

The Pastor and the Eighth Commandment

by H. E. Hartzell

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I. The Universal Plague of Falsehood

I recently came across the observation that “all morality begins with the 8th Commandment.” This certainly has a direct bearing on the low level of morality in the world. In concentrating my attention upon this subject I have become aware, as never before, just how dishonesty and falsehood pervade the world and our human nature. It is everywhere. It finds its way into every nook and cranny of life; and most of the time it operates so effortlessly and slyly that we think little of it. I am of the conviction that it is the second most prevalent sin after idolatry, and very close to it on sin's scoreboard.

We cannot, in a paper of this length, begin to catalogue all the manifestations of falsehood in the world, let alone give time to a critique of each one. We cannot catalogue all the ways the 8th Commandment is abused by pastors. Every pastor is a human being and in danger of committing every sin common to man; however, not every human is a pastor, and is not afflicted with the peculiar sins of ministers against this commandment.

After considering every angle of falsehood I could discover, I must confess that I am not certain all falsehood is sin. By falsehood I mean any and every word, picture, gesture, action, presentation, appearance that does not convey accurately the way a thing really is; or that conceals the truth in some way. Among those falsehoods that I hesitate to class as sin are false air scoops on a car (though if the salesman told some unsuspecting customer they were real, that would be a genuine lie); false eyelashes, and other “falsies” women employ; poetic license which may ignore the truth; touching up a photograph to eliminate blemishes; the omission by an artist of some unwanted feature in the landscape he's painting. Also, how about the person who is able to conceal from us his true emotions, so that what we see of him does not truly reveal what he is at heart? These are the sort of things I call “false” yet hesitate to label as sin. Our list of sins against the 8th commandment will not be seriously depleted by the omission of such “falsehoods,” because the list of real falsehoods is unending in number and universal in scope.

The world not only wallows in falsehood, it is poorly equipped to deal with the truth. Recently the N. A. U. football team won a game in the last six seconds on a field goal. They won by one point. The next day the N. A. U. coach admitted his team had 12 men on the field; but the athletic world cannot cope with this sort of truth. One time when a woman threatened to tell me all the “facts” of her relations with a certain man, he quickly interrupted with, “Now *no facts*, just the *truth*!”

Luther said of the world at his time, “truth is the most intolerable thing on earth...the way of the world is such that people cannot bear the truth. Let him who would live in the world be silent about the truth. Let him tell dirty lies and engage in foul deceit. If, however, you want to testify to the truth, then be prepared to have as enemies the devil with all his angels, the world with its wisdom and its greatest intellects; nay to have as enemies your parents, your father and mother, and your best friends. Matters will take no other turn... Those who like to hear the truth when it testifies against them are rare birds. On the other hand, sparrows and crows are not as common as the folks who like to have themselves praised and patted on the back.”

Luther also said we should not deceitfully belie, betray, slander, nor defame our neighbor. He also admitted we daily sin much. Of whom was he thinking? Was he thinking abstractly, or drawing upon his own personal experience? I think the latter. I also believe this is what we too must do, and I assume this is the purpose of this paper. Not that we think abstractly about falsehood only as it touches others, but how it touches us. The assigned subject is 100% law. If I stick to my subject the only way you can be profited by it is if this law becomes a schoolmaster to lead you to Christ one more time. Just as we are never far from falsehood in others, or in ourselves, we are never far from the Lord who thru His law would lead us to our Savior, and how often we

make that trip, and rejoice in His forgiveness, driven by the knowledge of our own falsehood to seek the comfort of Him who is the *TRUTH*.

At a recent adult Bible class in one of our churches, the subject was the Eighth Commandment. Someone mentioned that they had heard from a secular source the frequency with which the truth is mishandled by the average person each day. There was no implication of guilt, just that the truth was avoided in some way, either by omission, addition, exaggeration, shading, or such. It was the consensus of the report that the average person may do this as much as *200 times* a day! Some disagreement with that number was expressed, but in general there was agreement that if every deviation from the truth were tabulated each of us would run up a sizable score most days. There were, however, a few who did not believe the figure was realistic. The class was then asked to think of ways, other than blatant lies, in which the truth suffers. Immediately one businessman in the class replied, "Happy to meet you." And, most admitted, that is probably not the most honest thing one will say all day, even though in some cases it may be truly so.

The fact is that falsehood is a universal plague, and ministers, though they may not be of the world, are in it. Luther confessed that he "*daily sinned much*." Some of those sins must have involved the Eighth Commandment. Even when we do not sin against the Eighth Commandment directly, it tinges other transgressions. Not only is there "false witness," there is false religion, false worship, false use of God's name, false gods, false treatment of parents, false dealing. There is no honest stealing, no honest adultery, no honest murder. Covetousness too hides behind a mask of falsehood.

There is so much perverse activity within the bounds of this commandment because it is so easy. It seems so innocuous. Scripture itself reveals that it is easier to get a rambunctious horse or a tossing ship to go where we want them to go, than to get our tongue to go where it should go. (James 3:3) So easy to lie, so hard to be 100% honest in *all* things!

II. Falsehoods Many Forms

May I here relate to you a recent encounter with falsehood? I stopped by the home of one of our older members. A group of people was sitting in a little grove of cedar trees. There was a small campfire and some meat cooking on the coals. I joined the group and sat down on a stool they offered me. Almost immediately one of the men asked, "Hartzell, what is this commandment about stealing?" I explained that a person could steal and never touch nor have the thing he stole, as when we break out the windows in our neighbor's house some dark night. Also I said a person could steal even though someone gave him the item - as when a person is given too much change at the store and knowingly pockets it and walks out of the store with it. There was silence for a few moments, then this man said, "Well, Hartzell, you caught me right there. Just last week I got a check for \$17.00. I went to the Tribal Store and it was sure busy; and when I cashed my check the girl gave me \$27.00! So I kept it and paid my water bill with the extra money." Falsehood number one was revealed. About that time falsehood number two came to light (literally). One of the ladies sitting nearest to me had been interjecting a "Praise God" every now and then, at what seemed to her the right moment, I suppose; but now from under her voluminous camp dress tumbled a can of Coors; which she had evidently been clutching between her knees, up to that moment giving the false impression of a "tee totaler." To add to the falsehood she said quite primly, "Oh, I dropped my tea!" Everyone else laughed and thus came to light another falsehood. They had known the truth all along; but were playing Annie's game: Fool the Preacher. A more serious mood then descended, and all volunteered their greatest concern at the moment was that they be picked up by the bus for church on Sunday. Sunday, however, revealed more falsehood when not all who pledged their great desire to be in church showed up.

Amid such abuse of truth and honesty one fervently longs for even a small manifestation of truth. Sad to say it does not always show up in noblest form. Years ago I spoke to a handful of men on a rocky hillside under some live oak trees. One of the men had never been in church to my knowledge. I expressed my concern over the fact and he said, "I'll be in church tomorrow." The next day just as the service was to begin I heard someone call my name, "Hartzell." I turned to see this man standing with right hand upraised and his left hand over his

heart. “I am here according to my word,” he said, sat down, and was never in church again. He died shortly thereafter. But this is not the Pastor and the Eighth Commandment, so let me get to that subject. The ministry has some special areas of susceptibility and transgression in regard to this commandment.

A. The Teaching of False Doctrine

The most serious, if not the most prevalent, transgression of this commandment by a pastor is The Teaching of False Doctrine. It is certainly the one most specifically warned against, and in our Synod the one most publicly condemned and denounced. I know no funny stories about false doctrine. I do not know that I can add anything to the seriousness of it, nor do I have any desire to subtract anything from the judgment it deserves. You need not be told why false doctrine is such a grave sin; nor that ministers, theologians, and churches are the prime perpetrators of this sin. Any person guilty of false doctrine is going to have to step over into the spiritual realm to tell his lies.

We can thank a gracious God that our Synod can be characterized, along with the church in Philadelphia: “Thou has a little strength, and hast kept my Word, and hast not denied my name” (Rev. 3:8). Dare we believe, however, that our Synod and each of its pastors has a 100% record as regards the Eighth Commandment? We condemn Papal Infallibility, do we claim something similar to ourselves? We abhor false teachings. We do not want to defend it. Where we know it, we disown and repent of it; because we know what a great evil it is, and what an abuse of God’s truth it is, and what a mockery it makes of our righteous God. The only commission we pastors have is to preach the truth, and anytime we have failed to do this we step out of our office and abdicate our high calling as messengers of the truth. Likewise, when we preach the law and gospel in their truth and purity, we are exactly what our Lord ordained us to be.

B. Unfaithfulness in our Calling

All of us promised at our ordination or subsequent installation to be faithful in the discharge of our duties. Lest we forget may I quote from the Agenda? It charges us, “by sound doctrine to exhort and convince the gainsayer...study...preach the Word...reprove, rebuke, with longsuffering...showing (ourselves) a pattern of good works... (Titus 1:7-9)... wait upon and serve the church...feed...instruct, watch over, guide...give yourself wholly to this office with daily meditation and study of Scripture...discharge faithfully the duties of the holy ministry...strengthen the weak...seek the lost...reclaim the erring...comfort the sorrowing...care for the needy...giving no offense in anything... and ever to have at heart, and pray for, the spiritual welfare of every soul under your care!”

Yes indeed! The pastor and the Eighth Commandment. This is certainly not the road to heaven for any of us! What a death knell this would be for every one of us without our Savior’s loving forgiveness!

Knowing you are all guilty of being false to your ordination vow, I can still regard you most highly, and gladly associate with you; because we have all acknowledged our short comings and have received full forgiveness from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

C. Exaggeration

Pastors may not be more prone to this abuse of the Eighth Commandment than others, but they are liable to slip into it sometime. We are not here speaking of hyperbole or other obvious extravagances of language. (His arms are a *mile long*; he *always* does that; he *never* says anything nice) I’m referring to deliberately parading an exaggeration as the truth. This is blameworthy even if it has become habit and everyone knows “that’s just the way we talk.” I think of all the statistics I’ve recorded over the past twenty-six years. I prefer an accurate number to any other number, but in strong second place is a nice plump number, and I hardly ever like a skinny odd number. In double jeopardy of exaggeration are pastors who also like to hunt, fish, play golf, or who have something for sale.

In the spiritual realm there are some things that do not readily lend themselves to exaggeration. How can we make the love of God for sinners greater than it is? How do we exaggerate the terrors of hell or the bliss of heaven? We may be wrong in what we say (e.g., making heaven a harem of fleshly pleasure) but it is not wrong

because it makes heaven's joys greater than they are, but because they are incorrect and pervert what the Lord has told us of the joy of heaven. We cannot exaggerate Christ's part in our salvation; nor our need to live a godly life out of gratitude for His free gifts. We can hardly exaggerate the reliability of God's Word, and its inspiration by Him. We cannot overstate the certainty of a believer's ultimate safety, or of an unbeliever's final and eternal punishment.

Some things, however, can be overstated. If by the words "all Israel shall be saved" (Rom. 11:26) we meant all or the nation of Israel, or Israel after the flesh - we would be exaggerating. It is exaggerating the Gospel if we make of it a license to sin. Both Universalism and Unitarianism are exaggerations either of the nature of God or man. Humanism is an exaggeration of man's ability, and this lie has found fertile ground within the external church, and is something we pray never to fall victim to.

D. Flattery

Pastors are not, I believe, more guilty of flattery than others. At the top of this list I would put barbers, beauticians, entertainers, and artists of other stripe, haberdashers, politicians, morticians (at least they try), evolutionists, public figures, advertisers, and teachers who pass everybody.

A statement of fact is not flattery. Even that which is true to you cannot really be called deliberately false. Flattery, as I define it, is the deliberate upgrading of an existing condition to gain some advantage for oneself. I am sure some of you think you married the greatest woman on earth, and you have stated the same. But may I ask, "Where does that leave the rest of us and our wives?"

The supreme flattery is to give anyone the idea that by himself he can in some way gain God's favor, apart from Jesus. I'm sure all of us are constantly on guard not to give anyone such a fatal opinion of himself.

Flattery can also be reflexive. In this form it is called "tooting your own horn" "patting yourself on the back." When no one flatters us we may feel it our duty to do so. There is something in the way we talk about *our* work, *our* church (churches), *our* area. Usually there is something about *ours* that is bigger, better, more successful, more demanding than the other guy's. *Our* work is a bit harder, *our* people less cooperative and appreciative, *our* area infested with bigger problems and harder hearts. I once had a pastor tell me that though we both lived on gravel roads, the rocks on *his* road were sharper than mine, thus his tire bill was higher than mine. In all honesty I think I have had a similar, if unexpressed, idea of *your* work over against *mine*; and if I were called to your place I suppose I could make it into a hard place in no time.

I readily admit this is a tinkering with the Eighth Commandment if I do it, so you know how I would feel if I caught you doing it. I think we both need to amend, and I truly ask our Lord to help us. We need have no fear of becoming perfect. The American Indian had this fear, and so a Navajo rug weaver purposely deviated from his "perfect" pattern for fear of angering the gods. A nice humble gesture on his part, no? Fear that my perfection might equal God's, and thus gain His disfavor is not high on my worry list.

E. Bragging

This is a combination of exaggeration and self aggrandizement. What more need be said? Bragging can hardly be completely true or honest, and it is not becoming to anyone, certainly not for a minister, who is a slave of Christ, servant of all, an earthen vessel, one whose every success comes from his Lord.

The fact that we cannot brag about our achievements should not make us less diligent in serving our Savior and our neighbor; and if it does, our duplicity is exposed. Then we were not striving to please God, but man.

An offshoot of bragging is the tendency to minimize our own weaknesses and magnify the short comings of others. We "cut down" our brother, especially behind his back - and we do! I hate myself for any unkind remark I have made about a fellow pastor, because I know it was most often not based on a love for the truth, but manifested a spirit of covetousness and jealousy. If we could eliminate this, or even materially diminish it, we would have done something comparable to balancing our Synod's budget.

F. Betraying Confidences

We pastors do not *always* have to tell the truth, in fact we are forbidden to get up in the pulpit and tell the truth about personal sins confessed to us. Not making public all truth we are party to is not, however, license to tell untruths. It is only license in certain circumstances to remain silent. Betrayal of secrets is as much a sin as deceitfully, belying, slandering, or defaming our neighbor.

The Eighth Commandment confronts us with one more glimpse of our sins. And still its purpose is our ultimate salvation and sanctification. For the Eighth Commandment, no less than the entire Decalogue, is intended to lead us to Christ—where we confess, believe, and receive forgiveness.

At first glance we might assume the world would give ministers credit for honesty and integrity. The very opposite is true. Every worldly stereotype of a minister is delineated in terms of hypocrisy, deceit, fawning flattery, and often less obliquely as an unregenerate liar. The world seldom pictures the minister as a square shooter, good for his word. This honor is reserved for cowboys, dock workers, hookers, and such like.

When the world looks askance at a minister's integrity it is, in effect, revealing that it knows what dishonesty is, and suspects it in others because there is such an abundance of it in its own heart.

We shall never be able to escape all suspicions of dishonesty. Jesus was called a "deceiver" (Mt. 27:63). He was not guilty as charged. We will not achieve perfect honesty in thought, word, or deed in this life; but it is something we should pursue with our entire being. In order to do this successfully we need to be reminded in some detail of what Scripture and our Christian conscience reveals of the meaning and extent of "false witness."

The words "false witness" are not difficult to understand or leaded with subtle and hidden meaning. Without doing damage to the Hebrew we could just say "lie" since the word "*SHEQER*" is more often translated "lie" than "false witness." What God is prohibiting is that we fail, for any reason, to convey by word or action the way a thing really is.

In Greek the words sound a little strange to our ears. We are not to be "pseudo-martyrs." A martyr witnessed to his faith in Jesus though it cost him his very life. Greater integrity can hardly be imagined or demanded of any. Those men who will give their life for Jesus without denying Him must be given high marks for honesty. If we complete our ministry without ever having denied our Savior we will have much to thank Him for. To finish our ministry trusting in our Savior would be the most honest thing we could ever do; as surely as ending our ministry without faith in Him would be the most dishonest thing we could ever do.

The Eighth Commandment, in fact, presents special hazards for a preacher because the worst lies are spiritual lies, moral lies, religious lies and the minister is more likely to get involved in these than the layman. False teachers are the worst liars - false prophets. A lie that robs a man of \$10.00 is bad enough, the lie that robs a man of hope and eternal life is surely worse.

III. The Causes of Lying

A. It may be the church, the community, the family, or the pastor himself has set unrealistic goals. Pressure for success is great in every walk of life, and no less so in the church. It becomes a contest, not to see if we can serve Jesus better, but if we can serve Him better than another pastor can. When we fail there is great temptation to cover up. This is when truth begins to suffer. Honesty is not best served by trying to divert attention from our failure, but by confessing it to the Lord and seeking His help to do better. This is so easy to say, actually it is trite, but it is very difficult to do it consistently, and humbly.

B. Pastors lie, or become involved with falsehood, for basically the same reasons anyone else does. I'm sure many of you have asked your confirmation class, "Why do people lie?" There are always some children observant enough to answer, "Because they are afraid to tell the truth." When I consider Peter's denial of Jesus I am sure fear played a big part in that sorry episode. By way of contrast Ananias seems to have lied to conceal his greedy materialism. I do not know that fear was the prime motivation for his original lie.

C. When we become angry we may lose all inhibitions and blurt out the truth, but it is equally possible that we will not hesitate to be untruthful when we are riled up. The high priest in the heat of anger bore false witness

against Jesus with his tongue even as he tore his priestly vestment in a show of righteousness. Those who falsely accused Jesus of casting out devils by Beelzebub may well have been motivated by anger.

D. Another cause for falsehood is forgetfulness. We are not true to our word because we are forgetful. Some of you have excellent memories. Others may feel they cannot be faulted for forgetting. I would say forgetfulness at least ranks as a sin of omission; and there is a great danger that being caught in having forgotten something we try to cover up and excuse it, rather than admit to a slip of our memory. It is also certainly false when we deliberately or conveniently forget something we do not choose to remember. To forget sins committed against us would certainly not be condemned, but our human nature so effectively obfuscates any guilt for forgetfulness we do not consider the possibility it might have been a failure of our *will*, not of our *brain*.

E. There is something else which often results in untruth, and that is the whole family of guessing, thinking, suspecting, and suspicion. May I give three examples of how this works: 1) A Baptist minister once accused me of teaching my members that the Apostles themselves wrote the Apostles Creed. That may seem funny to you, but it was also false. 2) A Holiness “minister” once stated flatly that I did not know what it meant to be “born again” and had consequently never explained it to my people. That too was contrary to fact. 3) A WELS pastor, whom I will not name, at a pastor’s conference in California said publicly that I had presented a committee report which was in fact a minority report of my own. He was wrong. Suspicion is dangerous because it is seldom 100% accurate, and when it is not accurate it transgresses the Eighth Commandment. I think there is quite a bit of guessing that goes on among pastors (I might as well get into the act myself.)

F. Sometimes we lie to “help someone out.” We have lived thru one big cover-up in government. Let us pray we will not be involved in any such cover up in our ministry. We resent it in others, we should deplore it in ourselves. Just as we do not always “rightly divide the word of truth,” we may not always distinguish properly between rightly keeping our mouths shut or putting the best construction on something, and a cover-up of actual sin or blameworthy conduct. We do not want those in official positions in our church to be blabbermouths, but neither do we sent them to be artisans of the cover up.

G. The prime cause of all untruth, however, is simply our sinful flesh. Everything else is just a manifestation of this underlying ill. We lie because we are sons of Adam and Eve whose actions were as false as false could be, and who then tried the first cover-up (with fig leaves, yet!) We lie because we have a congenital defect which our first parents contracted from the devil at their first exposure to the foul breath of the father of all lies. We lie because we are weak, imperfect, proud, impatient, fearful, angry, covetous, unfaithful, jealous, envious. Which is to say we lie because we were “ruined by the fall.” Can you imagine the wondrous shock we will feel in heaven because we will have neither reason nor desire to be false, ever again?

H. Finally, some take liberties with the truth because it makes a better story. Some will excuse this as poetic license or figurative language. Maybe it is, maybe it isn’t. Let me illustrate. During World War II, I was an instructor at an Infantry Replacement Center in Texas. There I became well acquainted with an officer of Polish parentage. We would on occasion attend a show at the post theatre. He always insisted on flipping a coin to see who would pick up the tab. I always resisted, but always gave in. The way I remember it is that I never once paid for a show. He always lost. Now the law of averages tells me I must have lost sometime, but the story I tell is he lost every time. This story gains some credence, I think, because it happened in Texas, and the other officer was Polish. Anyway, what kind of a story would this be if I lost about as often as he did, and it all took place in Fort Ord?

This is basically the principle that comes into play when a pastor is tempted to (and perhaps does) embellish an event in Scripture with a few frills of his own, because it just makes a better story.

That pastors must confess to transgressions of the Eighth Commandment comes as no surprise to you. The public on the other hand is perhaps split; the one part figuring we are even greater liars than we admit to, and the other part somewhat taken aback by our admissions of guilt. Isaiah the great prophet confessed he was “a man of unclean lips” who “dwelt in the midst of a people of unclean lips.” We are certainly not wrong in thinking some of the uncleanness was falsehood. When we become aware of our sins against the Eighth Commandment we can join the ranks of some of Scripture’s greatest saints.

How about it when David pretended slobbering madness among the Philistines; when Peter dissembled at Antioch at Antioch; when Thomas doubted the Lord’s resurrection; when Elijah said he was the only believer left; when Abraham and Isaac said, “she is my sister.”; when Jacob claimed to be Esau; when Rachel hid her father’s images and then gave a dubious excuse for not joining in the search; when Moses said he brought water from the rock; when all the disciples falsely forsook Jesus and fled? Indeed one common sin infects us all and it is no false gesture to plead for mercy—all of us!

IV. Some Special Problem Areas for the Pastor

A. The necessity to denounce sins, of which we ourselves are guilty, is an invitation to “soft pedal”—or, just as bad, to blast away hypocritically. In preaching the Gospel we like the first person: I, we, me, mine, ours. In preaching the law we may prefer either the second or third person—you, your, him, her, theirs, they. We like to put at least some grammatical distance between us and sin.

B. The necessity to denounce sins of which we know someone in the congregation is guilty - and they happen to be in church that morning. Recently I mentioned the fact that various kinds of people expect to be paid whether or not the service they rendered is satisfactory or effective. I had, among others, zeroed in on auto mechanics and doctors. The second time I preached the sermon I was at McNary. It dawned on me that I had representatives of born professions in church that morning. So what did I do? When I mentioned the mechanic I looked at the doctor, and when I said “doctor” I looked at the mechanic. I fault myself for that duplicity.

C. We do not want to hurt anyone, and we do not want to offend or antagonize our people. The devil likes to present the truth to us in these terms: If you say this, then there will be trouble. Honesty is pictured in a bad light as though it were a danger to true peace and harmony. I do not believe honesty causes trouble, but I do believe it has seemed to. Have you ever had a member who got huffy with you because of some truth you spoke, and stopped coming to church? It surely did not seem good, but does your faith not assure you it will still be right? We will not be honest if we have no faith our God rewards honesty.

D. In spite of all that has been written about the call, its divinity, how it is to be weighed, and for what reasons it should be accepted or returned; the consideration if a call has often proved to be a testing ground for the truth in many a ministry.

I would never say, nor do I wish to imply, that no pastor has ever dealt honestly with a call. Nor do I believe we can say that every call has been accepted or not accepted in total candor and straightforwardness. The prime reason the call is accepted or returned may not come out into the open, but subsidiary reasons are pushed to the front.

The phrase “after long and prayerful consideration I...” has been abused. We do not judge whether or not prayer was involved. I would be willing to concede that no pastor in our synod has ever decided a call without offering a prayer of God for wisdom and guidance; but I believe that by any definition of the word it was not always “long consideration.”

None of us can decide another pastor’s call. We can, however, make the observation that any and every statement made in justifying the decision be honest. I do not want to add to the difficulties a call presents to the pastor who gets one and who wishes to make a God pleasing decision. I do not even think you must make

public every single factor that contributed to your ultimate decision (no one ever has). For example, I would not expect, nor do I think it would be wise for a pastor to announce, "...and another reason I've decided to leave is because Mrs. Blank has been making a play for me." Some things are better left unsaid.

V. What Scripture Says About Truth and Falsehood

I believe it is safe to say whenever the Scripture mentions *TRUTH* God is never far from it, and is usually the subject of the statement; and contrariwise, whenever falsehood is mentioned man is the subject.

How can it be otherwise? Jesus said, "I am the ... Truth" (Jn. 14:6), and "Everyone that is of the truth heareth *my* voice" (Jn. 18:37). Our Lord is "a God of truth" (Deut. 32:4). David says, "O *Lord God*... Thy words be true..." (II Sam. 7:28). And, "*God* keepeth truth forever" (Ps. 146:6).

Paul writes, "Let *God be true* but every *man a liar*..." (Rom. 3:4). The writer of Hebrews confesses that it is impossible for God to lie (Heb. 6:18). Truth may not always appeal to man but "They that deal truly are (God's) delight" (Prov. 12:22).

On the other hand man has a sorry and sordid record when it comes to speaking the truth every time. "A tale bearer revealeth secrets..." (Prov. 11:13). God says liars shall be destroyed because He abhors them (Ps. 5:6). Liars shall not dwell in God's house (Ps. 101:7). Our old sinful nature is characterized as false in its dealings with others (Col. 3:9). God is on record as being against those who say, "He saith..." and He has not said it (Jer. 23:30f), and against every lying spirit in a prophet's mouth (II Chron. 18:21-22). With the exception of the lies of Satan, every falsehood in Scripture comes out of a human mouth and heart; and further more, it is difficult to find a mouth unsullied by some falsehood, lie, untruth, betrayal, denial, slander, defamation, excuse, boast, unfounded complaint, innuendo, false accusation, misrepresentation, deceit, overstatement. The Lord has permitted these to appear in His Word for our reproof and correction. We are to see other's lies, see how futile and fatal falsehood is, see how the Lord punishes it; and, hopefully, we will not foolishly perish on account of unforgiven dishonesty.

Father in Heaven:

The world is false and we are living in it. Human flesh is false and we have it. The devil is a liar and the father of every lie, some of which have wormed and squirmed their way into our hearts and out of our mouths;

But we also have the mind of Christ which is truth, loves truth, seeks truth, proclaims truth, and finds its strength in the truth, and rejoices in the truth.

Lord, may it ever be so for us, your servants, pastors of your sheep. Amen.