

To the Saints of God at Topeka, Kansas October 2, 2016

Honesty – Spiritual and Practical Applications

1Pe 2:11 -12 *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; 12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.*

Beloved, the Jews were notorious for their absolute hypocrisy in their dishonest walk and you see it in both the Old and New Testaments, plain and clear. In Romans 1, Paul speaks to the sins of the Gentiles and in Romans 2 he addresses the hypocrisy of the Jews.

Rom 2:1 *Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things...[does this help you to see, why Christ addressed the apostles regarding judge not]. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?...5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; 6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds... 8 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, 9 Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; 10 But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: 11 For there is no respect of persons with God... 17 ¶ Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God...21 Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? 22 Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? 23 Thou that makest thy*

boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? 24 For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.

Here is Robert Haldane on Romans 2: The Apostle, in these verses, exhibits the most lively image of hypocrisy. Was there ever a more beautiful veil than that under which the Jew presents himself? He is a man of confession, of praise, of thanksgiving; a man whose trust is in the law, whose boast is of God, who knows His will, who approves of things that are excellent; a man who calls himself a conductor of the blind, a light of those in darkness, and instructor of the ignorant, a teacher of babes; a man who directs others, who preaches against theft, against adultery, against idolatry; and, to sum up the whole, a man who glories in the commandments of the Lord. Who would not say that this is an angel arrayed in human form – a star detached from the firmament, and brought nearer to enlighten the earth? But observe what is under this mask. It is a man who is himself untaught; it is a thief, an adulterer, a sacrilegious person, - in one word, a wicked man, who continually dishonors God by the transgression of His law. Is it possible to imagine a contrast more monstrous than between these fair appearances and this awful reality? Doubtless Paul might have presented a greater assemblage of particular vices among the Jews, for there were few to which that nation was not addicted. But he deems it sufficient to generalize them all under these charges, - that they did not teach themselves that they dishonored God by their transgressions of the law. There was no people on earth more avaricious (extreme greed for wealth or material gain) and self-interested than they. It is only necessary to read the narrations of their prophets and historians, to be convinced how much they were addicted to robbery, usury and to injustice. They were no less obnoxious to the charge of fornication and adultery, as appears from the many chargers preferred against them in the writings of the Prophets.

Jer. 7:9 Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; 10 And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? 11 Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD.

Peter is telling the strangers (many of which who were reformed Jews) scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappaodcia, Asia, and Bithnyia, the Elect according to the foreknowledge of God that they cannot do what the Jews have done and live this hypocritical lifestyle. God will not put up with it. You must have your conversation honest amongst the Gentiles. The word *conversation* means: manner of life, conduct, and behavior. It is to do all things honestly in the sight of men and the sight of God and to live and walk honestly amongst your fellow man according to the law of God because the Gentiles were watching for their stumbling and fall. They were looking to rail against the Christians, so every manner of their life was to be Godly and in order and without reproach including abstaining from fleshly lusts. Gal. 5:19-21 *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, reveling, and such like.*

Matthew Henry: *Their conversation in every turn, every instance, and every action of their lives, ought to be honest; that is, good, lovely, decent, amiable, and without blame; they lived among the Gentiles, people of another religion, and who were inveterate enemies to them, who did already slander them and constantly spoke evil of them as of evil-doers.* Beloved it is a common practice for the people of God to be bad-mouthed and spoken evil of by the wicked. But they see our good works and this will glorify God in the day of visitation.

John Brown says: *Conversation* does not mean colloquial intercourse, but conduct and general behavior. [Note: I like the word *conversation* here – our conversation and manner of speech should be honest, but it means much more than just this].

Honest means *equivalent to honorable, respectable, morally beautiful and lovely; what commands esteem and reverence. It is materially the same exhortation as that given by Paul at Phil. 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*

The heathens were poor judges of Christian doctrine... But when they saw Christians making it plain that no temptation could induce them to deviate from the straight path prescribed by the laws of temperance, and chastity, and justice, and love; rendering to no man evil for evil; meekly suffering many injuries, but inflicting none; denying themselves the comforts of life, to supply those who were destitute of its necessities; sacrificing and suffering everything, rather than violate conscience; they could not help feeling how beautiful and how awful goodness is; and a testimony was silently lodged in their hearts, in behalf of the religion of Christ.

Refrain from desiring what is forbidden; refrain from inordinately desiring anything that is seen and temporal; and thus maintain a habitual behavior so morally lovely and venerable, that even your heathen neighbors shall be constrained to take notice of you, and trace the obvious effect to the hidden cause, the goodness of your conduct to the goodness of your principles.

Remember what Brother Ben told us a few weeks ago, that we are travelers. We know that we must endure some uncomfortable things while we are traveling precisely because it is *not* our home. The verse says *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims*. It is the same concept. We are strangers, and pilgrims – we are children and soldiers of God and citizens of heaven, living amongst the children of the devil, sojourning for a short while on earth. Our mission as a soldier and one that warreth is not to become entangled in the affairs of this life; that he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier (2 Tim. 2:4). Our interests are to promote the interest of God and pass through these enemy lines of this inhospitable land to run our race, fight a good fight and finish our course and keep the faith (2 Tim. 4:7) and endure hardness and make it home. And it is required that we conduct this walk in an honest and forthright manner.

Beloved, when we talk amongst ourselves about having our conversation honest among the Gentiles or walking honestly among the Gentiles we typically quote this verse is 1 Peter 2:12, but by no means is this the only place where this concept is mentioned. It is mentioned a lot in the Bible.

2 Cor. 8:21 Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

Rom. 12:16 *Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. 17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. 18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably (in hamony) with all men. 19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. 20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.*

Acts 6:1,3 *And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations...Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.*

Luke 8:11-14 *Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. 12 Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts... 13 They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root...,14 And that which fell among thorns are they ... 15 But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.*

1Tim 2:1 *I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; 2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;*

Le 19:13 *Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.*

Mr 10:19 *Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.*

1Co 6:8 *Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.*

1Th 4:6 *That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.*

Mt 22:39 *And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

Titus 2:9 *Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*

Beloved we must abstain from fleshly lusts and instead walk honestly in all our ways before the Gentiles with good and Godly works. We must live without hypocrisy, saying one thing, but doing another. Our manner of life, conduct and behavior in all of the particulars must be honest before all men and God. God is watching what we do, He walks amongst us. Christ walks amongst His churches (Rev. 1:13). We cannot lie, and cheat and steal, and misrepresent things amongst our fellow man. We cannot do it. As the elect of God, we are held to a higher standard, not a lower standard. Luke 12:44 *...for unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.* We cannot lie to the natural man amongst us in any way, and we certainly cannot lie or misrepresent to the Elect of God. If you do that, you are doing it against your own interest and angering God.

Le 19:11 *Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another.*

Col 3:9 *Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;*

2nd John 1:4 *I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.*

We must walk in truth. The opposite of this is walking in lies and deceit and lusts, which is what Satan and his children walk in. John 8:44 *Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.*

Col. 3:5-6 *Mortify (to make dead, to put to death, slay) therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: 6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:*

In all of our conduct and behavior we must walk in truth, in honesty, in honour, in purity, in justice and in goodness. Our conduct must be above reproach. That is the essence of these verses. That is what good looks like. Doing what is right and doing unto others as we would have be done to us is priceless. It keeps us from a world of regret and guilt and struggle in your own mind.

- **If the person at the cash register misses something and doesn't scan it and doesn't charge you for it, point it out to them.**
- **If you find a cart with some bags of groceries that were inadvertently left, return them to the store.**
- **If you are at the Washington Monument and you find a wallet with \$400 in it, you give it to the park ranger with every penny intact. That is what God requires of you.**
- **If you are selling your car and you know it has something wrong with it, don't keep silent. That is called fraud and misrepresentation.**
- **If you buy something and someone gives you some extra money back that is not due to you, give it back.**
- **Plausible deniability may be the standard of man, but it is not the standard of God.**
- **Be honest to a fault.**
- **Lead with honesty.**

- Lead with kindness.
- Do not lie on your brethren. When we speak to one another, we should believe what we are told and we should be told the truth. Heb 4:13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.
- If you have a question of whether you should be honest or lie in a situation, just make it your personal policy to be honest. Have your conversation, your conduct, honest - period.
- You choose to have an honest report and to have an honest and good heart or not. Isaiah 7:15 *Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.*
- If you screw something up at work and you don't want to admit it was your fault, don't hide it. Admit your fault and be honest about it. At least you will be respected for honesty and you will have done right to your God. God gave you the job and you will have it until the day that God takes it away.
- If you are issuing a security, or selling stock, and you withhold pertinent information from the investors, that is illegal and dishonest. It goes on every single day in this country. We call them investment bankers.
- If you get inside information about a publicly traded company and you use that information to your advantage to make money and thus hurt other investors that buy that stock not knowing what you know, (Martha Stewart was not charged with that, she was instead charged with lying to the Federal Investigators who came to ask her what happened, don't do that either!) this is illegal and it is called defrauding one another.
- None of these things I am saying are subject to interpretation or opinion these are clear things.
- Defraud not thy neighbor, neither rob him. And remember Beloved, God is the avenger of all such.

Mat. 7:12 ¶ Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets. 13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14 Because strait is

the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Rev. 21:8 *But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*

Some examples of dishonest and unscriptural behavior in the Bible:

- **King Ahab and Queen Jezebel suborning witnesses to commit perjury (bearing false witness against their neighbor) to steal Naboth's vineyard from Naboth and his children (1 Kings 21).**
- **Gehazi followed after Naaman and told a lie about Elisha needing Naaman's money, when he coveted it himself and thus Naaman's leprosy clung to him (2 Kings 5).**
- **Balaam knew that God loved Israel and that he should not curse them when he was hired by Balak to do so, so instead when he went to do so, God made him to bless them. And in light of that, Balaam conducted a treacherous scheme to ensnare Israel and alienate them from God (Numbers 22-24). Great covetousness set this man apart for all ages, and help us to understand what we are seeing in the Billy Grahams and Jerry Falwells of the world.**
- **King Saul was charged by God to kill all of the Amalekites including all livestock and instead Saul disobeyed God and came up with a lying reason to keep King Agag alive and the best of the sheep, oxen and lambs (1 Sam. 15). Great covetousness came at a great cost to Saul.**
- **Ananias and Sapphira needlessly lied to the church and the Holy Spirit to keep part of the sale of their property back, when all of it was theirs to begin with (Acts 5).**
- **Laban changed Jacob's wages ten times (Gen. 31).**

- The lying betrayal of Judas against Christ for 30 pieces of silver (Mat 27:3).

1Co 13:13 *And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.*

Eph 6:14 *Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;*

Beloved, there are examples in the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament, of the righteous telling lies. This typically happened under extreme and difficult circumstances. A few examples include: Hushai the Archite lying to Absalom and in doing so saving King David's life, Jael misrepresenting that she was a friend to Sisera and then putting a tent spike through his temple, Rahab the harlot lying to protect the three spies and saving their lives, David scrabbling at the door before King Achish of Gath to save his own life and Jacob/Rebekah stealing the blessing from Esau. Beloved, these should be the rare once-in-a-life-time exception and not the rule and we should not use these examples to justify dishonest behavior. The Lord is the Judge of all such matters and He sees what we do and hopefully any behavior like this is done only under prayer and with great spiritual forethought.

1 Thes. 4:12 *That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.*

Rom. 13:13 *Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.*

I love you all, Amen.