

The 9th Commandment – You Shall Not Bear False Witness

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Oakbrook Community Church (PCA)

Exodus 20:16

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False Witness : well defined by WLC Q 144&145 (modern English version)

Q. 144. What does the ninth commandment require? 144 The ninth commandment requires that we maintain and promote truthfulness in our dealings with each other and the good reputation of others as well as ourselves. We must come forward and stand up for the truth, speaking the truth and nothing but the truth from our hearts, sincerely, freely, clearly, and without equivocation, not only in all matters relating to the law and justice but in any and every circumstance whatsoever. We must have a charitable regard for others, loving, desiring, and rejoicing in their good reputation as well as regretting and putting the best light on their failings. We must freely acknowledge their talents and gifts, defending their innocence, readily receiving a good report about them and reluctantly admitting a bad one. We should discourage gossips, flatterers, and slanderers; we should love and protect our own good reputation and defend it when necessary; we should keep every lawful promise we make no matter what; and finally we should do the best we can to focus our lives and thoughts on things that are true, noble, lovely, and admirable.

Q. 145. What particular sins does the ninth commandment forbid? 145 The ninth commandment forbids everything detrimental to the truth and the good reputation of others as well as our own, with special reference to legal matters in the courts. We must not give untrue evidence, suborn perjury, knowingly appear and plead on behalf of an evil cause, or engage in overbearing and boastful exaggeration. We should never participate in passing an unjust sentence, call evil good or good evil, or reward the wicked in a way appropriate to the righteous or the righteous in a way appropriate to the Forgery is forbidden, as is concealing the truth, remaining silent in a just cause, and not taking it on ourselves to reprove or complain to others about some wrong. We must not speak the truth at an inappropriate time, or maliciously to promote a wrong purpose, nor pervert it into a wrong meaning, into ambiguous equivocations, or in such ways as to undermine truth and justice. Also forbidden are: saying anything untrue, as well as lying, slandering, backbiting, belittling, gossiping, whispering, ridiculing, reviling, and expressing any kind of judgmental opinion that is rash, harsh, or prejudiced; misconstruing intentions, words, and actions; flattery and ostentatious boasting; thinking or speaking too highly or too poorly of ourselves or others; denying the gifts of God or the effects of his grace on us; exaggerating the significance of trivial faults; concealing, excusing, or rationalizing our sinful behavior when we are called to confess it voluntarily; gratuitously revealing the problems and failings of others; spreading false rumors, receiving and approving evil reports, and refusing to listen to a just defense; harboring evil suspicions; being envious of or grieved by the deserved honors others receive, trying to discredit those honors, and rejoicing at someone else's disgrace or evil reputation; scornful contempt and foolish admiration; breaking our lawful promises; and, finally, failing to promote everyone's good name, and doing, not avoiding, or not hindering in others, as we can, those things that give people a bad name.

Some Thoughts:

- 9th command applies to 'lessor' sins like gossip, slander, etc.
- What is forbidden shows us what we were saved to be: tellers of truth
- What about tales of amusement, practical jokes, war, persecution?
 - Prv 26:19; Eph 5:4; Ex 1:19-20; Jos 2:3-4 What is your focus?

Example: Ananias & Sapphira - Act 4:32-37; 5:1-11

- Many in the Bible lied: Abraham Gen 20; Isaac Gen 26 Jacob Gen 27
- Ananias & Sapphira - Lied to appear more righteous
- tried to be like Barnabas 4:37 – tried to look like they gave all
- property was theirs to use as they saw fit
- Issue was deception (false witness) 5:3-4; Jn 8:44

The Scary Truth About Us

- God is just - Psalms 5:6; Psalm 15:1-3; Revelation 21:8; 22:15
- We like Ananias often try to appear more righteous than we are Mt 23:27-28
- We are all liars at heart – run to the HOPE OF THE GOSPEL:
- We are far worse than we think we are...
 - but God is more gracious than we can ever imagine
- Let us now live as Truth-tellers because Christ redeemed us to do so! Jn 8:32

Think & Discuss:

- **Read the Larger Catechism Questions 144&145... are you a liar?**
- **How does that make you feel? Do you like to think of yourself as better than that?**
- **How do we often act like Ananias & Sapphira, trying to appear more righteous than we are? What does God think?**
- **Rehearse the reality of the Gospel as it relates to you being a sinner and God sent Jesus to set you free from sin and He now calls you be His ambassador.**
- **How do these questions help us think Gospel and be truth-tellers?**
 - 1. Who is God?
 - 2. What has He done?
 - 3. Who are we in light of that truth?
 - 4. How do we live in light of that truth?