

God on the Sanctity of Truth

The Ten Commandments

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We have rounded a corner and we're heading for the finish line in our study of the 10 Commandments, we are now at the ninth commandment found in Exodus 20:16. Exodus 20:16 where we read this simple phrase,

16 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

This command has such far-reaching implications that it is truly difficult to know where to begin to set the context so that you can fully appreciate it and understand it, let alone to begin to appropriate what it means for your personal life, and so we're going to take two or three messages to search our way through it.

Let me just kind of focus on that word "false" in "false witness" and just kind of tease out a little bit some of the significance for you. This commandment opens up fundamental concepts about truth and falsehood that address the very spirit of our age. We live in an age that believes that truth is subjective, that there is no absolute truth, what is true for you may not be true for me and you know how that spirit goes. This command directly assaults that and says that that entire spirit of our age is not true because for something to be false it means that there must be a standard by which it can be measured, and if there is a standard it is an absolute standard that is unchanging. And so we are immediately ushered into, I should say, the very foundational philosophical concepts about truth and reality, falsehood and deception, from these simple words found in a single verse of the Bible and we will explore those not only in the remainder of our series on the 10 Commandments but in a further series that I'm preparing for preaching in May and June that we'll talk about more another time.

This commandment about bearing false witness and prohibiting false witness leads you directly into the ineffable mystery of the Triune Godhead. This commandment leads you to distinguish the attributes of God from the characteristics of Satan himself. This commandment applies in a myriad of ways to every aspect of our daily speech. This commandment convicts us of guilt and warns us about eternal judgment, all of these things from simply tracing this fundamental theme through the rest of the pages of Scripture. And let me say something else about it as well. The fact that this commandment tells you that you are not to bear false witness, on the flip-side it implies a

positive duty upon you to know what the truth is, and how can we know the truth unless we read the Bible for ourselves, unless we are devoted to studying it and understanding the very nature of God's truth as he has revealed it in his own word.

So this goes everywhere. How could a man, you know, and look, there's a lot of people who want to teach the word of God but Scripture warns us against that, Scripture warns, "Let not many of you become teachers for as such we'll face a stricter judgment." Well, one of the reasons that you'll face a stricter judgment as a teacher of Scripture, and it always frightens me when I say this from a pulpit, is that God holds teachers to a higher standard of what they represent to be true about his word. When a man gets up and says, "This is the Bible and thus saith the Lord," well, it is a most serious duty and responsibility to represent his word accurately and that implies that someone has given himself before he steps up to speak, in some manner or another he's given himself over to study and to understand the word of God and is not doing it quickly or lightly or in a haphazard manner. So all of this, all of this about teaching in the church, about the nature of truth in our post-modern society, the nature of God, the nature of Satan, the nature of eternal judgment, all of it is invoked by this one single verse, you know, I trust that you will see as we go along today and over the next couple of times that we gather together.

So we have four things that we're going to start with, this is kind of an introduction today to the ninth commandment, four things that we're going to look at today and the first one is this: we're going to consider the distinction between truth and falsehood. The distinction between truth and falsehood and even in saying that there is such a distinction, we are making a statement about our rejection of the mindset in which we live. The Bible says that there is truth and that there is falsehood, and as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, as believers in the authority and the veracity of the word of God, we hold to that principle also. It's not simply, beloved, it's not simply whether an individual fact is true or whether a particular type of teaching is true or not, we're speaking at a far greater, far more profound level than any individual assessing the truth claims of any individual statement. We are saying based on the Scripture that there is absolute truth and that it can be known, and indeed we are commanded to know it, and not only are we commanded to know it, we will be held accountable for what we have done with God's truth. So we're saying and asserting the fact that there is truth and we are saying that the human mind is capable of knowing truth as it is aided and enabled by the Holy Spirit. And so your mind is capable of knowing the truth, you are responsible to cultivate the knowledge of truth in your life, and you can know truth from error.

Look over at the book of 1 John for just a moment, 1 John in your New Testament, after the book of Hebrews and before the book of Revelation if that helps you find it. In 1 John 4 we find a most fundamental statement that bears on this as well. 1 John 4 reading through verse 6, just kind of by way of introduction to the theme that we're introducing here this morning. 1 John 4:1 says,

1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses

that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. 4 You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

The New Testament tells us that we can know the truth and distinguish it from that which is false, and it tells us that we are responsible to know the truth and to distinguish it from error. All of this presupposes, all of this presupposes that there is truth and that you are capable of understanding it and that you have a responsibility to do so. That means that we cannot fall into the flabby, lazy spirit of our age that basically with Pilate says, "What is truth? How can we know what is truth?" And to kind of shrug our shoulders at the concept. Listen, we cannot live that way and we cannot think that way. Truth matters to God because God is a God of truth and therefore we have a responsibility to consciously reject the spirit of our age and to search out that which is true as God has revealed it in his holy word and in his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Those things are fundamental. Now let's address the distinction between truth and falsehood with this command in our minds, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."

So here we go. I'm excited to be able to share this with you. First of all, a command that says not to bear false witness invokes the entire specter of the nature of truth and the nature of deception, what is truth and what is false. Now I'm going to keep this simple and avoid any complex philosophical discussions. I just want to keep this really simple, as it were, to keep the cookies on the bottom shelf where we can all access them and all process it. Truth, the term truth simply means this, it means that which is really so. It's the way things really are, and by that we mean that it is something that is outside of you. Truth is not how you perceive things, truth is the way that things really are. It is that things are in actuality. By contrast, a lie or a falsehood distorts the way that something really is. You could say it this way: truth is that which is accurate, that which is right. A lie, by contrast, indicates a falsehood, deception or anything that is counterfeit, that looks real but actually is not. To say it a different way by way of contrast, you have to affirm things and deny things when you're defining truth. Truth conforms to reality or conforms to what really happened in the past, falsehood is inaccurate, whether it's a deliberate misrepresentation or not is beside the point for now, falsehood represents things to be different than the way that they actually are. So truth is what is real, falsehood is what is not real, and as I said, the terms themselves presuppose that the human mind can know reality. This means that teachers have a responsibility, not just biblical teachers but teachers in general have a responsibility to know what is true and to teach it in a way that it can be understood so that the minds that they are teaching are able to receive truth and receive it as real, as accurate, and to affirm it in their own minds.

Now coming to the term here in Exodus 20:16, this Hebrew term for "false" what is "bearing false witness," it has this idea of deception and it has this sense to it, it's that which deceives someone else, it disappoints expectations or it betrays someone, and in this context, as we'll see, it especially applies to falsehood in courtroom testimony but it is not limited to the legal setting, it applies to every aspect of life. One other way that we could distinguish between truth and falsehood is this, is that false words are those which have no basis in fact or reality, and what we need to dwell on here, what we need to understand because we've all been conditioned by the culture in which we live and its swirling vortex down the drain of deception, what we all need to realize is that truth is objective, it is outside of you. It does not matter what you think about the truth, the way that you think about truth is not relevant to whether something is true or not because truth is outside you, it is not a subjective opinion, it is that which is actually real, it is that which is true. You can think about it this way: truth is real whether you had been born or not. The question of truth is not determined by what you think about it because what is true is going to be true after you die. It has nothing to do with what you think about it, it is what is actually objectively real outside of the realm of your opinions and perceptions. This is so very vital and, as I said, I'm preparing a multiple message series on the nature of truth that's coming up in May and June and we'll go into this more and explore these concepts in greater detail. For now I'm kind of dropping seeds into the soil that I hope will bear fruit later on. But truth can be known and truth must be known, and you are responsible to know the truth lest you be guilty of violating a command of bearing false witness against that which is true.

So it's just astonishing to realize that this command stands in judgment of entire education systems, it stands in judgment of universities and university departments and says, "Is what you're teaching true?" And what possibility, beloved, what possibility of truth is being found in an environment where the very existence of God is denied or at best ignored, where Scripture is marginalized, mocked and contradicted? There is no hope of finding truth in an environment like that and so we have to realize that we are swimming in an ocean that is contrary to the environment of truth that God commands us to know and to uphold. So these things just go to the fundamental existence of reality, of what life truly is.

If I can step back and take a little breath here, here's one way to think about it. I understand fully that it is not popular to talk about biblical doctrines like sin and repentance and eternal judgment, and I said when we began this series on the 10 Commandments many months ago, one of the things that I said was that we were going to find out where we were at as a church by the way that people responded to the teaching of the law of God. And I think that's happening and, you know, that's great. I thank God for that. But we come to God's word to know what is true but here's the thing, the fact that people want to deny the reality of sin, want to deny the reality of guilt, the fact that people do not want to hear teaching on the biblical doctrine of hell because it is displeasing to them, it does not gratify their desires and it's an unpleasant, uncomfortable topic to consider, the fact that people therefore don't want to hear it or deny the reality of it in their books and articles and the things that they say, I hope that it's obvious to you that that response has nothing to do with whether those doctrines are true or not. The fact

that someone rejects biblical teaching says nothing about whether the Bible is true or not, it simply says that that person is rejecting what God has revealed in his word. I dwell on this point because it's so necessary for us to distinguish subjective opinion from objective truth, subjective opinion from objective fact, human opinions versus what God has said is true and revealed to be true in his word. These things are absolutely fundamental.

So we start there. This commandment tells us that there is truth and there is falsehood. It tells us the post-modern spirit of our age is a demonic deception. And because it is the whole environment that undergirds everything that is said in media and education, it becomes very incumbent upon you to recognize that distinction and to apply yourself to knowing the truth. There's no escaping this. And the fact that it's not, you know, that the things that we say here are not supported by the world does not change anything about our responsibility; to know the truth doesn't change anything about our commitment to proclaim the truth, doesn't change anything about our desire and ability to defend the truth. And I don't say that simply corporately but I say it for each one of you here, all right?

Now secondly, the reality of truth and the principle of truth leads us into something that is just, if possible, if possible even more transcendent than what we've already just said because the reality of the principle of truth, the reality of truth itself leads us into the very essence of the Triune Godhead. That's our second point here for this morning: truth and the Trinity. Truth and the Trinity. Do you know what's behind the ninth commandment which says in Exodus 20:16, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor"? Do you know what that commandment is a mirror of, the greater truth that it reflects? It's a reflection of the very character of God himself and Scripture is full of these kinds of matters, and let me just quote some Scriptures, some familiar, some not so familiar to you.

The ninth commandment is a reflection of the very character of God. In Numbers 23:19 it says this, "God is not a man, that He should lie." Numbers 23:19, "God is not a man, that He should lie." In John 17:17, Jesus said to the Father, "Your word is truth." In Titus 1:2 it says "God cannot lie." In Hebrews 6:18 it says, "it is impossible for God to lie." In 1 John 1:5 it says, "God is Light and in Him there is no darkness at all." And so when you think of the concept of truth and falsehood, it is something that is pointing you into the nature of the character of God and you see the absolute holiness of God revealed in this statement. The reason that you and I are commanded not to bear false witness is because to bear false witness is to contradict the very character of God himself. And God is so holy, we think about the omnipotence of God and sometimes people wrongly define that as saying that God can do anything, well, there are certain things that God cannot do because they would violate his holy character, and therefore God cannot lie and the Bible emphasizes that over and over again.

So when we talk about truth and falsehood, we see that it is rooted in the holy character of God who is a God of truth, whose word is truth, and it is impossible for God to lie or to do anything that contradicts the way things really are. And you know, we attribute those statements that I read earlier, we sort of attribute those statements to God the Father

but, beloved, as you read in the New Testament, you find the same kinds of things being said about God the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and also God the Spirit.

Turn in your Bibles to the gospel of John, if you will, the gospel of John 14 and all we're doing at this point is just showing how much emphasis Scripture places on the truthful nature of God. God is true. God is right. What he says is true and could never be false because what he says is determined by the nature of his own holy character so that we see this and these are just kind of illustrations, not at all exhaustive of the point, Jesus said in John 14:6, that very well-known verse, Jesus said to Thomas, "I am the way and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." Jesus is truth itself. Jesus is truth incarnate. Jesus says not only that, "I am the way," and not only that, "I am the life," but he says that he is the truth. Truth is found in Christ himself and so to, in any way, violate truth by bearing false witness, as we'll see what that means in time to come, is an assault on the character of Christ itself. It's not simply that when you practice deception that you are deceiving another human person for the sake of your own advantage usually, it is a direct assault on the character of God. It is a vertical sin, not simply a horizontal one.

So we see Jesus saying, "I am the truth," and then he goes on and he speaks about the Holy Spirit in this Upper Room Discourse in John 15:26, you can look there with me. John 15:26 Jesus says, "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning." The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. And he says something similar in chapter 16, verse 13, when he says, "But when He, the Spirit of truth," the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, "when He comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come." Jesus promises the disciples that were hearing him in that day that the Holy Spirit would come to them and guide them in the truth so that it was a promise that as the apostolic writers were recording Scripture for us, the Spirit would guide them so that what they wrote was absolutely true without any mixture of error in what the Scriptures affirm. So we see this principle of truth laid upon us and we see the principle of truth applied not singularly, this principle of truth is applied to Father, Son and Holy Spirit. So an assault on truth is an assault on the very essence of God himself. That's how important this is.

Now let's draw a contrast here. We're just laying foundation here, right? We're seeing why this matters. God's veracity, God's truthfulness is a cosmic contrast with the enemy of our souls. Satan lied to Eve in the garden of Eden and the consequences of that are carrying forth to the present day. You're in the gospel of John, look over at chapter 8 with me, John 8:44, and you see the way that Jesus addressed the audience in his day which gives us a pattern for the way that preachers should address the audience in their modern day, address their contemporaries. We are not trying to court the favor or the good opinion of people who are not in Christ. We need to confront them with their sin and confront them with the truth, and that is what Jesus did when he was speaking to the Jews in his day when he said in verse 44, look at it with me, he said, "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the

beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But," Jesus says, "But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me."

This is incredible to think about. This is so amazing to think about that God cannot lie and Satan cannot tell the truth, and the human heart is so blind and so dead to the truth when it has not been regenerated by the Spirit of God that it rejects what Christ says precisely because he is telling them the truth. The unsaved heart rejects the truth precisely because it is the truth, because the unsaved heart is deceitful, it is desperately wicked, Jeremiah 17:9 says, so that the whole concept of truth, the unaided human heart is not able to process it for what it really is. And the unsaved man either consciously or unconsciously aligns himself with the prince of darkness because the human heart is full of lies and Satan is full of lies, and when men lie, they are speaking from that which was originally authored by Satan himself. What the ninth commandment does, then, is it calls us out of that realm of deception, it calls us out of that satanic demonically-influenced realm and to come into the realm of truth as it has been revealed by God.

Now look, we're so used to excusing so-called white lies, you know, little distortions of the truth for personal advantage or to avoid an awkward situation, what I want you to see is this: with God it's impossible to lie, with Satan it is his nature to lie, whenever he opens his mouth or speaks through one of his emissaries or teachers, it's lies, lies, lies, because that's all he can do. There's cosmic reality rooted in what we are saying here. What this means for you and me as we think about the truthfulness of our own tongues and the truthfulness of our own character is this: to misrepresent the truth makes you and I a partner with Satan in his deception that he is wreaking on the world. That's how serious this is, is that it's aligning ourselves with the father of lies. And in 1 John 2:21, you don't need to turn there, 1 John 2:21 it says, "no lie is of the truth." These realms are mutually exclusive. There is truth and there is falsehood. There is Christ and there is Satan and these two do not mix.

So it is obvious that you and I must take this commandment seriously, realizing how much is at stake. The very fundamental nature of reality is at stake in our consideration of this command. The very fundamental essence of God, the Triune God, is at stake in what we are studying here today and by contrast the awful destructive character of Satan is raised to the surface as we consider these matters which are in front of us here today and over the next couple of weeks. So this commandment is not one to lightly brush aside. The honor of God is at stake in the way that we – the perceived honor of God, I should say, the perceived honor of God is at stake in the way that we respond to this commandment.

So what I want to do in our remaining time here as we look at our last couple of points here, is I want to start with the original context of this command in terms of what its original purpose was. Let's go back to Exodus 20 for just a moment. I want to start with its original command and then show how it expands out in our subsequent teaching. So we have seen the distinction between truth and falsehood, we've seen truth and the nature of the Trinity and now, thirdly, I want to discuss this section which we could title Moses

and the courtroom setting. Moses and the courtroom setting. Again, look at verse 16 with me there, Exodus 20:16, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." Now one of the things that we've seen as we've studied the 10 Commandments together is that there is a lot of in the writings of Moses, there is a lot of content that helps us understand and to interpret the command as it was originally given. God gave the law to Moses and then he gave more revelation to Moses during the course of Moses' lifetime and that further progressive revelation gives us a sense of understanding of what the commandments meant in their original context and that's certainly true for the ninth commandment here.

The context for this commandment is found in legal proceedings and it governs the testimony that a witness was to give at a public trial, and also the way that judges would receive testimony and the way that people who were accused of crimes, the standard and the due process that would be given to them. So what God stressed to Moses was that there was a need for truthful witnesses in order to establish facts in a courtroom of law, and the principle of making sure – here's the point – making sure that the truth was upheld in the courtroom setting was something of great priority to the social structure in the nation of Israel.

Look at the book of Numbers, you turn to your right, you go past Leviticus and you find the book of Numbers. In Numbers 35 as the people were reaching the end of their wilderness wanderings and about to enter into the Promised Land, in Numbers 35:30 God lays down the principles that would govern legal proceedings in the time to come. So in verse 29 of Numbers 35 you find this,

29 These things shall be for a statutory ordinance to you throughout your generations in all your dwellings. [Now verse 30,] 30 If anyone kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death at the evidence of witnesses, but no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness.

No one was there to see what happened or there wasn't the sophisticated gathering of physical evidence as we have today, and so courtroom testimony in a capital case depended upon what a witness says he saw, what he heard, and things like that. But the principle of truth is so important and the guarding of human life such an important matter that an accused criminal was not to be put to death simply on the basis of one witness; there were to be multiple witnesses that were saying the same sort of thing that would establish a matter to be something of truth, and if two or three credible witnesses gave the same testimony, the matter was considered to be established.

Look over at the book of Deuteronomy, the next book over, as we see this revelation unfold as God gave it over the course of time. In Deuteronomy 17, let's begin in verse 2 to set the whole context.

2 If there is found in your midst, in any of your towns, which the LORD your God is giving you, a man or a woman who does what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, by transgressing His covenant, 3 and has

gone and served other gods and worshiped them, or the sun or the moon or any of the heavenly host, which I have not commanded, 4 and if it is told you and you have heard of it, then you shall inquire thoroughly. Behold, if it is true and the thing certain that this detestable thing has been done in Israel, 5 then you shall bring out that man or that woman who has done this evil deed to your gates, that is, the man or the woman, and you shall stone them to death. 6 On the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness.

The whole matter of testimony in criminal proceedings was one of most sober significance, matters of life and death were at stake, matters of God's justice were at stake, and the matter of God's justice is to be upheld by truthful testimony. That was what mattered to God.

Now look over at Deuteronomy 19 in verse 15. We see this same point being made. We remember that the original commandment, the ninth commandment says, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." We're seeing how this applied in the immediate need of courtroom testimony so that in Deuteronomy 19:15 it says this,

15 A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed. 16 If a malicious witness rises up against a man to accuse him of wrongdoing, 17 then both the men who have the dispute shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who will be in office in those days. 18 The judges shall investigate thoroughly, and if the witness is a false witness and he has accused his brother falsely, 19 then you shall do to him just as he had intended to do to his brother. Thus you shall purge the evil from among you. 20 The rest will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such an evil thing among you. 21 Thus you shall not show pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

And what we see in these witness requirements is that it was an Old Testament version of due process. It was an Old Testament version that said, "This is the process by which a matter is to be established." And the way that legal proceedings are to be adjudicated, they are to be adjudicated strictly on the matter of truth, and in order to safeguard the principle of truth, it was not enough to take one person's word for it, there were to be independent confirming witnesses who were saying the same thing. Then and only then would a matter be established. The point of that multiple witness process was to highlight how important the nature of truth is in the economy of God. So one of the ways that God upholds justice in a courtroom is by forbidding false witnesses, and in the Old Testament economy forbidding the cases to be decided on the testimony of only one man because you don't know whether he's necessarily telling you the truth or not, but if there are multiple witnesses saying the same thing, a matter could be determined as established.

So beloved, what I want you to see is the consistent theme that is driven through here. Scripture talks about the importance of truth, Scripture talks about the essential nature, the essential perfection of God as being one of truth, one of his attributes is his truthfulness, contrasting that with Satan and you see that carrying forward with force into the early life of Israel in their national life, truth being so important that there were strict procedures set down into the way that a matter would be decided, and if it was found that there was a false witness, what he was trying to convict the accused of with his false testimony, the punishment that he was seeking on the innocent person being accused is the punishment that would be inflicted upon him. So this has a very sobering impact. You start to get the sense that truth is holy, truth is set apart, truth matters to God, truth is to be protected and guarded as something valuable. That's the context of this ninth commandment.

Now there's a final way that we can see the importance of this commandment to God and to his economy and to his moral law. What we're going to do is we're going to skip over the personal application for what this means for you and me in our private lives, we'll talk about that Tuesday and next Sunday, let's go to the ultimate courtroom, let's go to the final courtroom to see how important this is to the Triune God, the God who cannot lie. Our fourth and final point for this morning is this as we consider the matter of God and eternal judgment. God and eternal judgment. We're skipping over from the beginning of Israel, we're skipping all the way to the final day. There just comes a point where you're just so overwhelmed by the majesty of it that you just have to smile at the weightiness of it all. You consider the unsearchable riches of the nature of the Triune God, you see how he established things in his moral law, and you see the contrast with Satan, you get a sense of how serious God is ultimately about it by what he says will be true in the final day of judgment. Each one of us, you and I, we're all heading toward a day of accountability with a holy God. Some of you will face a judgment at the Great White Throne apart from Christ with no one there to defend you, and the holiness of God is going to search you and to convict you, and you're going to have nothing to say for yourself in light of these things. For those of us that are in Christ, we'll be safe from an eternal judgment, our sins washed away and we just see how important it is to be saved from our sin.

So God in eternal judgment. Let's start it this way. Turn to the book of Romans 1 in verse 18. Lies and deception bring forth the wrath of God. Nothing could be clearer than that. Romans 1:18, it says,

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

The suppression of truth brings forth the wrath of God. God in his holy zeal for his own character will vindicate the truth against everything that assaults it; whether it's on a collective societal scale or whether it's at an individual scale, God will vindicate his truth. God will uphold truth against all comers.

Now look at verse 28 of Romans 1 where it speaks about how God hands men and societies over for their refusal to honor and worship him. He hands them over and this is the consequence of the judicial judgment of God, the judicial sentence of God, this is what happens and is a manifestation of the wrath of God. Look at verse 28,

28 ... just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit,

Deceit. The practice of deception is a mark of the unveiling of the wrath of God. A society given over like ours to the unmitigated practice of deception and approval of deception is a mark that God's wrath is on that society. Deception is at the core of it. Now it goes on and we can read the rest of the text here,

malice; they are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; 32 and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

We see that the practice of deception means that someone is worthy of death in the sight of God. A society that practices deception like ours does is worthy of the immediate judgment of God and it is only a measure of his grace that it hasn't been unveiled yet. So a deceptive culture manifests the wrath of God upon it.

Now here's the thing and you start to see how weighty these things are. God has said in his word what the ultimate outcome of this practice of deception will be. Look at the book of Revelation 21 as we look to the final outcome of things as they are revealed by God. Revelation 21 in verse 6, ah, let's start in verse 5.

5 ... He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." 6 Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. 7 He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.

The promise of hope, forgiveness and eternal life for those who put their faith in Christ, and the promise of an ultimate glorious outcome with eternal life in the presence of God given to everyone who turns from sin and trusts in Christ. That is a glorious, glorious promise to dwell upon but it's not going to be for everyone and I fear that it may not be for everyone in this room, and so we read this next verse as a personal warning, a personal caution, as well as an indication of what the final outcome will be. Verse 8, look

at it with me, these words given to us by a God who does not lie and a God who does not bluff. God is not bluffing in what he says here. He is not saying something only to contradict himself at the end. No, God said in advance this is what the end of time will be like, this is what his judgment will be like, and this is those upon whom judgment will fall. Verse 8,

8 But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

Look at the last chapter in the Bible, verses 14 and 15, the same structure of promise of grace to those who believe versus a certainty of judgment on those that do not.

14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. 15 Outside [outside of heaven, outside of that realm of secure blessing,] outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.

That's how serious this is. Beloved, the ninth commandment, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor," it has eternal implications. It has infinite vertical implications into the unseen realm. It has infinite implications as we examine the very nature, truthful nature of God, and it has eternal implications. God is a God of truth. Every lie that you have ever told has been an assault on him and it leads us to this question: which one of us can stand before such a holy truthful God, which one of us is free from the threat of judgment that these passages from Scripture bring us to?

My friend, if you're convicted and fearful because the Spirit of God has convicted you of your own untruthful character and you see yourself guilty before the presence of a truthful God, let me close by saying this: there is hope, there is time but there's no time to waste. There is no time for you to waste. Flee to the Lord Jesus Christ who suffered for sinners just like you on the cross. He was crucified, he was resurrected to provide a blood atonement for sinners just like you but, beloved, we must commit ourselves to the truth if we are to be on the side of God and not the side of Satan as we go forth from this building today.

Let's pray together.

O God of truth, God of majesty and might, we bow before Your holy name. We see all around us the utter contradiction of our world against everything that is good and holy and upright and true. So Father, I pray that for each one that is somehow under the sound of my voice in this message, Father, I pray that You would help each one see how urgent it is to flee from this wicked generation, to flee from this wicked world, to repent of sin and to flee to Christ who Himself is the way, the truth and the life. Father, we say these things not to manipulate people but to lay the truth before and to trust Your Spirit

to apply it to hearts as You see fit as You work out Your eternal purpose. Father, grant mercy to each one here. For those of us that are in Christ, Father, we pray that You would help us repent and turn from any remnants of falsehood in our own character and to be sanctified more fully by the Spirit of truth that we might be found pleasing in Your sight. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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