecture of his life. After thinking about it, he decided that she was right: this was not a joking matter. It was sacrilegious!

The next time Jane stopped to ask when he was going to come down there and pray for Bill, he said, “Well, I’ll tell you, Jane. I would have already been down there but the last three people I prayed for all died.” She never mentioned it again. A “very present help in a time of trouble?”

Those who knew my grandfather knew to stop to question anything he said when he introduced any new subject. Only those who were never included in one of his practical jokes were disappointed - no joke! I have never seen anyone else like him. The only problem was that when he was stringing you along you would tend to lose sight of the line between truth and deception. All his family and friends knew that.

This backfired on Granddaddy on a few occasions. When he was a young man he more or less accidentally got into the race for sheriff of Yalobusha County, MS. I say accidentally because those closest to him were convinced that he would never have done it if he had been sober at the time. He could never have made a speech, and if he had, the stutter would have increased with his nervousness and people would not have understood him. So, he hired a Mr. Street to do the “stumping” for him. Some men would cut down a tree, leaving a tall stump so that the speaker could stand on the stump and address the people.

Mr. Street was apparently a spell-binder and people loved to listen to him. He concluded each speech with the statement, “There is just one difference between my candidate, Lee Cofer, and George Washington. George Washington couldn’t tell a lie and Lee Cofer can but won’t.” Then came the day when he slipped: “There is just one difference between my candidate, Lee Cofer, and George Washington. George Washington couldn’t tell a lie and my candidate, Lee Cofer, can’t tell the truth.” The crowd thought he had planned to say it that way and cheered - and a lot of them voted for him.

C. The World Rewards Its Own.

1. Some politicians have reduced lying to an art.

During and following the Civil War, many Republicans in Congress, with their accomplices in the media lied about Robert E. Lee. They lied about Jefferson Davis. They lied about Reconstruction. They lied about Andersonville. They even lied about slavery.

Today Democrats in congress persistently accuse conservatives of trying to starve children, take social security away from senior adults, and pass all laws for the benefit of the top one percent of income earners. The liberal media rewards those lies by parroting their claims. Many people, frightened by those claims, elect those they believe will protect their interests, even when they detest the behavior of the individual.

2. There are salesmen who have been accused of lying.

Many years ago, I traded in a large automobile with a powerful engine for a smaller car because of the gas millage. I was disappointed in the smaller car, and giving up the comfort and power was part of it. After about a month, I had the new car in the shop for something, and when I found my salesman I mentioned this. He listened sympathetically, and then said, “Man, you had better be glad you traded that car when you did. We sold it the next week and the man who bought it has had it in the shop twice already. We have spent a lot of money on it If you had not traded it you would have had to put a lot of money into it.” I felt immediate relief.

I was telling my brother-in-law and a friend of his about it and the friend began laughing. His father had a used-car lot, and that was the standard response when someone expressed doubt about a trade they had made. Hey, it was working with me until Harry clued me in on the deception.

3. Advertisers have been known to deceive people.

There is a reason for the truth in advertising laws that have been in place now for a number of years. Those laws were needed because companies were lying to the consumer and in most cases the consumer was not aware of the fact that he had been deceived. When he did there was not much he could do about it except to buy another product the next time. Companies were forced to prove claims that their product would kill cold germs, get clothes whiter, or build strong bodies twelve ways.

Now, I find interesting when someone announces, “We are so confident that you will like our product that if you are not completely satisfied you can return it in thirty days and get your money back.” They reason they offer to return your money within thirty days is that the law requires it.

II. A LYING TONGUE REALLY IS AN ABOMINATION TO THE LORD.

A. Satan Is the Father of Liars, John 8:44.

“You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies.”

1. Satan has been a liar and murderer from the beginning.

- a. He lied to Eve.
- b. He was involved in Cain’s murder of Abel.

2. Satan cannot help but lie.

- a. It is his nature to lie.
- b. He is the enemy of God.
- c. His lies are designed to destroy those created in God's image.

3. Satan is the extreme opposite of the Truth.

- a. He is the arch enemy of God.
- b. He is the bitter enemy of Jesus, Who is Truth.

4. Those who practice lying are children of Satan.

- a. Liars "want to do the desires of your father" (John 8:44).
- b. Men are never more like Satan than when they are lying.

B. God Hates Lying, Pro. 6:16.

*"These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: 17 A proud look, A **lying tongue**, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren" (Ps.6:16-19, NKJV).*

1. Lying one of the abominations against God mentioned in Proverbs.

- a. Lying is one of the seven abominations in 6:16-19.
- b. "Dishonest scales are an abomination to the LORD" (11:1).
- c. "Those who are of a perverse heart are an abomination to the LORD" (11:20).
- d. "Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD" (12:22).

As you can easily see, Lying does not stand alone. As the old saying goes, "a liar will steal and a thief will lie." Lying goes hand in glove with cheating, stealing, slander, gossip, and a host of other sins.

I had lunch with a pastor who had been in the military. He told me about a Sargent who came to the base one day wearing a long face. When asked what was wrong he confessed that his wife had left for work that morning, but returned an hour later for something she had forgotten. She found him in a compromising situation with the maid. They asked the Sargent what he did and he said, "I lied." They said, "I thought you said she caught you.." He answered, "She did, and I still lied." I lie as a very present help in a time of trouble, right? It is still an abomination to the Lord.

2. Not only does God hate lying, I hate lying.

And, as I have already stated, I especially hate lying when I find myself doing the lying. I made a commitment when I was a young man that my wife and my sons would never hear me lie. If you ask them, I think they will tell you that I have taken that commitment seriously. I have been so narrow

in this that there have been times when someone would ask on the fly, “Pray for Uncle Jim’s son-in-law’s cousin’s nephew.” I would want to promise to pray for the child, but knowing my memory - or lack of same - I will probably forget if I am not able to write it down immediately. So, I would assure the person making the request that I would do my best to remember him. Let’s face it, anyone who forgets his wife’s name is likely to forget a stranger’s name! By the way, if you ever forget your wife’s name, here is a recommendation - wait for it to come back to you. Don’t try to fill in the blanks!

I don’t want to be dishonest, but I have often asked myself if I answered a person with total honesty. Is anyone absolutely honest? Absolutely not. Only God is. Only Jesus can honestly claim to be “the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”

I came by my hatred for lying honestly. I have often said that my mother was among the most consecrated Christians I have ever known. She was among the most selfless saints I have ever known, and the remarkable thing is that I never had to tell people around our home that - that is what she told me. My father was not as spiritually sensitive as my mother. He supported her in what she did for the Lord, but she is the one who usually thought of it first. But my father was one of the most honest people I have ever known. He appreciated honesty and hated lying, especially when someone lied to him.

My father was working on something one day when a neighbor came by to see him. He was probably trying to get a tractor back in the field. Tim (not his real name) stood around visiting with my father for about half an hour before he made the statement, “Leo said you said thus-and-so about me.”

Without looking up Daddy said, “No, I didn’t say that.”

Tim said, “He sure said you did, and he also said that you had said....”

Daddy looked up and said, “Tim, you are lying.”

Tim began saying, “No, he really said that, and he said....”

“Tim, you are lying.”

Tim must have made six or eight attempts, and everyone was cut off with the same response, “Tim, you are lying!”

I was in my mid-teens at the time and knew enough about Tim and his neighbors to know that very few people in the area would have had the courage to confront him with the lie. This neighbor had made the statement that he had gotten out of one killing because the army wanted him for questioning in Germany. My father was very firm, but never raised his voice, and there was no evidence that he

was nervous.

When Tim left, I asked my father why he had called Tim a liar. He said, “I knew I had not said it, and knowing both Leo and Tim, I figured Tim was more likely the one who was lying.” There was more, but I would only appreciate that after some more consideration. Tim knew Daddy had not made the statement. He also knew if Daddy had thought about saying he would have said it to his face. He simply wanted to see my father on the defensive.

3. Hate for lying is an American tradition.

That historian of the West, Louis L’Amour - yes - that Louis L’Amour - offered many historical insights into the character the pioneers who settled the Mid-West and the West. Those who first moved into new areas moved ahead of the law, which meant that from time to time they sort of made it up as they went along. A horse thief was taken to the nearest cottonwood tree. In the desert, in the plains, or in Indian country, to steal a man’s horse something akin to sentencing him to death.

Above all things, the pioneers and westerners hated lying. Let’s face it, they not only hated lying, they hated liars. They were often days, if not weeks from any court or attorney’s office. They traded on a man’s word, and to them it was axiomatic that “a man is as good as his word.” If his word was no good he was viewed as no good. No one wanted to deal with a man they couldn’t trust.

Now, you will turn with me to the Word of God, I think you will see why God hates lying lips.

III. THE BIBLE CONDEMNS LYING, PROVERBS 12:17-22.

“He who speaks truth tells what is right, But a false witness, deceit. There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, But the tongue of the wise brings healing. Truthful lips will be established forever, But a lying tongue is only for a moment. Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil, But counselors of peace have joy. No harm befalls the righteous, But the wicked are filled with trouble. Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, But those who deal faithfully are His delight.”

A. The Liar and the Honest Person are Poetically Contrasted.

In Hebrew poetry parallelism is employed to either contrast or amplify a subject. In the first line a statement is made, and in the second line that truth is reinforced, either through contrast or amplification. Let’s see how that works here (Pro. 12:17-22).

1. “He who speaks truth tells what is right, But a false witness, deceit.”
2. “Truthful lips will be established forever, But a lying tongue is only for a moment.”

3. "Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, But those who deal faithfully are His delight."

B. Lying May Be the Most Vile of the Sins of Speech.

1. "He who hates disguises it with his lips, But he lays up deceit in his heart" (Pro. 26:24).
2. "A lying tongue hates those it crushes, And a flattering mouth works ruin" (Pro. 26:28).
3. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue" (Pro. 18:21).

C. Liars Who Do Not Repent Are Going to Hell (Rev. 21:8).

*"But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and **all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.**"*

1. All those whose sins are not forgiven are going to hell.
2. Liars here receive special emphasis - "all liars".

CONCLUSION. I have no idea who said it, but when I heard it I turned to the front of my Bible and copied the statement: "It is true because God said it. It is never enough to say that God said it because it is true." You and I speak many things because they are true, when God speaks truth is established. "Paul was inspired to write, *"Let God be found true, though every man be found a liar..."* (Rom. 3:4).

You are never more like Satan than when you lie, and you are never more like your heavenly Father than when you walk in the truth. Job declared, "Till I die I will not put away my integrity from me" (Job 27:5). Will you join me now in praying with David:

"Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity; And I have trusted in the LORD without wavering. Examine me, O LORD, and try me; Test my mind and my heart. For Thy lovingkindness is before my eyes, And I have walked in Thy truth" (Ps. 26:1-2).

INVITATION.