

## **EXODUS 20:16 YOU SHALL NOT LIE**

There is a story that Alistair Begg told about a minister in a small church who announced the text for that Sunday evening was Matthew 29. He asked how many read Matthew 29. A whole host of people put up their hands. He told them thanks and then told them to put their hands down. Then, he said, "I can see my message is especially for you since you don't know there is not a Matthew 29 and the subject tonight is about truth."

Our message today is about the call to truthfulness. This is the ninth commandment which states that we are not to bear false witness against our neighbor. As in the other commandments, this one is a negative command that carries positive, broad-sweeping implications. It means much more than just not lying. It means to be committed to truth. It furthers the wealth and outward condition of our neighbor. As we see the depth of each of the commandments, we recognize how natural and easy it is to break this commandment. We are all convicted and are guilty. If you haven't been convicted, you haven't been listening. God has high standards which govern us and show us what true righteousness is. We have the desire to follow His commands but we don't always follow them. We know that sometimes we fail to tell the absolute truth in every situation. We don't make up the standards, God does, and we realize that we have violated this 9<sup>th</sup> commandment. We are found guilty, but thank the Lord for His grace and mercy that relieve us of our guilt. We have lied and still lie, but we are forgiven and justified. Christ is the reason we stand in that position before a holy God. Christ fulfilled all the law and His righteousness is imputed to all of us who are justified. We now have the power of Christ to desire to follow the truth of the Word. Let's delve into the matter of truth by looking at the 9<sup>th</sup> commandment and be renewed and refreshed by God's Word.

### **1. THE EXISTENCE OF TRUTH**

#### **A. GOD'S OWN CHARACTER**

When we talk about the truth, there is no better place to turn than to God Himself, since He is the truth. Jesus said he is the way, the truth, and the life. Jesus said the Father's Word is truth.

John 14:6, 17:17

The truth is the very nature, a characteristic, an attribute of God. He doesn't just speak the truth He **is** the truth. Everything that God says, reveals, and does is truth. Anything that is true is founded in Him. We take great comfort in this because when we read His promises to us, we never have to wonder if it is really true or not.

#### **B. OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO TRUTH**

Because God is truth, the people of God are to be people of

truth and we are to represent Him by telling truth. Speaking the truth is associated with how we worship God as we are to worship in spirit and truth. (Jn 4:24)  
Zech 8:16, Proverbs 14:5, 25, 31:8-9 The very direct reference in our text is to a court of law. They were to give testimony through the legal process. Reputations meant everything and if one gave a false testimony about his neighbor, life and death hung in the balance. The evidence against someone could be brought by other persons to court. We are familiar with the Jewish judicial system, because ours is based on the same source, the Word. Accusations could eventually lead to punishment, even capital punishment. That is why telling the truth must always be spoken because of the seriousness of the matter. If we can't trust our neighbors, how can a society continue to exist? If we can't trust the court system, to detect false witnesses, then justice is an illusion. If the justice system is misused and manipulated there is no foundation of trust for our society.

So, telling the truth is first of all about God and His nature and secondly, it is about our neighbor. We are forbidden to lie and we are to do everything we can to uphold the reputation of our neighbor.

#### C. THE POSTMODERN MIND

We know in our times, truth is being sold down the river. It no longer seems to be a high virtue. Our education system wants our children to believe there are no absolutes as they shove this propaganda down their throats. This is ridiculous for the very fact that they are saying something is absolute. If nothing is absolute, why would I want to listen to someone about anything. It seems to me that it would be entirely a waste of time if I believed their absolute thought that there are no absolutes.

The so-called wisdom of the day is that truth is constructed by whatever you want to make it. The philosopher, Richard Rorty said, "Truth is made, not found." This means there are different truths for different people at different times. There is no reality to a universal truth and no responsibility for people to tell truth to one another in this postmodern thought. This means there is no difference between a truth and a lie.

Immanuel Kant was kind of a father to this postmodern thought of our day. His philosophy doubted that mankind could ever really know the truth at all. It is all relative, it's what you conceive in your own mind.

Friedrich Nietzsche said truth is an illusion. "Truths are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins which have lost their embossing and are now considered as metal and are no longer coins.

This represents where the world is at today, and how sad this is. He denied the truth even existed. He did not see any moral problem in this thought. To him, truth was not associated with morals. That means if there is no morality there are no lies. If there is no truth there is no God. One can then sin all they want because there is no sin. It is so convenient for them to

buy this thought for it covers up their sinful, wicked deeds and their conscience eventually is seared.

Nietzsche wrote about truth and lies in a nonmoral sense but that is impossible because he would have to say eventually that claiming something false as true, is a lie. And if he claims something false as true is a lie, then he had to make some kind of a judgment. He was caught in a trap as he denied there is truth, but then he had to defend the truthfulness of the claim that there is no truth. Postmodern thought collapses everytime.

Al Mohler uses the example of an airplane at 33000 feet. There would be no postmodernists in that plane at that time. The law of gravity, they would have to be in agreement with. How about a postmodern heart surgeon just snipping away at any artery he wanted to? How about a postmodern banker?

There are standards that no one can logically challenge. How about the standard of time? Using Greenwich, the time is calculated from there. Why would we even have court systems if there was no truth and everything is based on illusions? Can you imagine the chaos in this world if there were no standards?

But the ignorance continues on. Take this example.

*Child Magazine*—"The Truth About Lying" Some people now doubt that it is even possible to lie. Or, it is actually healthy to lie as put forth in this magazine. An article with this caption said this:

The old view: Lying, like other issues of other morality was seen only in black and white. Children were taught that all lying was bad and deserving of strict punishment and frequently reminded that lying will make your nose grow long as Pinocchio's.

The new view: Today, some lying is considered normal. In fact, a child's first few lies are seen as an important step in the development of the self.

Can you imagine this, we are to help our children in developing by encouraging lies?

#### D. GOD'S WORD ON FALSE SPEAKERS

Since God is truth and His Word is truth, there are volumes and volumes written on truth and lies in the scriptures.

We see the first lie very early on in the book of Genesis. There, is Satan, the father of lies, tempting Eve saying she can be like God. Then, in Gen 4:9 Cain murders Abel. God sought out Cain and asked him where Abel was. Cain replied that he did not know and then had the audacity to say to God rebelliously, "Am I my brother's keeper." He knew full well where his brother was, he killed him. So, we see murder, then lying. Those two commandments sure link together.

All throughout the Bible we see liars and their judgment by God. God wrote much about how He hates lies, especially in Proverbs. His judgments are severe on liars for they will not enter the kingdom.

Luther said the worst liars were heretics and false prophets and empty preachers.

Jere 14:14-15—God condemns the prophets who were to be speaking in His name as they spoke lies and deception. Getting theology wrong

is to bear false witness about God.

## **2. THE MEANS BY WHICH LIES ARE TOLD**

Because of man's sinful nature, man exchanges the truth for a lie (Rom 1)

Man exhibits his lying nature by using his tongue.

With the wink of an eye, the nod of a head, we can tell a lie. The easiest way is by the means of the tongue. Without this two ounce membrane, there would be just unintelligible grunts.

The Tongue—James 3 says that venom is in the tongue.

## **3. HOW DOES ONE BEAR FALSE WITNESS?**

### **A. PURGERY      Deut 19:15-19**

This means to deliberately misrepresent the truth. This is rampant in courts today. If this continues in our country there will be disaster.

The justice system plays such a key role in society but if truth does not reign, how can the courts function?

We are headed for chaos, for truth is not a foundation anymore. The Constitution is not a foundation. In it, is bottom line truth based on God's Word and when this crumbles and our leaders ignore the standard, then everything crumbles.

### **B. SLANDER    -- Prov 10:18**

This means to tell lies about someone else. It is designed to hurt in accusing the neighbor of what he is not. This fails to give the neighbor his due for his virtue.

### **C. GOSSIP      --**

One who gossips is a tale bearer. He repeats things about his neighbor, even if it's true. They delight in the neighbor's faults. This does damage to the neighbor's reputation. It is wrong to even listen to gossip.

But we are to cover one's sins    ---Prov 12:16, 1 Pet 4:8

### **D. TWISTING WORDS ---- Matthew 26:59-61 (Jesus' trial)**

This is deliberately misconstruing the meaning of what somebody says.

### **E. FLATTERY    --- Prov 26:28**

This is saying things to a person's face you would never say behind his back.

This is just as bad as bearing false witness. It is self-aggrandizing.

The motives are to advance oneself.

### **F. DECEPTION    --- Rom 3:13**

### **G. FALSE CLAIMS      This can deal with age, salary, etc.**

### **H. FALSE COMPLAINTS    It can be just a minor incident to get compensation.**

### **I. FALSE ALIBIS**

### **J. BRIBES**

### **K. SILENCE---Just by not saying anything when we know something to be different. It can be a lie to let a false witness to be carried forth.**

### **L. EXAGGERATION**

### **M. FALSE IMPRESSIONS**

## **4. THE POSITIVE SIDE OF THE NEGATIVE COMMAND**

### **THE CALL TO TRUTH---MORAL DUTIES**

**The lesson we need to learn in all these commandments is that there is more implied here than what we first see.**

Rather than just the negative statement about not lying is the

fact that we are to uphold the reputation of ourselves and others.

**There are virtues that are to dominate us. We have moral duties**

A. LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

In the ten commandments the second table of the law is: love your neighbor.

We are to esteem others more than ourselves. We are to want the best interests for others.

B. INTEGRITY

For the sake of our own name it is a duty to regard our neighbor's name and our name. A name is valuable.

C. HONESTY

We are to be truthful in every context. We are to guard the truth in general. Truthfulness should characterize us since we belong to Christ. There is no sin easier to do than lying. We can make up excuses in a moments time and are good at it. We need to strive to always be about truth, no matter how the flesh wants to do what is so natural. By God's grace we can be a people of truth.

God's people are a people of the truth. We are to honor and tell the truth, to defend and discern the truth, to love the Bible as the Word of God that is truth without any mixture of error, and to stand for the truth. ....Our God is true. -- Al Mohler

Let's let God continually change us in this area of our lives so we can represent His very character for His glory.