

LD 43; John 8:31-47; Eph. 4: 11-16; Loving the Truth I. Foundation of this Command II. Avoiding the Lie III. Speaking the Truth

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the truth is under attack today in a way that is hard to believe.

There were always certain truths which were held that are self-evident as the Declaration of Independence puts it- but now it seems like everyone has their own version of the truth. But as we return to the 10 Commandments this morning, we will see that our God calls us to love the truth. There is a connection between the 9th Commandment and the 3rd Commandment. The 3rd command teaches us to speak the truth about God's name. the 9th commandment tells us to speak the truth about our neighbor. So this morning we consider this theme: Jesus Christ commands us to love and speak the truth openly.

I. Foundation of this Command

In our first point we see the foundation of this commandment. Why is God so concerned with the truth? Well, the fact is that God not only loves the truth, but He is the truth! Consider what Jesus says in John 14:6, I am the way, the truth and life. Jesus is the truth. And the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Truth in John 14:17. So there is a direct connection between the truth and the nature of God. Truth describes His attribute. Added to this, Heb. 6:18 tells us that it is impossible for God to lie. It is impossible- contrary to His nature. Lies cannot dwell in His presence- deceit is foreign to His nature. So our God is faithful and true in His character and His actions. Who He is and what He does is truth. He is faithful- He keeps His word- His promises cannot be broken- His word cannot be undone or nullified. He is never changing and never forgetting. But not only does God speak the truth, He also uses the truth to liberate. In John 8:32 we find that it is the truth that will set us free. Knowing and believing the truth is the very process that our God uses to bring liberty to captive sinner! Knowing and believing what God says in His word is the very path to salvation and eternal life! That is why the truth is so important to God- and must be important to us. On the other side of the scales we find the lie. Deceit and

perversion. There is a being that is opposed to God and opposed to the truth! As we read from John 8:32, the devil is the father of lies. When he deceives, he is speaking his native tongue. There is no truth in him, and even when it appears that he is an angel of light he is only masquerading! The devil twists the truth, polluting clear water with the mud of deceit. It is the devil that questions truth when God clearly speaks. Did God really say? It is the devil that contradicts God's Word- you will not surely die. So when people lie, they are acting like the devil. As Jesus pointed out in our passage, those who refuse to listen the words of Jesus are acting like their father, the devil. Where the truth brings liberty and salvation; lies lead to only slavery and death. Where men like Pilate will ask- what is truth?! God's people say- Your word is truth! A lamp to my feet and a light upon my path!

II. Avoiding the Lie

Now that we understand the connection between our God and truth, we move on to consider this commandment specifically. You shall not bear false witness. This specific commandment is dealing with perjury- which is lying under oath. When a person is giving testimony in the courtroom, they must speak the truth openly. Refusing to lie or deceive. Why must a witness refrain from lying? Well, life and death- or freedom or bondage are at stake! If the witness lies, then the wicked will be set free or the innocent will be condemned. Think of Naboth and Stephen- both godly men who died because of deceptive witnesses. Most of us, however, will not be called upon to testify in the court of law. But many of us have made vows and promises which we must not break! For example, if you are married you have given your word- your promise in the form of a covenantal vow. You have promised to love and care for your spouse in sickness and in health until death parts you. This commandment has something to say to those in marriage! Do not break your word! You have promised to live the rest of your life with this person. So those entering marriage must do so soberly- marriage is a wonderful blessing but it is also a solemn vow and commitment! But in a more general sense, we must avoid all forms of lying and deceit. As QA 112 puts it, lying and deceit are the very works of the devil. When you

think about it, most people lie in order to cover up something. When you are caught in sin, the default lie sneaks from our lips. We do not want to get in trouble, so we lie to cover up our wicked deeds. But we can also break this command by speaking the truth in the wrong way or to the wrong person. For example, gossiping may be speaking the truth technically but the design is the not for the benefit of the hearer. There is whole host of sins that could be included here. As Phil. 2:4 says, do all things without arguing and complaining. Those who speak the truth will not always be pointing out the negative things in others. Nor will they be nagging or arguing which tears down and does not build up. In general, this commandment forbids any use of the tongue that is at odds with its good design. The lips of a lying person is like that of snake- dripping poison. Or like that of a pyromaniac- spitting out embers that burn cities down. Tearing down others- spreading rumors- twisting people's words; all of these expose a heart of sin that does not love as it ought! Lord forgive us for speaking with a forked tongue!

III. Speaking the Truth

But instead of lying, God's people are to love the truth and speak it openly as QA 112. As we read from Eph. 4:12, speak the truth in love. Now this is a very important qualifier. Speaking the truth is one thing- but speaking it in love is quite another! How you say it and what you say needs to be guided by love for the person you are speaking to and about. There are times when the truth is spoken so bluntly or harshly that it does not benefit! Picture for a moment that your mother burned the cookies she was baking. Would it be profitable and beneficial to walk into the kitchen and say- Mom- you burned the cookies? Although true, it is not loving nor does it build up. Rather, we should pursue the positive use of our speak. Edifying- that our words may minister to the hearer as Eph. 4 puts it. When our words are full of grace- seasoned and sweet to the hearer- we gain an audience. Now to be clear, our goal is not just to make people feel good about themselves. That is not the kind of building up that we are talking about. Rather, our words are to be used with eternity in mind. We must be people of truth because the gospel is at stake! What I mean is this. First of all, no one will listen to you if you are a liar.

No one will believe you if you are deceptive with your speech. So when you do actually say something of worth that is true, no one will be listening. It is like the "Boy who Cried Wolf." Those who lie with their lips are unfit vessels of the gospel. Second, the reason we must be people of truth is because we have been tasked with speaking the truth to the world who is lost. The fact is, your words will not be a faithful testimony if you lie. God may use you to tell others of the great things He has done. If you do not know how to speak the truth, your message will be blunted or ignored. If we are used to lying, will we stop when speaking of eternal things? We do not want to get this wrong! If God has charged us and people are depending on us to speak the truth of the gospel, we don't want to mess that up! But rather it is our prayer that the words of our mouth and the meditations of our hearts would be pleasing to Him! Or as Psalm 51 puts it, God desire truth in the inmost part.

Before we close, we can see from history the great loss that happens when people lie. For example, Jesus himself was condemned to death with the deception of man. So Jesus who is the Truth was put to death by way of the lie! But praise God this was part of His design- to use the lies of man to bring about His victory over the lie! The father of lies thought he had won- but the God of truth would have the last word! As we come to the Lord's Supper, let us rejoice in the truth that Jesus died to save deceptive people like us. Let us learn to love and speak the truth. Jesus is the truth- and His word is true. Let us be dedicated to not only knowing but obeying the truth!