

Exodus Chapter 20 v 16

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[0 : 00] Good morning. Welcome. It's good to see you. It's a cold and unpleasant sort of a day outside, but we have the refuge of being able to come into the presence of the living God and draw near to him and come and worship him for who he is. And the only way we can know God and the only way we can enjoy his presence is through Jesus Christ, his son. And the apostle Peter, as he speaks about Jesus before the religious leaders, says this, salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved. No other name but the name of Jesus, Jesus Christ, the son of God who came into the world to rescue us, to save us from our sins, to bring us into that everlasting relationship with God.

And of course that Jesus who lived and died rose again and the Bible assures us is coming again one day. The great hope, the great purpose of this world is not the self-destruction of humanity, but this world is heading to one goal, the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. And so we're going to stand and sing about that day and of that Jesus. 304 in our hymn books, at the name of Jesus, every every knee shall bow, every tongue confess him. King of glory now. Let's stand and sing 304.

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King of glory now. Let's stand and sing 304. King of glory now. Let's stand and sing 304. We shall call him Lord, who from the beginning was the mighty word.

Amen. A wonderful day it will be when our Lord Jesus comes again and every eye will see him.

[2 : 21] Amen. We shall see him who we've loved. But even now we have this wonderful fellowship with him and we express that in prayer together. So let us pray.

It's an amazing thing, O Lord our God, that we can draw near to you, that we can know you. Know not just about you or facts or certain things that are true of you, but know you personally in that life-giving and that life-sustaining relationship. We thank you, O Lord our God, that we are one with you and you are one with us. We are part of your family. You are our heavenly Father. And our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, is our elder brother in that sense that he is the one who has gone and done all things for us. He is the one who is the firstborn from the dead.

He is the one who is having all authority and power over all of creation. He is indeed the one who is our Lord and our Redeemer, our Rescuer. We thank you that though he is and always will be the very Son of God, we thank you that he became the Son of Man. He took on our frailty and feebleness, our weakness, when he became that baby born in Bethlehem. Thank you that he humbled himself for a season.

He condescended to come amongst his creation, us, to live as one of us, to endure and experience all the sorrows, the highs, the lows, the joys, the griefs, the pains of life. And we thank you that in going to the cross, he secured for us full and complete payment for all of our debts, all of our sins. We thank you that in the cross, Lord Jesus, you took upon yourself the very punishment that our sins deserve, and you died the death that we deserve. But we thank you that you conquered death. And by your death, O Lord, you rose to life everlasting. You rose to life which can never die. And Lord, we know that even today, you live. And because you live, we have life. Because you live, we have one in whom we can put our trust. Because you live, you've promised never to leave us or forsake us. Because you live, our faith is not in some historic act of the past, but our faith is in the living and enduring and everlasting God. And Lord, we know that the day is coming soon when all the world will see you, when you will return again, just as you promised. You will come again in power and glory and splendor, not as that humble child in the manger, but as that glorious God that you are. And you will come as judge of living and the dead. And every single one of us here must and will stand before your judgment seat and give an account of how we've lived, either to receive that judgment of death, which is everlasting or life which is ever living. We pray, O Lord, that even today that you would make us aware of the seriousness, of the awesomeness of what it must mean to stand before you.

For, O Lord, we thank you that though we are all sinners and all deserving of judgment and all under condemnation, yet, Lord, you have promised that there is salvation, salvation to be found, pardon to be found, simply by faith, not by anything we can do, not by any actions that we can take, not by any prayers that we can pray, but simply by faith, trusting and leaning and looking to you that you have done everything for us and receiving your gracious gift of life and forgiveness. O Lord, help us this morning. If we know that joy, that salvation, to sing of it, to worship of it, to, Lord, bring to you our lives afresh, to live in the light of your coming again, that we might live such lives, O Lord, busy about your service. And if we have not, Lord, prepared for that day, that day which must surely come, then, O Lord, we pray that you would waken us, quicken us. O Lord, cause us to see that we are in terrible, terrible danger and that, Lord, there is only one way of escape. It is for us to throw and cast away our sin and to come to you. And Lord, come to you on your terms and come to you and receive you. Bow the knee before you. Every person will do that one day, but we do it now willingly and gladly that we may enjoy the rich blessings that your life has brought.

[7 : 00] Come upon us now by your spirit, we pray this morning. Help us and speak to us. Meet with us and bless us and cause us again to go from this place knowing that we have met with you the living God, whom to know is life itself and life everlasting. Amen.

We're going to turn together now in our Bibles to Ephesians and chapter 4. In our preaching, we're looking at the Ten Commandments as well, as we've been journeying through the book of Exodus.

And though we're a week behind with the children, the commandment we're looking at is, you shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. That's the ninth commandment.

But we're reading from Ephesians 4. And as we read through, it's page 1175. Just try to take note of how many times it speaks about our speech.

About our speech. We're going to pick up from verse 11. So that's Ephesians chapter 4, beginning at verse 11. So that's probably near the bottom of the page, on page 1175.

[8 : 18] We're picking up from there and reading through into chapter 5. Here is God's faithful word. So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching, by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding, and separated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, due to the hardening of their hearts.

Having lost all sensitivity, they've given themselves over to sensuality, so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed. That, however, is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ, and were taught in him, in accordance with the truth that is in Christ, the truth that is in Jesus.

[10 : 05] You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires, to be made new in the attitude of your minds, and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Therefore, each of you must put off falsehood, and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. In your anger do not sin, do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.

Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption, get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children, and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us, and gave himself up for us, as a fragrant offering, and sacrifice to God.

[11 : 35] And so we come to the ninth of these commandments, you shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. I wonder how good are you at telling when somebody is lying to you? Can you tell by the way that they speak or act?

Can you discern how good a judge are you at these things? There are physical signs, and we're told that when somebody's lying, they blink more, their pupils are dilated, sometimes the expression on their face doesn't match with what they're saying.

There's increased muddled movement with their arms, shorter sentences, more pauses, more mistakes than usual, more negative words, more extreme words, like very, and repeated words.

Inventors over the years have made a lie detector, it's called a polygraph, it's used by governments and other authorities to question people suspected of crimes and other things as well.

[13 : 03] And the person is sort of hooked up to this machine which measures several physiological responses, blood pressure, pulse, breathing rhythms, body temperature, changes in the way the skin conducts electricity while the person is being asked these questions.

The theory is that false answers will produce distinctive measurements, and those distinctive measurements can be ascertained whether that person is lying or not.

But even with sophisticated technology, there's no guarantee that all lies can be detected. People can become so convinced of the lie that they believe that it's true.

And so those physical responses are not seen. When we come to this commandment, you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor, or as we could simply put it in one sense, you shall not lie, we might think it's one of the most innocuous, the simplest, the least dangerous, as it were, the least severe of all the commandments.

Yes, we can understand, I mean, stealing, we know that's wrong, and killing, of course, and adultery, and these sort of things. Well, lying, I mean, really, is it all that bad?

[14 : 23] Is it all that wrong? Well, in fact, of course, lying underlies all those commandments that go beforehand. A person who's a thief has to be a liar, don't they? They have to be devious, they have to be duplicitous, they have to be, they have to pretend to be doing something that they're not.

There's a lie underneath the thief. There's a lie, of course, underneath the adulterer, where they've been, who they've been seeing, what they've been up to. They have to put on a false life.

And a murderer, of course, is not somebody who tells people about his intentions beforehand. As he approaches his victim, he's coming, perhaps, in a friendly manner. Now, in every sin that we see, in every commandment, we see lying is there.

And we know that lying is spread throughout the whole of our society and the whole of our world. Lying is the very root, of course, of why we distrust politicians, why there is cynicism in the world.

Well, because in business, in personal relationships, sadly, even in the church, there is that attitude, well, everybody lies.

[15 : 34] Why do we find it so hard to trust others? Why does it take so long for us to build up strong, trusting relationships which have confidence because we are constantly exposed to falsehood wherever we go?

From the very cradle, we are brought up the hard way to learn that people cannot be trusted. Even in the schoolyard, someone who pretends to be your friend one day is the one who is calling you names the next day, telling lies about you so they can win favor.

Consciously, or subconsciously, we grow up to be on our guard. We grow up to be trusting of no one, not fully, not completely, entering into our marriages in that way, bringing up our children in that way, doing all that we can to prevent ourselves being hurt by another person's falsehood.

And so we find that this innocuous, this seemingly simple thing is so very, very hurtful, dangerous, and vile.

Perjury, which is to lie in court, in one sense that's really this commandment and its nub is about, is a serious crime. In every single country, wherever you go, to perjure yourself, to lie under oath in court is something which is dealt with with severe punishment.

[17 : 09] It shows that clearly we understand the importance of truth-telling and that lying is unacceptable and does immeasurable damage, and yet somehow we permit it.

The alternative facts that have been put forward even in the last few weeks, new phrases, convention, being economic with the truth, and so on, all to cover up lies.

And so we see this ninth commandment, this last but one penultimate commandment is given by a good creator, a good God who knows the needs of our society, knows the problems that we face, and always his word is up-to-date, relevant for today as it has been throughout history.

In fact, if we want to know how bad lying is, then we only have to go right back to the very beginning and the fall of man and women into sin, the entrance of sin and evil into the world began with a lie.

Satan, the devil, lying about God or rather accusing God of lying. Back in Genesis 3, do you remember when the snake, the serpent, Satan we're told, says to the woman, eat the fruit.

[18 : 27] And she says, no, we mustn't eat it or we'll die. He says, you will certainly not die, the snake said to the woman, for God knows when you eat from it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God knowing good and evil.

In other words, what God has said that you will die, it's a lie, he's saying. And God has ulterior motives, he's not to be trusted. He only wants to keep you from enjoying something good.

The devil was so good a liar that Eve believed him rather than God and acted upon his lies to her and Adam and humanity's everlasting sorrow and ruin.

And the sad truth is is that we live in a society where people continue to believe the lie that God cannot be trusted. He's a good liar, isn't he? He's a good liar, God cannot be trusted.

God's word is not true. Exactly the same lie being spoken and being heard and being believed by people today. And dear friends, therefore, we've got to see that lying can never be excused.

[19 : 34] There's no such thing as a little white lie or a harmless lie or a lie that never hurts anyone. All falsehood, all lying is dangerous and harmful.

So what does this commandment teach us? Remember, we've been looking and we've seen that this commandment is given by God as all commandments are to teach us what God is like and we see the reality of this commandment lived out and fulfilled personally in the Lord Jesus Christ and then we see how do we apply it?

How do we live it? Not just with the dead letter but with the spirit of the law which goes way beyond simply just not speaking falsehood.

So what does this commandment teach us about God? Well, of course, it teaches us a God who commands you shall not lie and bear false witness is a God who never lies, a God who is perfect, a God who is full of truth, a God who is honest.

Summed up in a simple word, a four letter word, holy. God is holy. Without fault, without error, without imperfection, without deceit, God is holy.

[20 : 47] We saw that at the very start of Exodus when Moses goes out into the wilderness and there before him is a flaming bush and the Lord God speaks to him and says, take off your sandals for you are standing in holy ground.

God is holy. That means he's set apart. He's different from us. But it means that he's perfect, that he's good. And because God is holy and because he does not sin and he does not lie and he does not false, it means also that he hates what is false and he hates what is a lie.

In Proverbs 12, we're told the Lord detests lying lips. So for us to say lying is acceptable, if it's inexcusable, God says it's not.

It's not. He hates lying lips. God is truthful because he speaks the truth and his words can be trusted. When God said to Adam and Eve, if you eat of that which I've told you not to, if you break that commandment you will die, he kept his promise in one sense.

When they took an egg of that fruit, that is in the moment they died. That moment their relationship with God was broken, the moment that they began to age. God is not a hypocrite.

[22 : 09] God doesn't say one thing and do another. God is not deceitful. That's why we can take what he has said in the Bible as being truth. His word, dependable, reliable because it's him who gives it.

His promises that he gives us are promises that we can rely on as well. We may see that the promises of God are impossible, that he shall meet all our needs, promises that we forgive all our sins, promises that we shall have life everlasting in heaven, promises that Christ will come again.

We may think these things are impossible, we don't see them, but we can depend upon them and we know they shall come to pass because God is truth. This is what he says in Numbers, or rather what Balak, the prophet, says of him in Numbers 23.

God is not a man that he should lie. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill? Of course not. What he promises he fulfills.

The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into the world was the culmination of promises over thousands and thousands of years, prophecies that God had said that my son will come, a Messiah will come, a Savior will come, and he came.

[23 : 23] History tells us the reality that Christ came. As God promised. One day we shall see that all that God promises about Christ coming again will be fulfilled.

We started at the very beginning of our service with the necessity of grasping and comprehending this reality. This world, your life and mine, is heading to one place.

Judgment before God. God and we've got to take that seriously because God has said it. He's not a man that he should lie. God is truthful, he's dependable, he's reliable.

Who else can you really trust in this world? Let me ask you that. Who else can you really depend upon? People say, well, I can depend upon myself. But goodness me, look at yourself.

Aren't you a contradiction in terms? How many times have you and I, when we look in our own hearts, we've deceived, we've lied, we've exaggerated, we've never, ever lived and spoken in complete truth.

[24 : 31] So if you can't trust yourself, what makes you think you can trust anybody else? There's only one person that you can trust implicitly. That's the living God.

He's the only one who's going to tell you the truth about yourself. He's the only one who's going to be truthful to you. He's the only one who's never going to let you down and fail you. He's the only one who's never going to deceive you.

And so when God says, dear friends, to us that there is hell and there is judgment and there is a day when we shall stand before him, then you can be certain that will happen because God is not a liar.

And when he promises you there is forgiveness if you'll put your faith in Jesus, when he promises you that there is life everlasting beyond death for those who have Christ as their savior, you can take him at his word and trust him.

What about the Lord Jesus Christ? How does he keep this commandment or how did he keep this commandment? Remember, the Lord Jesus Christ is the only person who has ever lived in this world who has never, ever sinned, who has never, ever lied.

[25 : 38] The only person who has ever lived who is perfect and holy because he is the Son of God yet fully human. And we can see we only have to look at the testimony, we only have to look at the record of those four witnesses of his life, those four biographers, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John to see that there was never a false word that came from his lips.

Never a lie, never a deception. Never did he pull the wool over people's eyes. Never did he hoodwink them. Never did he say to them flowery words to keep them happy.

He always, only spoke the truth. So much so that when Jesus stood before his disciples he's able to say to them, I am the truth. I want you to imagine that there is somebody who comes to you and says to you, I've never lied.

I've always spoken the truth. You'd be a little bit sceptical to say the least, wouldn't you? In fact, you'd be very sceptical. But imagine somebody coming to you and say, not only have I never spoken a false word, I've never lived or done anything false either.

I am the truth. My life has always been free from falsehood. Then you would say that's preposterous. That's impossible. You cannot possibly say that of anyone except of Jesus Christ.

[27 : 00] Of anyone except of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, I am the truth. By that he meant clearly that he spoke the truth. Do you remember how often when Jesus would speak to people he would say, truly, truly, I say to you.

The words he actually says in his own language are, amen, amen, amen, I say to you. Because the word amen means surely, definitely, truthfully.

It comes from the root for steadfast and trustworthy. So in other words, Jesus is saying, what I'm saying to you, you can trust implicitly. That's why at the end of a prayer, when we pray together, we say amen.

We're saying, we're in agreement with this. That's what we're saying. We're in agreement with this. This is trustworthy. This is what we agree with. Jesus always spoke the truth. Truly, truly, I say to you.

But Jesus lived the truth, as I said. What you saw with Jesus is what you got. He talked the talk and he walked the walk. His life and his words were one together.

[28 : 04] We see that very simply, we might put in the one sense where Jesus tells us that we are to pray for those who persecute us. And what do we find? That when he's on the cross being nailed to that tree, what is he doing?

Praying, Father, forgive them. He said it, he did it. He lived it. How many of us are like that? Say it. We don't live it. That's why Jesus was so scornful against those religious leaders who would say all sorts of great things, but their lives were completely corrupt.

They were hypocrites. Again and again, Jesus spoke about their double standards. Isn't that something that we find again and again that people pick up on especially?

Where somebody places themselves in this position of authority, religious or otherwise, which demands trustworthiness and truthfulness, and then we see that they are far from it.

And how sad it has been over the years, how sad it is even today, that many who claim to be Christian people and Christian leaders are absolute, complete hypocrites.

[29 : 16] And it's so sad because the world is looking for people it can trust, but the wrong thing is it should be looking for the God it can trust. Men will always let us down. Women will always let us down.

But dear friends, what a challenge it is for you and I as well. And in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, he only lived the truth and spoke the truth, but he revealed the truth.

He was the personification of truth about God. We sang there in that hymn just a little while ago. In the person of the Savior, all his majesty, God's, is seen.

Would we view his, that's God's highest glory, here it shines in Jesus' face. When Jesus Christ came into the world, he was not simply an only coming to save and to rescue men and women for God, he was coming to say, here is God and this is what he's like and he is just like me.

And so when he speaks to his disciples in John 14, he says, anyone who has seen me has seen the Father, has seen God. Now either he is completely off his trolley or he is completely truthful.

[30 : 30] You can't say that he's a good man who says, when you've seen me, you've seen God, unless he's really telling the truth. You either have to say he's a lunatic or a really wicked and evil man or that he truly is who he says he is.

You certainly can't say he's a good man or simply just a good man. No, Jesus is not just the one who spoke the word of God but he is the living incarnation of the character of God.

That's why I challenge you, read the biographies of Jesus, read them and you will see what God is like. He's the one who looks over crowds of people with compassion. He's the one who goes to the outcast and the people who are rejected and pushed aside in society and he loves them and he cares for them and he heals them and he ministers to them.

Yet he's the one who speaks against falsehood, who speaks against hypocrisy. He's the one who goes to where people are deceiving and cheating and he kicks over their tables and he makes a cord of whips and drives them out of the temple.

The truth is this that our Lord Jesus Christ in the person of Jesus Christ we have the one who contains the truth about everything. Everything. We read there from Ephesians in chapter 4 verse 21 where we're told about how we've been taught the truth that is in Jesus.

[31 : 58] It's in receiving the Lord Jesus Christ that we receive the whole truth. The whole truth about who we are, the whole truth about the world and what its position is in this universe and in history, the whole truth about God, the whole truth about our relationships with others, the whole truth about where the world is heading, it's all found in the person of Jesus Christ.

all truth is found in him alone. So John at the right beginning of his biography speaks about Jesus as the one through whom grace and truth have come.

Are you searching dear friend? Are you looking for answers? Are you trying to find out what makes sense of yourself, your world, your society? Are you looking for answers to the questions that trouble you and have troubled you?

Who can I trust? What is it that's worth living for? Where am I going? Then it's in Christ and in him alone that you will find those answers. They aren't found anywhere else or in anyone else.

The Lord Jesus Christ especially fulfills and keeps this commandment in his work of redemption, his work of salvation in bringing men and women into a right relationship with God.

[33 : 13] You see, what happens when you become a Christian is this, the Lord Jesus changes us from being the erroneous, the faulty, the false human beings that we are into being the true beings that we're meant to be, the true children of God that we are meant to be.

He fixes us. You see, when God made the world, he made human beings, he made us in his own image. Genesis 1.26 tells us that. When God made Adam and Eve, they bore the image of God as it was meant to bear the image of God in the world.

But when sin came in, when evil came in, and falsehood came in, that image of God was distorted and broken and corrupted and polluted. And from then on, men and women were born and have been born faulty, false, until Jesus Christ came.

And until Jesus Christ comes into our life, we continue in that faulty, distorted, false image of God. But when Christ becomes part of who we are, when he comes into our lives, then what he does is he restores us to the very image of God.

We begin to become the people that God made us to be. That's why we speak about the fact that everyone who is a Christian is a new creation. The old is gone, the new has come.

[34 : 38] Paul writes about the very purpose of God in choosing and purposing to save a people, to be conformed to the image of his son. Now for every one of us who is a Christian, that has already begun.

You and I, dear friends, if we are Christians this morning, already have been shaped and fashioned to bear something of the image of God that we did not bear before, to be restored to the people that we were made for and created for.

But it's not finished yet. That's the whole Christian life, is this great journey, this great adventure, this great, at one sense, shaping process of God. We'll never be what we were meant to be until the day Christ comes again.

But more and more, day by day, week by week, God is molding and fashioning and shaping and changing us that we might be conformed to the image of God. But when Christ comes again, when he comes and we're told that we shall be like him, 1 John 3, 2.

All sin will be gone, all falsehood will be gone, all that destroys, all that mars, all that spoils, the image of God in humanity will be gone. We should be like him.

[35 : 51] Our Lord Jesus Christ is doing that. And one of the ways he's doing that is he's doing it through his word, as we apply his commandments to our lives.

So this commandment, you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor, how are we to apply that to our lives with God's help? How are we to live that out? To be the people that God wants us to be, Christ died for us to be, the Holy Spirit has saved us to be.

Well, of course, all these commandments, as we said to the children, are wrapped up in those two commandments, love the Lord your God with all your heart and mind and soul and strength, love your neighbor as yourself.

Love your neighbor as yourself. And that applies not just to our actions or our emotions, but to our words, particularly to our words.

If we love someone, then we will not steal from them, we will not kill them or mistreat them. If we love someone, we will not deceive them or lie to them or about them.

[36 : 54] So this is when we come back to Ephesians chapter 4 and to the passage we read, where we have Paul's very clear and helpful teaching on the matter of the use of our lips, particularly over all things, he says there in verse 15, instead, in other words, instead of being deceitful and scheming and lost and blown around by every deceitful truth, every deceitful teaching, instead speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that's Christ.

Speaking the truth in love, that's the simple, plain, straightforward command. What does it mean?

It's not the same as loving to speak the truth. You see, some people can love to speak the truth, but there is no love in the truth that they speak.

what do you think of my new hat that I bought the other day? It's awful. That's loving to speak the truth, but it's not speaking the truth in love, is it?

Ultimately, because it's your judgment whether it's awful to somebody else, it may be beautiful, but love to speak the truth is not the same as speaking the truth in love. When I speak, are my words coated with love?

[38 : 24] How do we do that? We need to ask ourselves some very simple questions before we open our mouths. The big problem, of course, is we've got to engage our brains before our mouths and they always seem to work in reverse order.

Is it true what I say? Is it true? Secondly, is it necessary? Not just for me to say it, I need to get it off my chest.

No, no, that's not the same as it's necessary. Do they need to hear it? Is it necessary for them to hear? Is it going to be useful, right for them?

And thirdly, is it kind? Where's all the kindness gone in the world? Is it kind to say that to them? In the midst of their grief, in the midst of their difficulty, in the midst of their hardship, is it kind to say, true to say?

Is it necessary to say? Let's just look at these things a little closer. First of all, we must speak without hypocrisy. We must speak without hypocrisy, dear friends. How can we be otherwise?

[39 : 33] 1 Peter, Peter writes chapter 2, rid yourself of all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. We live in a hypocritical world.

We live in a world where people want to exalt themselves to be something better than they really are. That's the whole purpose, isn't it? I want people to think of me better than I am.

I want to put on a show, I want to put on a demonstration that makes me appear to be powerful, clever, intellectual, cool, trendy, whatever it may be, even though really that's not who I am inwardly.

And so, in various ways, from the very smallest ways, the way that people dress, to the way that people make pronouncements or act or do things or are involved in things.

Dear friends, we don't need to exaggerate who we are. See, the wonderful thing about being a Christian is we've been brought into a place of freedom. And this commandment sets us free to be just exactly who we are.

[40 : 38] We don't have to be something that impresses other people. We don't have to be something that makes people think that we're wonderful because we're accepted for who we are in Christ. God looks at you and me and he says, I don't care how you dress, I don't care about what activities you're involved with, I don't care about any of those things, I love you, I accept you just as you are today because you're in Christ.

We don't have to be champions to feel good about ourselves. We don't have to be better and put other people down to be happy with ourselves.

We're happy with ourselves because God is happy with us and because we are his child. And therefore, dear friends, we don't need to pull other people down. There in Ephesians chapter 2 verse 29, notice what Paul speaks about, do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs so it may benefit those who listen.

So often when we speak are our words words that build others up. And of course the most obvious way to pull somebody down is to gossip about them, isn't it?

Let me say this to you dear friends and I know some of you would hold your hands up and say that it's a problem that you have. It is something that does not belong to the Christian. It is something which marks the unbeliever.

[42 : 05] Here's what Paul writes in Romans chapter 1. He speaks about those who are without Christ. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters. How on earth can he put those things, how can he put together God-hater and gossip?

Well he does. That's how serious it is. It's something that we have to work at and put to death in our lives. If you have that tendency that when you hear tittle tattle that you go and tittle tattle it to others or a rumor or a story or whatever it is then you need to nip it in the bud and if somebody says to you let me tell you something about somebody no thanks I don't need to know.

Do my words build people up? Do the things that I say about others build them up before others? Or am I still in that position of such a sense of self-loathing that I've got to put other people down to make myself feel good?

And of course as Christians dear friends one of the things that we must do is we must speak the gospel truth. In other words we must share the gospel with others.

What's the greatest truth that you can speak to somebody else? It's the truth about Christ. When the Christians were persecuted in Acts 8 and they were scattered from their homes we're told they preached the word wherever they went.

[43 : 38] Wherever they went they told people about Christ. The best truth that we can speak with our mouths, the most loving thing we can say to somebody else is about the love of Christ and about what he did for us.

When was the last time I did that? When was the last time I prayed and asked for an opportunity to do that? speaking it in love, getting alongside, sharing the things of Jesus with others, not in a demonstrative way, not in a harsh, unkind way.

You're a sinner, you're going to hell. Well, well, do you know the love of God in Christ who died for you?

Do you know that there is a way of life, forgiveness? There's a way, isn't there? It comes from loving people. Finally, dear friends, there's something that we must all do, whoever we are.

It's the one truth that we must speak about and it must be we speak about it with God in prayer and that's confessing our sin. Confessing our sin.

[44 : 53] Here's what John writes in his first letter. 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 to forgive us and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Confessing my sin to the Lord is a vital part of using my tongue aright. It's not just enough to say I'm a bad person.

Do I confess my sin? Lord, forgive me. Forgive me. That's the wonderful promise we have. If we don't cover up our sin but confess it, he forgives it.

If we try and cover it up and bury it and pretend that we don't need that forgiveness, pretend that we really are good people, truthful people, honest people, reliable people, we're fooling ourselves, deceiving ourselves and actually the sin still remains.

We need to pray, dear friends. There's a wonderful prayer. It's in Psalm 141 verse 3. Write it down if you've got notes there. Psalm 141 verse 3. I'd encourage you to pray that prayer every day.

[46 : 02] It's the prayer of the psalmist and he says this, O Lord, place a guard on my mouth. Keep watch over the door of my lips. O Lord, place a guard on my mouth.

Keep a watch over the door of my lips. May the Lord help us. Let's pray together. Let's pray. Let's pray. Lord, you've given us the great blessing which is above all of creation of communication.

You've given us the ability to speak and communicate with one another in the most intimate and wonderful ways. Things that animals can't do, fish can't do, dolphins can't do for all their squeaks. They cannot communicate as we do and they cannot communicate with you.

You've given us that blessing and that gift of speech, Lord, because you are the God who speaks, you are the God who speaks to us, the God who makes himself known to us, not the God who's hidden away.

We ask, O Lord, that you would help us as we've been challenged again by your word and your commandment. Lord, we want to be more like you, we want to be those people whose lives are truthful without hypocrisy, without lies, without falsehood.

[47 : 29] We want our words to be sweet, to be loving, to be kind, to build up, to do good. So, Lord, we pray, Lord, because there's not one of us here who does not need your help in this matter.

There's not one of us here who keeps control over their tongue as they should. God, please help us in this, that it may be that in this coming week and in our lives day by day, we may display more of the image of Christ to a dark, to a ignorant, to a deceived world, that more and more men and women and boys and girls may hear the wonderful, truthful words of Jesus Christ, the Savior of sinners.

Be with us then and help us, we pray, as we bring our prayers to you now, in Christ's name, Amen.