

“The Ninth Commandment”
Exodus 20:16
(Preached at Trinity, January 20, 2008)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we come to the Ninth Commandment most people consider it a small thing. Telling a few lies here and there isn’t that bad as long as it doesn’t hurt anyone. This is the way most people look at most moral issues today. As long as it doesn’t hurt anyone it’s OK.
 - A. I overheard two ladies talking about homosexuality. One said to the other, “It should be a matter of personal preference. After all, it doesn’t hurt anyone.”
 - B. There are two serious flaws in her thinking.

First, she has bought into the lie that morality is a relative term. You have your morals and I have mine. You have no right to impugn my morals. But morals are not lost in the chasm of relativity. God has given absolute demands for obedience in His law. All must obey.

Second, she has been deceived into thinking that our actions are only judged by the effects they have upon other people. Disobedience to God’s law is an assault upon Him. All sin is against Him. All sinners will be judged by Him.
2. While most people consider telling a lie a small thing God looks upon it quite differently.
 - A. The Bible equates it with wickedness.

Psalms 58:3 – “The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.”
 - B. It is equated with Satan
John 8:44 – “Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”
 - C. It is among those sins consistent with those who are cast into hell
Revelation 21:8 – “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”
3. This is not a light matter, especially for the believer. Truth should permeate our entire existence. We should strive to imitate Christ who is the epitome of truth.
John 14:6 – “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”
4. At least Two of the abominations God hates deals with this commandment
Proverbs 6:16-19 – “These six *things* doth the LORD hate: yea, seven *are* an abomination unto him: ¹⁷ A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸ An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, ¹⁹ A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.”
5. The law demands perfect obedience. Although Christians have been justified through the righteousness of Christ this does not free us from obedience to the law.

- A. Jesus said: **John 14:15** – “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”
- B. The Apostle John tied obedience to the very essence of knowing Christ.
1 John 2:4 – “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”
6. What exactly does the Ninth Commandment command?
- I. In a literal sense this commandment forbids perjury – being a false witness, giving false testimony.
- A. The word neighbor indicates testimony in the context of the covenant community
1. This demonstrates our high regard for our brother
 2. But this command does not end here – Jesus stressed that with regard to our care for the wellbeing of others, all men are our brothers.
- B. God has a high regard for justice
1. In the ancient world the criminal justice system was often filled with abuse
 - a. The accused had little protection – you were considered guilty until proven innocent.
 - b. There was little by way of forensic evidence. Everything depended upon the eyewitness.
 - c. God demands that we strive for justice
 2. Two witnesses were required for a conviction
Deuteronomy 19:15 – “One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.”
 3. There were severe penalties for committing perjury in an effort to bring harm to another
Deuteronomy 19:16-19 – “If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him *that which is wrong*; ¹⁷ Then both the men, between whom the controversy *is*, shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days; ¹⁸ And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, *if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother*; ¹⁹ Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you.”
- II. As with the other commandments this commandment is a summary of a particular category of God's law. Specifically, this commandment requires all that promotes truth and prohibits every form of falsehood and dishonesty.
- A. This commandment stresses the importance of the careful guarding of the tongue. (Note: the pen is subject to the same laws as the tongue)
1. The Ninth Commandment forbids every use of our tongue that would bring injury to our neighbor. The tongue can cause great damage to others.
 2. As God's people we must carefully discipline the use of our tongue
- B. While it deals with the matter of the tongue it actually deals with the matter of the heart. Our lips will quickly expose the condition of our heart. The heart will eventually overflow into speech.

Matthew 12:35-37 – “A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. ³⁶ But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. ³⁷ For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”

- C. The lost man can only stay silent for a short time – His evil heart will overflow into evil words. He will soon begin to speak lies.

James 3:7 – “For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; *it is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.”

- D. The same is true for a righteous man – His righteous heart will overflow into good words - he will speak of good things, of truth and righteousness.

Our words should always be edifying and praiseworthy

Ephesians 4:29 – “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.”

III. What are some things that this commandment forbids? It forbids all falsehood.

- A. This commandment forbids gossip

Proverbs 20:19 – “He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.”

1. By gossip I’m not talking about the casual mentioning of other’s affairs
2. Gossip is speech that tears down and damages the reputation of others
3. We are sometimes guilty of purposely sharing details out of context that defame the character of someone – and they seldom get to defend themselves.
4. A person’s reputation is important and we should endeavor to protect it
5. Most gossip is filled with misinformation, hearsay and half-truths but even true words can violate this commandment when spoken maliciously and in a deceitful manner.
6. Philip Ryken – “Is what I am about to say true? If so, does it really need to be said to this person in this conversation? Would I put it his way if the person I’m talking about were here to listen?”
7. Gossip has a two-sided dimension – we must not speak it, we must not receive it.
Thomas Watson – “He that raises a slander, carries the devil in his tongue; and he that receives it, carries the devil in his ear.”
8. We must remember this – there is great virtue in silence.
There is a time when it is good to speak, but there is also a time when silence is the greatest virtue.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 – “To every *thing there is* a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:”

Ecclesiastes 3:7 – “a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;”

Ecclesiastes 5:3 – “a fool’s voice *is known* by multitude of words.”

- B. This commandment forbids all flattery – either of ourselves or others

Psalms 12:3 – “The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, *and* the tongue that speaketh proud things:”

1. All commendation is not flattery. Flattery is that spoken deceptively with the agenda of personal gain
 2. This is a sin of deception - Flattery is dishonest
 3. Flattery exposes a low view of our fellow man
 - a. The flatterer is just using people for his own personal gain
 - b. Often it exposes his own personal insecurity
 - c. While using sweet flattering words, he is actually demonstrating contempt for the person because he is not truly looking out for their good.
Proverbs 26:28 – “A lying tongue hateth *those that are* afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin.
 4. We must beware of flattering ourselves
 - a. We are often prone to justify our actions – often the same things we condemn in others
 - b. We compliment ourselves on some small deed while leaving a thousand undone
- C. The Ninth Commandment forbids speaking all that is untrue, misleading.
1. It should be noted that *how* we say something can be just as important as *what* we say.
 2. We might say something that is “technically true” while our intention is to deceive.
- IV. If this commandment forbids speaking all that is untrue then it must also require speaking that which is true.
- A. Everything about God is the personification of truth
1. God the Father is truth
Romans 3:4 – “let God be true, but every man a liar”
 2. Jesus the Son is truth
John 1:14 – “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”
 3. The Holy Spirit is truth – 1 John 4:6 refers to Him as “the spirit of truth”
 4. The Bible declares itself to be truth
John 17:17 – “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”
- B. If God is truth then we must do everything we can to promote truth
1. We should promote honesty, fairness.
We should “speak the truth in love.”
 2. We should defend those who are wrongly accused or unfairly attacked.
 3. We should say and think the truth about others
1 Corinthians 13:6-7 - Love . . . “ Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; ⁷ Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”
- C. **Sound Doctrine Sound Worship Sound Evangelism**

Conclusion:

1. Remember we are talking about matters of the heart. We must seek to love all men and speak those things that will edify and build up.
2. We must also make sure we fill our minds with truth – what we put in will ultimately come out.

Philippians 4:8 – “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things.”