

## **Knowledge, Necessity, and Love (Exodus 20:16)**

### **Introduction: *An overview of the commandment***

The sinfulness in our heart expresses itself toward God and man through the tongue. Even when we are unable to do violence against God, or dare not strike another person, still our words carries our sinful thoughts against God and man (3<sup>rd</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup>). “The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence” (Prov 10:11). This command prohibits all forms of false witness and teaches us to be truthful people who take care not to harm the good name of others. Bengel wrote (on Matt 7:1) that we’re not to speak or judge “sine scientia, necessitate, amore.”

### **1. Do you know it’s true?**

People often impute false motives to others, but 1 Cor 13:5, love “thinks no evil.” There’s also half-truth. Abraham goes down to Egypt, and says of his wife Sarah, “She is my sister” (Gen 12:19, 20:5-12). It was a half-truth intended to deceive, intended to produce an impression on people that he wasn’t married to her.

### **2. Is it necessary?**

There’s a time that we’re called upon to judge people; but how often we judge people and pass on our [poor] judgments of them to others. Who are you to judge another’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls.” (Rom 14:4). James 4:12, “Who are you to judge another?” “A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back” (Prov 29:11). “The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil” (Prov 15:28). “In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise” (Prov 10:19). “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you” (Matt 7:1-2).

### **3. Is it loving?**

“He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends” (Prov 17:9). Love “does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Cor 13:6-7). We should be reluctant to receive an evil report of our neighbor, though quick to receive a good report. We shouldn’t love to hear and tell bad things; we should be anxious to hear and tell good things about our neighbor. In Gen 9:22-23, God was angry with Ham for speaking the truth, because he spoke the truth in a cruel and unnecessary way. Ham spoke the truth, but not in love. “Love will cover a multitude of sins” (1 Pet 4:8). It’s not loving to broadcast the sins of others.

### **Conclusion: *Building the three doors***

“There is no table we sit at very long that we do not more or less ruin either to ourselves or to some one else. ... For some men to command their tongue; to bridle, and guide, and moderate, and make just the right use of their tongue, is a conquest in religion, and in morals, and in good manners, that not one in a thousand of us has yet made over ourselves” (*Walk, Character, and Conversation of Jesus Christ our Lord*, pp. 244-246). When Isaiah saw the Lord in his glory, he cried out in despair, “Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips” (Isa 6:5). But as Isaiah’s sin was purged, and the Lord took away his sin, that is our hope as well. Going forth, let’s build these three doors for our words, so that it may be said of us, “all ... marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth” (Luke 4:22).