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Hold Fast to Christ!

(Col 2:2b-3 ESV) to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

“No Longer People of the Lie”

April 7, 2013

Sermon Text: Colossians 3:9

Scripture Reading: Genesis 3

Introduction-

“Lying is done with words, and also with silence.” (Adrienne Rich)

John 8:31-47 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, (32) and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

(33) They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?" (34) Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. (35) The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. (36) So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. (37) I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. (38) I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father."

(39) They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the

works Abraham did, (40) but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. (41) You are doing the works your father did." They said to him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father--even God." (42) Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. (43) Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word.

(44) You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (45) But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. (46) Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? (47) Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."

Our Scripture text this morning is profound –

"Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices..." Colossians 3:9

It is difficult to know how to begin when approaching a topic that has so many aspects to it and enormous implications for our lives.

Ephesians 4:25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

Leviticus 19:11-12 "You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; you shall not lie to one another. (12) You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.

Proverbs 12:22 Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, but those who act faithfully are his delight.

Isaiah 59:3-4 For your hands are defiled with blood and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies; your tongue mutters wickedness. (4) No one enters suit justly; no one goes to law honestly; they rely on empty pleas, they speak lies, they conceive mischief and give birth to iniquity.

Jeremiah 9:3-5 They bend their tongue like a bow; falsehood and

not truth has grown strong in the land; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they do not know me, declares the LORD. (4) Let everyone beware of his neighbor, and put no trust in any brother, for every brother is a deceiver, and every neighbor goes about as a slanderer. (5) Everyone deceives his neighbor, and no one speaks the truth; they have taught their tongue to speak lies; they weary themselves committing iniquity.

Revelation 21:8 But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

Zechariah 8:16 These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another; render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace;

God is truth. We are His people. Therefore we must walk in truth, speaking it and living it.

Some Thoughts on Lying

Let's think through the flow of thought here in Colossians:

1. Christ is all. If we need anything, it is a greater knowledge of Him and His will.
2. This knowledge of Christ will lead us into a fuller obedience to Him:

(Col 1:9-10 ESV) ⁹ ¶ And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

3. Christ is before and above all things, fully God, and He has reconciled us to God by His cross. There is nothing more to be done.
4. We must stand firm then in Christ, never permitting anyone to delude us into thinking we need something more that they claim to offer.

(Col 2:4-8 ESV) ⁴ I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments.

⁵ For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

⁶ ¶ Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him,

⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

⁸ ¶ See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

See to it! And again-

(Col 2:16-19 ESV) ¹⁶ ¶ Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.

¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

¹⁸ Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind,

¹⁹ and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

Did you notice again that last phrase? "With a growth that is from God." This would warn us that there is an apparent growth, but it is not from God and thus it is not true growth in the

knowledge of God and in Christ. So we can be deceived into false systems of so called "growth" in the Lord.

(Col 2:20-23 ESV) ²⁰ ¶ If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations--

²¹ "Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch"

²² (referring to things that all perish as they are used)-- according to human precepts and teachings?

²³ These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

So watch out, you see. There is great freedom in knowing all of this, as we have seen. We can set boundaries and enforce them. We can tell people who try to lay legalism and false conscience-binding rules on us, "no." And one of the greatest means of doing all of this and clinging to Christ is to immerse ourselves in His Word.

Last night I had a conversation with a courageous lady. She and her children are being ex-communicated this weekend by their ex-church because she had the courage to escape from enslavement not only to domestic

abuse, but to the spiritual abuse suffered in that so-called church? She has decided to walk in the truth of Christ and be free, rejecting the false decrees of men. And for that, she is being ex-communicated, declared cut off from Christ, and her eternal salvation being pronounced doubtful.

I told her “Congratulations! It is always a good thing to be put out of Satan’s kingdom.” And I assure you that if I told you all the details of the evil committed against her both by her domestic abuser and by her spiritual abusers you would be mortified.

Listen to this example of the very kind of thing the Apostle Paul is warning us against:

Introduction

The governing constitution of the RPCUS (Reformed Presbyterian Church in the United States) is the original Westminster Confession of Faith with its accompanying Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the Form of Presbyterian Church Government, and the Directory For Public Worship of God. Outside of its general commitment to the doctrines of the Reformed Faith found in the Westminster Standards, the RPCUS is known for its adherence to four specific areas in addition to all other Reformed

doctrines in the Standards. The purpose of this article is to outline these distinctives, giving documentation from the Standards for their insistence. There are those in the Reformed community who already have a perception of the RPCUS’ distinctives, and others are unaware of them. This paper will clarify those distinctives.

What are the particular distinctives characterizing this denomination? First, we affirm a presuppositional approach to apologetics. We also acknowledge ourselves to be a theonomic denomination. Third, we believe in a postmillennial eschatology. Fourth, the RPCUS advocates that all areas of ecclesiastical authority be exercised by biblically qualified males. Specifically, the RPCUS only allows male heads of households to participate in congregational voting.

The question that has been raised by some Reformed brethren is: To what extent does the RPCUS demand subscription of its officers to these distinctives? The answer is: The RPCUS requires all of its teaching and ruling elders along with its deacons to subscribe to these distinctives. These distinctives are not the only emphases of the denomination, for they are only part of that total Reformed system of doctrine set

forth by the Standards. Allegiance to these four distinctives does not mean that the RPCUS is obsessed with only these four areas. The denomination is committed to all of the Reformed doctrines set forth by each chapter of the Confession. Moreover, the RPCUS insists that these four distinctives are inseparable from the entire system of doctrine delineated by the Standards. The denomination would not see contrary views as acceptable exceptions to the Standards.

The reason why we are drawing attention to these four distinctives is because other Presbyterian denominations permit divergent views in these areas. For example, some Presbyterian denominations practice eschatological liberty. They permit their officers to hold to historic premillennial and amillennial schemes. In rare instances, dispensational premillennialists have been accepted into various presbyteries. The RPCUS does not practice eschatological liberty. We do not believe that the Standards are eschatologically vague. We believe that eschatology plays a key role in the overall system of doctrine taught in our Standards and in the Word of God. For one's future view powerfully impacts one's present actions.

Flee from any such church or denomination or system such as this! The fact that these men are enforcing these points and insisting that they be adhered to if someone is going to be in their fellowship is a clear warning sign that there will be all kinds of other traditions of men laid upon you if you are deluded by them. In these last few months I have found some of the most frightening scenarios of spiritual abuse of Christ's people in the ultra-conservative Presbyterian denominations.

Set Your Minds on the Things Above

Alright then, that is our review! We have seen that at chapter 3, Paul begins to describe to us the practical application of our new life in Christ.

(Col 3:1-10 ESV) ¶ If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

⁴ When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

⁵ ¶ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality,

impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming.

⁷ In these you too once walked, when you were living in them.

⁸ But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.

⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices

¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

These are the things above. Righteousness. Putting away earthly, fleshly, evil things that used to characterize us, and putting on our new self more and more. Compassionate hearts, forgiveness, kindness, humility and meekness, and above all, love. These are things above. These are the things that characterize our new life in the New Creation. We must live like who we are.

And one of the qualities of the New Creation is – truth. The kingdom of darkness is characterized by lying. And no wonder as the prince of that kingdom is the very father of lies. Lying is so much a part of the devil that whenever he utters a word, you can be sure that it is a lie.

Paul is not merely randomly identifying lying as a sin here, pulling it out of his hat you might say. No. He recognizes that lying is a particularly Satanic evil, just as murder is. It was with “the lie” that sin and death entered the world. And it is the embracing of “the lie” which continues to bring man under God’s condemnation:

(Rom 1:18-25 ESV) ¹⁸ ¶ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.

²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools,

²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

²⁴ ¶ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,
²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

To reject sin and evil and Satan then is to reject “the lie.” Lying is really at the level of the very essence of evil. It calls God a liar and suppresses His truth. The result is death and disaster.

Now, when we are born into this world, we are born as liars and cheaters. That isn't pretty, but it is true. Part of raising up our children is to teach them to speak and do the truth. Lying is speaking a lie. Cheating is doing a lie. And note carefully that each one can be done passively. We can lie by not speaking and we can cheat by not doing what we are supposed to do.

But as adults and even as Christian adults, we all still must battle this business of lying. If I asked how many of us have lied this past week, and if none of us lied, our hands would all have to go up. Let me show you why.

Perhaps some of us just told overt lies. It is income tax time – I shall say no more. But notice how, as I list off the

ten commandments here, lying is certainly related to every single one of them:

1. Idolatry – lying about who is God
2. No graven images – lying about who God is
3. Using God's name vainly – lying about the majesty and holiness of God; lying about our relationship to God
4. Remember the Sabbath – lying about the worship of God
5. Honor father and mother – lying about who we are to obey
6. Murder – lying about the holiness of human life, AND this sin is always followed by lying and coverup (“How do I know? Am I my brother's keeper?”)
7. Adultery – lying about the holiness of marriage and sexuality. Again, always accompanied by lying coverup.
8. Stealing – lying about ownership. Covering up a theft.
9. False Witness bearing – direct lying for self-gain.
10. Coveting – lying about my entitlement. “I deserve,” when I do not.

So you see, virtually every sin in some way involves lying. It is in this sense a base sin.

Notice in the account of Achan's sin how lying was woven through the whole thing –

(Joshua 7:10-21 ESV) ¶ The LORD said to Joshua, "Get up! Why have you fallen on your face? ¹¹ Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I commanded them; they have taken some of the devoted things; **they have stolen and lied and put them among their own belongings.** ¹² Therefore the people of Israel cannot stand before their enemies. They turn their backs before their enemies, because they have become devoted for destruction. I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you. ¹³ Get up! Consecrate the people and say, 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow; for thus says the LORD, God of Israel, "There are devoted things in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the devoted things from among you." ¹⁴ In the morning therefore you shall be brought near by your tribes. And the tribe that the LORD takes by lot shall come near by clans. And the clan that the LORD takes shall come near by households. And the household that the LORD takes shall come near man by man. ¹⁵ And he who is taken with the devoted things shall be burned with fire, he and all that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of the

LORD, and because he has done an outrageous thing in Israel."

¹⁶ ¶ So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel near tribe by tribe, and the tribe of Judah was taken. ¹⁷ And he brought near the clans of Judah, and the clan of the Zerahites was taken. And he brought near the clan of the Zerahites man by man, and Zabdi was taken. ¹⁸ And he brought near his household man by man, and Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. ¹⁹ Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the LORD God of Israel and give praise to him. And tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me." ²⁰ And Achan answered Joshua, "Truly I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I did: ²¹ when I saw among the spoil a beautiful cloak from Shinar, and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels, then I coveted them and took them. And see, they are hidden in the earth inside my tent, with the silver underneath."

Notice that Achan's sin is called a lie, even though it was an action. You see also that lying always involves hiding. And finally we see that lying is only repented of by confessing the truth. As long as the lie stands, repentance

and confession are impossible. *Salvation in Christ is impossible as long as a person embraces the lie.* About who they are, about what they have done, about who God is, about what Scripture says. This is why Revelation says that liars end in hell. To come to Christ requires confession of truth.

Lying and Spiritual/Mental Health

Many, many people, including many who profess to be Christians, remain enslaved to all sorts of bondages – codependency, rescuing, shame, eating disorders, sexual aberrations, relationship malfunctions, and more – *simply because they have not faced the truth.* In this sense they lie to themselves as well as to others. How does Satan enslave us? With his lies. By deception.

Therefore, growing in Christ means increasingly purging our minds and lives from lies. Note this very thing in Colossians 3:10 again –

(Col 3:10 ESV) ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

Think about counseling and good, genuine biblical therapy. What is it? *It is simply helping someone see the lies they have believed and the truth*

that they need to replace those lies with.

The renewing of the mind, you see. Lies are powerful!! But Jesus' truth is even more so. The one enslaves, the other sets free.

(2Co 10:3-6 ESV) ³ For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh.

⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

⁵ We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

⁶ being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

See it there? What is it that the enemy uses to oppose God and hold people in bondage? Lies. Arguments and opinions that are lies. The remedy is God's truth.

So this means ---- that as long as we refuse to embrace truth, to identify and reject the lies we have perhaps held to all our lives, mental health, spiritual health, and even physical health in some cases, is going to elude us.

The lie can become precious to us. We may not actually SPEAK a lie, but we can be characterized as a liar as long as

we live a lie. We cling to a lie. We have become accustomed to the lie and comfortable with it. But it enslaves us and holds us in its darkness.

Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, all 3 of which are totally inconsistent with the lie. No wonder Scripture tells us to stop lying to one another and instead speak truth. And to never yield to the lies that people bring to our ears.

Truth as a Weapon Against Temptation

We know then that still another reason to reject all lies and lying is because this is THE avenue through which sin comes to tempt us.

(Eph 6:13-17 ESV) ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, **having fastened on the belt of truth**, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

So to the degree that we lie or that we continue to embrace a lie in our minds, to that degree we are made vulnerable to sin's temptation. Consider it in Proverbs:

(Proverbs 5:1-14 ESV) My son, be attentive to my wisdom; incline your ear to my understanding, ² that you may keep discretion, and your lips may guard knowledge.

³ For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, ⁴ but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. ⁵ Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol; ⁶ she does not ponder the path of life; her ways wander, and she does not know it.

⁷ And now, O sons, listen to me, and do not depart from the words of my mouth. ⁸ Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house, ⁹ lest you give your honor to others and your years to the merciless, ¹⁰ lest strangers take their fill of your strength, and your labors go to the house of a foreigner, ¹¹ and at the end of your life you groan, when your flesh and body are consumed, ¹² and you say, "How I hated discipline, and my heart despised reproof! ¹³ I did not listen to the voice of my teachers or incline my

ear to my instructors.¹⁴ I am at the brink of utter ruin in the assembled congregation."

You see the lie as it comes. What does it say? It says that this course will be as sweet as honey, and the lying words sound smooth and pleasing. But what is the truth? This is the path to death and ruin, as sin always is. In the end, those who yield to the lie will have to acknowledge in their ruin – *how I hated discipline and despised reproof. I did not listen to truth.*

Conclusion

The church of the Lord Jesus Christ, a local church such as this one, must be a place of truth. Not only truth spoken, but truth lived. As such, it is a threatening place to the lie, just as light is to darkness.

(2 Timothy 4:1-4 ESV) ¶ I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. ³ For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴ **and will turn**

away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

This means among other things that there must be an honest, truthful atmosphere in our church. It must be a place where everyone senses that if they face up to a lie in their life and embrace truth, they will not be punished nor scorned. Where walking in light is seen as a *good and necessary* thing.

(1 John 1:6-10 ESV) If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.