

16 - The Ninth Commandment - Exodus 20:16 - 2014-05-11

Call to Worship: Philippians 2:10-11

Scripture Reading: Colossians 3:1-11

Sermon: "The Ninth Commandment" Exodus 20:16

Benediction: 3 John 1:4

Read the text: Exodus 20:16 "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

I. Understand what it is to be a witness, to bear witness

A. We don't know most of what happens in the world, because we weren't there to see it or hear it for ourselves

B. As to most of the things that happen in the world, we don't have any need to know what happened; but some things that happen in the world, we have great need to know what happened

1. if a crime was committed at our house or business
2. if a baby was born among our friends or relatives
3. if war was declared
4. if a law was passed or repealed
5. if an important scientific discovery was made
6. if a helpful new product was brought to market
7. if a fire broke out
8. if a hurricane made landfall or a tornado touched down

C. In these cases, someone who was there to see or hear must use his faculty of speech, his mouth, his tongue, his ability to speak, to tell those who were not there what he saw and heard, so that the rest of us can know the truth

D. So it is that we, all of mankind, constantly depend on the testimony, the reports, of witnesses for very many things; basically, the world could not function without the operation of witnesses telling what they have seen and heard so that everyone else can know, and can act accordingly

E. One of the blessings in every major development of media, from the printing press to the internet is that it becomes easier than it was before for witnesses to testify of what they have seen and heard, and even to give some evidence of the truth of it by photographs or video and audio recordings

So, we understand what it is to be a witness, to bear witness---to use our capacity for language, especially speech, to tell other people what we saw or heard so that they can know even though they weren't there

So, understanding what it is to bear witness,

II. Understand what it is to be a false witness, to bear false witness, and what our part is in that

A. Because of this dependence on the testimony of witnesses, we human beings are particularly vulnerable to being harmed by false testimony, by someone bearing false witness

1. a person, or a whole company might testify to having seen a certain new medicine cure people of cancer or some other disease, with a very high rate of success and only very minor side effects; if that testimony is false, and there are actually very severe undesirable side effects, thousands of people could suffer those severe side effects as a result of believing that false witness

2. a person might testify to the police and in court to having seen a certain man commit a violent crime; if that testimony is false, the accused man could be sent to prison unjustly

3. a person, like Muhammed or Joseph Smith, might testify to having seen a vision from God and heard a message from God; if that testimony were false (which it was!), millions of people could trust their eternal destiny to ideas about God that are not the real God

B. God, knowing this, of course, gave Israel laws for dealing with false testimony

1. for when a person bears false witness in court

Deuteronomy 19:15-20 "One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established. (16) If a false witness rises against any man to testify against him of wrongdoing, (17) then both men in the controversy shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who serve in those days. (18) And the judges shall make careful inquiry, and indeed, if the witness is a false witness, who has testified falsely against his brother, (19) then you shall do to him as he thought to have done to his brother; so you shall put away the evil from among you. (20) And those who remain shall hear and fear, and hereafter they shall not again commit such evil among you.

a. the law has an evaluation procedure

b. the law has a stiff penalty

2. for when a person bears false witness in the church

Deuteronomy 18:20-22 But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.' (21) And if you say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?'-- (22) when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

a. the law has an evaluation procedure

b. the law has a stiff penalty

C. But some of the people of Israel, being sinners, blatantly broke God's law concerning testimony, bearing false witness

1 Kings 21:11-13 So the men of his city, the elders and nobles who were inhabitants of his city, did as Jezebel had sent to them, as it was written in the letters which she had sent to them. (12) They proclaimed a fast, and seated Naboth with high honor among the people. (13) And two men, scoundrels, came in and sat before him; and the scoundrels witnessed against him, against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, "Naboth has blasphemed God and the king!" Then they took him outside the city and stoned him with stones, so that he died.

D. Was it just the evil queen Jezebel and that corrupt city council and those two soundrels? No, the whole nation were liars.

Jeremiah 9:1-6 Oh, that my head were waters, And my eyes a fountain of tears, That I might weep day and night For the slain of the daughter of my people! (2) Oh, that I had in the wilderness-- A lodging place for travelers; That I might leave my people, And go from them! For they are all adulterers, An assembly of treacherous men. (3) "And like their bow they have bent their tongues for lies. They are not valiant for the truth on the earth. For they proceed from evil to evil, And they do not know Me," says the LORD. (4) "Everyone take heed to his neighbor, And do not trust any brother; For every brother will utterly supplant, And every neighbor will walk with slanderers. (5) Everyone will deceive his neighbor, And will not speak the truth; They have taught their tongue to speak lies; They weary themselves to commit iniquity. (6) Your dwelling place is in the midst of deceit; Through deceit they refuse to know Me," says the LORD.

E. Was it something particular to the culture of Israel, that the Israelites learned as they grew up in that deceitful culture?

Psalms 58:3 The wicked are estranged from the womb; They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.

F. Was it just Israel, just the Jews? No, regarding all mankind the bible says, Romans 1
Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

Romans 1:25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

And just in case you are about to excuse yourself as not being guilty, the bible says to you:

Romans 2:3 And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?

G. Really to understand what it is to bear false witness, consider just how low we human beings have gone in our lies. When the Lord Jesus Christ came, the chief priests and the other members of the ruling council themselves produced false witnesses in their own court, bearing false testimony against the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Or, to put it another way, when the Son of God came down here to us and lived a perfect life, doing no harm to anyone, but loving his fellow man perfectly, we assembled a council and brought in liars to bear false witness about Him. We couldn't get them to all give the same false story, so we asked Jesus. When He answered in truth, bearing true testimony, we shouted out His condemnation and turned Him over to be crucified.

Mark 14:55-62 Now the chief priests and all the council sought testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none. (56) For many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree. (57) Then some rose up and bore false witness against Him, saying, (58) "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.' " (59) But not even then did their testimony agree. (60) And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, "Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?" (61) But He kept silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" (62) Jesus said, "I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."

So, understanding what it is to bear witness,
and understanding what it is to be a false witness, to bear false witness, and what our part is in that

III. In your understanding about bearing false witness, include all the sins to which we are tempted, which are not exactly bearing false testimony, but are hateful, harmful, evil speech nonetheless (adapted from the larger catechism)

- concealing the truth to deceive
- remaining silent when it is our duty to speak up against evil
- speaking the truth in an ungentle, unloving way or maliciously to a wrong end
- speaking the truth in such a way as to deceive
- speaking part of the truth, leaving out part, so as to deceive
- slandering or libeling
- backbiting,
- gossiping or listening to gossip
- scoffing
- mocking

flattering,
bragging or boasting
raising false rumors
failing to listen to someone's defense of himself
making promises and not keeping them
speaking of religion only to impress other people
telling something as true when you aren't really sure
telling a false version of the gospel of Jesus Christ or some other bible doctrine
failing to tell of your hope in Jesus Christ when you have opportunity to do so

So, understanding what it is to bear witness,
and understanding what it is to be a false witness, to bear false witness, and what our part is in
that
including all the other sins of the tongue to which we are tempted

IV. Ponder God's attitude toward bearing false witness and all kinds of lying and deceit

A. He hates those who do these things

Proverbs 6:16-19 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.

B. He so hates lying and liars that ultimately He will throw all liars outside of His blessed city

Revelation 22:12-15 "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. (13) I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last." (14) Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. (15) But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.

So, understanding what it is to bear witness,
and understanding what it is to be a false witness, to bear false witness, and what our part is in
that
including all the other sins of the tongue to which we are tempted
and having pondered for a moment God's hatred toward false witness and liars who give it,

V. Think about what it is to be a faithful witness, to bear true testimony

A. God is; God is there; but we can't see Him with our own eyes or hear Him with our own ears; but God has established faithful witnesses in nature to bear true testimony

1. the bible tells us that the rain falling, causing food to grow up from the ground, so that we eat our fill and are glad, bears witness that God is there, and that He cannot be worshiped by the use of idols

2. that what we see in the sky speaks to use day after day and night after night, telling us that the being who made all of this is not a creature like we are, but divine, He is God; He is infinitely wise and infinitely powerful

B. The prophets of the Old Testament bore true witness that they saw visions and heard the voice of God promising that He would send a Savior, a Messiah, a Christ, to deal with sin, so that even the worst of liars could be forgiven and granted a place in His blessed kingdom

C. John the Baptist testified faithfully that God had told him the Christ was coming, and had come, and that He is Jesus of Nazareth.

D. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself bore faithful witness, gave true testimony that He had come from heaven, from God the Father, to give His life a ransom for many sinners, including liars and deceivers, who would be saved through believing in Him.

E. The apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, men like Peter, John, and Paul, saw the Lord Jesus risen from the dead, and they bore true witness to His resurrection. They said truthfully that no liar would have any place in the kingdom of heaven, but that any such liar and anyone else who will repent of sin and trust in Jesus Christ will be saved and will have his place in the kingdom of heaven.

F. These same apostles have commanded us who believe to put off all lying to one another, as a man puts off an old, dirty garment, and to put on truth, speaking to one another only what is true, what is wholesome, what is helpful for building up others in the faith, according to what they need.

CONCLUSION

So, understanding what it is to bear witness,
and understanding what it is to be a false witness, to bear false witness, and what our part is in that
including all the other sins of the tongue to which we are tempted,
having pondered for a moment God's hatred toward false witness and liars who give it,
and having in mind what it is to be a faithful witness, to bear true testimony

Let every person hear believe the true testimony about God, and our sinfulness, about forgiveness in Christ, and about the way of living in truth in His church. Amen.

What God hates: Proverbs 6:19

Definitions of false witness

Proverbs 14:5 A faithful witness does not lie, But a false witness will utter lies.

Proverbs 14:25 A true witness delivers souls, But a deceitful witness speaks lies.

Proverbs 19:5 A false witness will not go unpunished, And he who speaks lies will not escape.

Proverbs 19:9 A false witness will not go unpunished, And he who speaks lies shall perish.

Proverbs 24:28 Do not be a witness against your neighbor without cause, For would you deceive with your lips?

Proverbs 25:18 A man who bears false witness against his neighbor Is like a club, a sword, and a sharp arrow.

Jesus Christ as the faithful witness

Isaiah 55:4

John 3:11

John 5:31-36

his works: John 10:25

John 18:37

Revelation 1:5

Revelation 3:14

John the Baptist as a faithful witness

John 1:7-8; 32

John 3:28

John 8:13-18

God as witness of evildoing

Jeremiah 29:23

Malachi 2:14

3:5

False witness comes out of the heart

Matthew 15:19

The gospel as a witness

Matthew 24:14

The OT prophets witness to Christ

Acts 10:43

The apostles as witnesses

John 15:27

Acts 1:22

Acts 4:33

Acts 22:15

Acts 23:11

Acts 26:16

Revelation 1:2

False witnesses against Christ

Mark 14:56-57

God as witness to Christ

1 John 5

Downs:

God commands honesty in our speech

God reserves the right to govern our mouths

so many times sanctification is expressed in terms of your speech

Col 3:5

Pr 12:17-22

Psalms 101

Matthew 12:33-37

Our assurance rests in the honesty of God Hebrews 6:11-20

Be honest regarding what God has said

Speak the truth in love

Hodgins:

We know lying is the idea because of

Hosea 4:1-2 Hear the word of the LORD, You children of Israel, For the LORD brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land: "There is no truth or mercy Or knowledge of God in the land. (2) By swearing and lying, Killing and stealing and committing adultery, They break all restraint, With bloodshed upon bloodshed.

John 8:44-55

Cairns

this commandment maintains the integrity of Israel's legal system

see Ex 23:7 Deu 23:6

What is lying?

-deliberately representing as true what you know to be untrue

-Psalm 101:7 lying includes idea of deliberate act

-uttering from the heart words of falsehood Psalm 5:6

JRY:

Our business is truth. If we are to be believed, we must have a reputation for truthfulness.

Chanski:

this sin makes you most like the devil

the church has been taught this emphatically in the case of Annanias and Saphira