

Respect The Reputations Of Others

Text : **Exodus 20: 16, Deut: 19: 15-20**



INTRODUCTION :

A. Our study has shown that each of God's commands guards something valuable.

1. God's commands reflect His love for us, not just a desire to control us.
2. This 9th Command "You Shall Not Bear False Witness" is no exception.
 - a. It protects a man's ability to find justice, and
 - b. It protects a man's right to earn and maintain a good reputation.

B. Man has long treasured his reputation above all else.

1. Before Christ, the ancient philosopher Socrates said,
"Flattery is the most vicious biter among tamed beasts,
And slander the worst among wild beasts."
2. Hundreds of years ago, in "*Othello*" Shakespeare wrote :
"Good name in man or woman, ..., is the immediate jewel of their soul:
who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, 'tis nothing;
'twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;
but he that filches from me my good name
robs me of that which does not enrich him, and makes me poor indeed."
3. Even before these, God inspired the wisest man who ever lived to write :
 - a. **Prov. 22: 1** - "A good name is to be more desired than great wealth."
 - b. **Eccl. 7: 1** - "A good name is better than good ointment."

C. Aside from personal considerations, all legal systems rely on truthful witnesses.

1. Imagine what a courtroom would be like if there was no expectation of truthfulness.
 - a. There could be no justice. (**impossible**)
 - b. The court system could not even function.
2. **ILL.** Bailiff : "Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth ?"

Witness : “No.”

Where does one go from there ?

Our study will show :

- 1- This command is as important and as relevant as all the others.
- 2- This is a New Testament (Christian) concept just as it was in the Old Testament.
- 3- The consequences of ignoring this command are horrible.

I. This command is no less important than the others.

A. Politicians today totally ignore this command.

1. How to lie about one's political opponent is taught in political science courses.
 - a. It's taught as a viable expediency ... use it because it works.
 - b. It's not condemned because it's common practice. (“**Everyone is doing it.**”)
 - 1) Some people will believe any report, true or false. (**a character deficiency**)
 - 2) When the candidate is caught, he retracts the statement and is praised for humility.
 - 3) Some who believed the lie will never believe the recantation.
 2. Political contests are all about elevating one's self above others.
 - a. * **THUS, they are the antithesis of love.**
 - b. Remember, God's commands are to teach us how to love our neighbors.
 3. Lying about one's opponent exploits those among the electorate with character defects.
 - a. There are those who want to believe evil about others.
 - b. There are naïve and often loveless people who are easily manipulated.
- * **Politicians are just an illustration of the problem. Similar scenarios could be set forth about many other groups, such as the media, attorneys, etc.**

B. God hates false witnessing under any circumstances.

1. **Read ... Prov. 6: 16-19** (**Notice the distinction between Vs. 17 and Vs. 19.**)

2. Anyone who distorts the truth to the hurt of another : (Vs. 19.)
 - a. Rebels against God.
 - b. Commits an act that God hates. (**It is the fruit of a wicked heart.**)
 - c. Commits an act that cannot be justified by “noble motives.”
3. It is interesting that God lists “**creates discord**” at this place in the list of things He hates.
 - a. The law of Christ emphasizes the necessity of having a submissive heart. (**loving**)
 - 1) **Phil. 2: 3-4** ... We’re commanded to count others better than ourself. (**Gal. 5: 15**)
 - 2) **Eph. 5: 21** ... Christians are commanded to be subject to one another.
 - 3) **Heb. 13: 17** ... We are instructed to be submissive to our leaders.

ILL.- Some congregations have three different choruses because they do not submit to the song leader. (simple illustration of an attitude)

- b. Those who sow discord usually justify themselves blaming it on other people.
 - 1) “I can’t agree with what they’re doing so I have to leave.” (or **stay and cause trouble.**)

* Sandlot bullies : “**You play by my rules or I’ll take my ball and go home.**”
 - 2) “The problem is their fault because they’re doing the thing I don’t like.”

* Temper tantrum : “**If they’d just give ME MY way, there’d be no problem.**”
- c. People who love other people don’t misrepresent them, they don’t lie about them and they don’t try to bully them. They seek others welfare above their own.

C. God commanded the false witness to be punished so that evil would be removed.

1. Remember our text ... **Deut. 19: 15-20**
2. Only those who respect others can stand before God.
 - a. **Read ... Psal. 15**
 - b. Note :
 - 1) **Vs.- 2** ... Integrity
 - 2) **Vs.- 3** ... Will not slander
 - 3) **Vs.- 5** ... Will not speak evil of another even if paid to do so
 - c. Cf.- **Psal. 65: 4**

II. This command is also a New Testament concept; it's for Christians, not just Jews.

A. God's value system never changes. (He doesn't read the polls or take surveys.)

1. **Heb. 13: 8**- Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday and today and forever.
2. **Heb. 1: 12**- And like a mantle You will roll them up; (the heavens) like a garment they will also be changed. But You are the same, And Your years will not come to an end."

B. When one becomes a Christian, his life must conform. (different from world)

1. **I Cor. 5: 8** ... The Apostle describes it as purging out the old leaven.
2. **Rom. 12: 2** ... We are instructed to change our mindset, our way of thinking.
3. The law of Christ commands that Christians love their neighbor.
Gal. 5: 14- For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." **15**- But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

C. Truth and respect are among the great dividers between good and evil.

1. **Rev. 12: 10** ... Satan is spoken of as "the accuser."
2. **Rev. 3: 14** ... Jesus is spoken of as "the faithful and true witness."

D. Likewise, truth and respect draw distinctions between true Christians and those who just wear the name.

1. Those who seek to elevate themselves and get their own way, don't know God.
2. True Christians seek to elevate others and to help them get what they want.
* **Respecting and elevating others is essential to love.**

III. Evil Consequences result from disrespecting others.

A. The bible is replete with stories of people seeking to destroy other people by means of false accusations.

1. **Gen. 39** ... Potiphar's wife lied about Joseph.
2. **I Kings 21** ... Jezebel hired false witnesses to lie against Naboth.
3. **Luke 23** ... The Jewish leaders lied about Jesus. (**religious editors still misrepresent**)

B. Most people who slander other people feel justified in doing so.

1. Those above felt justified.
 - a. Potiphar's wife was a woman scorned.
 - b. Jezebel felt no one should be able to refuse the King or Queen what they wanted.
 - c. The Jews were jealous and felt threatened by Jesus.
2. Today, those who slander often do so for the same reasons.
 - a. Their rivals appear to be gaining the advantage over them. (**Destroy Gov / Chur**)
 - b. They feel their target is preventing them from getting something they want.
 - c. They harbor ill will against their victim or seek revenge for perceived wrongs.
3. There is NO justification for sin. It's always wrong. (**No legitimate excuse**)
 - a. All vengeance belongs to God. ... **Rom. 12: 19** (**Do not usurp God's authority.**)
 - b. Love will not allow one to harbor ill will against another. ... **I Cor. 13: 4-7**
 - c. Those who do not love do not have God. ... **I John 4: 7-14** (cf. - **I Pet. 4: 8**)

C. The tongue can be more deadly than a bullet.

1. **Read ... Prov. 18: 17-21** ... "death and life are in the power of the tongue."
2. Only an unloving person will resort to character assassination.
 - a. Remember : **Matt 12: 34-** For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.
 - b. Truth can be used maliciously to destroy ... but God knows the motive.
3. When we allow ourselves or our congregation to practice gossip, slander, or negative criticism we become like a man who eats his own feet.
 - a. **Gal. 5: 14-** For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement,

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

**15 - But if you bite and devour one another,
take care that you are not consumed by one another.**

- b. When one part of the body starts destroying other parts of the body,
the whole body will be destroyed unless the malignancy is removed.
(**Spiritual cancer is deadly to the soul.**)

CONCLUSION :

A. All of God’s laws are good; they are holy; and they are good for us.

- 1. God does not just seek to control us. **He loves us.**
- 2. His commands are given with our best interest at heart.
- 3. They teach us how to live and maintain good relationships.

B. Without respect for others and honest testimony society cannot function.

- 1. There can be no justice without truthful witnesses.
- 2. Cowards can not be allowed to destroy a man’s reputation with malicious reports.
- 3. No man has the right to usurp God by taking verbal vengeance upon another.

C. All of us have committed offenses with the tongue.

- 1. **James 3** ... teaches us that the tongue is most difficult to control.
- 2. Thank God there is a way to find forgiveness for our transgressions.
 - a. Jesus has provided what the law could not .. access and forgiveness .. **grace.**
 - b. **Heb. 4: 16-** **Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace,
so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

**D. Jesus loved you so much that he died to set you free from
a system that could only condemn, never save.**

- 1. **Read ... Heb. 9: 13-15**

- a. Old Testament sacrifices could only cleanse the flesh, not the guilt of sin.
 - b. The sacrifice of Christ atoned for sin, thus cleansing the conscience.
 - c. That sin offer was given freely because of His love for us, for you.
2. **Read ... Rom. 6: 15-19**
- a. Jesus made the supreme commitment to save you.
 - b. He asked you to reciprocate by committing your life to Him.

INVITATION :