

# Honoring Reputation: The Ninth Commandment. Ephesians 4:17-32

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by C.W. Powell

The Ninth Commandment reads thus: **Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.**

The HC. puts it this way:

Q112: What does the ninth Commandment require?

A112: That I bear false witness against no one, twist no one's words, be no back-biter or slanderer, join in condemning no one unheard and rashly; but that on pain of God's heavy wrath I avoid all lying and deceit as the very works of the devil; and that in matters of judgment and justice and in all other affairs I love, speak honestly and confess the truth; also, insofar as I can, defend and promote my neighbor's good name.

I would strongly urge you to read and study the scriptures given as support—also study them in the context of scripture.

But let us look at the text before us that we read a few moments ago: Ephesians 4:17-32. I will cast this passage in the context of the 9th Commandment, although there are a great many applications that could be made.

17. This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,
18. Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:
19. Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

Unbelievers have a different way of living in this world. It comes from the vanity of their minds—the emptiness of their minds, which have been darkened. The reason for this darkening is their alienation from the life of God, which is in Jesus Christ. They are ignorant because they are blind and have no sensitivity toward the truth, and so give themselves over to all kinds of uncleanness. There is a great difference between professing to love your neighbor and loving your neighbor. It is easy to say, I love my neighbor; it is impossible to love your neighbor if you are alienated from God. But the unbeliever can be very vocal about loving his neighbor, while all the time seeking to ensnare him in his own filthiness.

This alienation comes from Adam's sin. The human race came under the curse of that sin, and you and I are born into this world with our minds darkened and dead in trespasses and in sins, unless we are born again by the spirit of God through the Gospel.

20. But ye have not so learned Christ;

21. If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:

What was just said of unbelievers is not true of Christians. A Christian is one who has been taught of Christ—he is a disciple of Jesus Christ. Christ does not teach you to be a liar and a slanderer—that comes from somewhere else. Lies and slander are the bread and butter of the devil's kingdom. Jesus said that the devil was a liar from the beginning—Satan is the father of all lies.

If you are a Christian then you believe that Jesus is the Son of God. It is the Holy Spirit that teaches you that, and you will never truly believe that unless the Holy Spirit teaches you that. The devil won't teach you that; public school won't teach you that; Infidel preachers won't teach you that. It is the devil who contradicts and says "Jesus Christ has not come in the flesh" which is the spirit of antichrist.

22. That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts

23. And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

24. And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Conversation means a way of life—a philosophy of life—a word-order, if you will, that directs and directs your life. These ideas and words and stories—for story is a very important part of your philosophy of life—everyone tells stories. "I would never be a \_\_\_\_\_ because—well let me tell you a little story." Now you fill in the blank. Everyone has stories to tell—about people, about places, things. etc. Very often these stories are slanderous. They are simply lies, but they direct everyday decisions. The stories may be about people—usually they are about people.

When we first came into the reformed faith years ago, there was a young couple we knew who were strongly opposed to the faith. [See how it works—I am telling a story]. Anyway, this young couple had been to Moody Bible Institute and said that they had classes from two different professors: one was a gruffy and stuffy, slow and methodical. He was a Calvinist. The other professor was young, witty, alive, interesting. He was an Arminian. "We could never be a Calvinist" they said. They told that story everywhere. It was slanderous, of course, but they didn't seem to mind slandering all the Calvinists they knew. Gruffy and Stuffy.

As Christians, we are called to put off the philosophy of life that belong to the old man—that is directed by deceitful desires. Your mind is to be renewed so you can see the truth

through the Scriptures, and not through your desires.

The new man is created in righteousness and true holiness. If you are a Christian then God has predestined you to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

How does the old way of life lie?

1. By flat making up stuff.
2. By misrepresentation
3. By magnifying faults
4. By twisting words.
5. By minimizing sins.

But continuing with our study of our text:

25. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

1. Put away lying. It is interesting the choice of words. Paul is talking to Christians, but he seems to indicate that lying is a part of our lives, and is something that need to be put away. The idea is that you have it, but you need to get rid of it.
2. The reason: we are members one of another. It is in your interest that God's people have a good name in the earth. It is good that Christianity be well spoken of.
3. Don't do anything that will destroy reputation. Proverbs 10:12 Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.

Proverbs 10:18 He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool.

Proverbs 26:28 A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin

Proverbs 6:16-19: These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:

A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,  
An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,

A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

Before you say something bad about somebody, you should test it with three rules:

1. Is it true?
2. Is it necessary?
3. Is it kind?

26. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:  
27. Neither give place to the devil.

Anger in itself is not evil; but caution is in order. But there are three cautions:

1. Anger without a cause means ill-will and hatred. What fuels the anger if there is no reason for it—if there is no reason in the person or his actions, then the reason lies in yourself, and that is very dangerous.
2. Anger nursed and continued is a very great evil.
3. Satan's kingdom is built upon lies and hatred. He is the father of lies and a murderer from the beginning. Do not advance the devil's kingdom by indulging your malice and telling lies. Put those things away.

28. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.  
29. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

1. As I said in the last two messages, God expects from His people a generosity of spirit. We should be administrators of blessings, not curses and slander.
2. No theft should defile our hands; and no slander should defile our lips. We are not to steal our neighbor's good; nor are we to steal his reputation.
3. Our labor should be to produce a net surplus of goods; our words are to produce edification and grace.

30. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.  
31. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

1. The Holy Spirit seals us unto the last day. We are secure because He has imprinted us with the image of Jesus Christ.
2. How is the Holy Spirit grieved? Paul lists the things:
  - a. Bitterness: Peter used this against Simon the Sorcerer: gall of bitterness. It means extreme hatred, and burning anger. It can be in a good sense, as when Peter wept "bitterly" after his denial of Christ. It comes from a root that means acrid, or dry. It is also used in Hebrews—we are to beware of a "root of bitterness" that brings forth the sins of hatred and malice. It is bitterness that is the source of slander and evil speaking. Put it away!!
  - b. Wrath: Excitement of the mind—reaches forth. It is often used in connection with the wrath, or punishment of God. It is a desire

to hurt. In itself, it is not evil, but evil when directed against the good or innocent.

c. Anger: The strongest of all passions. Paul is multiplying synonymns.

d. Clamor: This word is onomatopoeic: the cry of a raven. Lies and slander stir up people so they run around squawking like ravens. A most apt figure of speech. When you hear an ugly rumor—stop, think, consider. Your first im-pulse should not be to get on the phone—oh, I can't wait to tell \_\_\_\_\_.

e. Evil speaking. Literally “blasphemy” It is used of those who speak evil of God—which is blasphemy. But it is also translated “railing” as those who speak evil of men. They “railed” on Christ. “If you be the Christ, come down from the cross.” “He saved others; himself he could not save.” Etc.

f. Malice: Thorough rottenness. If the fountain is good, it should bring forth good water; The old conversation was thoroughly rotten—put it away.

32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. The commentary on this verse is found in the words of Christ: Luke 6:31-38:

31. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

32. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.

33. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.

34. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

35. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.

36. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

37. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

38. Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken to-gether, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

God bless you.