

The 8th Commandment

By Harold C. Cranch

Lesson: “*And he said to me, ‘These words are faithful and true’. And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place. Behold I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of the book.... And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me to give to everyone according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last. Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.*”
Revelation 22.

Sermon: Now today we want to talk about another of the Ten Commandments, these laws of the Lord by which the Lord prepares us for heaven. You know that they are all very, very important, for through them the Lord can lead us and prepare us to receive the life of heaven.

And we have now come to the eighth Commandment, that is: “*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.*” But sometimes the words, as they are written in the Word of the Lord, are a little hard for us to understand because we don’t always use them the same way as they used them when these words were written down. And so you may not really know what this means, “Thou shalt not bear false witness against the Lord.”

Witnessing means to tell about something, and so when we give *true* witness it means we are telling what is *true* about that thing. But to bear *false* witness means to tell a lie about it. And so this command really means thou shalt not lie against your neighbor. You must not tell any lies that will hurt other people, and that will lead people to dislike their friends and their associates. Thou shalt not lie.

You know, when the Lord came into the world He always told the truth. For He came to teach men the truth, that by means of the truth men might be prepared for heaven. He taught that it is very, very important that we learn to think true things, and to act true things, and to say true things. Even though sometimes it hurts us. Even though sometimes, when we tell the truth, it means we may have to be punished. It still is good and right for us to tell the truth.

You remember, the Lord knew all things, and when He was arrested by evil men, He didn’t tell lies to avoid what they wanted to do to Him. He knew that they wanted to put his body to death. But He still told the truth, no matter what they asked Him. He said, “It is for this purpose that I am come into the world, to testify unto the truth, that through the truth men might be made free.” And so when Pilate asked Him, “Are you a king?” the Lord answered, “Thou sayest it, I am a king. But My kingdom is not of *this* world.”

So the Lord always told the truth, and He was called “the Faithful and True Witness” because He had come to tell us the truth about heaven and about Himself.

But there are many, many ways that we use the truth every day, and we may not even think about it. You know, when you go to school you learn from your teachers and from textbooks. Your teacher tells you things that you've never heard before, and you learn from these things. If we had to know only what we have experienced, what *we*'ve done, we wouldn't know very much. And so we listen to our teachers and we read the textbooks about science, history, geography and arithmetic and many, many other studies.

Now the people that wrote these books, these textbooks that we use in school, and the teachers who teach from them, they are bearing "true witness", for the things that they write are true and therefore we can depend on them. And when we learn them, we can use them as we grow up. And by using them we can become wise.

But if what they wrote wasn't true, if they wrote lies, things that we couldn't believe, then we couldn't learn from our teachers. We wouldn't know what to believe, or what to do, or how to live. And so they are obeying the Commandments when they write true things, and we can learn from them.

And when we make friends, you know, we don't make friends just by what we know about a person by our contact with them. We learn to like someone from the way they act toward us and towards other people, and by the things that they say, and the things that they do, and the things that we learn about them. We learn, "Yes, I would like to have him for my friend." And so you become friends. But suppose someone should come to you and say, "He's not really your friend. He tells lies about you. He takes things that belong to other people. He's really a very bad boy."

After a while you wouldn't want to be friends with him any more, because you had been told that he was bad, and the things that he did were evil. Now suppose later you discovered that these were lies, that actually he *was* your friend, he *did* like you, and he was a good boy. That would make you feel very bad. That lie would hurt him, and it would hurt you. That's why you're not to tell lies against your neighbor.

But there are so many, many other things about this Commandment that we should know. You know, when we're tempted to tell lies it's so that we may get out of trouble. Maybe we will be punished if they find out that we did something. And so we think maybe it's better to tell a lie, say we didn't do it. And a worse kind of lie still would be to say that somebody else did it when you really were the one at fault. Because that would be hurting them; they would be punished in your place. And it would be hurting yourself because the Lord couldn't correct your evil by means of that punishment so that you could learn how to act correctly.

It's very wrong to think that you can escape punishment by telling a lie. You might not be punished just the same way, but you *would* be punished. For if you tell a lie it makes you very unhappy, and you're afraid somebody will find out that you told a lie. And you feel uncomfortable when you're near your mother and father, for fear they have learned

that you told a lie to them. You're always afraid and unhappy when you've told lies. And so you see that's a kind of a punishment in itself.

But if you ever do tell a lie, the Lord tells us how we can correct that, too. He says that we must go and tell the truth and then our lie will be taken away and we will feel better. If you've told a lie to get out of punishment, and you think about it later and you're unhappy because of what you did, then remember if you go to your mother or father or your teacher or to anyone to whom you've lied, and tell them, "I'm very sorry but I lied to you; I really did that thing." Then even though you may have to be punished, a little bit, you will feel ever so much better, because you will be obeying the Lord's commandment. And through the truth the Lord will be with you to help you.

And you know, your mother or father or teacher or your friend will all like you so much better. They will say, "That person is to be trusted. He's a good boy, or she's a good girl, because she's doing what the Lord wants her to do. We can trust that person and believe what they tell us." And through this obedience to the Lord's commandments, the Lord will help us day by day. He will give us as much happiness as we can receive, and He will prepare us to enter into heaven, into His holy city, after death.

And so the Lord said, as we read in our lesson, "*Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life and may enter in through the gates into the city.*" Amen.