

“Tell the Truth”  
(Exodus 20:16)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. The commandments are categories that control everything in that category.
  - a. 1<sup>st</sup>: Who is to be our God.
  - b. 2<sup>nd</sup>: How He will be worshipped.
  - c. 3<sup>rd</sup>: How His name will be used.
  - d. 4<sup>th</sup>: How His Sabbath will be kept.
  - e. 5<sup>th</sup>: How we are to honor and submit to authority.
  - f. 6<sup>th</sup>: How we are to protect life.
  - g. 7<sup>th</sup>: How we are to protect one another’s purity.
  - h. 8<sup>th</sup>: How we are to protect one another’s possessions.
  
2. These are the principles/inclinations He has written on our hearts.
  - a. This is what we will innately want to do by virtue of a new nature: the Law of love, the Law written on our hearts.
  - b. This is what we must do by virtue of His command.

B. Preview.

1. Tonight we come to the ninth commandment.
  - a. We could summarize this one as the principle of how we are to govern our tongues:
    - (i) How we are to use our tongues righteously.
    - (ii) How we are to love our neighbor with our tongues and not injure them with them.
    - (iii) How we are to promote truth with the power of speech and writing.
  
  - b. James summarizes the importance of how we use the tongue in James 3 (read).
    - (i) He warns against many becoming teachers because it is vital that truth be known and communicated clearly: it makes the difference between heaven and hell for ourselves and others.
    - (ii) He warns because of the difficulty of using the tongue righteously.
    - (iii) He warns because it is the devil’s primary tool of destruction (Rev. 12:10).
    - (iii) But he exhorts to tame the tongue and bend it to the Lord’s will.
    - (iv) The same is true of this member as any other: it must be subdued to Christ’s glory.
    - (v) This battle basically goes on in the heart.
  
  - c. That’s why what we say – how we use our tongues – shows what we are. Listen to some quotes on the use of the tongue:

- (i) “We know metals by their tinkling, and men by their talking” (Thomas Brooks).
- (ii) “He may not be accounted an honest man of life that is an evil man in tongue” (Nicholas Byfield).
- (iii) “An unbridled tongue is the chariot of the devil, wherein he rides in triumph. . . . The course of an unruly tongue is to proceed from evil to worse, to begin with foolishness, and go on with bitterness, and to end in mischief and madness (Eccl. 10:13). The Jew’s conference with our Saviour began with arguments: ‘We be Abraham’s seed,’ saith they, etc.; but proceeded to blasphemies: ‘Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?’ (Edward Reyner).
- (iv) “Some care not what they say in their passion; they will censure, slander, and wish evil to others. How can Christ be in the heart, when the devil has taken possession of the tongue? . . . Passion disturbs reason, it is *brevis insania*, a short frenzy. . . . Let them whose tongues are set on fire, take heed that they do not one day in hell desire a drop of water to cool them” (Thomas Watson).
- (v) Our Lord in Matthew 12:22-37 (read).
  - (a) One of the fruits of our lives is the fruit of our words.
  - (b) They also show the character of the tree.
  - (c) “The mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart” (v. 34).
  - (d) The good man brings what is good, the bad what is bad (v. 35).
  - (e) This is why the evidence of our words will speak for or against us on the day of judgment (vv. 36-37).

2. As we go through this commandment, we need to analyze what our tongues say about us.
  - a. This is a rather large area, so we will deal with it in several sermons.
  - b. This evening, we will begin in the most obvious area: how we use our tongues with respect to our neighbors.
  - c. The principle is: We must use our tongue to love our neighbor and not injure them.
  - d. Tonight, we have just enough time to break ground in this area.

## II. Sermon.

- A. Let’s consider the use of the tongue in relation to our neighbor: we must not unjustly injure our neighbor with our words, but build them up.
  1. The most obvious way we can injure our neighbor is by saying things about them that are lies.
    - a. We call this slander.
    - b. This is literally what the commandment forbids: “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”
    - c. Slander is to man what blasphemy is to God.
    - d. As a matter of fact, it’s the same word in the Greek.
    - e. It means saying something that isn’t true that is damaging to another’s character, reputation, or that gets them into trouble.

- f. We have many examples in Scripture:
    - (i) Joseph was slandered by Potiphar's wife (Gen. 39:14-18).
    - (ii) The land of Canaan was misrepresented by the 10 spies (Num. 14:36).
    - (iii) Mephibosheth was slandered by his servant Ziba: "Then the king said, 'And where is your master's son?' And Ziba said to the king, 'Behold, he is staying in Jerusalem, for he said, "Today the house of Israel will restore the kingdom of my father to me"' (2 Sam. 16:3).
    - (iv) Jezebel hired two men to lie about Naboth (1 Kings 21:9-13).
  - g. We do the same thing when we lie about others.
    - (i) On the job, if we shift the blame to someone else when it was our fault.
    - (ii) In our minds, if we blame others for our deficiencies.
    - (iii) If we have turned brother against brother by the things we have said about them in secret.
    - (iv) Children, when you blame your brother or sister for the fight when you were also to blame.
  - h. Solomon writes, "There are six things which the LORD hates, yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that run rapidly to evil, a false witness *who* utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers" (Prov. 6:16-19).
  - i. And, "A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who tells lies will not escape" (19:5).
  - j. It's one thing to lie to get out of trouble – that's wrong in itself; but it's doubly wrong when your lie hurts someone else.
2. Obviously, the Lord would have us not only not lie, but also tell the truth about our neighbor.
- a. "'These are the things which you should do: speak the truth to one another; judge with truth and judgment for peace in your gates. Also let none of you devise evil in your heart against another, and do not love perjury; for all these are what I hate,' declares the LORD" (Zech. 8:16-17).
  - b. More than that, He would have us do all we can to protect the good name of our neighbor: "Open your mouth for the dumb, for the rights of all the unfortunate. Open your mouth, judge righteously, and defend the rights of the afflicted and needy" (Prov. 31:8-9).
  - c. There are many ways in which we are to do this, as well as not to injure our neighbors good name which we won't have time to get into tonight.
  - d. But let's begin by examining our lives to see if we have injured our neighbor unjustly, unnecessarily, with our words and be ready in this area, as in that of the eighth commandment, to repent and make restitution as necessary.
  - e. And may the Lord help us to tame our tongues, use them for righteous purposes, to build up God's people and His kingdom, and not to be tools in the devil's hand to tear them down.