

The Ninth Word: Lying Against Your Neighbor

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Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. It's a joy to be with you again to worship and to be able to preach God's word to you this morning. Please turn with me to Exodus 20. We've been in the Ten Commandments for a while in Exodus 20. We've been in the book of Exodus for a little while.

And we're going to take a little break from the book for Advent, Christmas, but then we'll resume in the new year. We're in Exodus 20. We're in the Ninth Commandment in verse 16. I'm going to read the prologue, verses 1 to 2, and then skip forward to 16.

But let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's word. Heavenly Father, your word is truth. Your word never returns void.

It always accomplishes its purpose. So you sent your son, Jesus, the word of God, the incarnate word, to accomplish your purposes here on earth.

It's because of him that we now know you, relate to you as we ought to.

[1 : 27] And now we want to honor him in the way we bear witness to our neighbors, to our Lord Jesus.

So please teach us from your word how we may be faithful witnesses. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. If you would stand with me, if you're able, I'm going to read Exodus 20, the prologue, verses 1 to 2, and then skip forward to verse 16. And God spoke all these words, saying, I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. This is God's holy and authoritative word. Please be seated.

You may be familiar with the famous children's rhyme that goes like this. Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words shall never hurt me.

[2 : 52] Those are, you know, the words of a, it's a well-intended rhyme, an English rhyme, teaching children not to be affected by name-calling and verbal bullying that often happens in schools.

But sadly, it's only wishful thinking. It's well-intended, but it's wishful thinking because the book of Proverbs compares rash words to sword thrusts.

And bearing false witness, it calls a war club or a sword or a sharp arrow. He says that a perverse tongue can break a person's spirit.

Proverbs 18, 21 says, death and life are in the power of a tongue. James 3, 6 says, the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life and set on fire by hell.

The untamed tongue is destructive, like a spark that sets a forest ablaze. What we say can set on fire our entire life and stain our entire body and leave us, in the end, to burn in the fires of hell.

[4 : 06] Revelation 21, 8 confirms that. It says, all liars will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death. That means words may break much more than bones.

This is why the ninth word of the Decalogue is essential. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. The ninth commandment teaches us that we should love our neighbors by bearing true witness like Jesus, our faithful and true witness.

So we're going to first talk about true witness in the court of law. And then we're going to talk about true witness in the court of life. And then we're going to talk about true witness in the court of the Lord, in the heavenly court.

The first and most obvious application of the ninth commandment is bearing true witness in the court of law. In the U.S. and in many other countries, witnesses in a court case have to take an oath.

They say, I do solemnly and sincerely and truly declare and affirm that the evidence I shall give shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

[5 : 20] That oath rules out various ways people can wheedle their way out of telling the truth. They must tell the plain, unvarnished truth, and they must tell the whole truth.

Because a half-truth told as if it were the whole truth is a whole lie. And often, more persuasive than a whole lie. And they must tell nothing but the truth because we can tell the truth and yet couch it in all kinds of irrelevant, speculative, and leading information that will undermine the very truth that we're telling.

Satan is the first liar and he's the father of lies. And he lied to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3-1 by saying, did God actually say you shall not eat of any tree in the garden?

To which Eve replied, no, only the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden. Satan knew well what Eve's answer would be.

Satan knew the right answer. He knew that only one particular tree, the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the middle of the garden was forbidden. But by framing the question this way, did God actually say you shall not eat of any tree in the garden?

[6 : 35] He had already slandered God's character. He had already sown seeds of doubt in Eve's mind. Suspicion. He did not tell nothing but the truth.

He told the truth and some other misleading things as well. Also in Genesis 3-4-5, the serpent tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit saying, you will not surely die for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God knowing good and evil.

This is a half-truth because it was true. Adam and Eve took of the fruit and ate it and their eyes were opened. They knew good and evil like God does. But he also lied because he said you will not die.

And they will die. They did die. A half-truth sold as a whole truth. And this first lie had deadly consequences.

It literally introduced death to humanity, alienated them from God and it put the tree of life in the middle of the garden out of reach because it can only be found in communion with God.

[7 : 47] So much rides on bearing true witness in the court of law. In 900 BC in what is now modern day Israel in Israel there was a man who owned a vineyard.

Unfortunately for this man his vineyard was coveted by the then king of his country. And the king at first tried to do the right thing and he went to this man and offered to buy the vineyard at full price and he'd like to turn it into his vegetable garden because his palace is right next to it.

But the man not out of spite but out of principle because it was his ancestral land passed down from generation after generation after generation politely declined saying I cannot sell this vineyard to you.

And so this king was sullen and like a child like a spoiled brat that's been refused something for the first time in his life he stormed home and was angry and refused to eat. And then his wicked wife was like a doting mother that indulges her child.

She said to him aren't you the king of Israel? Stop being distressed over something so trivial and leave the matter to me. I will make sure that this vineyard is in your hands soon enough.

[9 : 07] So what does she do? She uses the king's authority to declare a religious community gathering and then she appoints in the king's name this man who owns the vineyard to preside over that meeting and while the man is presiding over that meeting she has secretly probably paid off or incited two false witnesses to rise up against him and accuse him saying you blasphemed against God.

You cursed God and the king. And as was the custom at the time a capital crime can be established on the testimony of two or three witnesses and this man innocent man was dragged out and stoned to death that very day.

And the king afterward greedily claimed this prize. It's really shocking that Jezebel Ahab's wife said aren't you the king of Israel?

Stop being distressed over something so trivial. Her false witnesses killed Naboth. Trivial.

Right. This is the account found in 1 Kings 21. And we're not exempt from this problem in our day and age.

[10 : 23] Innocence Project is an organization dedicated to exonerating wrongfully convicted individuals and they have recorded 241 legal victories to date and 194 of their clients were

exonerated by DNA evidence.

And if you add up the number of years that these wrongfully convicted individuals spent in jail it adds up to 3,754 years. That's not just a number.

That's real people real lives ruined. Irreversibly irreversibly affected by wrongful conviction which sometimes was abetted by false testimony.

Take the case of Ellen Reasonover when 19 year old James Buckley was shot and killed at a gas station in Missouri in 1983. Ellen Reasonover who happened to witness what happened in the aftermath of the event did the right thing by going to the police with information connecting two men to the crime.

But instead of finding the real culprit the authorities considered her their prime suspect despite the fact that as the August 4th 1999 Washington Post article says no witnesses placed her at the scene of the murder police found no fingerprints and no murder weapon prosecutors said her motive was robbery but no money was taken from the cash register and about \$3,000 was left in an unlocked safe.

[11 : 50] So how then you might wonder did the prosecution convince the jury that Reasonover was guilty? The article continues quote the jury relied almost entirely on the testimony of two inmates Rose Joliffe and Mary Ellen Liner both of whom testified that Reasonover confessed to the murder while in prison with them while waiting for the trial to happen.

But that was a lie. She had never confessed to the crime. So her conviction was largely based on the testimony of false witnesses to prisoners who had long criminal records history of drug addiction and to people who had been offered a reduced sentence or \$1,000 for testifying against Reasonover by the prosecution which by the way was not told to the jury.

She would have been sentenced to death if it went for one juror who refused to sentence her to death. So she was spending life in prison without parole and it was only after 16 years of serving prison time that she was exonerated of her wrongful conviction.

And she might still be in prison today if it weren't for the work of Centurion Ministries, the first ever non-profit dedicated to overturning wrongful convictions which was founded by a Christian minister named Jim McCloskey.

His organization was able to dig up a tape recording produced from by the prosecution during Reasonover's time in prison in which she repeatedly says that she did nothing.

[13 : 29] According to Innocence Project, false jailhouse informant testimony plays a role in nearly one in five of the 367 DNA-based exoneration cases that they examined.

That means nearly 20% of people who are wrongfully convicted at least from that sample size are wrongfully convicted on the basis of false testimony. So the ninth word of the Decalogue is highly relevant for us today especially in the context of ancient courts.

This was especially important in ancient courts where they could not avail themselves of forensic science including fingerprint examination, DNA testing, photo and video evidence.

In that context the truthfulness of witnesses was absolutely vital. That's why God takes bearing false witness so seriously in Deuteronomy 19.19 it prescribes the same punishment that the false witness wanted to bring onto that innocent person to be given to the false witness.

Despite such severe warnings and threats we see that people in the Bible and in our times again and again bear false testimony. There are many reasons why someone might do that in the court of law.

[14 : 55] Exodus 23 1-8 gives us a helpful summary of them. It says you shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with the wicked man to be a malicious witness.

You shall not fall in with the many to do evil. Nor shall you bear witness in a lawsuit siding with the many so as to pervert justice. Nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his lawsuit.

You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in his lawsuit. Keep far from a false charge and do not kill the innocent and righteous for I will not acquit the wicked.

And you shall take no bribe for a bribe blinds the clear sighted and subverts the cause of those who are in the right. So it gives us several reasons why people bear false testimony. Some people give false testimony because they are a malicious witness.

they have joined hands with a wicked man. So you're out to get someone maybe you have a vendetta against someone and so you maliciously give false testimony.

[15 : 57] Or maybe you're bearing witness for a wicked man. Maybe that wicked man is your father or son or brother or friend. But God commends us not to join hands with such a man.

We also, he says, must not side with the many so as to pervert justice. Sometimes we bear false witness not out of maliciousness but out of the fear of man in order to avoid being on the wrong side of popular opinion.

In order to side with the many and the spirit of the times because we don't want to be criticized or ostracized. But he says, we must not fall in with the many to do evil.

Still others bear false witness because they are quote, partial to a poor man in his lawsuit. Some people just like rooting for the underdog. But that preference must not become partiality in the court of law.

With the ascendancy of critical theory nowadays many people understand social relationships in terms of hierarchy and power through the lens of the oppressor and oppressed framework.

[17 : 08] For example, men are the oppressors. Women are the oppressed. Whites are the oppressors. Blacks are the oppressed. Heterosexuals are the oppressors. And homosexuals are the oppressed.

Cisgendered are the oppressors. Transgenders are the oppressed. The rich are the oppressors. The poor are the oppressed. As a result, historically powerless or marginalized groups are automatically given privileged status due to their lived experience of oppression.

And their views and perspectives are privileged over that of the dominant group. In this kind of environment it's common for people to be partial to a poor man in his lawsuit.

To be partial to the oppressed class. But we are never to be partial to a poor man he says. Why? Because the poor and powerless still do wrong.

Because the poor and the powerless still sin. And though extenuating circumstances might mitigate they do not negate our responsibility.

[18 : 19] Of course partiality often goes the other way as well. That's why it says in Exodus 23 same passage you shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in his lawsuit.

just because a person is poor and powerless does not mean that people can trample on his or her rights. Just because they are oppressed or marginalized or weak or don't have the money to hire the most expensive lawyers does not mean that you can deprive them of justice.

Proverbs 22 22-23 says do not rob the poor because he is poor or crush the afflicted at the gate for the Lord will plead their cause and rob of life those who rob them.

The city gate was where legal proceedings were carried out in ancient Israel. So this verse specifically commands God's people not to crush the afflicted or rob the poor in court. The rich and powerful can use their wealth and influence to sway public opinion but we are not to let them deprive the poor and powerless of justice.

We must be witnesses that always testify to the truth and nothing but the truth. This is why Exodus 23 continues and you shall take no bribe for a bribe blinds the clear sighted and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.

[19 : 47] So here's another reason why some people might give false testimony bribes for the sake of selfish gain but what good is it to gain the whole world yet forfeit his soul?

Christians should be unbribable. By refusing to accept bribes we declare that we love our neighbors more than we love ourselves. We declare that truth matters that justice matters.

God cares that the guilty are condemned and that the innocent are acquitted so to that end we must never give false testimony in court. The corollary to the command not to bear false witness is to bear true witness wherever we can.

Leviticus 5 1 says if anyone sins and that he bears a public adoration to testify and though he is a witness whether he has seen or come to know the matter yet does not speak he shall bear his iniquity.

When you are a witness to something and are called upon to testify and your testimony can aid in acquitting the innocent or condemning the guilty to not bear true witness is sin.

[21 : 01] It's a violation of the ninth commandment. While bearing true witness in the court of law is the immediate context of the ninth commandment it also teaches us to bear true witness in all of life in the court of life you might say.

And we know that it has a general application from Leviticus 19 1-18 which is kind of a summary or an exposition of the ten commandments. It contains all the ten commandments Leviticus 19 and 20.

And this is what it has to say about the ninth commandment specifically. You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.

You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbor. I am the Lord. You shall not hate your brother in your heart but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor lest you incur sin because of him.

You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people but you shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord. So false witness, slandering, reasoning dishonestly with your neighbor, all of these things constitute a violation of the ninth commandment.

[22 : 19] To boil it down, in essence, any witnessing we do concerning our neighbor, anything we say about our neighbor that stems from hatred of him or her rather than love of him or her violates the spirit of the ninth commandment.

This includes lying, of course, speaking falsely of another. Ephesians 4.25 says we should put away falsehood. Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Proverbs 6 says that God abominates, detests, abhors a lying tongue and a false witness who breathes out lies. Lying in Proverbs 6 is connected to all kinds of social ills, like shedding innocent blood, devising wicked plans, running to do evil, sowing discord among brothers.

And the reason is because a lying tongue is foundationally at its root anti-social and is connected to all these other social ills. People who lie think to themselves, well, they don't deserve to know the truth.

They would misunderstand the truth. They wouldn't know what to do with the truth. So I'll just keep this truth to myself. A lying tongue is connected to hands that shed innocent blood and to a heart that devises wicked plans because a liar is willing to sacrifice the truth and the interests of other people to advance his or her own agenda.

[23 : 51] Lying is fundamentally selfish because it hides the truth for the sake of self preservation and self advancement. All societies and relationships are built upon trust and lying erodes trust so it compromises the very foundation of society.

when you catch someone lying and I'm sure some of you guys have done this before when you catch someone lying even once you start to second guess yourself whenever that person tells you something don't you?

Did this really happen? Is this really true? It cripples your ability to trust that person. People lie in order to gain power and control over others but ironically what ends up happening is that they gradually lose control and power because their words lose credibility.

Truth is not fungible. It is irreplaceable and unchangeable. The ninth commandment also prohibits slander as we saw in Leviticus 19.

Jesus includes slander along with false witness in his summary of the second half of the ten commandments in Matthew 15. So if lying is speaking falsely of someone slander is speaking maliciously of someone speaking evil against another person James 4 calls it.

[25 : 17] Slander is of course often mixed with a lie but it's not necessarily a lie. For example in Numbers 12 1 to 2 it says Miriam and Aaron slandered Moses spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married for he had married a Cushite woman.

And they said has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also? So the narrator confirms it was true that Moses had married a Cushite woman.

A Gentile woman rather than a Jewish woman. A woman of the same faith like all faithful Jews were expected to do in that time. And it's also true what they say that God hadn't spoken only through Moses.

God had also spoken through Miriam and Aaron. They're both called prophets. Prophetess and prophet. respectively in scripture. However despite the fact that everything Miriam and Aaron said was technically true.

What they said was not exactly fair. They don't mention anything of the fact that Moses had fled for his life from Egypt and was in exile in Midian for 40 years that there were no other people no other Jewish people to date or court or marry.

[26 : 30] Why do they choose to talk about that specific detail of Moses' life? I mean you could have said all kinds of things on Moses. Why are you saying that he married a cushide wife? Their intention is to undermine him.

Their intention is they're trying to communicate that well God spoke through me and Aaron, Miriam and Aaron. Maybe we're more suited to lead this congregation than Moses. Maybe we follow God's law more faithfully than Moses. See look, he married a Cushite woman. That's their intention. So technically everything that they said was true but what they said was not fair.

And the spirit of what they said was false because Moses was a faithful man and he was a law abiding man. So whenever you're wondering whether or not you should say something about someone, whether it's slanderous or not, you could ask yourself this question, does my speech stem from love or does it stem from hatred?

Sometimes the loving thing to do is to expose someone's sin. In that case, it's not slander when it stems from love. But Proverbs 22 once says, a good name is to be chosen rather than great riches and favor is better than silver or gold.

[27 : 55] Commenting on this, John Calvin writes, if a good name is a treasure, more precious than all the riches of the world, no greater injury can be inflicted upon man than to wound their reputation.

Imagine that your friend has an heirloom jewelry and they trust you enough to let you hold it for a second. You're holding it. I mean, I don't think I'd ever accept that because I don't even want to hold something like that.

Right? I mean, it's so precious. What if you drop it? What if something crumbles? But people's name and reputation, the Bible says, is even more precious than the costliest jewels.

And I would argue further that a damaged reputation is harder to restore than a damaged jewel. people. And how much more care should we take with one another's name and reputation?

The ninth commandment also prohibits gossip, which we might define simply as speaking secretly of another behind someone's back. The New Testament sometimes describes this as being double-tongued, which literally means speaking twice, meaning you're saying something in one place and then you're going to another place where that should not be said and then saying it again.

[29 : 25] That, of course, if you're betraying someone's confidence and sharing something that that person confided in you, sensitive information, private information, that would erode trust, destroy trust.

But it's not necessarily only something that's secret, but Proverbs 16, 28 says, a whisperer separates close friends. Gossip also includes talebearing, spreading rumors, or telling stories that reflect negatively on someone to people who don't need to know.

Need to know is a good rule of thumb. Does this person need to know what you're about to share by virtue of their relationship with that person or because they occupy a position of authority?

If we are not to gossip, we should also refrain from listening to gossip. Proverbs 26, 22 says, the words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels. They go down into the inner parts of the body. I picture like a really well-marbled, high-quality steak, right? Or a really well-baked chocolate chip cookie that's nice and crispy on the outside but very moist on the inside.

[30 : 39] Something that just melts in your mouth. That's what gossip is like. And it goes down smooth.

And you'll want to eat it up. Get some more. So the warning is this. Be leery of it.

Don't let it get started. Interrupt when you suspect that you're about to listen to gossip and ask, is this something that I need to know? Do you think it is loving for you to share this information with me to that person?

Have you shared your concern with this person directly? Do you need me to mediate between you? Another one that we might not think about often is flattery.

Flattery also falls within the purview of the ninth commandment. Flattery is speaking well of another disingenuously. Proverbs 27, 5-6, is better is open rebuke than hidden love.

[31 : 44] Faithful are the wounds of a friend. Profuse are the kisses of an enemy. It's the enemy who kisses up profusely to hide his true feelings and intentions. Flattering mouth works ruin.

Once again, the heart of all kinds of false testimony is hatred of one's neighbor. Some decades ago, I have to share this, Kent Hughes, who's another pastor.

He's a pastor emeritus now, retired of college church in Wheaton, Illinois. He came up with a very witty definition of flattery. He says, flattery is saying something to a person's face what you'd never say behind their back.

Isn't that funny? I got a good kick out of that one. In that sense, it's the mirror image of gossip, which is saying something behind someone's back what you would never say to their face. Right? To be more precise, the content of the flattery is not necessarily false. Maybe the person you're flattering does have those redeeming qualities that you're flattering them about in order to butter them up.

[32 : 57] But the spirit of flattery is always false because you don't actually love that person. You're not actually trying to encourage that person. You're just trying to use that person and manipulate that person.

That's hatred. That's false. Even if what you're saying is technically true. Sometimes we can erroneously conclude that something is true about our neighbor and therefore bear false witness about that neighbor.

That kind of rash judgment I think also falls under the ninth commandment. In our age of sound bites and hot takes where everybody has a platform and everybody wants an audience, premature and presumptuous judgments are increasingly common.

So we have fact checkers to ensure that people are actually speaking the truth. And then we have fact checkers who check the fact checkers. And then we have fact checkers who expose that some of these fact checkers are not real fact checkers.

I mean it gets ludicrous. We have fact checkers who are checking fact checkers who are checking fact checkers who claim to check facts. It's ridiculous. I don't know if you guys saw the biographical film of Richard Jewell from 2019.

[34 : 19] Have you guys seen that? It's not very popular. I saw it on a plane one day. It was pretty good. It's about a man named Richard Jewell who works as a security guard during the Centennial Olympic Park bombing in the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, Georgia.

He was a security guard and he was patrolling the grounds and he did his work well and he noticed a suspicious looking backpack that no one was attending to and so he checked it and he found three pipe bombs in it.

And so he alerted the police and then he helped evacuate the people and he saved lives. But what happened in the aftermath is that because of psychological profiling, FBI's investigation led them to suspect that Richard Jewell was actually their primary suspect.

This should have been done privately and then it would have been all fine but that information was leaked to the press. And so for 88 days, I think, he endured intense public scrutiny, what they call trial by media until he was declared not guilty by the FBI where they stopped the investigation. But even after that, some people suspected him and really believed that he had done it until nine years later when a man named Eric Rudolph pled guilty to the bombing. Some members of the media were convinced that Richard Jewell had been the bomber and if you followed the events and the narrative at the time, you might have been convinced yourself.

[36 : 00] We all suffer from confirmation bias. We tend to make new evidence we encounter fit the beliefs and theories we already hold.

The things you hear and even see with your own eyes can be misleading or even doctored. There might be other explanations for them. So be wary of making rash judgment.

Let the proper legal authorities do their job before you pronounce someone guilty in the court of public opinion. James 1.19 commends us to be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger, not to be hard of hearing and hasty in speaking and hot in anger.

Not even on social media. Swearing falsely is another issue that is addressed by the Ninth Commandment. It says, you shall not deal falsely.

This is Leviticus 19.11-12. You shall not lie to one another. You shall not swear by my name falsely and so profane the name of your God. Psalm 15 describes the profile of a righteous person and many of the descriptions have to do with his speech, godly speech.

[37 : 12] It says he speaks truth in his heart who does not slander with his tongue and does no evil to his neighbor nor take up a reproach against his friend. And it says this, that he swears to his own hurt and does not change.

What good is a promise if we only keep it when it is expedient to do so? Then we don't need to make a promise because we already do what's expedient for us to do every single day.

If we break our word at the slightest pretext, as soon as it appears disadvantageous to us, what consideration are we giving to the neighbor to whom we made the promise?

Who gave our word to? Who's counting on us? In an ideal world, swearing oaths and making pinky promises would not even be necessary.

But they are still inadequate. So Jesus says in Matthew 5, 33, 37, again, you have heard that it was said to those of old, you shall not swear falsely but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.

[38 : 17] But I say to you, do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king. And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.

Let what you say be simply yes or no. Anything more than this comes from evil. Just as divorce was not part of God's creation ideal but was rather a concession to human unfaithfulness, so oaths were not a part of God's creation ideal but a way to manage human untruthfulness.

So for spirit-empowered new covenant believers, we should simply let our yes be yes and our no, no. At all times. Not only when we're under oath.

I don't think this means it's sinful for us to take oaths of office or take the oaths of witness in court. Even Jesus was placed under oath by the high priest in Matthew 26, 63, 64 when he was under trial.

But we should live in such a manner that even our ordinary words are completely truthful and reliable so that oaths are not necessary.

[39 : 34] That's the high calling that God has for us with truthful speech. But obviously, we don't live in a world like that. And we have no one but ourselves to blame because we have lied.

We have slandered. We have gossiped. Gossiped. We have flattered. We have rushed into wrong judgment. We have sworn falsely. We have let our yes be no and our no be yes.

And God, because he abhors a lying tongue and because he is perfectly righteous and holy, has every right to scrap all of creation. But instead, he redeems creation by sending his only son, Jesus.

And Jesus wasn't secluded from our deceiving and backstabbing. He lived among us. He was betrayed by one of his own disciples, Judas, who handed Jesus over to the authorities with a kiss.

Profuse are the kisses of an enemy. And then when Jesus was being tried by the Jewish authorities in Matthew 26, it says that the chief priests and the whole council, they were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death.

[40 : 51] But they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. And at last, two came forward and said, this man said, I'm able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.

The authorities who were charged with executing justice were instead obsessed with executing unjustly.

They sought false testimony that would warrant capital punishment. But no one came forward. A whole bunch of false witnesses came forward, but none of them warranted capital punishment. And so they kept looking until two came forward saying that Jesus committed blasphemy, which was an offense punishable by death.

That's how Jesus was led to the cross. He was charged on the basis of false witnesses. So if you've ever been on the receiving end of false witness, slander, gossip, rash judgment, flattery, broken promises, rest assured that Jesus understands your sense of betrayal, injustice that you feel.

His situation was even more unfair. And he feels the pain even more acutely because he was the perfectly righteous son of God and no one in the whole world had any dirt on him.

yet still to the very end, Jesus bore true witness to who he is, that he is righteous, that he is the son of God sent by the father to rescue us from sin and death.

[42 : 24] He died so that we might live. He died. He who had no deceit in his mouth died so that he might cleanse us of our lying tongues. If you're convicted by this and you're not yet a follower of Jesus, you're not gonna just become a more truthful person by trying harder because what we say with our mouths reflect what's in our heart.

We need a new heart which can only come through repentance and faith in Jesus, which can only come when you're born again by the spirit of God. And for you, brothers and sisters in Christ, for our fellow believers, we have an enemy, the devil.

His name is Satan, which means the accuser. He is a liar, the father of lies, false witnesses his bread and butter.

It says in Revelation 12, 10, that he accuses us day and night before our God. day and night, Satan is accusing us to God's face saying, that one and that one deserves your judgment, your condemnation.

He is sinful. She is sinful. They are slanderers. They are liars. And that would be true if it weren't for Jesus' atoning sacrifice.

[43 : 57] But now that Jesus has died for our sins and he has been raised from the dead, that's a blatant falsehood. That's false testimony from the accuser. And maybe Satan has been whispering these lies into your heart this morning.

But remember that he is a liar. And we have in our defense an infallible witness. Revelation 3, 14 calls Jesus the amen, the faithful and true witness.

His very name is amen. His name is certainty. His name is truth. His name is faithfulness. Jesus is our true and faithful witness and he is standing at the right hand of the Father this very moment advocating for you and me saying, I pay for that one sin.

He is mine. So be gone you accuser in this heavenly court. We have a true witness in the court of heaven.

And so now we are commissioned to bear witness to him. To be true witnesses of Jesus to the world.

[45 : 21] And Jesus warned us in Luke 21 and Matthew 5 he said that we'll be handed over to courts. That people will bear false testimony about us.

That we will be persecuted. That we'll be thrown into prison. That some of us will be killed. Jesus said all of these things will happen because we bear witness to him. But we're still to bear witness to him.

Jesus said everyone who acknowledges me before men I also will acknowledge before my father who is in heaven. This is how we are meant to conquer Satan by the blood of the lamb and the word of our testimony.

You guys remember that story of Stephen our first the first Christian martyr in Acts 7. He bore witness to Jesus and he was persecuted like Jesus.

He was falsely charged the same kind of crime that Jesus was falsely charged of. He was stoned to death and as he is being stoned to death by this unjust and wicked human court around him throwing stones at him and Stephen looks up to heaven and he sees at the right hand of the father Jesus the true and faithful witness bearing witness to him standing up for him saying it doesn't matter what men say about you because I say you are justified.

[47 : 05] So let's be true witnesses for him. Heavenly Father God it's your Lord Jesus your true witness your intercession on our behalf your advocacy for us in the court of heaven that gives us confidence to approach you that gives us confidence to go out into this world and bear witness to our savior Jesus Christ no matter what happens to be true to you to speak truthfully even when the whole world is against us and call us liars because Lord Jesus you are the way the truth and the life and we love you we belong to you thank you God in Jesus name we pray amen