

The Sanctity of Truth and You

The Ten Commandments

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Bible Verse: Exodus 20:16
Preached on: Sunday, April 3, 2022

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Well, when we preach the gospel, we proclaim a message of good news that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, left the glories of heaven in order to live a perfect life and offer that life as a sacrifice on behalf of those who sinned against a holy God and therefore needed redemption, needed deliverance, needed forgiveness of their sins. It's a glorious message. It reveals the love of God for sinners like you and me that Christ would do that. It reveals that he has a reconciling heart toward people who are by nature rebels against him. The glory of the gospel reveals the love of God but if there is to be a gospel, and if there is to be a gospel that is of consequence for you, if that gospel is to mean anything to you, you must realize that you are a sinner in need of forgiveness, a sinner in need of redemption, and so we can't simply preach Christ in a vacuum, we have to warn people and instruct people about the nature of sin, the nature of God's law, so that people would see that they are guilty lawbreakers, all of us without exception, those that we are facing punishment in our own right and in our own merit, and that as a result of our guilt we need something to cleanse us. We cannot cleanse ourselves. We cannot change our own spots as if we were leopards able to do that. And so that is why we have spent so much time preaching the moral law of God as it is found in the 10 Commandments.

In Exodus 20, I invite you to turn there with me, Exodus 20, today is our final message on the ninth commandment. So we only have one more commandment to go after today. The ninth commandment we addressed last Sunday and on Tuesday as well, and the ninth commandment is found in Exodus 20:16 where we read this,

16 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

The ninth commandment, like every other commandment, is sufficient to condemn us all. None of us have kept this commandment perfectly, let alone the other nine that are revealed in the two tables of the law. The ninth commandment on its face, on its original narrow application, was designed to forbid false testimony in a courtroom or in a proceeding that was designed to adjudicate the guilt of someone who had been accused of a crime, but as we've seen over the past two weeks, it addresses far more than that. It's not simply a sin to give false testimony in a courtroom as if we were free to say false things in other contexts, that's not the point at all. It is a sin to propagate falsehoods of any kind whether through active deception or through withholding the truth. What Scripture calls

us to is a very high standard in which you and I are to proactively uphold the truth in all of our speech, in everything that we say, and I intend to walk through that a bit here with you this morning as to all of the implications of that.

For now as an introduction, let me simply quote a few words from my good friend Phil Johnson who said this. He said, "When we are forbidden to bear false witness against our neighbor, we are actually being commanded to do everything we can to preserve the truth in our dealings with men; to guard the reputation of our neighbor's good name; to uphold justice in our interaction with one another; and to use our tongues for speaking the truth in general. In other words, you have been given a tongue in order to speak the truth and to uphold the truth. You've been given a life and been given relationships in order to protect the truth about other people, and you have certainly been given a tongue in order to proclaim the glories of Christ and to uphold the truth of God in the midst of a wicked age like the one in which we live. And all of that comes under the umbrella of this simple commandment that says, 'You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.'"

Now what I want to do today as we kind of wrap up our consideration of this commandment, is to ask and answer this question: when we speak, when we talk with others, what is it that we should be keeping in mind? In other words, what should influence what we say? What principles should guide and put us in the right channels for the way in which we use our tongue? Well, you know, the fact of the matter is that we probably don't ask and answer that question nearly often enough; some of us just speak whatever comes into our mind without any consideration of what's true or false, and if that's you and you've really not really contemplated at a serious level your obligation to speak truth and what Scripture says about it, you know, I can't do anything other than simply inform you that it's necessarily true that you've violated this commandment with the way you've used your tongue. So we need God's word to instruct us, we need his Holy Spirit to help us understand the vast far-reaching implications of it; we need the Spirit of God to graciously convict us of sin, judgment and righteousness, as Jesus said in the gospel of John; we need the Holy Spirit to help us see the consequences of our guilt; we need the Holy Spirit to cause us to mourn over sin so that we would look to Christ for relief. You know, we are just desperately dependent upon the ministry of the Holy Spirit as we open the word of God here today. These are things that we are handling the spiritual truth of a spiritual God, trying to do so in a spiritual way to men and women who are men and women of the flesh. You know, we walk about in our humanity, we walk about with our false presuppositions and it's just very very difficult to pierce through all of that. It's beyond the ability of any human speaker to pierce through the clouds that cover your mind, we need the help of the Holy Spirit and we're trusting him as we turn to God's word here this morning. You know, we just have to humble ourselves, beloved. Scripture says humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord. Humble yourself. God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble.

So it's necessary for us to come to his word with an attitude that says, "I need to be instructed. I need to be taught. I don't know the darkness that lurks in my own heart and I am so biased in my own favor, I'm so prone to self-deception, I'm such a product of the environment in which I live," that we need supernatural help. And if we're not going to

seek the help of the Spirit and rely on the Spirit, we're really wasting our time. If we were just going to try to have, you know, a little Bible talk here that would make people feel good and then walk out, we should really just shut down and go and not waste each other's time, and certainly not waste the Lord's time, so to speak, with what we are doing. As a body at Truth Community Church, we earnestly believe in the truth of Scripture, we earnestly believe in the Holy Spirit, we earnestly believe that we need his help in everything that we do. It's with a sense of expectation of his blessing and also a deep sense of our dependence upon his help that we come to God's word here today. And so all of that, all of that informs every word that we would speak from our mouths.

So when we speak, what should we be keeping in mind? What should be rooted in our hearts about the way that we use our tongues? And let's start, I'm going to give you three points this morning and let's start with this one: the first thing that we should be keeping in mind is God's great holiness. God's great holiness is the place that we should start without any kind of question. Look, the reality of it is, is that we live and move and exist by the pleasure of the Creator God. It is by his hand, it is by his will that we have been made. It is he that formed us in our mother's womb and so he has prerogative, he has authority over us not simply to tell us what to do or not to do, but he has authority over our very souls and it's our responsibility and our obligation to worship him and to honor him and to fear him in respect for what he has done in giving us life. So God's great holiness should shape the way that we speak.

Now with that in mind, we realize that the moral law expressed and summarized in the 10 Commandments are an expression of God's will, they are an expression of his standard of morality for all men, women, boys and girls. God has revealed his holiness in the law. And so we come to the law and we see what he requires and we find this, we find that when he says that, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor," that a holy God demands truthfulness in everything that we say. That is a great confrontation with the spirit of our age and with the spirit of our own hearts. Just think about somebody that works in the realm of sales, for example, and in the realm of sales, you know, it's things of exaggeration or over-promising things or just a way of doing business. It's just assumed as part of the dialog, for example. I'm just using an illustration here. You could go to any realm and say the same thing, but this exaggeration and these false promises, this is not an acceptable business practice in the sight of God. God says that we are not to bear false witness and so these things become very practical very quickly.

As you read on from the book of Exodus, I'm not going to have you turn to this particular text, but as you read on in the writings of Moses, he spoke through Moses, God did, in Leviticus 19:11 and 12 and he said this, he said, "You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another. You shall not swear falsely by My name, so as to profane the name of your God; I am the LORD." Notice that he says here, "You shall not swear falsely by My name because if you do so, you will violate, you will profane My name, you will sin against My very name." And so God places a vertical dimension on the nature of truth-speaking. When the God of truth says, "You shall not lie," to lie or to distort the truth is to sin against him, let alone any consequences that it might bear on a horizontal level before men.

And Scripture tells us so clearly that each word that we say is spoken in the hearing of God. God hears everything that we say so that David could say in Psalm 139:4, "Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O LORD, You know it all." And so every sharp and angry word that we've said, God has seen it and heard it. Every lie that we've perpetrated, every distortion or fudging of the truth, God has heard it. God is personally present everywhere in the universe. He is everywhere with us. And in his omniscience, in his sovereign majesty, he not only hears every word that we say, he knows what we're going to say before we say it. So there is this searching, there is this searching understanding, the searching knowledge of a great and majestic God who is holy in all of his attributes, who is true in all of his attributes, who tells us to be true in all that we say and there's no hiding from that.

So we realize that God sees and hears everything that we say. We need to consider that and have it sanctify our tongues with the help of the Holy Spirit. That's just, you know, from the nature of God, his great holiness compels us toward truthfulness. Well, let's search this out in Scripture a little bit more, let's frame the question this way as we think about the holiness of God: what does God think about lies, and what does God think about the liars who tell them?

Well, look over in the book of Proverbs 6 with me. Proverbs 6. The question is what does God think of lies and the liars who tell them? Well, it's not pretty. When I say it's not pretty, it's fearful is what I mean by that. Everything about the nature of God is attractive and lovely and worthy of our praise. In Proverbs 6:16 it says, "There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him." That literary device, "There are six, Yes, seven," is simply a device that says that the list that follows is not intended to be comprehensive, there's other things that could be added to it but he's focusing on these things in this particular section in what is being said. So, "There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him." He hates this, he abominates it. And what are they? "Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, And hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that run rapidly to evil, A false witness who utters lies, And one who spreads strife among brothers." God simply hasn't given the command, "Don't bear false witness against your neighbor," he's shown us the reaction of his holiness, the permanent, settled attitude of his holiness toward our lying ways, toward our lying culture, toward our lying selves. He says, "I hate that."

And beloved, how could it be any different? God is a God of truth. God cannot lie. God himself is utterly separate from lying and the sin of lying, and when he speaks, he speaks truthfully, when he speaks his promises they are, "Yes and amen." Everything that he says is true. Everything that he says can be trusted. And he looks out on humanity, he looks out on our hearts and doesn't see that, and that which is not equal to his own holiness is something that he, by nature, must detest.

Look over at Proverbs 12, we'll read verses 19 through 22 where Solomon says under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "Truthful lips will be established forever, But a lying tongue is only for a moment. Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil, But

counselors of peace have joy. No harm befalls the righteous, But the wicked are filled with trouble. Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, But those who deal faithfully are His delight." Beloved, we serve a God of truth. God is a God of truth whether you serve him or not. Jesus Christ said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." And think with me a little bit further about the importance of truth just for the sake of our own souls. Beloved, if you profess faith in Christ and you are a Christian, understand that your salvation from sin depends entirely upon whether God has told you the truth in the gospel, whether God has told us the truth about the blood atonement of Christ, whether God has told us the truth that Christ will receive all those who come to him in repentant faith. Everything about our eternal destiny depends upon that being true and that God has dealt faithfully with us in what he has said.

So you can see that truth is the most important principle to your eternal well-being, that everything that is said in the gospel is actually true, it's the way things really are, and that truth is therefore the most important principle in the universe. God forbids all forms of lying. God himself is a God of truth. To lie is to contradict his nature. To lie is to, in his presence, assault the very nature and attribute of his truth. To lie in his presence and in his knowledge to violate everything that he stands for and everything that he has commanded us to do. So as we think about how we're going to speak and use our tongues and speak to one another, that principle of God's truth, God's holiness, has a very sobering impact on us, doesn't it? And perhaps, you know, perhaps here and you're thinking about, you know, I misled So-and-so on what I said about this or that, you know, and you're conscious of it, don't resist Scripture for the sake of your pride. Don't resist the conviction of the Holy Spirit just for the sake of trying to preserve face or to, you know, assert your own self-righteousness. That is a deadly deadly way to go, it's a deadly way to respond to God's word, and if you think about it and you're resisting a truthful conviction that comes to you through the word of God, understand that even that resistance is lying against God. In your conscience you know that it's true and yet in your heart and will you try to resist it and say, "No, that's not the case." You're lying against the word of God if these things are convicting you.

So once again, I've said this with every commandment, once again we come to the realization and the recognition that there are none of us that can escape the conviction of a single commandment. The 10 Commandments severally and individually, in other words, completely and individually, they all puncture any sense that we might have of being righteous in the holiness of God, in the presence of a holy God. The 10 Commandments show us that there is no way that any one of us is good enough to go to heaven on our own merit. None of you, none of you should have the thought in your mind when someone asks you, you know, why do you think you're going to go to heaven, none of you should have the thought in your mind that I'll go to heaven because I'm a pretty good person. You are not a pretty good person in the sight of God. The 10 Commandments convict you of falling short of his glory and that's the only standard that matters.

Matthew 5:48 says, "you shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." The standard is crushing and you can't become a Christian unless you understand something

about that. Someone who thinks they're good enough to go to heaven has just made two assertions, "I'm good enough to go to heaven," or, you know, "The good outweighs the bad. I'm a pretty good person and so God will accept me on that basis." Someone who thinks like that has just said two things. 1. They've said, "I am not a Christian." And number 2, "I am on my way to hell. That's what they've just said because you are not good enough to go to heaven. Scripture says that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and that is found even in just the consideration, the sole consideration of the ninth commandment.

So it's just desperately important, beloved, you know, and the older I get, the more I realize that, you know, there are probably more times in the past that I've had opportunity to speak to people about the gospel than there is in, you know, ahead of me. And so every time I speak these things, it's just so much on my mind to plead with you to examine yourself to see whether you be in the faith, 2 Corinthians 13:5. And to do everything that I can to wash my hands of your blood, so to speak, the blood of your soul, to wash my hands from it and to warn you to look at the law of God, to examine yourself in light of it, to confess your sin, and to turn to Christ for salvation because there is no other name by which you can be saved. And if you reject that message from Scripture, you have sealed your doom. That's how serious this is, you know, and I realize this isn't lighthearted entertainment but if you want, you know, I know you don't, I'm not accusing anyone in here of being like this, but do you know what? If people want to be entertained, there's lots of locations of Crossroads all around. If you come here, if you come here we're going to do our best to teach you Scripture and to warn you about coming judgment so that you would take it to heart and turn to Christ. It's for your eternal well-being, your eternal good that we say these things in the presence of God. So as we speak, we need to consider the great holiness of God.

Well, let's take it to a horizontal level now. What else should we be thinking about as we speak and use our tongues? Scripture tells us to consider your neighbor's good name. Your neighbor's good name, and we could introduce this in this manner, I suppose, Scripture tells us that we are to love our neighbors as ourselves, that we are to do unto others as we would have them do unto us, and that's the essence, that's a shorthand way to understand what the nature of love is, is to actively do for your neighbor what you would want them to do for you, and to refrain from doing to your neighbor that which you would not want them to do to yourself. And so when it comes to this matter of a neighbor's reputation and the command is don't bear false witness against your neighbor, think about it this way: you would like for people to protect your reputation, to not injure your reputation, to speak badly about you in the presence of other men, especially in a way that was false. You would want that. Well, then, that imposes a reciprocal responsibility upon you to guard the reputation of others in what you say about them, whether to them or about them outside of their presence.

And so this commandment forbids us from diminishing the reputation of our neighbor, and there are many many ways to sin against this commandment, and I just want to walk through these in a pretty rapid way. This commandment forbids the sin of slander. Slander occurs when you falsely impute evil to someone. So you say that someone did

something or that someone is badly motivated when it's not true, and two Scriptures on that will give us perspective. I think you're still in Proverbs so let's turn to Proverbs 10:18 and then we'll go back to Exodus in just a moment. Proverbs 10:18 says this, it says, "He who conceals hatred has lying lips, And he who spreads slander is a fool." And so to repeat a false report about someone is to slander them and Scripture condemns that as a violation of the ninth commandment.

Go back now to Exodus 23 in verses 1 and 7. Exodus 23:1, "You shall not bear a false report; do not join your hand with a wicked man to be a malicious witness." Verse 7, "Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent or the righteous, for I will not acquit the guilty." To make a false accusation against someone is a great and heinous sin. It diminishes their reputation. It diminishes their name and it's not true. And so by slander, speaking falsely against someone, we violate the ninth commandment.

Now there's another side to this coin as well. You know, it is slanderous to deny the good qualities of someone, to deny the giftedness of someone in the church, or to deny, you know, to deny the good qualities that someone has. That's slanderous to deny that or to try to diminish it. It goes both ways. To falsely say evil or to deny the good about your neighbor is a manner of violating the ninth commandment. Your neighbor, just as you would want for yourself, your neighbor is entitled to affirmation of his good and righteous qualities and to refuse that, to withhold that, to withhold it from your spouse or to withhold it from your loved ones, or to withhold it within the body of Christ, this is a sin of bearing false witness against your neighbor.

Now along with that, gossip is another way to violate the ninth commandment. Slander involves telling lies, gossip spreads negative information even if it is true. And so you could speak the truth and commit gossip and violate the ninth commandment because there's no need for us to rehearse before others all of the sins and faults and negative things that we know about each other. You wouldn't want someone to do that, you wouldn't want someone to speak the truth about your private behavior in your home in your worst moments, now would you? You wouldn't want that, and so by what distortion of love and by what distortion of truth do we go and repeat things that we know about others that diminish their reputation in the eyes of others even if it's true? Why do that? Why do we do that? It's because there is sin in our heart that delights in pulling someone else down, and what you need to see is that pulling someone down, even if you're saying true things about them, is a violation of the ninth commandment. That information does not need to be known.

Now Scripture tells us, go back to Proverbs 11:13, you can see all of these things in this text. Proverbs 11:13. You know, there's just a time, as you're turning there, there's a time to keep your mouth shut, to not say everything that you know especially about someone else. So Proverbs 11:13, "He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets, But he who is trustworthy conceals a matter." He keeps it to himself. You know, and I know people that are skilled at this. I know that they know things about other people, you know, in the course of relationships but they don't repeat it. They know how to keep a regulator on their tongue and not discuss such things. What we need to see on the violation side is this,

is that when you repeat negative things about your neighbor, about someone in the church, someone in your family, someone in the community, when you repeat those things about your neighbor, even if the report is true, you are sinning against this commandment because there's no need for you to discuss that. And the reason for it is this, when you're gossiping like that, you are reducing the name of your neighbor in the eyes of the one to whom you're speaking. It shows that you secretly delight in your neighbor's faults and in his shortcomings and even in his sins.

God condemns that and, beloved, what I want to help you do is think about it not simply in the terms of the bare commandment in Exodus 20:16, but to think about it in the context of the principle of love. You know, the goal of our faith is love with a pure conscience and what does love do? What is love like? 1 Corinthians 13:6, love "does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth." 1 Peter 4:8, "love covers a multitude of sins." And so let me set you free to understand that it's perfectly fine for you to know negative things about someone else and not repeat them so that others come to know about them. You don't need to do that.

And as Scripture goes on, it convicts both the one with the tongue and the one with the ears. It's not merely saying such things, it even goes to listening to them. Scripture says in Proverbs 17:4, "An evildoer listens to wicked lips; A liar pays attention to a destructive tongue." You can prove yourself a liar, you can prove yourself wicked by what you choose to listen to, by what you drink in through your ears, giving a platform for someone, giving a platform for someone to violate the ninth commandment by what they say is a sin in and of itself.

So we just take a moment to reflect on our lives, take a moment to pause and ask the Spirit to sift us, to sort us out, "Lord, is this something that I'm guilty of?" You know, turn over to Psalm 139 with me, we're just a few pages away there. We'll come to Psalm 139 in a couple of months on Tuesdays and I hope you'll be with us when we do. You know Psalm 139. I quoted from it earlier and now is not the time to go through the fullness of what it says and means, but in Psalm 139, David opened and said, "O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O LORD, You know it all" So there's this searching omniscience of God that knows us inside and out, who knows us far better than the closest person in our lives. He knows exactly who we are. He knows exactly what we say. He knows exactly what we think. He knows exactly what motivates us.

Now in light of that knowledge, in light of the holiness of God, and in light of the many ways in which this commandment can be violated so easily, so readily, what's the conclusion of it all? How do we respond to this searching knowledge of God and the high calling of his commandment? How do we respond when we realize that we don't know our own hearts? Well, the last two verses of Psalm 139 form the climax of that great act of worship. The response is found in a humble plea for a searching by God. Verse 23 of

Psalm 139, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way."

Now one more in Psalm 19. I want to reinforce this point to your heart in the hopes that God will use it to bring you to a point of meditation and confession later today and in the coming week. As we contemplate these things, there should be the negative desire to be free from these kinds of sins and there should be the positive desire that is shown in Psalm 19:12 through 14 where in response to the glory of God in creation and the glory of God in his word, the same David said this, Psalm 19:12, "Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults. Let them not rule over me; Then I will be blameless, And I shall be acquitted of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer." "God, in light of Your holiness, in light of Your glory, in light of Your word, in light of the commandment, in light of my sinfulness, God, search me and try me to see if there's any hurtful way in me," Psalm 139. "God, search me and know me and try me so that the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart would be acceptable in Your sight." You see, there comes this earnest response that says, "My inner man must respond to this truth. My inner man must respond to this God of holiness." And with Isaiah, in Isaiah 6, we think, "Ah, woe is me! I am a man of sinful lips and I live among a people of sinful lips." How can I ever escape the searchlight of what God's word says on this matter?

So our hearts are searched very very much by these things, and our response is one of inward humility, one of inward prayers for mercy, inward prayers for cleansing, and inward prayers for the help of the Holy Spirit to sanctify our tongues, to sanctify our hearts so that's what in our heart and what's coming out of our mouth is something that's pleasing to God. This is what God's word says is the proper response to him.

Now one thing that I need to say because I know that this comes up in conversations like this. There is an aspect of this that we need to keep in balance. There are times, let's just say within church life, there are times where it is right to tell of a man's sin to protect the church or to protect innocent life. Jesus made it very plain in Matthew 18:15-17 that where there is unrepentant sin in the body of Christ, that a man goes to confront that sin in the person privately, if he doesn't repent, take one or two more, and if he still doesn't repent, tell it to the church, if he still doesn't repent, then put him out of the church. And so this command not to bear false witness and not to slander doesn't negate the importance of church discipline or somehow forbid it. This command is not to be used as a cover-up for evil, especially within the body of Christ.

So there is a balance to it. You can also think about it this way, there are times where it is necessary to tell about another man's sin in order to protect innocent people or to protect innocent life so that in Acts 23, you may not remember this story, but in Acts 23 Paul's nephew overheard about a plot that the Jews had to kill him. He went to Paul, told Paul about it and Paul said, "You go tell the commander about this." Because the command against bearing false witness was never designed to enable wicked people to carry out their plans. So there have been times, you know, there have been times in our church where we have excommunicated people and we have told people in a general sense what

the sins were, what the nature of the sin was that required them to be put out of the church. If you realize that God's purpose is to protect holiness, to increase holiness in his people, when you remember that a little leaven leavens the whole lump, as a church body, as church leaders, we have a responsibility to address known sin when it comes up in the body because we can't allow it to infect others and to let other people come to a conclusion that sin isn't such a big deal and it's not going to be dealt with. Well, you know what that would be if we cultivated in our church, if we cultivated that kind of attitude where people felt free to sin openly without fear of rebuke or excommunication, without fear of church disciplines, we would be bearing false witness. We would be bearing false witness and giving the impression that God did not care about the holiness of his people, God did not care about the holiness of his church. To uphold our testimony to the holiness of God, it is necessary for us to uphold the principle of church discipline or church restoration, whatever term you prefer as it's found in Matthew 18.

What the commandment is addressing is those private times, those private times where we are delighting in gossip with one another when there's no purpose being served to protect innocent people, where there is no purpose being served to protect the body of Christ, it's just two people telling tales to one another because they delight in the scandal of it all. That's what the commandment applies to, not the effort to uphold justice and protect innocent people and to protect the holiness of the church in discussing such matters. And so there's always a balance and we need to think with nuance and with critical discernment in order to be able to think about these things rightly and to apply them rightly.

So as we're speaking, we're thinking about God's great holiness, we're thinking about our neighbor's good name, and thirdly, this one we won't spend as much time on but it's an interesting point, thirdly, the ninth commandment requires you to protect your own good name. Your own good name. It will certainly surprise you, many of you anyway, that the ninth commandment applies in this manner, that it implies that positive duty upon you, but think about it this way, think about it this way, we will reason from a familiar topic in order to establish something in a less familiar topic. Going back to Exodus 20, we saw that the sixth commandment says, "You shall not murder." The sixth commandment says, "You shall not murder," in Exodus 20:13, and when we taught on the sixth commandment, we said that the commandment not to murder prohibits the act of self-murder, it prohibits the act of suicide. Suicide is a sin against the sixth commandment, "You shall not murder," because you're taking a life that God has not given permission to take. Well, in like manner, by similar logic, the command against false witness highlights our need to live with integrity so that men will not have anything bad to say about us. We need to live in a way that does not give people occasion to speak against us and Scripture makes this also very plain.

Again, turn to the book of Proverbs. We've got two texts that we want to look at here. Proverbs 22:1, as you're turning there, Proverbs 22:1, "A good name is to be more desired than great wealth, Favor is better than silver and gold." Well, what does that mean except to live in a way that invites and calls for and even commands the respect of others. Your name is something that you, yourself, are to protect, not in being defensive when

legitimate criticism comes to you but by the way that you live, by the way that you carry yourself.

You don't need to turn to this next text but in Titus 2:6 it says this, verses 6 through 8, it says, "Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us." So that we live in a way, we seek to live with an integrity that silences critics of our doctrine and of the principle of godliness. And it's interesting to me, just as an aside, that that command is particularly addressed to young men. So those of you that are in your late teens, early 20s, late 20s, early 30s, you're to be thinking about these things, growing in doctrine, growing in godliness, conducting yourself in a dignified way in part so that the opponents of Christianity would be silenced from having criticism to render on account of the ungodly way that you think or live.

So the obligations of Scripture are there upon us. Now when it comes to considering our own name, two things to say about this. I'll just give you little examples. You should not have too high of an opinion of yourself like the Pharisee in Luke 18 who said, "God, I thank You I'm not like other men. I tithe on everything I get," so on and so forth he says, he was puffed up in his own mind and sinning against God in the way that he prayed because he had such a high opinion of himself, but at the same time, beloved, you should not, in light of the ninth commandment, you should not diminish the work of God's grace in your own life. You remember how Moses in Exodus 4, you don't need to turn there either, but in Exodus 4, Moses had been called by God to go and speak to Israel and he didn't want to do it. He said in verse 10 of Exodus 4, he said, "Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." "God, I can't do what You've called me to do because I'm not equipped to do it." He was minimizing the work of grace in his life, minimizing what God had called him to do in order to evade the responsibility. The point in all of this, beloved, is it is simply hypocrisy to pretend to be someone that you are not. It doesn't matter whether you make too much of yourself or if you make too little of yourself, either way you're bearing false witness about who you are. So when you say something about yourself that you don't believe, you're bearing false witness about your own name and it incurs the same guilt as if you had done it to someone else.

So we're left with this scriptural view of our tongues and how we use our tongues in a way that causes us to step back to consider ourselves and to ask for the help of the Lord as we move forward. Beloved, Scripture says that your mouth and my mouth are mouths speak from that which fill our hearts. What you say is telling the world what is inside your heart. I remember years ago, a pastor in Chicago said something that I've always remembered and I've probably repeated it here in the past, but he told a story of being with someone who had lost his temper and angrily was responding to the people around him, raising his voice and all of that, and as I recall the story as I stand here, he said, "Friend, your heart is showing. Your heart is showing in what you are saying and doing here because the mouth speaks from that which fills the heart."

Well, in light of everything that we've seen here, isn't it obvious that we need a work of the Spirit to circumcise our hearts? Isn't it obvious that we need the Spirit to come upon us and to cut away the ungodliness that sometimes marks our hearts as expressed by our lips and to ask him to cleanse us, to cleanse us from the lies in our heart so that our mouth would speak that which is true and to form within us righteous desires and godly aspirations so that we're speaking out things that are to the glory of God? You know, beloved, I say this sympathetically and I say it tenderly and as gently as I can, have thoughts like this ever even occurred to you? Has it ever occurred to you that this is a matter of high priority in the development of your Christian life and your Christian character?

Well, this is where the word brings us to consider. This commandment like all the others, it crushes us. One commentator said this, he said, "There's nothing more tempting and no sin easier to fall into than the sin of lying, but the ninth commandment reminds us of our moral duty to uphold the cause of truth especially when we are speaking about others." So what shall we do with this as believers? Just a couple of texts from the New Testament as we close. Ephesians 4:25, "Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another." In Colossians 3:9 and 10 it says, "Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him."

Let's pray together.

O great God of truth, help us to be people of truth. Help our church to be a church of truth. Father, for those Christians that are convicted, Father, I pray that they would be swift to confess and that You would be even more swift to bring Your forgiveness and a sense of renewed cleansing to their hearts but, Father, help us all to deal and respond to this earnestly. Father, for those that are convicted of sin and mindful that Your word has shown them to be the hypocrite, the one never actually converted, a false convert even, and it's all laid bare before You with whom they have to do, Father, I ask You in Your mercy, Your grace, Your love, Your goodness, Your patience, to do no less than this, lead that one to the Lord Jesus Christ and His blood atonement which was made on the cross for the forgiveness of sin. Work repentance and faith in their hearts that they might truly enter into the new life which You promise to all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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