

The Whole Truth, and Nothing but the Truth *Ephesians 4:25*

If you were to visit the prestigious Harvard University, you would find in the famous Harvard Yard a statue, and on the pedestal an inscription: “*John Harvard, Founder, 1638.*” This icon is known as the “statue of the three lies.” First of all, the artist commissioned to sculpture it could not find a clear picture of John Harvard after which to model his work, so he just chose a picture of a respectable-looking gentleman from the proper era. Second, John Harvard was not the founder of Harvard University. He was simply a substantial contributor to the college in its early days. Third, the date on the statue’s base represents not the date of John Harvard’s death, as might be supposed, but the year he donated his library and half his fortune to the college. The irony lies in that on the side of the statue is the Harvard emblem emblazoned with the school’s motto: *Veritas - truth.*

A preacher was walking down the street when he came upon a group of about a dozen boys, all of them between 10 and 12 years of age. The group surrounded a dog. Concerned that the boys might be hurting the dog, he went over and asked “What are you doing with that dog?”

One of the boys replied, “This dog is just an old neighborhood stray. We all want him, but only one of us can take him home. So we’ve decided that whichever one of us can tell the biggest lie will get to keep the dog.”

Of course, the preacher was surprised by this. “You boys shouldn’t be having a contest telling lies!” he exclaimed. He then launched into a ten-minute sermon against lying, beginning, “Don’t you boys know it’s a sin to lie?” and ending with, “Why, when I was your age, I never told a lie.”

There was dead silence for about a minute. Just as the preacher was beginning to think he’d gotten through to them, the smallest boy gave a deep sigh and said, “All right, guys, give him the dog.”

Paul has just been telling us that as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, our lives should be different than they were before. He compared the changes that occur in our lives to the act of taking off a set of filthy clothes, and putting on clean, fresh ones. And he begins to list several things that serve as examples of what we should put off. He begins his list of things we need to change, areas of our lives where the remnants of the old self are to be discarded and the righteousness of Christ is to be put on. This is critical to everything else he has to say on the subject.

If you were called upon to give testimony in a court of law you would promise to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. But Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:25, *“Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.”* The word for “put off” or “laying aside” in some versions, literally means to stop doing something we have been accustomed to doing. You’ve been telling things that weren’t exactly the truth? Paul says. Then stop it! What Paul meant specifically is that when we speak to one another, we should always tell the truth, that speaking lies and falsehood to one another is not fitting for a believer. After all, Satan is the father of lies, and we as believers should have nothing to do with the kingdom of darkness.

But it is also true that this principle has a much broader application than just the kinds of things we say to one another. I think it can also be applied to three major areas of our lives: speaking the truth about ourselves, speaking the truth about others, and speaking the truth about God. Let’s look at each of those in turn.

1 It means that we should always tell the truth about ourselves.

This is so important for us to grasp. For too long we have been telling ourselves things about ourselves which are not true. For example, we may have the opinion of ourselves that we are pretty good people, and we may even convince ourselves that God is lucky to have us on His team. But the Bible says, *“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives”* (1 John 1:8-10). We must speak the truth about our own personal sin and deal with it in a timely and Biblical manner.

On the other hand, we make a mistake, and we say to ourselves, “Oh, you’re so dumb!” or “I’m such an idiot.” I’m pulling these out of my own experience with myself. You may have other things that you say about yourself which simply are not true. Paul says that we are to put off falsehood, and I firmly believe that would include speaking any falsehood of any kind, including falsehood about ourselves.

We just simply need to come to the place where we know who we are in Christ, and that we believe what God says about us. It doesn’t have anything to do with something you have done. It makes no difference what your past looks like. It has everything to do with what God says about you. When we come to terms with who we are in Christ, and what God says about us, the more our behavior begins to look like this new person we have been created to be in Christ.

Because you are in Christ, every one of the following statements is true of you. Just from right here in the book of Ephesians, we find these wonderful truths about ourselves:

Ephesians 1:3— We are blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ.
Ephesians 1:4— We are holy, blameless and covered with God's love
Ephesians 1:5-6— We are adopted as God's children
Ephesians 1:7— We are forgiven and our sins are taken away
Ephesians 1:10-11—We will be brought under Christ's leadership
Ephesians 1:13— We are marked as belonging to God by the Holy Spirit
Ephesians 2:6— We have been raised up to sit with Christ in glory.
Ephesians 2:10— We are God's works of art!
Ephesians 2:13— We have been brought near to God, so that we have direct access to God.
Ephesians 3:6— We share in the promise in Christ
Ephesians 3:12— We can come with freedom and confidence into God's presence
Ephesians 3:29-30—We are members of Christ's body, the Church

Pretty amazing, isn't it? But listen, folks—that is just the beginning! There are so many more things that the Bible says are true of every one of us who name the Name of Christ. Here's just a few of them:

We are loved—*How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!* (1 Jn 3:1).

We are children of God—*Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God*—(John 1:12)

We are joint heirs with Jesus, sharing His inheritance with Him Romans 8:17

We are a temple of God. His spirit and His life live in us 1 Corinthians 6:19

We are members of Christ's body. 1 Corinthians 12:27

We are redeemed and forgiven Colossians 1:14

We are complete in Jesus Christ Colossians 2:10

We are free from condemnation Romans 8:1

We are new creations because we are in Christ—*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!* (2 Corinthians 5:17)

We are God's co-workers 2 Corinthians 6:1

We have been given exceedingly great and precious promises by God by which we share His nature 2 Peter 1:4

We can always know the presence of God because He never leaves us Hebrews 13:5

We can ask God for wisdom and He will give us what we need James 1:5

And that's just a little bit of what God says about us. Is God a liar? No! So is what God says truth? Yes! Simply choose to believe what God says about you.

Dr. Neil Anderson, in his book *Victory over the Darkness* has written “The more you reaffirm who you are in Christ, the more your behavior will begin to reflect your true identity!” I think that is why Paul, through the Holy Spirit, is telling us as believers that we are to put off the old ways, and put on the new man which is in Christ.

Don't go by your circumstances or your feelings. Don't even go by your own intelligence and what you think you've figured out. Instead, believe God. Trust Him and put your faith in Him, even when that makes no sense at all. God's ways are different from our ways. He can turn weakness into strength, surrender into victory, and death into eternal life.

2 It means that we should always tell the truth about others.

Here is a real eye-opener—listen very carefully! All those things we said that are true about ourselves are also true of other believers! Even those we don't get along with. Even those whose beliefs don't exactly line up with ours. Even those who don't worship the way we do. And when we speak about others, our words should line up with the truth. Scripture tells us that we are to avoid any hint of speaking falsehood about anyone else. I believe that would include not only outright lies, but half-truths and distortions of the truth as well.

Sometimes even giving the “facts” is not the same as telling the truth. Did you know that? Henry David Thoreau once wrote a book entitled, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. The publisher printed 1000 copies, but the book did not sell well. Because the publisher needed the shelf space, Thoreau bought all 706 of the unsold copies, then wrote in his personal journal: "I have now a library of nearly nine hundred volumes, over seven hundred of which I wrote myself." It was the truth, but it was a very clever twisting of the truth so that it sounded like something else. We can do that sometimes when we are talking about others.

Scripture agrees with Scripture on this point, that telling the truth is something which should always characterize those of us who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Just listen to these examples from the book of Proverbs:

Prov 12:22, *“Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord.”*

Prov 12:19, *“Truthful lips endure for ever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment.”*

Prov 20:17, *“Bread gained by deceit is sweet to a man, but afterward his mouth will be full of gravel.”*

So it is very clear and plain from Scripture that God's intention from the beginning was that we should not bear false witness against our neighbor, as we are told way back in what we have

called The Ten Commandments. Telling falsehood, half-truths, distortions and outright lies—all of them things that have no place in the life of the disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 It means that we should always tell the truth about God.

You say, “Well, pastor, what do you mean by that? I would always tell the truth about God.” Well, let’s look at it, and see if that is true. For example, we may be involved in personal sin, and we think that we can delay dealing with it because no one else knows about it. God won’t care—He understands, we tell ourselves. But the truth about God is that He knows everything, and it matters a great deal to Him what you’re hiding in your heart! Matthew 10:30 tells us that even the very hairs of our heads are numbered—information that very few of us know about ourselves.

We go through a particularly rough spell in our lives, and in a moment of despair, we may say, “God doesn’t care about me.” But that is a falsehood that we are to put off! It is not true! 2 Corinthians 1:3 calls Him the *“Father of compassion and the God of all comfort.”* We may think God has forgotten us, but that, too, is a falsehood. We read in the book of Deuteronomy, *“Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.”* In the book of Joshua we read, *“You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed.”* (Joshua 23:14).

We may feel afraid, but that, too, is a falsehood according to the Scriptures. Psalm 62:2 reads, *“He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress; I will never be shaken.”* Psalm 27:1 proclaims, *“The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?”* We may question, at least in our minds, whether God really has a plan for our lives, a plan that we can know. But let’s remind ourselves of the truth which is found in Jeremiah 29:11—*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*

We wonder if He has the power to act in our lives, but that, too, is a falsehood. Habakkuk 3:19 assures us, *“The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.”* We sometimes do not “feel” the love of God, but that does not change the fact of His love one little bit. Jeremiah 31:3 tells us *“I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.”*

You see, folks, that is the truth about God! He is also true to His own character and His Word. He always speaks the truth, and cannot lie. You know what that means? That means that when God says that He loves you and values you, He is telling the truth. We also learn in the Scriptures that God is unchanging, that His characteristics do not change from one day or

minute or split-second to the next. And do you understand what that means? That means that since God loves you and me, and since He cannot change, that He loves you and me as much today as He ever has. Consider that! How much do you think God loved us when He sent His Son to die for us? The Bible says in John 3:16 that God loved the world so much that He sent His only Son to die. That's a lot of love, isn't it? Well, since God's love cannot change, that means He loves us as much today as He did the moment Christ died. The darkness of your sin and the hardness of your heart have not been able to change the vast, unmeasured love of God for your soul.

Roy Lessin has written, "Everything that God is, He is eternally. He is love, and He loves you all the time. He is good, and He is good to you all the time. There are no ups and downs, highs and lows, or comes and goes with God. What He was to you yesterday when He showed you mercy and grace, He will show to you today. The acceptance you knew when He lifted you out of your sins is the same acceptance that upholds you today. The arms that were once around you to give you assurance, embrace you today. All the delights of His presence, all the joys of His face, all the gladness of His heart rests upon you today."

So let's put off the old man with all its falsehoods, lies and deceit. Let's tell the truth about ourselves, about others, and about God. Put on the new man which is in Christ!