

The Words of a Covenant

Part 10 - The Ninth Commandment

June 21, 1998

Exodus 20:16

16 "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. NKJV

• Review and Introduction

We are nearing the end of the second table of the law given to Moses at Sinai. As we do, it is important to keep in mind that these ten "words" or commandments are themselves a summary of the detailed law that God gave to Moses.

This particular commandment is probably the most violated of all the commandments. Those who would never think of worshipping idols or stealing their neighbors car, are frequently included with those who violate this command.

• Definitions

- It is important for us to know what is being prohibited in this command. While general lying is prohibited, the foremost point addressed in the command is perjury. Perjury is defined as the willful delivery of a false testimony in a court setting. This is a testimony which is in violation of an oath. This can be committed in a courtroom but can also be committed in our living room.
- Certainly included in this command, and in instruction found elsewhere, is a prohibition against lying in general. Regardless of which color of lie you tell, the Scriptures make no provision for lying except in unusual conditions.

• The Basis for the Commandment

- **God Hates Lying** - ¹⁶ *These six things the Lord hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: ¹⁷ A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸ A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, ¹⁹ A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren. Proverbs 6:16-19* Here God enumerates those things that He despises and lying makes the list twice. See also Proverbs 14:15.
- **Lying is Inconsistent with the Profession of a Christian** - ⁹ *Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, Colossians 3:9* Paul teaches that lying is characteristic of the old man or sinful nature which was done away with in conversion. Therefore, as the regenerate, Christians should not be given to lying. Equally as true, if you are one who lies easily, or you are someone who does not guard your mouth against lying, then you are living a life inconsistent with your profession of faith and may not be regenerate at all. See also Proverbs 19:9, 28.
- **Lying Is a Tool of War** - ¹⁸ *A man who bears false witness against his neighbor Is like a club, a sword, and a sharp arrow. Proverbs 25:18* Deception is a tool for a General to use in conducting a war and we can see that in that context there are a number of times where such activity is held out as faithful. We can see that Rahab in her deception is held out as righteous, James 2:25. The Hebrew Midwives are blessed by God when they deceive the Pharaoh, Exodus 1:15-21. David on numerous occasions deceives the Philistines about where he has started wars 1 Sam 27:8-12 See also Psalms 27:12.

• Application

- **Our obligation as Christians is to speak the truth in love.** Ephesians 4:11-15 We should be characterized as people who pursue truth, who love what is right. We should also be characterized as people who are bad at lying. Lying should be difficult and scary and only done when a covenant is in threat of being violated. Whether it is a covenant of marriage, of state, of the Church or of a community, if a covenant is being assaulted it is an attack and similar to war. In the condition of war, deception is a lawful tool to use against the enemy. However, this is a much finer distinction than it sounds and application of the principle should be done only after clear submission to the scriptures, prayer and the counsel of the wise.
- **If you have lied it is your obligation to make restitution.** Leviticus 6:1-7 This is one of the most difficult things to do yet is absolutely required by God.
- **It is not wrong to hear a lie; it is wrong to believe a lie.** Proverbs 21:28 It is our obligation to discern whether someone is lying to us and if the person is spreading gossip or other lies, we should reject that which we hear and be sure never to spread the lie. Exodus 23:1
- **Christians should be bad liars.** If you find that lies, white lies or little deceptions come easy for you, beware because lying breeds more lying and God sees all of it. We learn how to be liars at a very early age and as we continue in it, our hearts are hardened.
- **A half truth presented as a whole truth, is a non-truth.** We should be careful to avoid saying those things which are technically true yet they still deceive or speak lies simultaneously. If we blur the truth or stretch it or change the meanings we are still lying. A white lie is still a lie.