

END-TIMES ISSUES



#139 Commandment #9 – Obligations.

GOD DOESN'T TELL US TO KNOW ALL THE END-TIME DETAILS. HE TELLS US TO BE READY.

A N D B E Y O N D I

The Ninth Commandment:

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Exodus 20:16 (BSB); also in Deuteronomy 5:20.

This commandment focuses on our **SPEECH** – the things we say.

- It is represented by the prohibition against false testimony in a court of law: "Do not bear false witness/testimony against one's neighbor."
 - ✓ This does not mean we can say something false *outside* a court of law, or when the person isn't a "neighbor"!
 - ✓ Rather, this specific statement *represents* everything within the category of "speech that is related to other people."
 - ✓ It also applies to what we say about ourselves and about God – *anything* we say.
- As a category, this commandment includes both "negative" obligations ("do not") and "positive" obligations ("do").

To illustrate this...

- We have been using catechisms (primarily the Heidelberg Catechism) to show how the commandments – representing *categories* of obligations – are applied in various ways, both "positive" and "negative."
- As always:
 - ✓ Catechisms are helpful for organizing concepts; and the best catechisms will provide us Scripture passages we can examine. However, we consider Scripture to be the final authority.
 - ✓ Since catechisms were written in a historical context, the specific emphasis of each will vary. So we remain open to finding additional passages that we can include in our study.
 - ✓ For this commandment, the Heidelberg Catechism begins with what we are NOT to do, followed by what we ARE to do.
 - ✓ The Scripture passages we include may be relevant to *more than one* section of the catechism's answer (though we may mention them in only *one* section).

Q. What is the aim of the ninth commandment?

- The following answer easily divides into three sections: ① "do not"; ② the reason for this; and ③ "do."

⇒ ① "Do not."

A. That I never give false testimony against anyone, ...

- In two or three places, this catechism will point to the application of this commandment in a court of law (as it does here). However, a significant part of the answer applies to "everyday life." We will see, later in the answer, that this Ninth Commandment principle applies "in court and everywhere else."

What does Scripture say?

- Scripture contains many examples of people who committed this sin, even though the Ninth Commandment directly prohibits it:

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Exodus 20:16 (BSB); also in Deuteronomy 5:20.

- ✓ John (the baptizer) prohibited it.

He replied, "Don't extort money and **don't accuse people falsely**—be content with your pay."

Luke 3:14 (NIV)

- ✓ Many passages command us to do the *opposite* – to speak truthfully (both in court and as individuals).

"These are the things you are to do: **Speak the truth** to each other, and render **true and sound judgment** in your courts; **do not plot evil** against each other, and **do not love to swear falsely**. I hate all this," declares the LORD.

Zechariah 8:16-17 (NIV)

- ✓ A righteous government will *punish* those who do it in court.

A false witness will not go unpunished, and **one who utters lies** will not escape.

Proverbs 19:5 (BSB)

The book of Proverbs focuses mainly on issues related to life in the "here and now" – not denying that God will also judge people in eternity.

... twist no one's words, ...

- This includes not just *changing* the words themselves, but also tearing them out of context, or changing their definitions. All of these things can have horrible consequences.

What does Scripture say?

- All passages that mention the changing or distorting of someone's words describe it in negative terms (i.e., treating it as sin). Here is an example:

All day long **they twist my words**; all their schemes are **for my ruin**.

Psalms 56:5 (NIV)

- This sin can easily occur when someone is "blinded" by a bribe.

Do not deny justice or show partiality. Do not accept a bribe, for **a bribe blinds the eyes** of the wise and **twists the words** of the righteous.

Deuteronomy 16:19 (BSB); also Exodus 23:8.

- ✓ The "ultimate" example of this occurred in the garden of Eden, when the serpent twisted the significance of God's words. (He told Eve a *half-truth*, combined with a lie – compare to v. 22.)

"You will not surely die," the serpent told the woman. "For God knows that in the day you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Genesis 3:4-5 (BSB)

THE LIE

Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil."

Genesis 3:22 (BSB)

THE HALF-TRUTH

- ✓ The following passage illustrates how the Ninth Commandment can also apply to our speech about God.

Every word of God is flawless; ...
Do not add to His words,
lest He rebuke you and prove you a liar.

Proverbs 30:5a, 6 (BSB)

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... not gossip or slander, ...

- Speaking evil about someone behind their back is a "popular" sin; but popularity does not make it right! This includes not only going about spreading *lies*... it can include speaking *truth* with malicious intent – such as "broadcasting" the other person's weaknesses. (In the church, this is often disguised as a "prayer request.")

What does Scripture say?

- ✓ This sin is characteristic of people who have *suppressed* their awareness of God:

They are **gossips, slanderers**, ...
[and many other evil characteristics].

Romans 1:29b-30a (BSB)

- ✓ The person who wants to be in God's presence won't do it.

... who has **no slander** on his tongue,
who does **no harm** to his neighbor,
who casts **no scorn** on his friend, ...

Psalms 15:3 (BSB)

THIS TYPE OF
SPEECH IS LINKED
TO CAUSING A
PERSON HARM!

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- ✓ Don't do it!

You must not go about **spreading slander** among your people.

Leviticus 19:16 (BSB)

Brothers, do not **slander** one another.

James 4:11a (BSB)

- ✓ Don't keep bringing-up another's failures, especially once they have repented and been forgiven!

He **who covers over an offense** promotes love, but whoever **repeats the matter** separates close friends.

Proverbs 17:9 (NIV84)

Above all, love one another deeply, because **love covers over** a multitude of sins.

1 Peter 4:8 (BSB)

These verses *aren't* telling us to *ignore* sin. It may be serious enough that it *needs* dealt with. The main focus is: Don't keep bringing it up and "advertising" it!

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... nor join in condemning anyone rashly or without a hearing.

What does Scripture say?

- ✓ The Law of Moses required people to investigate the matter before accepting an accusation. This question assumes the answer "No":

"Does our law convict a man without **first hearing from him to determine what he has done?**"

John 7:51 (BSB)

- ✓ Without first finding out the facts, we are in danger of creating injustice – especially when we judge based on mere appearances.

You must **not pervert justice**; you must **not show partiality** to the poor **or favoritism** to the rich; you are to **judge your neighbor fairly**.

Leviticus 19:15 (BSB)

Acquitting the guilty and condemning the righteous – both are detestable to the LORD.

Proverbs 17:15 (BSB)

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- ✓ False witnesses do this!

An honest witness **does not deceive**, but a false witness **pours out lies**.

A truthful witness **saves lives**, but a false witness is **deceitful**.

Proverbs 14:5, 25 (NIV)

- ✓ This can occur in judicial matters, as well as in day-to-day matters, affecting both individuals and nations and having a wide range of consequences.

- » When Paul was bitten by a snake, the people falsely claimed:

"**Surely this man is a murderer**. Although he was saved from the sea, **justice has not allowed him to live**."

Acts 28:4 (BSB)

(When he *didn't* die, they falsely claimed that he was a god.)

- » When the Ammonite nobles falsely accused David (i.e., his motives), it resulted in a war, which resulted in many people dying – 2 Samuel 10.

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- ✓ *Accurate* judging requires that we don't *hypocritically* judge. Though Scripture tells us there are times when judging *must* be done, the context of the following verses tells us that we must first apply the principle to *ourselves*, *before* focusing on *others*. (The righteous person will obey *both* obligations.)

Do not **judge**, or you will be judged.

Matthew 7:1 (BSB)

(Verse 5 – After you have dealt with your own sin, *then* focus on theirs.)

You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on another. For on whatever grounds you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because **you who pass judgment do the same things**.

Romans 2:1 (BSB)

(Don't be a hypocrite!)

⇒ ② The reason for this.

Rather, in court and everywhere else, ...

- This emphasizes the fact that this commandment applies to *all of life*, not just to judicial matters.

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... I should avoid lying and deceit of every kind; ...

- This emphasizes the fact that the reason (= about to be given) applies to *anything* that is a violation of this commandment. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

What does Scripture say?

- Many Scripture passages point to these types of sin... and *none* treat them as acceptable conduct. Instead, they condemn them (whether directly, or by implication).

"Do not **lie**.
"Do not **deceive** one another.
"Do not **swear falsely** by my name and so **profane the name** of your God. I am the LORD." "

Leviticus 19:11b-12 (NIV)

The righteous hate **falsehood**,
but the wicked bring shame and disgrace.
Proverbs 13:5 (BSB)

This includes speech, along
with any other form of
pretension or deception.

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They **lie** to one another;
they speak with **flattering lips** and a double heart.
May the LORD cut off all **flattering lips**
and every **boastful tongue**.

Psalms 12:2-3 (BSB)

Gossip ... a **quarrelsome** man ... The **words of a gossip**
... **burning [or "smooth"] lips** ...

(A hateful man with) deceit in his heart ... he **speaks graciously, [with] deception**, ... A **lying tongue** ... a **flattering mouth** ...

From Proverbs 26:20-26, 28 (BSB)

- Do you claim to be a Christian?

Do not lie to one another, since **you have taken off the old self with its practices**, and **have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge** in the image of its Creator.

Colossians 3:9-10 (BSB)

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- Examples of other kinds of Ninth Commandment violations. These are not mentioned in this part of *this* catechism – though they are mentioned in several *other* catechisms.

» The "opposites" of these violations are mentioned (or implied) later in the section that gives examples of "positive" types of speech.

- Here are some examples (BSB translation). In some cases, the context also mentions the "positive" types of speech we should have. (This list is just a sample.)

- » Ephesians 4:29 – unwholesome talk.
- » Ephesians 5:4 – obscenity, foolish talk, crude joking.
- » Colossians 3:8 – filthy language.
- » 1 Timothy 1:13, 20 – blasphemy (insulting, slanderous defamation).
- » 2 Peter 2:18 – lofty (boastful) but empty words.
- » Jude 1:18 – scoffing (a characteristic of the wicked in the "last days").

WHY should we avoid all these things? The reason has two parts. →

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... these are the very devices the devil uses, ...

- This is obvious. The account in Genesis 3 illustrates it. Everything in the devil's nature is fundamentally linked to lying and deception (joined by every other characteristic that is compatible with lying). His followers follow his example.

What does Scripture say?

You belong to **your father, the devil**, and you want to carry out his desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, **refusing to uphold the truth**, because there is **no truth in him**. When **he lies**, he speaks his native language, because **he is a liar and the father of lies**.

John 8:44 (BSB)

- Many verses describe the devil as lying and deceiving people, as well as using the lies of *people* to accomplish his purposes.
- Other verses describe people as *following his example*.
 - » Acts 5:3 – Ananias lied; Satan filled his heart so that he did it.
 - » 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 – Deceitful, false apostles = Satan's servants.

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... and they would call down on me God's intense wrath.

What does Scripture say?

- God *hates* such conduct; he *detests* it.

There are six things that the LORD **hates**, seven that are **detestable** to Him: [including] ... a **lying tongue**, ...
... a **false witness** who gives false testimony, ...
Lying lips are **detestable** to the LORD, ...

From Proverbs 6:16-19; 12:22a (BSB)

- People *know* (innately) that they deserve death for such conduct; and *they will receive death – forever*.

They are **gossips, slanderers**, ... **they know God's righteous decree** that those who do such things are **worthy of death**, ...

From Romans 1:29-32 (BSB)

... all **liars**, their **place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur**. This is the **second death**.

Revelation 21:8b (BSB)

17

③ "Do."

- Here we look at the commandment's "positive" application. (As before, some of the verses can fit in more than one section.)

I should love the truth, ...

What does Scripture say?

- Truthfulness is to be the focus of all we say. It's a characteristic of love! (See also the verses that follow.)

Love ... **rejoices in the truth**.

1 Corinthians 13:6 (BSB)

... speak it candidly, ...

- Speaking the truth should be a natural and spontaneous part of our lives. We need *honesty*! Say "yes" when we mean "yes," and "no" when we mean "no" (Matthew 5:37; James 5:12b).

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What does Scripture say?

- ✓ Speak truthfully in personal interactions, as well as in judgments.

These are the things you must do: **Speak truth** to one another, **render true and sound judgments** in your gates, ...

Zecariah 8:16 (BSB)

Therefore each of you must **put off falsehood** and **speak truthfully** to his neighbor, for we are all members of one another.

Ephesians 4:25 (BSB)

- ✓ This includes confessing sins (to the appropriate people), as well as speaking in situations that might be uncomfortable or distressful.

He who conceals his sins will not prosper, but whoever **confesses and renounces** them will find mercy.

Proverbs 28:13 (BSB)

For through many tears **I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart**, not to grieve you but to let you know how much I love you.

2 Corinthians 2:4 (BSB); writing = considered a form of speaking.

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... and openly acknowledge it.

- Speaking freely from the heart, when *not speaking* is sin.

What does Scripture say?

- ✓ The person who wants to be in God's presence will do it.

He ... who **speaks the truth from his heart**, ...

Psalms 15:2b (BSB)

- ✓ God will hold you accountable, if you *don't* speak when you have an obligation to do so.

You must not harbor hatred against your brother in your heart. **Directly rebuke your neighbor, so that you will not incur guilt on account of him.**

Leviticus 19:17 (BSB)

- ✓ James' warning would include our *words* – what we say or don't say:

Anyone, then, who **knows the right thing to do**, yet **fails to do it**, is guilty of **sin**.

James 4:17 (BSB)

20

And I should do what I can ...

- This last sentence focuses on the commandment's application to *all aspects* of one's speech. It starts out by emphasizing that it's something we are to *do*, not merely a fact we are to *know*.

What does Scripture say?

- ✓ The following passage focuses on people who tend to be ignored by others:

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute.

Speak up and judge fairly; **defend** the rights of the poor and needy.

Proverbs 31:8-9 (NIV)

The need to "speak up" in such situations – often accompanied by *action* – is a common theme in *both* testaments.

21

... to guard and advance my neighbor's good name.

- The *name* represents the *person* – who they are, their reputation, everything about them. The focus here is on the effect of our *words* on these things. Protect and promote the person's good!
 - Some of the other catechisms have a greater emphasis on these "positive" matters, and include issues that are not directly stated here. Some also apply it to the way we talk about *ourselves*.
 - » We will include some of these issues in our evaluation, below.
- Even so, the catechism we have been using does *indirectly* include some of these things in the "do not" section: just do the *opposite* of those "do not" things!

What does Scripture say?

- ✓ (reminder) You can work to maintain *your own* reputation, too.

For we are taking great care to **do what is right**, not only **in the eyes of the Lord**, but also **in the eyes of men**.

2 Corinthians 8:21 (BSB)

22

- ✓ First of all, don't try to exalt yourself above others! If you base your life on *what is written* in Scripture, you'll succeed in this matter!

» Paul used himself and Apollos in an example (to teach them) ...

... so that you may learn from us **not to go beyond what is written**. Then you will **not take pride in one man over another**.

1 Corinthians 4:6b (BSB)

- ✓ Examples of people who did NOT do this:

» The religious leader (who boasted about his religious activities):

The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed, 'God, **I thank You that I am not like other men**—swindlers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector.'

Luke 18:11 (BSB)

» King Herod (who enjoyed being called a "god"):

And they began to shout, "This is the voice of a god, not a man!"

Immediately, because **Herod did not give glory to God**, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and **he was eaten by worms and died**.

Acts 12:22-23 (BSB)

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- ✓ Ways you can treat people that will build them up.

» Honoring those who fear God. (A person who wants to be in God's presence will do this.)

[He] but **honors** those who fear the LORD, ...

Psalms 15:4b (BSB)

» Examples given by Peter (what to do and what not to do). Most of these involve speech *combined with action*. All are expressions of love.

Finally, all of you, be like-minded and sympathetic, **love** as brothers, be tenderhearted and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

1 Peter 3:8-9 (BSB)

Above all, love one another deeply, because **love** covers over a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without complaining.

1 Peter 4:8-9 (BSB)

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- ✓ Recognizing *visible* spiritual growth in others – acknowledging it and thanking God for it. (Both are activities that require speech.)

First, **I thank my God** through Jesus Christ **for all of you**, because your faith is being proclaimed all over the world. ... **I remember you in my prayers** at all times, ...

Romans 1:8, 9b-10a (BSB)

I always thank my God for you because of the grace He has given you in Christ Jesus. ... Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly await the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:4, 7 (BSB)

It gave me great joy when some **believers came and testified** about your faithfulness to the truth, telling how you continue to walk in it. **I have no greater joy than to hear** that my children are walking in the truth.

3 John 1:3-4 (NIV)

Demetrius is **well spoken of by everyone**—and **even by the truth** itself. **We also speak well of him**, and you know that our testimony is true.

3 John 1:12 (NIV)

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- ✓ What if you *don't* have the best speech abilities? This commandment *still* applies to you!

» Some people may have greater speech abilities than we do; but that doesn't exempt us from doing what we can. (It also shows us that we – as members of Christ's body – need each other!)

"Please, Lord," Moses replied, "**I have never been eloquent**, neither in the past nor since You have spoken to Your servant, for **I am slow of speech and tongue**."

And the LORD said to him, "Who gave man his mouth? Or who makes the mute or the deaf, the sighted or the blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now go! **I will help you as you speak**, and **I will teach you what to say**."

But Moses replied, "Please, Lord, send someone else."

Then the anger of the LORD burned against Moses, and He said, "Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that **he can speak well**, and he is now on his way to meet you. ...

I will help both of you to speak ..."

Exodus 4:10b-14a, 15b (BSB)

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- ✓ Something to consider: If you *think* about the following types of things... how will it affect your *speech*?

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

Philippians 4:8 (NIV)

» Fill your heart with this type of thinking! WHY? Remember what Jesus said:

"For **out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks**. The good man brings good things out of his good store of treasure, and the evil man brings evil things out of his evil store of treasure.

But I tell you that men will give an account on the day of judgment for every careless **word** they have spoken. For by your **words** you will be acquitted, and by your **words** you will be condemned."

Matthew 12:34b-37 (BSB)

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OUR MISSION!

THINK about the ways you use your **SPEECH**.

Including ways you may be violating the Ninth Commandment, but never realized it.

MAKE it your GOAL:

to INCREASE the "positive" and DECREASE the "negative"!

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Credits

SCRIPTURE

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