

The Lord Loathes a Lying Tongue

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[0 : 00] Let's turn back then to 1 Kings, 1 Kings 21, and we want just to carry on in our study here in the life of Elijah. And as it were, we are building up in this passage and the one we looked at last time to a situation where Elijah will soon come in and come in with the word of the Lord both to Ahab and Jezebel.

We want to look at verses 5 to 10. And this is of course Jezebel's response to the state that Ahab has gotten himself into.

He's furious, he's very sulky, he's offended, and he would like Naboth taken out.

And I want us just to think about this passage that we're going to look at simply in terms of The Lord loathes a lying tongue. That's the angle we want to take because that is brought out in the passage and we want to endeavour to learn something about that for ourselves.

And when we say he loathes a lying tongue, he simply hates those who are habitual liars. And as John, the apostle himself, says in the book of Revelation, that those who continue to be liars shall have their place eternally outside with the devil and his angels.

[2 : 04] We tend, I think, to imagine that certain sins are worse than others.

And although there is a gradation of seriousness, we talk about this being more heinous than that, I'm talking here in a more popular way where we think about certain actions as being worse than other particular sins.

And people tend not to think about telling lies as all that serious, whereas the Bible tells us it's one of the deadly sins.

The Bible tells us that God hates those who persist in that way. And it's interesting, and there's a solemn side to it too, but it's interesting that at any time in history, in the history of nations, when true religion declines, then there is an increase in lying.

People lie and deceive. In our own country, we see it all around us. We see it in the media, we read of it, we see it on our TV screens.

[3 : 30] You don't need to watch many programs and you'll soon discover that people almost trivialize telling lies. I listen to Sky News and their analysis of different things.

And just last week, one of the reporters, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, said, in a particular context, sometimes telling lies is good.

And that is an attitude and a point of view that is endorsed by many. Would I lie to you? Means, yes, if I could get off with it.

That's the popular view of things. Telling lies is not that serious. God says, very serious. God says, I hate it. I loathe it.

I will punish it eternally. And therefore, it's important to see how God views things and to be taught by him to shun telling lies, to shun the false witness.

[4 : 50] We don't need to look at media folks. We can look at public life in our own country. It's not all that long ago, a year or two ago, when there was a great hoo-ha about standards in public life.

People were lying about the money they were getting. They were deceiving or trying to deceive. And things came out into the open.

We have currently the problem of the hacking scandal. It's all about people, highly intelligent, educated people, professionals, simply telling lies.

Trying to conceal what they've been doing. It's necessary, they say, to themselves. And so they twist and turn and seek to deceive.

But consider from this passage how God views the lying tent. Consider how he brings out before us the logic of those who persist in lying and deceiving.

[6 : 07] And within a few verses beyond the section we're looking at tonight, or a few chapters I should say, they have payback from God.

I want us then to simply look at this and to notice how this is building up. This whole nasty business of Ahab and Jezebel is building up to a confrontation between liars, enemies of the truth, and God's prophet of the truth.

The first thing I want to think about then, concerning liars, is that they are cruel in their schemes.

First of all, Ahab's lie against Nabal.

You notice that in the reading, when Jezebel asked her husband, why are you sullen? Why are you moping like this? Why are you in such a state?

The answer was a lie. Or, if you like, a half-truth that gave a false impression.

[7 : 28] There was a serious omission in Ahab's answer to Jezebel. See what he says. Verse 6.

I spoke to Nabal the Jesuit, and said to him, Give me your vineyard for many, or else, if it pleases you, I will give you another vineyard for it, and he answered, I will not give you my vineyard.

That's not true. That is a totally false impression. Oh, I hear you. Surely it contains truth.

So it does. But it's not the whole truth. It's a falsehood. It's a deception. It created in Jezebel's mind an impression that led her on to do her dirty work and her lying.

Nebuchadnezzar's mind didn't simply say, I will not. What Ahab's about here, he's prepared to omit something that gives a false impression to his wife in order to gain her sympathy.

[8 : 42] Let's be frank. We've already seen in studying this life of Elijah that Jezebel was no shrinking violet. Far from it. She was an aggressive promoter of Baalism.

She would stop at nothing. She had said earlier on after Elijah's triumph at Carmel, you'll die. And Ahab knew how to bring her on board and to get the help from her he wanted.

We noticed, just to remind you last time in our last study that in Numbers 36, 7 we saw that the inheritance that was given to God's people had to be passed on down through their families.

And the real reason why Naboth said no to King Ahab was that it was his father's inheritance. It had to be passed on. It was important to keep it.

Actually, in the law there are instructions that if somebody had to give up their inheritance because of poverty, famine, the death of a husband and so on, they were allowed to buy it back in the Jubilee or in fact it could be given back in the Jubilee in the year when the debts were cancelled.

[10 : 22] And Naboth's concern was to heed the law of God and do what the law of God told them. And we saw last time that Ahab the king knew all about this.

He wasn't ignorant of the requirements of the law. And so what he does here is he withholds truth from Jezebel in order to win harm for Naboth.

He misrepresents godly Naboth by leaving a false impression. Naboth's name is portrayed by Ahab to his wife as guilty of dishonouring the king and of offending him.

Remember this topic God loves lies and the lying can. And it's important for us not just to study Ahab and Jezebel here but to take this to heart and to feel the challenge of it for ourselves.

It's no small thing to indulge in lies. The white lie is itself a lie. There's no such thing.

[11 : 59] And in our own day we can easily be caught up in the tide that's running so strongly when people regard truth as unimportant.

if you can tell a lie yes a wee white lie and get away with it you'll get your way. God loathes lies.

That's to be our starting point. And therefore we take great care lest by our omission of some information we destroy the character of another.

It's not just the brazen lie we have to be concerned with but the impression we leave. I'm sure when Pilate was dealing with the Lord Jesus Christ and he said those memorable words to the Saviour what is truth he was saying something not superficial and he wasn't saying something that was sarcastic he was saying something quite profound the more we seek to tell the truth and the whole truth and nothing but the truth and the more we try to leave the correct impression sometimes it may have to be limited because of delicate matters it may be health matters we don't want to share our health history and so on but what we want to do is to leave a correct impression or else we're in trouble as regards truth and falsehood so this is something to say to us

I think that's so relevant we have to guard against distorting the truth we have to guard against distorting the truth when we are comparing ourselves with others or comparing one Christian with another Christian God loathes lies and the liar and we're to take that to heart Ahab then is guilty of

this he lies against Naboth but let's look for a moment at Jezebel's lie or shall I call it lying scheme because that's what it was as Ahab hoped she sympathized with her husband and she began to devise a plan a pretty despicable plan she decided it was time for Naboth to go I'll get you [14:47] Naboth's vineyard I will give you the vineyard verse 7 I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite and you see here again we see how the work of the cruel liar is evident in the whole strategy that she cooked in how she lied in order to give the impression to the people that Naboth had to die he blasphemed God verse 10 and the king and what she does is she goes to the nobles and the elders of the city with the letter sealed with the king's seal and instructs them on what to do but we're not told anything about what the elders and the nobles thought about see two men scoundrels before

Naboth in other words against him we're not told what they thought and when we've gone round and round it you just say it doesn't really matter what matters is what they did and what they did was they acted upon the letter supposedly the king's letter and it's absolutely straight down the line a pack of lies that will bring Naboth to death you remember the law had as its maximum penalty for the blasphemer that the blasphemer be stoned to death that was the maximum and that's what was being suggested for Naboth but notice how it is clothed a pack of lies though it is notice how it is clothed in the name of religion and justice proclaim a fast this is serious business this is religious business before

God and the king proclaim a fast and put Naboth in the place of high honour among the people and then bring the witnesses in and see to it that they lie against him you have blasphemed God and the king then take him out and stone him to death it's a vile scheme a lying scheme and it's done in the name of religion and of justice and Naboth is brought in and Naboth is pronounced guilty and Naboth must die did did not our saviour encounter this kind of treatment false witnesses brought against him you said you would destroy that temple that took forty years a building and you would raise it up in three days they twisted his words they sought to catch him in his words that they might pronounce him guilty how careful we have to be in what we do and what we say how important it is to avoid this kind of scheming

I don't say as deeply serious and calamitous as this but anything that savours of that kind of deception I remember in my first charge a really difficult situation where there was what I might call a leading member a lady in the congregation who was one of the leading women and long before I went there there was a big problem and there was an adherent lady who was accused of maligning this lady and oh it was before the session and all that sort of thing although it had blown over before I arrived there the hurt of it was still there this lady was actually connected her maiden name was Mary and she was of the Professor John Mary family and although she was an adherent and she was a nifty sweetie too she was I always found her to be as perhaps that was her problem she was too straight but I remember the whole thing began to bubble up again sometime along my time in Boner and this lady was distressed because she was back in the frame being falsely accused effectively lied against and I remember her saying to me something like this that I know I'll face God and I know I'll face the judgment but on this I'll go to the judgment telling the truth and [20:58] I remember she said that with deep feeling and of course it presented me with a whole can of worms because here you have an adherent saying one thing and a member a notable member saying something else why am I telling you all this simply to make the point that Christians can do these things Christians can lie to get out of trouble that they've got themselves into I say they shouldn't it's detestable it's dangerous to their spiritual well-being but they do it and they ought not to do it and we ought to be warned against it we ought to look at Aab and Jezebel and go beyond them and say there but by the grace of God do I second thing I want to look at just briefly is that liars in time come to grief two things they are godly and this may be seen of course in the lives of both

Ahab and Jezebel they came to both of them came to a miserable end you flick over in your Bible to 1 Kings 22 verse 38 and you read that when Jehoshaphat and Ahab and their armies went out against the Syrians you remember how the Syrians thought that Jehoshaphat was Ahab because he was disguised and he wasn't and when they discovered it was Jehoshaphat they let him go on his way and what happened with Ahab an archer shot an arrow we are told at random and it went right into Ahab and he bled to death and by the time they got him home and they washed out the chariot the dogs licked out the blood of the king just as the prophet of God

Elijah had said go on a little bit further to 2 kings 9 36 and you discover that in providence Jezebel was thrown from the palace window and she was trampled by the soldier's horse the cavalryman's horse and she was trampled to death and the dogs ate her up leaving her hands and her skull liars even in time come to grief sometimes it may be years and years later but they come to grief even in this world think about Gehazi the initial servant the greedy liar that he was there he was with the man of God serving the man of

God and he was a greedy liar you remember he asked for at least he told the Syrian that Elisha had changed his mind and he wanted some booty and it was a lie and Elisha told him I went with you my spirit went with you I know what you have done and he became a leper we see it in the new testament Ananias and Sapphira who lied to God they didn't need to they chose to and they died they lied to the spirit of God and it's important for us to take these things to heart it's a bit of a nonsense to imagine that God doesn't operate like that now I've even heard ministers say that of course he operates like that that's providence he works in his own way but he works the wheels of God's providence grind exceedingly slowly but they grind you know that

Churchill said that others may have but he said they grind and often they grind those who are practiced liars the Bible tells us that we are never to make lies our refuge for God will reward us according to our ways liars even in time come to grief first of all the ungodly secondly the godly as we said a moment ago it would be folly to imagine that this is just about the ungodly to suggest that the Christian can never be involved in this kind of deception or that is folly it's blind folly as we said in that illustration a moment ago from one's time in Boner Bridge the godly can be like this they can't tell lies to get out of trouble and this is not something confined to the past it's right up to date it happened but it's happening and we must never imagine ourselves beyond this we can so easily take what we see as the most convenient route out of trouble we ought never to forget that our father

[27 : 24] Abraham the great man of faith told lies to get out of trouble you can polish it up you can say that in a sense Sarah was his sister but when you look at the actual question that was asked and when you look at the plan he hatched the bottom line was they sought both Sarah and Abraham sought to deceive the Pharaoh and later on Abimelech remember what he said about Abimelech surely there is no fear of God in this place well Abraham was wrong there wasn't he and they will kill me on account of my wife and we're told Abimelech took Sarah not knowing that she was actually Abraham's wife and the Lord smote him and his house with barrenness we're told and then it took Abimelech to rebuke godly

Abraham what is this you have done to me and there we have godly Abraham in shame and confusion of face we think of Peter we identify with Peter don't we in so many ways and yet Peter lied he took easy route and it proved his undoing Matthew 26 69 following there in the courtyard of the high priest palace at the bracier standing with the soldiers and the servants you're one of them you're with Jesus don't know what you're talking about another girl came and said you are one of them another your speech betrays you and with oath and curse he denied

I don't know the man it can happen and the more sensitive we are to the reality and to the fact that God loathes lying and liars the more careful we ought to be what pain and sorrow can be brought about in the life of the Lord's people by adopting the way that is detestable to the Lord we can never truly advance in the life of godliness and we can never truly honor God by adopting such means sometimes and I'm guilty of it too sometimes we to make a point we exaggerate we overstate it it may be a trivial thing but it can easily become the same tactic in a more serious matter and we need to guard against it and we need to acknowledge the danger of this many stories can be related

I'm sure you could relate them to me and I to you about this exaggerating so that truth is actually lost well what is the real story we need to be careful lest we transgress lest we go in to these things and we end up adopting the liar's method and we displease the Lord who bought us I mentioned earlier on something like hell incredibly difficult sometimes to you're acknowledging it good it's incredibly difficult to you want to tell people to pray for you but you don't want to give them the whole rib on what the consultant has said and it's difficult and therefore we need to think before we speak we need to think about the impression we leave maybe about a family concern it may be about a concern in the life of a member or adherent or a young person and we need to weigh what we're going to say and the impression it leaves and the more concerned we are for the glory of

Christ more we're concerned to simply take to heart what he said by his holy apostle do not lie to one another speak the truth in life the more we will be concerned to stop and think before we speak so that we're not going to tell her what we're saying to leave a false impression the godly above all ought to have a concern for truth and a true impression our savior who redeemed us through his blood is the truth the gospel is a gospel of truth we are to be recognized as those who were thought in the morning who love the truth we believe it we receive it we live it we seek to practice it in our lives and we are to be concerned then about anything that gives the wrong impression and the last thing our time has quizzed and this is important to bear in mind to finish with those who are habitual liars will be eternally lost and they will be eternally lost simply because habitual lying is the proof of their parentage to quote the savior himself to the authorities the

[34 : 12] Jewish authorities you are of your father the devil and his works you will do Ahab who was brought up to know better and knew better was an idolater as we saw and advanced the cause of Baalism with Jezebel the daughter of the priest of Baal they lived to make and to live a lie the proof of their parentage that's what that's what habitual lying is and we must flee from that the Christian must have a concern to speak the truth in them no doubt there are those of us here tonight who can think on our former ways and remember even yet with some degree of acuteness of mind lies that were told deceptions that were woven simply to get us off the hoop we think about them or ought to think about them with shame such thought brings us back to the

Lord with all the more thankfulness for what he has delivered us from we are to be on the alert to be different the proof of our parentage is that we love the truth of the God of truth we are born again of the spirit of truth they are of their father the devil and the last thing within this heading is there is a place prepared for liars the book of proverbs in chapter 12 and verse 14 tells us that the truthful lip shall be established but a lying 10 is but for a moment short lived policy to live by the lie it will catch people out here it will certainly catch them out at the judgment seat of

God and so it's important for us to be prepared to come clean in the presence of the Lord and actually sometimes we have to come clean in our relationships as Christians we may have slipped we may have said something we ought not to have said we may have communicated an impression that it's simply not true and when we discover that we've done that we ought to come clean we ought to say brother or sister this was wrong I ought not to have left you thinking that I should have said I can't say anything pray for me because we know that God knows our heart and we know that lying and concealing it affects our fellowship with God you only need to go to 1st John chapter 1 and see there that those who claimed to a fellowship with

God and lied did not practice the truth and worse than that they didn't know God they were kidding themselves on and so you see it's important for us to think like this it's important for us to recognize that God has prepared an awful place for liars yes for others too who have persisted in their evil ways but for liars too that's the point we are to think in our hearts the truth we are to speak with our mouths the truth we are to shun the false way we are to come clean when we discover that we have said the wrong thing communicated and left the wrong impression we will seek to be marked by those who not only love the truth but in living it speak it what advantage was it to

Ahab that he got Nabal's vineyard to turn into a summer vegetable garden in his summer palace at Jezreel what advantage it was short term and it cost him his life here and here after my dear friends let's mark it at large in our minds that the Lord loves the truth and he loves his people to speak the truth for his sake and he loathes lies and liars amen way the voice the ■■■■ator and he only we who was the and many have he in