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**Session 7**

***God of Freedom, Week 4b***

**Exodus 20:13-17**

**23-24 October 2023**

**The Ninth Commandment –** “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.” You have probably heard this command stated as, “You shall not lie.” The ninth commandment, however, is dealing with a *specific type* of falsehood that is forbidden: bearing false witness. Notice that there is a correlation between the ninth command and the third (“Do not take the Lord’s name in vain.”) The third command tells us not to bear false witness against the *Lord*, while the ninth tells us that we are not to bear false witness against *those made in His image*, i.e. tell the truth about another person’s character. In the judicial system being established, a person’s life could depend on the testimony of others about him/her. That’s why it was important that facts be established based on the testimony of two or three witnesses, not just one. We are to honor our neighbor’s reputation. Taking someone else’s name in vain is like attacking him with a sword! (Proverbs 25:18) How do we break this commandment in our culture today? There are at least three common ways.

**The Sin of Reviling –** We are to steer clear of speech that harms our neighbor, and we are to steer clear of other people whose speech harms our neighbor. Certainly gossip and slander fall into this category, but probably the most common form of breaking the ninth commandment today is the *sin of reviling* in social media. All too often people go far beyond merely disagreeing with someone else’s opinion: instead of saying, “I disagree with your opinion,” they say, “You are worthless!” or, “You’re an idiot!” The sin of contempt comes into play once again. We tend to vilify anyone who disagrees with us.

**The Sin of Flattery –** There is another form of harmful speech, which is reviling’s twin. It is the sin of flattery. **Reviling involves *diminishing* someone’s reputation, while flattery *overstates* someone’s reputation.** The goal of flattery is to get approval for myself by overpraising the one whose approval I crave. But flattery does not build trust. Either we will believe the flattery and become puffed up, or we will wonder about the motive of the person who is flattering us so much. The thing is, when we overpraise, we are telling a LIE about someone’s character!

**Taking Credit for Someone Else’s Work –** A third way that the ninth command is commonly broken is to **misattribute someone else's work as our own** OR by **passing blame to someone else for our mistakes**. The goal of all of these forms of verbal abuse against our neighbor is to push someone else down so I can raise myself up.

**The Tenth Commandment –** “You shall not covet.” If in the sixth, seventh and eighth commands we were told, “Don’t DO it,” and in the ninth command we were told, “Don’t SAY it,” in the tenth command we are told, “Don’t even THINK about it!” What is the positive form of the tenth command, i.e. what is it

that God says we *should* do? It is that we should honor our neighbor in our heart. We are to be content

with what we have. Discontent can begin to develop when we have a relationship with someone, and we begin to think, “Why isn’t my marriage more like hers? Why isn’t my house more like hers? Why do I have formica countertops while she has granite?” We compare and compare and compare. When our expectations are very high while our “reality” is at a lower level, then discontent can begin to grow in the space between those two levels. We think that we will have happiness and peace if we just have all the things we want. The problem is that we rarely want things in a vacuum: we usually want something at someone else’s expense…and THAT is the sin of covetousness. It is not wrong to want your “daily bread”, but covetousness is dealing with all the things that are not our daily bread. Probably all of us have enough food, shelter, clothing, air, etc. Covetousness comes in when we focus on wanting more delicious food, nicer clothing, a better house, etc.

**Conclusion –** We should honor our neighbor, not just in our deeds and in our words, but in our innermost being. Why? Because out of the overflow of the heart is where all our deeds and words come from, both good and evil. In Heaven we will obey all the commandments perfectly. When we choose to obey them now, we anticipate that great and glorious day. We look back toward Eden and we think, “That’s how it should have been.” And we look forward to the New Jerusalem and think, “That’s how it will one day be again!” And then we pray for God’s will to be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Jesus Christ kept the entire Law perfectly, and because He did so and because we as believers have the favor of God, we strive to conform our lives to His example, living as He lived and walking as He walked. The Law teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and to live lives that are zealous to do good works. (Titus 2:12) “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.” (1 John 5:3) What was once burdensome to us becomes our daily delight, and we can say with the Psalmist, **“I delight to do your will, O Lord…Your law is written, not on tablets of stone, but on my heart.”** (Psalm 40:8)

***Parallels to 1 Peter***

*One parallel to Jen’s discussion on the last five commandments is found in the first verse of chapter two:* ***“So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and slander.”*** *This verse deals with the things we are NOT to do in regard to our neighbors.*

*1 Peter 4:8-10 gives us the positive side of relating to our neighbors: “Above all,* ***keep loving one another earnestly****…****Show hospitality to one another*** *without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to* ***serve one another****, as good stewards of God’s varied grace.”*