

The Law of God, Part 10: "Nothing but the Truth"

Exodus 20:1 ESV (Pg. 35) And God spoke all these words, saying, **2** "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. **3** You shall have no other gods before me. **4** You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. **5** You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, **6** but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. **7** You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. **8** Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. **9** Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, **10** but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. **11** For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. **12** Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. **13** You shall not murder. **14** You shall not commit adultery **15** You shall not steal. **16** You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."

- I. When our children were young, Ginger and I decided that one of the offenses that would incur sure and severe discipline from us was the sin of lying. While we could, and did respond mercifully to all manner of other offenses, lying *always* meant a spanking would be given. The basis of this was simple. There are naughty things children do because they are childish and immature, and must be addressed in a multitude of creative ways. Lying, however, is always done with malicious intent.
 - A. A lying person is misrepresenting facts, people or both, and always for selfish reasons. The liar never regards others, but is only seizing personal advantage.
 1. From a child who robs the cookie jar, to a politician who robs the public coffers, lies are constructed to divert your attention from their guilt, and so that they won't have to sacrifice what their sinful heart desired and took. Bernie Madoff told his investors that their investments had garnered a 65 billion dollar return, when he had actually stolen 20 billion from them!¹
 2. But people don't just use deceptions to divert attention from their own misconduct, but to saddle the innocent with unjustified blame. They protect their own reputations by destroying the reputations of others.
 - a) Australian brothers Ray, Peter, and Brian Mickelberg were accused of stealing 49 gold bars valued at \$650,000 in 1983.
 - b) All three brothers served prison sentences of various lengths until it was discovered that authorities had fabricated confessions, planted evidence, lied at the trials, and tortured the accused in order to frame them.²
 3. Yet others simply lie for the thrill of it all, desperately trying to impress their audience with exaggerated tales of their adventures, accomplishments and qualifications, hoping by the use of deception to gain some level of esteem.

- a) In the 70's and 80's, Mike Warnke was a very popular speaker who spoke of his days as the High Priest of a satanic cult, a notorious drug dealer, and a Viet Nam combat hero until his conversion to Christianity. He became a frequent consultant to law enforcement agencies investigating occult-related crimes and sold thousands of books and records.
 - b) The only problem was that every bit of the story was untrue. An investigative expose by Cornerstone magazine in 1991 that included interviews with over 100 of Warnke's personal friends and acquaintances revealed inaccuracies, fraud and deceit rampant in Warnke's story.
 - c) Pictures taken during the time he claimed to be a Satanist priest, rather than showing an emaciated drug-addict with waist-length hair, showed Warnke as a rotund and typical 'square' from the mid-1960s.³
- B. Ginger and I hated the idea of our children learning to lie because there is nothing so opposed to the nature and character of God as untruth. The Bible tells us in the book of Numbers that “God is not a man that he should lie.”⁴ Our confidence in God is in the assurance that he will never (and cannot) lie to us.
- 1. As parents, we wanted our children to embrace this characteristic of their heavenly Father, valuing and committing their lives to the truth.
 - 2. The 9th Commandment, “**You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor**” serves as a reminder of this aspect of God's holiness, and a call to all of his people to reflect that holiness in return.
- C. The new nature given to us by the Holy Spirit requires that we live in the truth, that we speak the truth, that we promote the truth, and stand up for the truth. This must be our commitment even when the truth is hard, when it will cost us our standing with friends and family, or even when the culture rejects the truth. In any and all circumstances, believers must be recognized as people of truth.
- 1. This is one of those things that is easy for most of us to affirm, but harder to live out. Do a quick assessment of yourself by thinking about the scenarios I gave earlier. I admit they showed examples an **extreme** departure from truth.
 - 2. But ask yourself, do I ever distort the facts to avoid trouble with my spouse, my boss, my teacher or the cop that pulls me over? Do I withhold details or blatantly shift blame when I am wrong, even at the expense of others? Am I prone to exaggeration and one-upmanship to impress others with my stories? If any of these apply, the 9th commandment is being broken.
- II. We cannot really talk about these transgressions of the law, however, until we consider what it means to those who are in Christ; for whom the law has been perfectly fulfilled by him, and who have been delivered from the curse of the law.
- A. So we ask, “on what basis do we give ourselves to lives of total honesty?” On the basis that, as earlier stated, our triune God is a God of absolute truth.
- 1. Not only is God a truth teller, but all truth originates with God. Augustine, the greatest theologian of the first millennium once said “...let every good and true Christian understand that wherever truth may be found, it belongs to his Master...”⁵ R.C Sproul said centuries later “all of truth is God's truth”⁶.
 - a) This would include the truths of the Bible as well as the truths of science. It includes truths of economics and sociology. It includes simple facts like

- “flowers are beautiful”, as well as deep mysteries surrounding black holes in space, and blacker holes in the souls of those who are without Christ.
- b) No matter what our post-modern, secular world says, truth cannot be compartmentalized into the scientific and the religious. Truth is also not relative to culture, feeling, or interpretation. All truth is God’s truth alone.
2. God has no vested interest in the domain of lies. There is another power that operates and trades in that realm. Jesus said to a stunned group of Jews **John 8:44 ESV** You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and **does not stand in the truth**, because there is **no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.**
 - a) What a clear distinction! Those standing outside the truth, who embrace and spread lies, literally belong to the devil! He is a father to them! Whereas all truth is God’s truth, Christ says “there is no truth” in the devil!
 - b) Jesus, on the other hand is the embodiment of the truth. He famously said of himself, **John 14:6 ESV** Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and **the truth**, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
- B. But how do we fulfill God’s demand for honesty from his people? Is it as simple as being as young George Washington was fabled to be, with a firm resolve that we “cannot tell a lie”? Maybe that’s good, but you’ve heard me say repeatedly in this series that moral resolve alone is never an effective tool to fundamentally transform our fallen hearts. We need to be regenerated by the Spirit instead. I believe the solution to the problem begins with honesty in at least four directions: honesty towards ourselves, others, with God, and with the world.
1. What does honesty with ourselves look like? I’m definitely not taking about making “self-affirmations”! In the 1990’s, Saturday Night Live had a recurring character named Stuart Smalley who would begin his parody show by staring into a mirror and stating, “I’m good enough. I’m smart enough. And doggone it, people like me!”⁷ That is not what self-honesty looks like! **2 Peter 1:10 ESV** Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.
 - a) Many people claim to be believers, but would never test their claim in the light of the scriptures. They assume that they are Christians because because of a decision they made, but we belong to Christ because of a decision he made. **James 3:14 ESV** But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, **do not boast and be false to the truth.**
 - b) The proof of belonging to Jesus Christ therefore is not in a past-tense decision, but in an ongoing, present-tense transformation. Is there daily less similarity between yourself and those that are perishing without Christ in the world? Are you growing more like Jesus everyday?
 - c) The way others have stated it is like this: "If you were on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict?" **2 Corinthians 13:5 ESV** **Examine yourselves**, to see whether you are in the faith. **Test yourselves.** Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test! Don’t assume on a

- preacher's words, assuring you of your salvation if your life shows no evidence of the Holy Spirit's work! You are deceiving yourself!
2. But we are also called to be honest with each other. **Colossians 3:9 ESV Do not lie to one another**, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices **10** and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.
 - a) The reason we don't lie to one another is because we have been made new! Lying is evidence of the old self, when we belonged to our father the devil. But now we have purchased by Jesus for the Father's glory.
 - b) Therefore lying must be put away in all of our interactions, but it especially should not be found among the people of God. **Ephesians 4:25 ESV Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.**
 3. Thirdly, we are to walk in total honesty before God. It is a very fallen human assumption to think that we can somehow hide the depravity of our attitudes, and the darkness in our souls from God. This is why Adam and Eve sewed together fig leaves after they sinned. They were attempting to hide from a holy God the fact that they were naked, having been slain by their own sinful desires. It didn't work then, and it still doesn't work now.
 - a) If you think your religious devotion and your charitable deeds (or any other thing) are blinding God's eyes to the depravity of your lust and rage, your greed and deception, you are fooling yourself and are sadly mistaken. You may feel clothed, but it is only fig leaves that will soon wither and expose your spiritual nakedness. What will you do then?
 - b) The only way to real peace with God is not through moral perfection, but an honest heart of repentance and dependence. **1 John 1:5 ESV This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.**
 4. Lastly, we must be honest with the world around us. This is where honesty with ourselves, others, and God all converge. If we fail to be honest with yourself, others, and God, you will have no credibility with a dying world.
 - a) "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." Carries with it a connotation of lying, under oath, in a court of law. This was considered an abomination in ancient Israel and carried stiff penalties. For example, **Deuteronomy 19:18 ESV The judges shall inquire diligently, and if the witness (in a case) is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely, 19 then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother.**
 - b) With that in mind, it is interesting that Jesus has called us, not to be his salespeople or agents, but his **witnesses**⁸. All of life is a courtroom. The devil is prosecuting against the gospel's truth, while the Spirit is contending for it. In this trial, we are witnesses to the truth or falsehood of it. What kind of a witness are you? Do you help or hurt the case?

- c) If you fail to be honest with yourself about your true spiritual state, you can only be a false witness. People will see your hypocrisy as a mockery of the truth and say you practice an empty religion. If you fail to be honest with one another, people will see you as a malicious phony that will turn and bite them as well at your first opportunity. If you fail to be honest with God, your whole life will be shrouded in darkness and you will simply be a blind person leading other blind people⁹.
 - d) What kind of a witness are you? Are you one that is false? Easily picked apart, and discredited by the satanic prosecuting attorney? Or are you a true witness, who through daily repentance and constant dependence on Christ are demonstrating the truth of the gospel to a dying world?
- C. "The greatest single cause of atheism in the world today is Christians who acknowledge Jesus with their lips and then walk out the door and deny him by their lifestyle. That is what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable." - Brennan Manning "You shall not bear false witness" - not to yourself, to others, to God or to the world around you. This commandment is at the very heart of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- III. The vital thing for us as believers to remember from this message and the 9th commandment is that truth is God's domain alone. Placing our faith in him frees us from the fear of exposure because we know that everything he has said about us, himself, the world, and his salvation is absolutely true! What but what has he said?
- A. He has said that all of us have sinned. He has said that all of our righteous deeds are about as valuable as filthy, blood-stained rags! It says that the just payment for all of our sinning is certain death and eternal judgement!
 - B. **Romans 5:8 ESV** but God shows his love for us in that *while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9* Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, *much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.*
 - 1. If you have placed your trust in Christ, think of what that means for you! All of your sin has been forgiven! Your record has been cleared! You are counted as perfectly righteous! You have been delivered from God's wrath! And you are being made new, from glory to glory¹⁰, everyday!
 - 2. If you are not a follower of Christ, God's truthfulness means that all you have to do is come to him and find the satisfaction you may have never thought possible. **Revelation 22:17 ESV** The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And *let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.*
 - C. In a way, our weekly celebration around the table of the Lord is a joyful reminder of God's truthfulness for us. What the prophets prophesied for centuries has now come to pass in the Person of Jesus Christ; full and eternal salvation for all who would just believe and call upon his Name!
 - 1. Together, we remember how his body was broken and his blood spilled so that we could be adopted into his family and given eternal life.
 - 2. What he promised, the God of all truth has delivered! **2 Corinthians 1:20 ESV** For all the promises of God find their Yes in him (Christ). That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen (So be it!) to God for his glory.

D. **1 Corinthians 11:23 ESV** For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, **24** and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **25** In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **26** For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

¹ <https://money.cnn.com/2013/12/10/news/companies/bernard-madoff-ponzi/>

² <https://www.smh.com.au/national/mint-robbers-were-framed-20020611-gdfcte.html>

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mike_Warnke

⁴ Numbers 23:19

⁵ <https://www.ligonier.org/blog/all-truth-gods-truth-reformed-approach-science-and-scripture/>

⁶ ibid

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stuart_Smalley

⁸ Acts 1:8

⁹ Luke 6:39

¹⁰ 2 Corinthians 3:18