

# The Gift of Truthful Speech

Ճշմարտութիւնը Խօսելու Շնորհքը

## Exodus 20: 16

Last Sunday Judge Ed Sarkisian reminded me something important about the eighth Word, the problem of stealing.

He reminded me the importance of parents teaching their children those principles. We were talking about the topic of ownership-stewardship. The best school for the teaching of Christian values is the home-- something that is unfortunately missing these days.

The next observation he made was, “These are Ten Commandments, and not suggestions.” Well said, Judge.

In fact, the **Word of God** is not book of advice and suggestions. The Word of God is given to us so that we read, learn, meditate, digest, obey and apply in our lives. With this introduction, let us move on to the next WORD (The Ninth Word).

Have you ever been robbed and been lied to?

It happened 2019 in Prague. Sevan, Azad and I were visiting Prague in the Czech Republic. We arrived on a train, and the first thing we needed was money exchange. I was in line at the train station to do that exchange. Behind me was another man. After I exchanged the money and the person behind me suggested that he could help me turn the big bills into smaller ones. I thought that would be a good idea. Instead of carrying larger bills, smaller ones would be easier. So I accepted his offer. We were hungry. and went to a restaurant. We ordered food and had fun. It was time to pay the bill. I gave the money that was given by that man. The waiter said, “This is not money they use in this country, in fact this money is not in use at all.” Wow, I felt so bad. I was robbed and lied. Thank God he accepted US dollar bills. We paid, but don’t ask me how I was feeling that day!!!!!!

Here is the 9<sup>th</sup> Word or Commandment:

First the introduction of the Commandments:

**I am the LORD (Yahweh) your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery** (We are in an intimate relationship with our God).

**“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”** (Exodus 20:16 ESV)

### **-Is lying an issue?**

We get extremely upset if someone lies to us. But it is ok to speak “white lies” (which are rarely as white). God takes this sin very seriously.

Why in the world “nearly 50% of American resumes contain one or more falsehoods”?<sup>1</sup>

Is exaggeration lying? What’s wrong if I am trying to impress someone by changing some of the truth? My intention is not to hurt anyone.

We will discuss those issues.

But first let us look at the Ninth Word in context.

You shall not bear **false witness** against your neighbor. (ESV)

“give **false evidence**” (NEB) translation.

It seems that this is a commandment used in the court of law. A person's testimony in a public trial before the jury makes an impact on the jurors.

“Neighbor” means for the Israelites the community of covenant that was made with God. This does not mean a neighbor is exclusive only for the Israelites. Jesus taught us that everyone is our neighbor (The Parable of the Good Samaritan Luke 10:25-37).

In those days **“they were not presumed innocent until proven guilty but presumed guilty until proven innocent.”**<sup>2</sup>

Please notice, there were no video cameras, no DNA tests, recorded voices... which could be used today in the court. In those days, and why not even today, Words meant everything. Testimony...

Truthful or false witness had powerful results. False witness can take someone to death penalty. In the Jewish society, (in Deuteronomy) we find that God is asking Israelites to ask for two witnesses before giving any judgment (Deut. 19:35) (Num 35:30).

Is the Ninth Commandment only for court usage?

I don’t think so. The bottom line of false accusation or witness is **lying. Words are strong and dangerous. Words can build and encourage, or they can “kill” people, kill people who are created in the image of God.**

When we commit murder, we steal life (6<sup>th</sup>)

When we commit adultery, we steal marriage (7<sup>th</sup>)

When we commit robbery, we steal property (8<sup>th</sup>)

When we commit false witness, we steal the name and reputation of that person (9<sup>th</sup>)

**Words can kill. Oh yes, they can “kill”**

“False witness” has consequences.

**Lying is wrong.** It is bad; it destroys relationships; it has a major effect on the culture.

**The master of liars is Satan himself,** and the source of the **truth is God himself,** the triune God the Father and the Son and the Spirit.

Satan was a liar from the beginning. Jesus called him **“a liar and the father of the lies”** (John 8:44)

God on the other hand, is the source of the truth:

**“Let God be true though every one were a liar”** (Romans 3:4 ESV)

**“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”**

(John 1:14 ESV)

**“...and there was no deceit in his mouth.”** (Isaiah 53:9 ESV)

**“I am the way the truth and the life”** (John 14:6 ESV)

**“For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”** (John 18:37 ESV)

**“By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”** (1 John 4:6 ESV)

God hates and rejects lying.

Prophet Zechariah said

**Speak the truth to one another; render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace; <sup>17</sup> do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath, for all these things I hate, declares the LORD.”** (Zechariah 8:16,17 ESV)

**-Why do we lie?**

Why did Satan lie to Eve in the garden?

J.I. Packer says: Partly from malice, and partly from pride.<sup>3</sup>

**When you lie to put someone down, it is malice or hatred. When you lie to impress someone about who you are, it is pride.**

Satan is the master of malice and pride. He is the fallen angel which indicates how prideful he was. Satan wants God’s creation to **rebel against God.** Satan hates the

truth. Let me warn you, further we are away from God, (the source of truth) further we can be used by Satan. This is very serious issue, brothers and sisters.

### **What forms of lying do we do?**

Jen Wilkins names a few:<sup>4</sup>

#### **-The Sin of Reviling**

The Definition of reviling is: **“to criticize in an abusive or angrily insulting manner.”** Նախաստեղ զրպարտեղ

**Gossip** is one of the ways of reviling; gossip contains fair amount of misinformation and talking about the person in his/her absence.

Unfortunately, gossip has become so common that we forget how abusive, hurtful, and sinful it is.

I have witnessed how gossip can kill someone's character.

I try not to do it, and I confess that I have fallen in this sin, trying to justify myself.

Jesus said:

**<sup>21</sup> “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ <sup>22</sup> But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.”** (Matt 5:21-22 ESV)

before you talk about someone ask these questions:

***“Is what I'm about to say true? If so, does it really need to be said now? Would I put it this way if the person I'm talking about were here to listen?”***<sup>5</sup>

Why don't we shut our mouth and speak less, or speak things that build the body of the church?

#### **-The Sin of Flattery**

Wilkins brings another sin from the lying family. Here is definition of flattery:

“It is excessive and insincere praise, given especially to further one's own interests.”

King Solomon says:

**Whoever hates disguises himself with his lips  
and harbors deceit in his heart;**

**<sup>25</sup> when he speaks graciously, believe him not,  
for there are seven abominations in his heart;**

**<sup>26</sup> though his hatred be covered with deception,  
his wickedness will be exposed in the assembly.**

**27 Whoever digs a pit will fall into it,  
and a stone will come back on him who starts it rolling.**

**28 A lying tongue hates its victims,  
and a flattering mouth works ruin.** (Prov 26:24-28 ESV)

Words and words with wrong intentions and motives.

Some Pharisees and the Herodians came to Jesus with questions:

**“Teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone's  
opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of  
God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?”** (Mark 12:14)

Those had wrong motives with those questions. Do we do that sometimes?

Illustration: One time someone was introducing me in front of hundreds of people saying I was a great opera singer!!

What? What opera? He was trying to impress them how important I was.

Sin of exaggeration, often we can fall in this. Even if your intention was good; it is not right, it is sin, and it is lying.

### **-The Sin of Silence**

My mom always said to me, “Don’t answer quickly. Remain silent and do not retaliate.” There is wisdom in silence. But there is a time to be silent and there is a time to speak, as King Solomon said.

When you hear something wrong and you are silent, we are participating in that sin.

James warns us:

**So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.**  
(James 4:17 ESV)

When you hear gossip, and you are silent. Or you allow the person to gossip in front of you and you don’t stop the person.

-The Puritan **Thomas Watson** said, “He that raises a slander, carries the devil in his tongue; And he that receives it, carries the devil in his ear.”<sup>6</sup>

-Satan wants the church to be silent. “When we silence truth--tellers, or remain silent ourselves when called to speak courageously, we confirm to Satan’s image instead of the image of Christ.”<sup>7</sup>

Watch out.

## **Application: (observations)**

### **1. Build Each Other up.**

Let us build each other up.

**Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.** (Eph 4:29 ESV)

The only place I think we are allowed to speak about the sin of the brother or sister is when the intention is to restore and build the person. Use God's wisdom in doing it. Never give up saying the truth with love, compassion, and care.

### **2. Truth is not relative**

The biggest lie that is being preached to our children in the schools and universities. There are different kinds of truths; so truth is relative.

Jesus said he is the Truth and the Life. No one can come to God without Jesus. We should be very careful how we reveal that Jesus is the truth. I have seen self-justified proud Christians destroying the message of Jesus.

**May God keep us humble and bold in revealing the Truth of Jesus.**

**Please don't compromise the Truth of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

### **3. The Good News**

Lying a serious sin, it is destructive, it kills relationships.

The Church should have a Christian testimony. God hates hypocrisy. **It is a lie when Christians look more righteous than they really are.**

Christ is righteous. We are justified and in a right relationship with God ONLY through Jesus our Lord and Savior. And apart from the Grace of our Lord Jesus who died and rose from the dead, we are all guilty of sin.

To act that we got it, and we are spiritually reached it, that is a lie; and more, it denies the grace of God. Only by His Grace we can be saved.

I, Nerses, am guilty of so many sins. I need His Grace daily.

What is the truth about you?

Who are you deep down?

I don't know, every time I am reviling, gossiping, slandering, using words to trash someone, I am denying the Grace of Jesus who **saved a wretch like me.**

I come to you Jesus; please clean my heart, and therefore my words.

**So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. <sup>2</sup> Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— <sup>3</sup> if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.** (1 Peter 2:1-3 ESV)

1. Jochem Douma, *The Ten Commandments: Manual for Christian Life*, p216, from the book Philip Graham Ryken, *Written in the Stone*, p 186
2. Philip Graham Ryken, *Written in the Stone*, p 186
3. J.I. Packer, *Keeping the 10 Commandments*, p 96
4. Jen Wilkin, *Ten Words to Live By*, p 127
5. Philip Graham Ryken, *Written in the Stone*, p 190
6. Thomas Watson, *The Ten Commandments*, p169-170 from the book Philip Graham Ryken, *Written in the Stone*, p 191
7. Jen Wilkin, *Ten Words to Live By*, p 132-133