

In the second table of the moral law there is a focus and emphasis on truth which goes well beyond the duties we have respecting our neighbour, though our living (that is, our doing, speaking and thinking) the truth will greatly benefit our neighbour, just as our failing to live the truth will hurt him immeasurably.

The 6th commandment, “You shall not murder,” summarizes our entire duty to our neighbour. Similarly, the 8th commandment, “You shall not steal,” summarizes our entire duty to protect our neighbour’s property. What, then, is the purpose of commandments 7, 9 and 10? They, too, are about our neighbour, but they are also more than that. The 7th commandment is about our doing the truth; the 9th, about our speaking the truth; and the 10th, about our thinking the truth. This is what our neighbour needs to see in us more than anything – civilizations have crumbled without these things – but this devotion to truth is also absolutely essential if we are to serve and please the Lord, so let that be our first and highest reason for pursuing them!

Today we are taking up the 9th commandment, “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.” Notice, this is not a command forbidding our bearing witness against our neighbour; sometimes, as in a court of law, we must do that. It is a command, rather, forbidding our bearing FALSE witness against him. So, whether we lie to ruin him, or lie to shield him, it is the lie itself, that false testimony regarding our neighbour, which God hates.

We may think that a ‘small’ lie is not so bad, but then we find that we have to lie some more in order to justify the first lie, and so on it goes.

“Oh, what a tangled web we weave

When first we practise to deceive!”

Rev. 21:8 tells us that all liars shall have their part in the lake of fire. How important it is, therefore, that we heed every word of what we are told in Eph. 4, especially where it says to put away lying, and each one to speak the truth with his neighbour. Eph. 4 lets us see truth as God Himself sees it. Here we are told, v.3, “to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” How shall we maintain this unity we have with other believers in Christ? It is by pursuing the truth. We are instructed, vv. 14 and 15, about “speaking the truth in love,” that we may grow up in all things into Christ, and V.21 speaks of how the truth is in Him, in Jesus. By pursuing the truth, then, we are not only maintaining our unity with other believers, but are growing, more and more, into the very likeness of Christ who is Himself the bond of peace between us. Living like Christ is vital to our living for Him. This is why we are to put away lying (v.25), to let no corrupt word proceed out of our mouth (v.29), and to let all evil speaking be put right away (v.31). May God give us the grace so to live, that we may serve the Lord faithfully and effectively, and that we may be at the same time a blessing to our neighbour!