

The Ninth Commandment

Seeking Reality and Embodying Truth

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One of my purposes in going through the last six commandments that deal with our relationship with our fellow human beings has been to show how trust within communities is destroyed by breaking them. I have been giving you a large number of statistics to impress on us how overwhelming the breaking of them is.

The vast numbers of people in this nation just do not care about keeping them because they do not fear God. Personal issues and other concerns are exceedingly more important than God and each other. They seem to make no connection between the breaking of these laws and how bad things are in their lives and in the community. The result is that we live with an uncomfortable measure of apprehension of danger. We are wary and somewhat suspicious instead of at peace.

Today we are going to continue in the commandments, and we have gotten to the one about which few, if any, statistics are kept. What I mean is that we cannot go to the library or on the Internet and see reams of charts, graphs, and figures compiled by the FBI as I could do with murder, rape, robbery, or thievery. What one does find, though, is that this sin confirms in a thousand different ways that we Israelites are having a supremely difficult time being trustworthy. The breaking of this commandment seems to be a problem that we Israelites are particularly afflicted with. Indeed, it almost seems as though it is in the genes.

With that thought, we are going to begin by turning to the book of John. In the first chapter Jesus is beginning to collect the men who would become the apostles around Him.

John 1:45-47 Philip found Nathanael, and said to him, "We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." And Nathanael said

to him, "Can there anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!"

The words "no deceit" means a person who is simple, uncomplicated, without deceit or subtlety. It is someone who is candid and sincere. Let us consider what Jesus said here. Was this a compliment from Jesus, or was it a mild sarcasm? To me, Jesus seemed almost pleasantly surprised. It is something I like to look at in a positive way, because this man went on to be one of His apostles.

I am going to change the translation there just a little bit. I am not twisting it in any way. "A real Israelite is one in whom there is no falsehood." Let me give you an altered rendering of that so that it is a little bit more helpful, because Jesus reveals a penetrating truth that all need to pay heed to. He seems to be referring here to the deceitful Jacob—that is, Jacob before his conversion. Before Jacob's conversion, Isaac said to Esau, "Your brother came with guile and has taken away your blessing." Nathanael though represented a true Israelite; that is, a person without deceit. That is as Jacob became after he was converted.

Now fast-forward to modern times. Lying is such an integral part of the fabric of our lives. We have coined such expressions of disbelief, such as, "Is that so?" You expect what this person is telling you is an exaggeration. Or they may say, "Do you really mean it?"

We expect advertisers to exaggerate the quality of their products. We expect politicians to be crooked, lie, be evasive, using their position to become wealthy, making undercover deals with contractors or even with crime figures. We expect policemen to be on the take, and for businessmen to give little in return for the highest price as the traffic will bear.

Indeed, the revolvers justified much of the turmoil this nation experienced in the 1960s because they said that they were disillusioned by the obvious hypocrisy of leaders becoming wealthy on an ever-prolonging of the Vietnam War.

Maybe you do not remember this, but President Eisenhower and President Johnson were caught openly lying at news conferences. It was a strangling web of intrigue that brought about President Nixon's resignation. This may seem like a little thing, but back when it happened it was not so little to many people. General Motors misrepresented their Oldsmobiles by lying that they had Chevy engines in them. Like I say, it was not a big thing, but it was business, you see, and we expect that kind of thing. We have grown to expect it.

People in government commonly lie "in the national interest," as the saying goes. Many have testified that Bill and Hillary Clinton spent eight years virtually continuously lying about a wide variety of personal failings, money-making deals, and political intrigues they were involved in.

Listen to this cynical quote from a very famous politician whose deepest involvements were in wartime in which the artfully euphemistically named "disinformation" is a common tactic. Winston Churchill said, "Truth is so precious it must be surrounded by a bodyguard of lies."

What a nation! Is this a great nation, or what? Many of us have just come to expect these things to occur. The reason we expect these things to occur is that we know it is happening continuously. And, even when a person is caught, it continues right on in an unbroken manner. Maybe not by the same person, but the theme and direction of these people never changes.

This next passage is very interesting. We are not going to go through the entire thing, but it begins with God saying in the first couple of verses that He is going to make Jerusalem like a burnt offering site. In other words, He is going to burn it to the ground, and utterly destroy it, as if Jerusalem itself is the burnt offering. We are going to drop down to the list of charges He has against Jerusalem.

Isaiah 29:13-15 Therefore the Lord said, "Inasmuch as this people draw near Me with their mouth and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their heart far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men, therefore, behold, I will again do a marvelous work among this people, a marvelous work and a wonder; for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the

understanding of their prudent men shall be hidden. Woe to those who seek deep to hide their counsel far from the LORD, and their works are in the dark; and they say, 'Who sees us? Who knows us?'"

That is how far they were from believing God. They were openly lying before the people, but they did it on the basis that nobody of any *real* authority was watching their every word and their every deed. So this charge against Israel is to a people who are so insensitive to God and truth that they are blind to dishonesty's destructive power.

On the national scene we parade slogans such as, "In God We Trust"; "One nation under God." Our citizens, by the thousands, swear on Bibles daily in our courts, and then proceed to lie on the witness stand. People attend church on Sunday, and then conduct business Monday through Friday in the same normal self-centered way. All of us grew up in this twisted environment and it has conditioned our approach to life to some degree.

God, here, is accusing His people of hypocritically playing games with His truth and not facing up to His standards in daily life. And yet they proclaim "God," or "Jesus Christ," or whatever, and appear to be worshipping Him. But, there is a disconnect between the words that they say and the conduct of their lives. That is what He is calling into account here. He says He is going to consume Jerusalem—meaning the capital city—just like a burnt offering. That is pretty devastating.

Jesus quoted this verse of Isaiah 29:13 in Matthew 15:8, and if you would compare the context with these two verses, you would see that they are strikingly similar. In both cases, the hypocritical people mishandle the revelation of God. But after a while, through persistent practice, the deception or hypocrisy becomes established as the way of life. That is the place we have come to, where people lie and never really give God a thought. But they will go to church, and they will claim to be His children.

What we will see in the next passage is actually part of a sermon Moses preached. Actually, God inspired it, but Moses gave it.

Deuteronomy 32:1-6 "Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; and give ear, O earth, the words of My mouth. Let My teaching[My

instruction] shall drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, as raindrops on the tender herb, and as the showers on the grass. For I will proclaim the name of the LORD: Ascribe you greatness to our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all his ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He. They [the people] have corrupted themselves, they are not His children because of their blemish: a perverse and crooked generation. [He is saying that if they were really His children they would not be like that. They would be like Him.] Do you thus deal the LORD [that is, pay Him back], O foolish and unwise people? Is not He your Father who bought you? Has He not made you and established you?"

This description by God is exactly the opposite of our national character. If we were really a Christian nation, this could not honestly be given by God. Our character is not like His; therefore it is the character of some enemy of God.

We have rejected, following the example that is given here in the names of God, by living lies that bring destruction and death. I will give very briefly what this means.

First of all, our God is a God of truth. In this case, it means He is unswervingly faithful to His Word. He is a Rock—implying one who is impervious to change. He does not change. "I am God. I change not." So He is always going to be faithful. He is our foundation, which is another characteristic of a rock, but in that figure it indicates One who gives firm footing to a way of life. He also says He is our fountain. That is, He is the source of a refreshing growth-giving way of life that He intends to be used.

I say these things because these are things that we utter, because this nation was founded, not on true Christianity, but on at least a form of Christianity. There are Christian principles that all run through our Constitution, but we are not living up to what we knew of at that time.

We are going to go from here to something that is said about Jesus in Revelation. Here an outstanding, very important characteristic of Jesus Christ is given. Remember, Deuteronomy says that God is a God of truth. He

is trustworthy. He does not change. His truth does not change, and He does not change. Here in Revelation the term is changed, but it means virtually the same thing.

Revelation 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judge and makes war.

Let us add to this a verse in John 14:6, where Jesus said of Himself: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." We have got three things linked here: (1) Deuteronomy 32, where God used "true and faithful," (2) Revelation 19 where Jesus Christ is "Faithful and True," and (3) John 14:16, where Jesus is "the way, the truth, and the life." All of these are in contrast to the people who call themselves by the name of God, saying that they are Christians.

So Jesus is "Faithful and True"—and that second word, true, seemingly doubling the affirmation that He is faithful. That is, He always sticks by His Word. His character never deviates from that which is true. In Revelation 19, "faithful" means reliable, trustworthy. He is one of unswerving integrity. In actual practice, He is trustworthy.

Let us ask another question. We are thinking here of a community. It can be a village, a town, a city, a nation, or a family, because it gets down that small. This aspect of being trustworthy, of being reliable and of unswerving integrity gets down that small. We are going to use the Bible as an example here.

In any community (and I am thinking of this mostly in terms of a nation because it is most obvious here), who must be faithful and true above all others? Who must be reliable? Who must be able to be trusted? Who in the Bible does God show is the most important in this respect to the welfare of a community, state, or nation? It is not the doctors. It is not the lawyers. It is not the politicians. It is not the businessmen. It is the preacher, primarily; and right after the preacher comes the king. There are logical, practical reasons for this. It is the preacher and the king, because they should teach, administer, and exemplify and provide the values upon which that community will function.

What does God show in His Word? If you will compare the context of the verses that appear in both Deuteronomy 32 and Revelation 19, we would see in the context of both of those books that a new culture, a new nation, is being established, and it would seem that God is indicating that there is a slight edge to the importance of the preacher. Now why? Because it will be the preacher God uses to establish the nation's morality.

Think of this. When God established Israel as a nation, who was the first person He appointed? It was the preacher. Whom did God do the work for? It was the preacher, called a prophet, because if this nation was ever going to get off on the right standing, it was going to have to have truth right from the beginning. So God sent a preacher to be the one who would lead them out of their slavery and into liberty, represented by being out in the wilderness. Let us confirm that.

We read about the physical nation of Israel, and now we get into the New Testament. Whom did God send to be the first one to establish the way in which His people under the New Covenant are to live? He sent the rabbi Jesus. That ought to tell you something. It was His responsibility to teach the way of God. Then after He died and was resurrected, He became High Priest, and High Priest still is a religious administrator function.

When He comes the next time, He is coming as King of kings in order to administer the way that He taught in the first place. From beginning to end, brethren, this is why there is so much importance on these two in the Bible: the preacher (who might be called a prophet) and the king. One is to establish the morality of a nation, and the other one is to establish the correction that needs to be made, and administers what the other one preaches. That is the order God has always followed.

Any of you who have lived as long as I have know that what happened in the United States for the past 50 to 75 years is that the churches have abandoned God by the droves, by the scores, by the hundreds. The preachers have turned away from what they knew about God and have become tolerant of virtually anything, any way of life that might come down the pike. Because things are like this, it has gotten to the place where God has been pushed out of the schools. He has been pushed out of the government. He is being pushed out of people's private lives. You cannot have a people who are

responding in truth to the God of truth, to the way of truth, when something like this has occurred.

A long time ago I read a quote that was quite famous at the time. Back in the 1960s, one preacher had enough perception to say, "The preachers have become very good at turning wine into water." There can be no turn-around until there are preachers who are willing to preach the truth of God. That is the order God will follow if there is going to be any repentance. But we can pretty well see from God's Word that even if men like the Two Witnesses come in our lifetime, it does not look as though the nation is going to be of a mind to accept them, and turn themselves around. Indeed, the whole world is going to reject them, and eventually kill them.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man come to the Father, except through Me."

John 14:17 "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him: but you know Him; for He dwells with you and shall be in you."

Jesus *is* the truth, and we are given the spirit of truth to dwell within us, to take up residence within us, and there is a practical reason why that is done. Jesus is the Second Adam. He is the beginning of a new order of an entire race—a Family of beings just like Him. Right now all of mankind is in the image of our forefather—the *first* Adam.

Many people can say, "I told you the truth," but there is a difference between them and Jesus. Many people can *tell* the truth, but Jesus did not just *tell* the truth, He *embodied* it. Notice He said, "I don't tell you the truth. I *am* truth." This becomes very important. In His life He put truth into a visible, concrete form so that all who want to see it can. What accountability that gives to anybody who follows the same order in *their* life.

A teacher can tell you a mathematical, a grammatical, a spelling, or a historical truth, and it does not matter what he is like in his person, but if a person teaches or administers moral truth, his example is what he *is*, and it is

all-important. Do you want a simple test? Do you want to be lectured by an adulterer on the sanctity of marriage? Do you want to be lectured on honesty by a liar, or on stealing by a thief?

I want to bring this principle down to your family. Brethren, think of this in relationship to your children. You are the administrator, and you may be the teacher of morality in your family who administers that to your children. Those little eyes and those ears are watching all the time. Your character, your example, may not affect them right away, but eventually it will come out.

Now this is the complaint the Father and the Son have against the people of Israel. The people of Israel had access, and they could see the embodiment of truth in the life of Jesus Christ through this Book, but it has not transferred in their lives because they *willingly* rejected it. So that is what God has against them and why He says He is going to turn Jerusalem into a sacrificial pit.

He has all the evidence He needs to convict, and why it looks as though there is going to be no repentance at the end time, because the hypocrisies have become a way of life to the extent that they *cannot* accept truth. It does not mean they are lost for all time. God is merciful and He is going to take that into consideration, and they will be resurrected in the second resurrection. But it gives us understanding of God's justification for blasting them all into the destruction of which He is prophesying.

Jesus embodied truth. I want us to go to John 17 to a very interesting thing there. We all know what this verse says, but we are going to look at it a little more deeply.

John 17:17 "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth."

The Greek word here translated into the English "truth" is *aletheia*. It does mean truth, and this is not a wrong translation, but there are alternatives that sometimes give us a better understanding. It also means "reality." "Sanctify them with Your reality," and that is a truth. It is just a little bit different shade of meaning, and sometimes that is very helpful.

Reality is the visible, unconcealed essence of a matter. You might say something like, "The real issue is . . ." and distill what is being discussed down to maybe one sentence or one little phrase; and so the reality is the distilled essence of a matter. It is a truth that lies at the basis of what is being discussed. Now truth *is* the reality that lies at the foundation of a righteous example. You do not see it. You just see the example, but the righteous example would not even exist if the reality (truth) was not understood by that person and put into practice. You do not actually see the reality, but it is nonetheless there.

I want you to look at this contrast, because it is the reality that is accurate, reliable, and authoritative. Remember that word—Jesus is faithful. He is faithful to a reality—something that exists. It is not seen, but at the foundation of His faithfulness is a reality that He will not turn away from, and because He will not turn away from that reality, which is truth.

He is absolutely reliable and trustworthy in every situation. Why? Because He is always going to use reality—God's truth—as the basis for everything that He does. This is our goal in life.

John 8:44 "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth [not in the reality] because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar, and the father of it."

Satan is Christ's diametric opposite. He is one hundred percent unmodified deceit.

God's entire plan is based on the premise by the converted that God is truth. He *is* reality. If He is not true to His Word or how He Himself lives, how can He be trusted? But He *can*. Absolutely. He can be trusted.

Now we, by faith, must live by this understanding of what He is in Himself, and what He says, which is a verbal expression of His nature. He is always true, and thus it is truth that forms the basis—the foundation, the reality—for your and my conversion. Truth. Unfiltered. All the time true.

Now consider this. There is a personal living Almighty God whose way and laws are intrinsically right. They are true; therefore, a person who is honest, who is willing to seek the truth, to acknowledge it when it is shown to him, and then use it in everyday practical situations must eventually be converted to God and be like Him. This is the process that we are going through.

We are to be cutting off lies and falsehood, and it comes to us in doctrinal form or whatever, and we are to put into practice the things that God says in His Word, because they are true. We may not be able to grasp *why* they are true, but because we trust Him we are willing to do it anyway even though we do not have a complete answer. God is constantly watching our response to truth. I am going to change that a little bit. God is constantly watching our response to reality.

Now God is making us kings and priests—leaders and teachers of a way of life based upon revealed truth. Those of you who have been in the church a long time, how many times did you hear Herbert Armstrong say, "God will not have anyone in His Family who does not embody truth as Jesus did"? Maybe not to the same degree, but we are on the path, and we are showing by the trajectory of our life that we are walking the same path as Jesus did.

By this response to the truth, we are showing God we love Him, we respect Him, and we are following Him. It might get us dinged up once in a while, but that does not turn us aside. Every once in a while we may trip and fall, but we repent. We pick ourselves up and go on, always turning toward reality, which is God's Word. It is a reflection of God Himself.

This commandment has very far-reaching applications. "You shall not bear false witness," He says. The word "bear" means spread, carry, render, or give. Now first, the commandment appears to involve only lying in a court of law. I have read commentators who say that this does not apply to everyday life, that mostly it just applies to when you happen to be in a court of law and you have to give the truth in such a case.

Not so. It might mean that, but only if you take the commandment only at face value.

Jesus showed that there is a spirit, that there is an intent to God's laws that carry that application far beyond the face-value judgments that somebody would give them. Many scriptures show that it covers lying under any circumstance, including two biggies: hypocrisy and self-deception.

In its broadest application, it includes any situation in which a falsehood would injure the reputation of God, injure the name of God, injure your own name, injure the name of another person, or injure their reputation. And so, we might lie, or twist the truth, in order to protect or whatever.

No. God would say, "Let *Me* protect that person. You tell the truth." It applies to those kinds of situations.

The ninth commandment is in much the same position in man's relationship to fellow man as the third commandment is to God Himself. This commandment directly involves faithfulness and loyalty with our mouth and with the witness of our example for God before men.

Proverbs 22:1 A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver and gold.

It flatly says in the Soncino commentary that a person's good reputation—his name—is his most valuable asset. Indeed, the Bible shows that God very jealously guards and protects *His* name. This is because His name represents what He is, and He wants His reputation always to be upheld, and He wants us, through this proverb, to see that it is important for us as well.

Did you know that the motivation for many to lie (and in so doing sow the seeds for the destruction of their reputation) is the desire for the approval of others? This leads so many to twist a story or to deliberately exaggerate or diminish one's part in the retelling of it. The one is looking for self-approval. Very interesting.

When we hear a name, images of what that person is immediately comes to mind. What we are, and how we are perceived by others, has everything to do with what we believe, what we practice, and what we say. This raises the

question: Is what we believe and practice true? It comes back to this simple thing. We are going to be sanctified, set apart, become holy through truth, through the application of truth, through the using of truth.

Lying does not fit into this equation at all, whether the lying is done by the tongue or whether the lying is done by the actions, by the conduct, or whether the lying is done in ignorance, or whether it is done in truth. Thus, if we are going to have a good name—a good reputation in the eyes of both God and man—it means that we must have recognized and used truth.

It is a simple formula to state. It is not always easy in application, but that is what the formula is. We have truth. We believe truth. We use truth, and we are willing to use it even at the sacrifice of something that might be very important to us.

It is this process, brethren, that produces faithfulness, being trustworthy, and being a person that can be leaned upon and is reliable. I am not speaking just of doctrinal truth. I am speaking of truth wherever it happens to impact on our life.

Response to truth is where a person's witness begins, and it is response to truth that carries the growth process as well. In other words, we just cannot do something that is true only one time. We have to do it, and do it, and do it until it becomes part of our character. We do it without thinking, because it is true and it has been ingrained within us. It is this process that is going to lead eventually into the Kingdom of God.

Hopefully you are beginning to see why this is so important that we do not lie. If truth does not form the foundation of a person's life, one is already behind the eight ball to some extent, and so resistance to truth must be met, and that resistance must be overcome. Sometimes it takes swallowing a bitter pill. Sometimes it requires a great deal of sacrifice.

At the bottom, at the very base of this problem—this resistance to truth—is a deceitful heart that continually lays traps to make lying an appealing course to follow, and guess who we lie to first? Ourselves. And then we do it to men, and thus our name before God is not good. It means that we, as God's children, in order to have this good name, must face up to our vanity and quit

lying to ourselves that God will just have to take us as we are. That is not the image of His Son.

He *was* truth, because He embodied it.

We need to quit blaming our failures, our problems, and our shortcomings on others, because these things provide us with a convenient justification for what we do, and what we are. Usually in this case, mom and dad are frequent targets in this area of life. They usually are guilty to some extent, but brethren, the pressure is on us to change, and for God to change what we are to a cooperative effort.

Change will not occur in this way of life until we face up to the reality that we are responsible for what we are. Let us quit blaming other people and accept that responsibility and work with God to change us. We bear a great deal of the responsibility of becoming what we hope to be.

Now nobody can do this except us. Nobody can do it *for* us, and this is the day-to-day stuff upon which trustworthiness and reputation are formed. Trustworthiness and righteous reputations are formed on the witness of what we do before men. What God wants our reputation before men to be built upon is first of all His truth, and then truth in general. Are we honestly doing as well as we could?

Proverbs 13:15 Good understanding gains favor, but the way of the unfaithful is hard.

Through this sermon, I am hoping to pass on to you a good understanding regarding lying. What God is saying in this proverb is that when a person consistently has a perception of what is true, it adds a force of beauty to his character, that it creates in other people favorable impressions that open doors for him. Do you know the word "gain"? Good understanding gains favor. God is saying this is the way to success. It opens up doors before the person who is honest and who can be trusted in any given situation.

Let me give you an example. Would you rather loan money to a person with a record of steady work and payment of debts, or to a person with a spotty record and who consistently defaults on obligations? Which one is going to

be more likely to get the loan, to have the door open, to have the favor there? It is the person whose character shows he can be trusted, that he is reliable, and will pay back the debt.

A person of good character is one who recognizes that truth spells out one's responsibility. He understands it, and he submits to it, and what that does even before men, is open doors, and it glorifies God at exactly the same time. So if a person will not do this, he will not have good character. He will not have the good name that goes with it. If he does recognize and understands his problem, but does not submit to the truth, whom is he deceiving? Himself. If the person knows this and does not submit to it, he is deceiving himself. This principle holds true to every other area upon which a name is built.

Think about this in regard to everyday things—your marriage, childrearing. Are God's principles being followed? How about health issues? Are we really eating what we should, or are we kidding ourselves, actually lying to ourselves and giving ourselves justification, saying, "Well, that's not going to hurt me"?

Brethren, there are so many of us running away from the reality, the truth about ourselves. We know it, and we hide from it, and yet it is right there with us.

There is hardly anything that will destroy a reputation quicker than that people know the person is a liar. And, I might add a hypocrite.

Thus this commandment covers, "You shall not bear false witness about another, or an event, by means of one's tongue." "You shall not bear false witness about God and yourself by means of your example."

To make a bad witness because of ignorance or weakness is one thing. We all do that. To know better and deliberately mislead is another thing altogether. That makes the sin willful.

Why do we lie? Very often it is to cover up our lack of responsibility. We fear that something about ourselves we wish to hide will be exposed. We also lie to rise above our feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. All it is, is

vanity. Sometimes we lie to lower a third party in the eyes of others. And all this has the effect of elevating ourselves in our own eyes, and we hope in the eyes of others too.

Let me give you a bombshell. Again, why do we lie? We are vainly attempting to control something. It is our means of manipulation. We do not want the reality to be known, and so we manipulate with a lie, hoping that we will control that person's thinking so that it will not go in the direction that it would go if we told the truth.

Proverbs 26:18-19 Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death, is the man who deceives his neighbor, and says, "I was only joking!"

These two verses begin a series of proverbs on lying that carry all the way through to the end of the chapter. Verses 18 and 19 are better translated in this manner: "A man who deceives his neighbor and disguises his deception as a joke [Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! See?] is as dangerous as a madman shooting arrows at a crowd."

Do you see plainly what God says, that when a lie is told, somebody is going to get hurt anyway, and God calls such a thing "mad, and insane."

"Tell the truth," God is saying. Yes, somebody may get hurt, and most likely you, but that is better than hurting somebody else when you sacrifice *your* reputation in order to protect somebody else's.

As I mentioned before, the deception is being done to manipulate, to control the direction that the person does not want to see it go in.

Proverbs 26:23 Fervent lips with a wicked heart are like a earthenware covered with silver dross.

Proverbs 26:25-26 When he speaks kindly, do not believe him, for there are seven abominations in his heart; though his hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness will be revealed before the assembly.

That is pretty plain. God is saying a person who lies is doing it out of hatred. Sometimes we think that we are trying to control a situation and we are trying *not* to hurt somebody. God is saying it would be better to tell the truth or to say nothing at all, than it would be to give an answer that is a lie.

These proverbs, beginning with about verse 23, primarily involve hypocrisy. And, one of the things God is saying is that lying lips create a false sense of security, and they hide the reality of the deception, which will be loss and pain. In other words, it is going to come back. "You can be sure your sin will find you out," Moses said. God is saying the best thing to do is face up to the reality right now rather than later, because at least you have preserved your reputation of being a follower of truth, and taking the pain upon yourself. That is an act of service to your brethren.

God is also saying to the person who is receiving this falsehood, that though the liar's voice sounds gracious, the liar is full of countless wickedness. If they lie in this situation, they are going to lie in others, and others, and others, and still others. It never ends. If the character chain is not broken and a right kind of link put into place, one sin is going to continue to lead to another, and a lying sin tends to escalate and begins to bring other things into it.

Proverbs 26:26 Though his hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness will be revealed before the assembly.

Now why can we say something like this consistently? It is because there is a God in heaven. God is judging His creation, and He is not asleep ever, and His memory is perfect. He will find a way to correct a situation that is going on in His Family even if it requires Him to expose the liar before the whole congregation.

Proverbs 26:27 Whoever digs a pit [meaning a pit of lies] will fall into it, and he who rolls a stone, will have it roll back on him.

These are pretty graphic. Liars have that which they have lied about come back on them. Whatever one sows, that is what one reaps.

Proverbs 26:28 A lying tongue hates those who are crushed by it, and a flattering mouth works ruin.

I want to go to Jeremiah 17 just to expand on a very well-known verse. I will give some synonyms that will help you to understand it a little bit more clearly.

Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?

I want to expand on this word "deceitful." Depending upon the context in which this Hebrew word appears ("deceitful" is a very fine translation in this context), but the context that this word can be used in can appear differently and have somewhat different teaching within them. It can be translated as "faithless." Are we not trying to be faithful? A deceitful heart is faithless, insincere, hypocritical, underhanded, false, dishonest, treacherous, sneaky, double-dealing, tricky, cunning, and crafty.

We might be able to accept being, "Oh, I am a little tricky," "I am a little deceitful," "I say a little white lie once in a while," but we are cunning, we are crafty, you see. God says, "Oh yes. How deceitful that heart is, and that is what needs to be changed." It all depends on the context in which that word would appear.

It also says there, "The heart is desperately wicked." It can also be translated that "it is incurable." Some modern translations translate it that way. But what this part of the verse implies is that it is a heart that knows better, but it lies anyway. That is how bad it is. It is addicted to lying.

So who can fathom the heart's treachery or corruptness? We all know where it came from. The prince of the power of the air is largely responsible for this evil proclivity that we find buried within us, raising its ugly head every so often. I should say, every time the opportunity arises to try to trip us up, and that part of our heart is incurable. Satan's heart is incurable, and some small portion of that heart still remains in us, and this is what we have to resist. We must recognize this reality and not bow before it, but overcome it using the power of God's Spirit, which is truth, to smash it within ourselves and thus bring God glory, and at the same time add to the kind of character God will

welcome into His Family—character that is faithful and loyal and is willing to sacrifice itself.

Let us turn to one more scripture and we will end here. It is in the book of Psalms.

Psalm 15:1-5 Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart; he who does not backbite with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor does he takes up a reproach against his neighbor; in whose eyes a vile person is despised; but he honors those who fear the LORD; he who swears to his own hurt, and does not change [He will tell the truth even if it is going to hurt him.]; he who does not put out his money to usury, nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved.

When I was studying for this sermon I was surprised to discover two things that were new to me. The first is, that among Christians, when they are asked, "What is your favorite psalm?" the majority of them will say "Psalm 23." "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."

Interestingly, when a Jew is asked the same question—"What is your favorite psalm?"—the majority of them will say, "Psalm 15." That was the first thing that was a surprise to me. But the Jews, for whatever the reason, perceive things a little bit differently from those who are of the Christian faith.

The second thing that surprised me is that the Hebrew of the phrase, "Who may dwell," does not suggest living in, but rather visiting with. With that thought in mind, what the psalm starts off with, and of course carries all the way through, is to actually be living with. But what the psalm begins with is, "What does it take to be acceptable to be in God's presence, to be able to pray to Him so that He hears, and to actually come into His presence that way, not to live with right now?" It is for us to be able to go there to seek the kind of response, to give God thanksgiving and so forth, to make our petitions before Him, to find grace in a time of need. What the psalm is saying is, "With this character you will be accepted."

How often, how frequently was a person who was facing up to truth be a part of that character? Why? This coordinates with John 17:17. It is by truth that we are sanctified; not just recognizing it, but using it because it is beginning to enable us to be like Christ, and not just know truth, but actually to embody it in what we say and what we do. When we do that, we are always doing that which pleases the Father. That is beautiful. It revolves around truth.

If you ever thought this commandment was not important, or was a lesser commandment because, after all, it is number nine, and therefore it is not as important as the ones that come before it—oh, yes it is! It is every bit as much, and maybe more because of its fact that it is truth that sanctifies us, and it is truth toward which we are being drawn. That means we have to practice it with our tongue and with our life.