You Shall Not Give False Testimony

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[0:00] Deuteronomy chapter 19. The Bible begins with Genesis and goes to Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and then Deuteronomy.

! And we'll be looking at Deuteronomy 19. And we're going to be reading several verses there, then we'll be moving over to the Psalms. So, Deuteronomy 19.

And verse 15. One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed.

A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If a malicious witness takes the stand to accuse a man of a crime, the two men involved in the dispute must stand in the presence of the Lord before the priests and the judges who are in office at the time.

The judges must make a thorough investigation. And if the witness proves to be a liar, giving false testimony against his brother, then do to him as he intended to do to his brother.

[1:08] You must purge the evil from among you. The rest of the people will hear of this and be afraid. And never again will such an evil thing be done among you.

Show no pity. Life for life. Eye for eye. Tooth for tooth. Hand for hand. Foot for foot.

And then turn over to Psalm chapter 12. Psalm 12. Help, Lord, for the godly are no more. The faithful have vanished from among men.

Everyone lies to his neighbor. Their flattering lips speak with deception. May the Lord cut off all flattering lips and every boastful tongue that says we will triumph with our tongues.

We own our lips. Who is our master? Because of the oppression of the weak and the groaning of the needy, I will now arise, says the Lord.

[2:12] I will protect them from those who malign them. And the words of the Lord are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times.

Oh, Lord, you will keep us safe and protect us from such people forever. The wicked freely strut about when what is vile is honored among men.

Let's hear the preaching of God's word. God is true, through, and through. He's not a man that he should lie.

He's the God of truth who does no wrong. Upright and just is he. And being true, he cannot lie. His every word is flawless and true, like silver refined in a furnace seven times.

And here in the ninth commandment of the ten, he forbids lying for us who are made in his own image. And so, like God, we are to speak the truth.

[3:25] We are to not give false testimony against our neighbor. And yet, few sins are more common than lying. It permeates society.

It's found in every area of life. We find it in the family. Children lying to their parents. Parents lying to their children. Husbands and wives lying to each other.

We find it in school. One of the surveys found that nine out of ten middle schoolers lie about their homework. We find it in business.

We find it in government. We find it in sports. We find it on insurance claims and tax forms. We even find it in religion. People saying things that they claim are true that are really false.

We find it in the Internet. On the news media. So we even have what's called fake news. False news. Which is just lies, isn't it?

[4:25] And then we have the truth that is dismissed as fake news. We find it in our courts that even after swearing to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, witnesses called to the truth.

Witnesses called to the stand. And then proceed to lie through their teeth. And lawyers do the same. One claiming he's innocent.

And another claiming he's guilty. Well, somebody's lying. And that's left up to the jury to try to discern just who is lying here.

And for everyone caught lying and punished, hundreds go untouched. Well, this is the culture we live in. It's the air that we breathe.

And I wonder if Isaiah was to visit us, if he would not say of this generation what he said of Judah of old. We look for justice, but find none.

[5:28] Truth has fallen in the streets. Honesty cannot enter. Truth is nowhere to be found. Losing truth is no small loss to any society, to any person.

In order to function, our judicial system depends upon people telling the truth, doesn't it? That's foundational. If the courts are to work, people must tell the truth.

But when truth is gone, justice is gone. Stephen Duke is professor at Yale Law School, and he teaches a course on criminal procedure.

And according to him, perjury in our courts is an epidemic. Lying under oath has become commonplace. And then he says, I don't know if it was as true a century ago as it is now.

I imagine that a century ago, more people believe that God punished perjury than do now, when it appears that almost no one believes that.

[6:40] The loss of truth. The loss of truth. It's the end of justice. The end of enforcing laws that protect your life. Your things.

Truth. It's absolutely necessary. Not only for our legal system, but truth is the fabric that holds the whole of our societal life together.

Truth. All relationships are built upon trustworthy communication, aren't they? How good is a marriage where you can't believe the words of your spouse?

Where there's no trust? How tight can a family be where everyone lies to one another? Who likes to do business with a liar? Who will tell you whatever you want to hear and then do something else?

Who wants to compete against athletes who are lying about not taking performance, enhancing drugs, and leaving no level playing field?

[7:41] Who wants a government built on lies? A community comes unraveled when truth is fallen in the streets. Church life. What happens to the unity and fellowship of the body of Christ when we do not speak the truth, each one, with our neighbor?

Therefore, each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body, Paul tells the Ephesian church. And if we're to have this oneness, it must be founded upon speaking truthfully to one another in the church.

So lying destroys fellowship, unity, societal life, wherever it is found. It destroys the very fabric of the nation.

What this means is that God's law against lying is good for us. This is just another one of those ways that we learn that God's law is indeed good.

And that true liberty is not found in throwing God's laws off and going our own way. That's destruction. True liberty is found in keeping the law of liberty, as James calls it, the commands of our God.

[9:00] It's good for us that God forbids lying. And so to keep the law is to love your neighbor. And to love your neighbor means you don't take his life, his wife, or his possessions, and you don't lie to him or about him.

What a good law. And what a loss is the loss of truth. How did it happen? Do you know that there was once a world in which everyone told the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

It was a world of three. There was Adam and Eve and God. And it was all truth talk. That's all that there was in the world. And then one day Eve heard another voice, a lie from the old serpent, the devil.

First questioning, and then outright contradicting God's voice. God's truth. Eve, has he said that? Has he said that you will die?

You will not surely die, he said to Eve. And lie followed lie until Eve finally bought into those lies, exchanging the truth of God for a lie.

[10:15] And that was the end of the perfect world of truth telling. As her own husband followed the same way and plunged the whole human race.

into darkness. So now instead of man imitating the God of truth, whose image we bear, fallen man now imitates their lying father, the devil.

As Jesus says in John 8, 44, you are of your father, the devil, and the works of the devil you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth.

No, there's no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. There's not a lie on earth that trace back to its source would not come to this father of lies.

And liars show that they're of their father, the devil, for they do his work. And against all of these lies, we have this sticky word. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

[11:28] Now that, that ninth commandment then brings us right into the courtroom, doesn't it? Where testimony is given. And we're not to give false testimony. In other words, when we take the stand, we must tell the truth.

Exodus 23, 3. When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd and do not show favoritism to a poor man in his lawsuit.

Sometimes we like to take favorites and there's the big corporation. Well, all the money and the power and so we would throw the weight in our witness to the poor man.

Don't do that, God says. He knows our hearts. He says, don't, don't do that. Don't show favoritism to a poor man in his lawsuit. In other words, just tell the truth. Just give true testimony.

No false testimony. And we read that passage in Deuteronomy 19 that showed that when a person did give false testimony, he would, and it was found out, he would receive the punishment that that person was being falsely accused of whatever his crime was and whatever punishment it bore, the false witness would get. [12:39] That's severe, isn't it? If a guy's on, is in trouble and being accused of a capital offense and his life is on the line, if I gave false testimony against him and it was found out, my life would be taken.

Why so serious, God? Because truth-telling is the very fabric of the court system of the whole nation.

And so there's that rich young ruler that Jesus heard and Jesus quotes to him the ninth commandment, among others, and he said, oh yes, I've kept that one too since I was young.

And maybe you too have thought that. You know, I've never stood in a court of this land and put my hand on a Bible and swore to tell the truth and then turned around in the witness stand and gave false testimony about anyone.

I've never done that. But what we see as we look at the Bible is that the requirements of the ninth commandment reach much further than the law courts. That example is given and we can understand it.

[13:49] But its application and the spirit of it reach into every aspect of our lives from family to business to athletics to government to the whole business.

And it's that way with the ninth commandment even as we've seen it with all the other of the ten commandments. They follow us everywhere.

And they demand that we speak the truth to everyone in every place. And this command then condemns all the various forms of lying and falsehoods.

And so just very briefly I want us to consider some of the various ways to break the ninth commandment. I'm going to save and go quickly because next week Lord willing we're going to look because the Bible is full of examples of these things.

And so I'm not going to give you a lot of the examples this week. But just so that you understand that it's more than a command forbidding us to stand on a witness stand in a law court.

[14:56] No this command reaches into all aspects of life. It does forbid flat out lies claiming that something is true or denying something that is true.

but it also covers little white lies. You don't want to answer the phone so you instruct someone to say that you're not at home. But you are at home.

You're asked at work or at school if you have an assignment done and you say I'm almost done but in fact you haven't started. Someone calls you're late for an appointment oh I'm on my way I'm just a few minutes out and you haven't left home yet.

You tell your child if you don't pick up your toys I'll throw them all away. Will you? Or are you just telling the little white lie? You're upset and someone says what's wrong?

Nothing. Nothing. Is that the truth? Nothing. What man calls little white lies are all black lies to the God of truth.

[16:07] In fact the Bible says God is light and in him there is no darkness no none at all. A triple negative. There's no darkness to the light of God's truth.

So there's little white lies. It's breaking the ninth commandment. We can break it by gossip. By slander. Remember how we've seen that every commandment requires us to love our neighbor.

It's just one more way that we love them. And what the ninth commandment is saying is that I must love him so much that I will do all I can to preserve and protect his good name. I will not falsely accuse him.

I will not say slanderous things against him. And we can do that not only in a court of law we can do it at the coffee shop. We can do it in our home on the telephone.

Proverbs 11 9 with his mouth the godless destroys his neighbor. Exodus 23 1 do not spread false reports.

[17:08] Don't receive an unsubstantiated report and then pass it on to someone else because we have that juicy piece of information. David says Lord who may dwell in your sanctuary?

Who may live on your holy hill? He whose walk is blameless and who does what is right. Who speaks the truth from his heart and has no slander on his tongue.

Who does his neighbor no wrong and casts no slur upon his fellow man. We break the ninth commandment when we misrepresent the truth and there's so many ways that we can do this.

When we spice up a story by exaggeration because a 15 inch fish is more exciting than a 10 inch fish right that I caught.

Or when we shrink the truth we exaggerate it's called stretching the truth isn't it? Just think about that a moment.

[18:10] There's the truth and then there's the truth as we try to stretch it. But you know the truth is not like jello. It's not like rubber that you can stretch it's like steel.

And you either tell the truth or you don't. When you twist someone's words and put a meaning on them that they clearly did not mean you quote them out of context Jesus had this done to him David had it done the apostle Paul had it done and we can do that especially in a controversy when we take a different side from that person be it in religion and politics and business we can put the very worst construction on his words to make him say things that he would never mean.

And that too is to twist the truth. It's building a straw man something ridiculous that doesn't really reflect what they meant.

So David complains all day long they twist my words Psalm 56 5 wicked and deceitful men have opened their mouths against me they've spoken against me with lying tongues with words of hatred they surround me and attack me without cause.

We'll see more of that in our Lord Jesus as well next week but when we put a different meaning on someone's words to try to make their point look ridiculous we've broken the ninth commandment we've not spoken truthfully we've given false testimony when we tell part of the truth as if it's the whole truth it is an untruth we'll see that example as well but a half truth when it's presented as the truth it's the truth of the matter that is a lie a whole lie when we torture the English English language and stretch words beyond their normal and common obvious meaning so that things turn on well it depends what is means and all sorts of torturous ways of twisting the language to try to excuse our lies we can deceive not only by what we say but also by things that we do remember Jacob had a blind father and he dressed up like his brother

[20:48] Esau and he deceived his father making him think that he was Esau and even saying it there's hypocrisy when you pretend to be something that you're not when you want people to think more highly of you than the truth is that too is a breach of the ninth commandment we'll see that we can live a lie as well as tell a lie can't we and then there's flattery! when we give insincere praise to another in order to gain something for ourselves we butter people up with words saying things that we don't really mean about them well if we don't mean it then we shouldn't say it if we're telling the truth psalm 62 verse 4 with their mouths they bless but in their hearts they curse psalm 12 2 we read it everyone lies to his neighbor they with their flattering lips speak deception when you flatter another you say things that is deceitful it's not true it's a lie false teaching again I said when when religious teachers teach things that are not true in the name of truth when they call evil good and good evil isaiah 5 23 when they say thus saith the lord and then what follows is their own ideas there's a problem in israel of old it's a problem in the church today it's false teaching it's false testimony to the truth and then when we break our promises that too is a form of lying isn't it who may ascend to your holy hill he who keeps his oath even when it hurts when he speaks something it's the truth and he holds to it so you gave your word in a business deal and you later found out it's going to cost you to keep your word what then what then you said at a marriage altar that you'd be true in good times and bad times for better or for worse when things turn worse does your word become a lie you see so many different ways we can break the ninth commandment so that david's words ring true in our day everyone lies to his neighbor and if we're honest we'll have to admit that it's hard for us it's hard being completely honest why is that why is lying so common well the answer the bible is that it's not just a bad habit that we pick up from others according to the bible it goes much deeper than that it's part of our fallen sinful nature that which with which we were that we're born with it's a problem from birth so that the psalmist says in psalm 58 for even from birth the wicked go astray really what what ways do they go astray david even from birth the wicked go astray from the womb they are wayward and speak lies from the womb they speak lies i'm told the average child begins to tell lies between two and three years of age david says it's probably even earlier if we could detect their cries and interpret them from the womb they are wayward and speak lies it's very early on and this is just the reality that we live in if you've had children you know that i'd like a show of hands how many of you parents taught your children to lie you sat him down and you said now billy if if you're ever caught doing something wrong and it comes to light and they they accuse you all you have to say is wasn't me keep a straight face and just make it look believable it wasn't me i didn't do it how many of you ever coach them to lie how many of you ever caught them lying yeah yeah well who did teach them then where did that lying

get its start well they are natural born liars with lying hearts that's how they enter the world and few sins are more common in children than lying and it simply proves the truth of jeremiah's words in jeremiah 17 9 that the heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure that little sweet one that you're looking into her face as she's born she has a deceitful heart that's beyond cure beyond human cure and she will begin telling lies because she has a lying heart and that's why lying comes so easy to us it's why truth telling is so hard it didn't take long in the bible did it the very first child born into this world with a fallen human nature with fallen parents had the audacity to lie to god's face didn't he when cain took his brother abel out into the field and killed him and then buried him in the ground and then god came to cain and says cain where is your brother abel you remember his response right to the face of god i don't know what's the deal am i my brother's babysitter or something i don't know it was a lie kids you ever said that i don't know mom comes into the room and screaming brother what happened i don't know i don't know what happened to the missing money on my bed stand i don't know what happened to the cookies there were ten there's now five i don't know it happens early on doesn't it kids i'm talking to you this morning because the bible talks to you nothing is more common in children than the sin of lying the half brother of jesus argues in his epistle of james that the tongue is a barometer on a man's religion that the tongue tells the true state of the heart before god listen to what he says james 1 26 if anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue he deceives himself and his religion is worthless kids when you go to the doctor does does she ever you're there for a checkup does she ever say now open your mouth and stick out your tongue and then she has a good look in your mouth why is she doing that because what's in your mouth can tell the story of your whole health it can give a clue to the health of your whole body and did you know that the great physician jesus says something similar he says that your mouth and what comes out of it is an indicator of your true spiritual health it shows what's in your heart for out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks luke 6 45 out of the overflow of the heart the mouse do you mean that when i lie when a lie comes out of my mouth it reveals a lying heart jesus says exactly you understand when we lie with our mouths it shows deception in the heart what's in the heart comes out of the mouth we've been to this text so many times but it's true of the ninth commandment what is it that makes a man defiled is it

because he hangs out with liars is that that's that's where he picks up and he learns to lie there's a whole lot of stuff going on down at the nursery among those little two-year-olds one is that what they're doing they're teaching each other to lie no they're born liars and jesus says out of the heart from within out of the heart comes what well we've seen all these breaches of the ten commandments they come from within and sure enough for from within out of the heart comes false testimony deceit slander so lying of all kinds reveals a heart problem men have tongues that practice deceit because they have hearts that are deceitful that's why lying comes so easily to us and that's precisely why we need to be born again we need a new heart we need a heart that loves the truth more than getting off the hook more than all the things for which we lie and only god can give a new heart and when he gives a new heart it's a it's an honest heart it's a heart that that tells the truth that loves the truth that follows the truth and god requires truth on the inward parts psalm 51 8 truth on the inward parts but only he can put truth on the inside into the heart i can deliver truth up to your ear gate but god can put it on the inside that's the new heart that's the new birth isn't it wonderful that we're we're born liars but we can have a new birth that tells the truth ask the lord jesus for a new heart because lying is so common many people conclude that it's no big deal everybody does it to live is to lie it's the herd mentality if the herd is doing it it can't be so wrong that's the air we're breathing so we need to be reminded that the herd is going to hell as jesus says the many are on the road that leads to destruction only a few have found the narrow road that leads to life the whole world is under the control of the evil one do you know what that means the whole world is under the control of the father of lies that liar the devil and they love to do the work of their father they bought into the lie that lying is not all that bad so let let us not go to the devil's family to the devil's kids to determine the seriousness of lying let's ask the judge of all the earth how important is truth telling to you what do you think about this lying that everyone does well he answers this in the ninth commandment you shall not give false testimony against your neighbor what is there about that you don't understand it's it's so important that he he put it in the ten commandments that that summary of all the laws of everything God requires he put that in that summary of God's moral law it's important to him in

Proverbs 6 16 to 19 there are six things that the Lord hates seven that are detestable to him haughty eyes that's pride a lying tongue hands that shed innocent blood a heart that devises wicked schemes feet that are quick to rush into evil and a false witness who pours out lies and a man who causes trouble with his brother stirs up dissension twice lying tongue false witness who pours out lies the strongest words I hate them I hate it it is a detestable thing it's an abomination to the Lord now lying is so contrary to the very nature of the God of truth that he can't help but hate it you see it's not just some bad mood he gets in when somebody tells a lie he is the truth he loves the truth and he can't love the truth if he doesn't hate the lie and so

[33:46] Proverbs 12 22 says the Lord detests lying lips but he delights in men who are truthful there you have it telling the truth matters to God it's the difference between his delight and his detestation Proverbs 19 5 a false witness will not go unpunished and he who pours out lies will will not go free now that's what everyone that tells lies hopes and thinks that they can pull the wool over people's eyes and get away with it unpunished but God will not be mocked all things are uncovered before his eyes and so he hates lying and is determined to punish it a false witness will not go unpunished he's weighed in on the matter he's dead serious about this commandment and expects it to be obeyed and goes on record promising to punish those who don't obey it a false witness will perish Proverbs 21 28

Psalm 5 6 you destroy those who tell lies deceitful men the Lord abhors you see you can't read that and say you know lines just a little thing it is true that liars may make it all the way through this life unpunished but then the final judgment where according to Jesus you will have to give an account of every careless word now folks if we're going to have to give an account before the judge of every careless word surely we'll give an account for every lying word and Jesus goes on to say by your words you will be acquitted and by your words you will be condemned you see the tongue is such a faithful barometer on your heart that the final day of judgment can turn on what came out of your mouth and it will rightly judge your heart by your words you'll be acquitted by your words you will be condemned we come to the last book of the

Bible the revelation of Jesus Christ revelation 21 8 all liars have their place in the fiery lake of burning sulfur this is the second death I want you to notice it says all liars that's liars of every kind and of every age they all have their place in the fiery lake of burning sulfur the father of lies and all of his children make no mistake there's hell to pay for lying that's what God is saying that's what Jesus the revelation of Jesus is saying that lying will keep you out of the new Jerusalem nothing impure will ever enter it nor will anyone who does what's shameful or deceitful the the last chapter of the Bible Jesus says blessed are those whose who wash their robes that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city because outside are the dogs those who practice magic arts the sexually immoral the murderers the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood lying is serious business it's a big deal to the God of truth and so we need to keep our consciences well informed with God's view of lying because we live in a world that belittles this sin they say it's nothing and they laugh it off as nothing and so we've come together again today we would stepped out of the polluted atmosphere that we breathe all week long we're lying is no big deal and we've stepped into the pure atmosphere of God's truth and we've said

God you tell us is this thing of telling the truth important and we've seen it breathe it in brothers and sisters breathe in that pure air we've we've stepped out of a world that David David describes where everyone lies to his neighbor and speaks with deception and we step into the pure air of God's truth why to renew our minds with his thoughts and words to arm ourselves for the battle for truth that we heard against all of Satan's lies that we might then go back into this world thinking rightly living rightly in this area of truth speaking walking in the light as he is in the light so God's truth is food to feed our hatred of lying as we read God's word it ought to deepen our hatred of lying just as God hates it because we won't kill what we don't hate if we're to be putting to death these sins that trip us up we won't be killing them if we don't hate them this is the food that feeds our hate it's the godly man who says in psalm 119 163 I hate I hate and abhor falsehood but I love your laws I love your laws if you love his laws you'll hate what is contrary to his laws and lying and falsehood is contrary Proverbs 13 5 the righteous hate what is false God is righteous and he hates what is false and his children are righteous and they too hate what is false you can't love the truth without hating it's opposite

God's truth today make us more truth lovers and lie haters so we've read of God's hatred of lying in his word but it seemed most clearly on the middle cross at Golgotha and here's the perfect son of God he's humiliated he's abandoned he's dying under God's wrath and anger why is he here why is he abandoned why such agony because he's suffering the punishment that lying deserves this is the price for lying there it is middle cross look at him study him this is the condemnation that liars deserve and he bears it as the substitute standing in for his people don't depersonalize the cross of Christ by which I mean if there was no other person in the world but you and if you had no other sins except the sins against the ninth commandment this is what it takes to make you right with God this is what he had to suffer to atone for your lies infinite wrath now who can stand before the agonizing son of God and say lines a little thing it's no big deal to God that itself is alive from hell but you know that same cross that teaches how much God hates lying also teaches us God's love that made a way for liars to be saved the same cross proves God's hatred and punishment for lying proves his love that made a way for sinners and liars to be saved for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that that whoever be they liars adulterers murderers that whoever believes in him might not perish but have everlasting life and that's one of the reasons God hates lies he hates lies because he loves sinners that are being damned by them he loves he hates lies because he loves sinners that are being damned by them it was a lie that sank the whole human race into sin in the first place and if you are not renouncing your sins today if you are not turning from them to Jesus Christ not trusting in him and living for him then you are still believing some lie of the devil that is taking you to hell it's no wonder God hates lying when he loves sinners and is offering eternal life to them at the cross what what are some of the lies that you might still be holding on to you might be holding on to the lie of the devil that the good life is is to set aside this book and to go your own way just do your own thing is that the lie you're holding on to maybe the lie is I'm not that bad and I think I'll be okay in the day of judgment I think I've done enough good in my life that that God will throw the scales my way and say welcome that's a lie from the father of lies where I intend to get saved but not just now I have plenty of time to go my own way and still get right with God later some of Satan's lies are exposed right in

front of us like like that lie some teenagers went to high school one day this week they [43:34] didn't come home there was no later it was death in the judgment we were not promised later the devil promises later you can do that later go ahead and live for yourself now you can you can get right with God later and G Jesus hates lies because he loves sinners who are believing lies that are taking them to hell don't go to hell with the herd believing Satan's lies come to Christ right now and be saved save from your sin from its penalty it's power that's controlling you to keep telling lies as we'll see next week you tell one lie you got to tell 10 more to cover that lie it's got a hold of you it's got a grip on you Jesus sets you free he's the truth that sets you free from sins penalty its power and one day from its very presence these he says come come to me and all who come to me I will never turn away well we're going to sing a closing hymn and you can come to Jesus even as we sing it you meet him by way of prayer you call out to him you trust in him you take him at his promise let's pray our God of truth thank you for speaking nothing but true and flawless words to us words that search us words that tell us about the most important things in life where can we go to receive truth and not be lied to thank you that we can come to your word and and bank on those words for time and eternity thank you for sending your son who is full of grace and truth enough truth to expose our falsehoods and and enough grace to to cover all our sins what an amazing fullness of grace is in Jesus is to cover my lying my untruths that of all my brothers and sisters all who put their trust in you thank you for such promises of mercy draw others to come with their lies and to lay them down at your feet and to trust in Jesus Christ to forgive their sins and seeing what it cost you to save us from lying send us on our way then hating lying loving the truth and willing to speak it in every situation to the glory of you the God of truth before whose eye we live we come to you in Jesus name amen