***Lights in the World - PH52-01

Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 2:16***

The righteousness of God, we have seen, is expressed, in part, in ten principles which are commonly known as the Ten Commandments. These were given as a guide of morality to the Jewish people. Today, we're going to begin with the ninth of these principles. The ninth moral principle deals with bearing a true testimony as a witness under oath.

In recent years, it has been our experience to see a surprising number of government officials on the highest level of government brought into courts of law and condemned for perjury. This ninth moral principle is the one that these men have violated. These government leaders demonstrated that they had a moral sense which was directed not by the presence of God, but rather by the situation of the moment. One of the men who has spent time in prison, who used to be a White House staff member, openly said that the reason he followed the course of perjury was because he had been taught this by the radical chaplain at Yale University under the principles of situation ethics.

So in terms of the system of morality, of right and wrong being determined according to the situation of the moment, it seemed to him that the thing to do was to take an oath before Almighty God to tell the truth, and then proceed to lie because the situation required lying. This, of course, is the whole thing that we're talking about. That's why we're studying these principles. Morality is not a relative thing. There are certain things which are right and certain things which are wrong, but only God can tell us that. This is not up to people to decide what is wrong to do or what is right to do. This is a moral ground established by the Word of God. I hope that as we have used this particular code, which is reflected throughout the Scripture, that you yourself (all of us) have found these principles being ingrained into our thinking automatically, so that without any effort (without any thought) on our part, when we are confronted with a situation that requires a moral decision, we can come through and act upon these principles that we have learned.

Justice in a nation is based upon the sacredness of a witness's testimony under oath. Under atheism in communist countries, there is no ground for justice because there is no ultimate ground for truthful testimony. There is no ground for assuring that the witness is telling the truth on an authority that is higher than simply other people. Perjured testimony is a bad thing because it destroys freedom. Of course, all of these moral principles are designed to preserve our freedom during the period of the angelic conflict in which we are living. To preserve our freedom, it is necessary that testimony given in a court of law be truthful. In time, perjured testimony will destroy not only the freedom of the victim who has been falsely accused, but it will also destroy the freedom of the perjurer.

As a matter of fact, as you remember, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself was murdered upon the Cross of Calvary as the result of the violation by the Jews of the ninth moral principle. They, who were standing so strongly for the Law of Moses and their faithfulness to that law, it is interesting to note, violated this principle against perjured testimony that sent Christ to the cross. You can read about this in Matthew 26:60 where they brought these false witnesses to set up a case against the innocent Lord Jesus Christ.

**The Ninth Commandment**

So let's look at the ninth moral principle. We read this in Exodus 20:16. In our English translation, it says, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." Let's look at the exegesis of this from the Hebrew first. The word "not" is the Hebrew word "lo" which you will remember is the strongest negative word in the Hebrew language. This is an absolute declaration of God. Period. Over and out. You will never take an oath to tell the truth, and then proceed to tell a lie.

The word "bear" is the Hebrew word "anah." It is "Qal"–a principle stated. It is active. This is a choice on the part of the person. It is imperfect which means anytime in the future–this will not at any time in the future be done. The word actually means "to sing." It really reduces itself to the idea of "answer." It signifies a solemn, loud declaration. It is used in 1 Samuel 9:17 of God uttering an oracle. It is used in Exodus 23:2 of a judge who is pronouncing a sentence. It is used of witnesses giving evidence. It means, in other words, "testifying." So we may translate this as, "You shall not answer," or "You shall not testify."

The word "neighbor" is the Hebrew word "rea," and it means "companion." A neighbor is anyone within the citizenry of the nation in which you live. This applies to every other person in your society. It has the prefix, the preposition "be" which means "against." So what the Hebrew is saying is, "You shall not answer against your neighbor." What you shall not answer is said to be "a false witness." The word "false" is the Hebrew word "shaker," and "shaker" means literally "liar."

The word "witness" is "ed." That is a person who is giving a testimony. So the translation comes out: "You shall not answer against your neighbor as a liar witness." You will not be a lying witness. You shall not answer against your neighbor as a liar witness. That is very clear. It's as definitive as God could make it in declaring to us this principle.

Let's define the principle. First of all, I want to point out that this is not basically a commandment against lying as such. The Bible does speak against being deceitful in our words (against lying). This commandment is not dealing with the practice of lying. This commandment is dealing with a legal procedure. This commandment is dealing with what is at the heart of law and order and stability in a society; that is, the reliability of the testimony of a witness in a court of law. This principle basically deals with false statements about other people. The rule has primary reference to witnesses here in legal proceedings. However, by implication it would extend to slandering people in any number of ways in daily contacts. This principle is reaffirmed in the New Testament, for example, in Romans 13:9. This is not dealing basically with lying or telling the truth. It is within the restricted area of legal proceedings.

There are times actually when the truth is not in order. We should recognize that the Bible teaches us that there are times when the truth is not in order. For example, let's look at three of these. All of you know, the story of Rahab the harlot. When Jericho was on the list of destruction by God's people, as the armies of Israel were invading the land of Canaan on their return from their slavery in Egypt, they had approached Jericho, and they had sent out two men as spies on a reconnaissance mission. These two spies came into the home of Rahab, and she hid them. When the agents of the King of Jericho came along and asked her to give up the men, she said, "It is true the men came here to me, but they went just before sundown. Before the gates were closed, they slipped out. If you will hurry, you'll catch them." You can read about this in Joshua 2:1-20.

The truth of the matter was that she had them hidden inside of her home up on the roof, and they were actually there all the time. However, she lied. She said, "They slipped out the gate just before sundown. If you hurry, you'll catch them." So she sent the agents out chasing rabbits. After a few days, they came back and they gave up. Then she let the spies down over the wall with the understanding that when Jericho was attacked and invaded by the Israelite army, she and her family would be preserved. That's where we have the dramatic arrangement of the sign of tying the scarlet cord in the window in order to identify the house of Rahab. The Israelite spies said to her, "We will be faithful to you as you have been faithful to us, but we will only be responsible for people in your house. Anybody who steps out the door into the street is not our responsibility. So get your people together. Keep them in this house marked by this scarlet cord, and it will be a protective sign over you."

Now, obviously, this is a wartime situation. That's the difference. This is a situation dealing with an enemy who has embarked on a mission of death for the spies of God in this case. For this reason, Rahab is actually commended in the Word of God for her actions. We find this in James 2:25 and Hebrews 11:31. She was singled out as an example of splendid living faith in action. She did lie to the enemy. However, in a wartime situation, the enemy is not entitled to the truth. Had she given them the truth, two godly men would have been delivered to their deaths.

This comes very close perhaps to sounding like situation ethics, because we are saying that in the situation of war, we do not tell the truth to the enemy and thus endanger our associates. However, the point of difference here is that we are not saying that in this case, what Rahab did was not a lie. She did tell a lie. A lie per se is a wrong thing to do. However, under the conditions of which she was living at the time, the lie was the thing which was in order. No criminal has the right to the truth from us with which to do us evil.

Somebody could come into your place of business in order to murder your employer, and you happen to know that your employer is at the moment in the vault, and the person comes and says, "Where is your boss? I'm here to kill him." You are not under moral obligation to tell him, "He's in the vault. You can get him there." What you are under moral obligation to do is to lie about it, and to refuse to give him the information. As Rahab had, you are to protect from an evil intent.

The Scripture, as a matter of fact, confirms this for us by the fact that it does not condemn Abraham and Isaac for lying in order to avoid their own murder and the rape of their wives in Genesis 12:11-13, Genesis 22, and Genesis 26:6-7. Abraham and Isaac are richly blessed by God, and the men who forced them into this deceit are, as a matter of fact, judged by God (Genesis 12:15-20. Genesis 20:3-18). In other words, to give the truth to those who are bent on evil is to become party to their sins.

Another example is the story of the midwives in Egypt. You remember that the Pharaoh, in order to reduce the Jewish population, determined to kill all the male babies. Therefore, he ordered the midwives, who were delivering these children, that if the child born was a male, he was to be instantly killed. The midwives did not do this. The Pharaoh called them in and said, "Why are the baby boys not being killed in the process of birth?" That's where he wanted them killed. The midwives lied to him and said, "Well, the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women. The Hebrew women are strong because of the kind of work they are forced to do. Consequently, when labor comes upon them, it is fast and direct and swift, and the children are born before we can get there–before the call can come for us to come in and assist."

This was not true. They were lying. However, they feared God and His moral laws, as Rahab did, more than they did the Pharaoh. The midwives actually were acting with moral courage in this case, because they were endangering their own lives by what they were doing. Had the pharaoh been able to establish that they were deliberately letting these children live, then they themselves would have been killed. Evildoers do not have a right to the truth to aid their cause. So this commandment is not dealing strictly with the matter of telling the truth. There are times under wartime conditions; under crises combat-type of conditions; or, under conditions of crime, when the truth is not the right of those who are bent upon destruction.

Another dramatic example is in 1 Kings 22:22-23. King Ahab is bent on a military campaign. He is the husband of the wicked Jezebel. They are a grossly evil team ruling the northern kingdom of Israel. He is trying to get Jehoshaphat, the king of the southern kingdom, to join him in this campaign. Jehoshaphat, being more of a godly orientation, wants confirmation from the prophets that this is the mind of God. However, Ahab cannot get confirmation. The true prophets say, "If you go into this battle, it will be disastrous." But it is the plan of God that Ahab is going to die. Somebody is going to shoot an arrow at random; it's going to find a chink in Ahab's armor; and, he's going to die in his chariot. As God predicted, the dogs are going to lick up his blood, just as he shed the innocent blood of Naboth the Jezreelite in order to steal Naboth's vineyards.

1 Kings 22:19: "And he said, 'Hear, therefore, the Word of the Lord.'" This is Micaiah, the true prophet, speaking. "I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the hosts of heaven standing by Him on his right hand and on his left (that is, the angelic host). The Lord said, 'Who shall persuade Ahab that he may go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead?' And one said on this manner; and, another said on that matter. There came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, 'I will persuade him.' The Lord said unto him, 'By what means?' And he said, 'I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' He said, 'You shall persuade him, and prevail also. Go forth and do so.' Now, therefore, behold, the Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets, and the Lord has spoken evil concerning you."

Micaiah was primarily trying to tell Jehoshaphat that, "Ahab's prophets are under a lying spirit which was authorized by God to deceive Ahab to going to his death. Don't listen to him, and don't join him in his campaign." So here you have the situation of truth being denied by God himself from those who are bent upon an evil course. So this principle deals with perjury. It deals with a legitimate testimony of truth under oath.

**Courts of Law**

So let's apply this thing and see how it works in action. There are certain factors that involve a true testimony. First of all is the principle of corroboration. The principle of corroboration is to confirm a testimony which is given. Remember that courts of law are ordained by God to exercise His vengeance on evil actions. Courts of law are not ordained by men; they are not ordained by the state; and, they are not ordained by people. Unfortunately, our society has so drifted away from the knowledge of the Word of God that we no longer view courts of law as religious institutions. But there is no other ground for a court of law except as a religious institution. It is an institution ordained by God for the purpose of executing God's views on right and wrong–not for executing what some group of people say is right or wrong. So courts of law are to exercise God's vengeance on evil actions. To do this, courts must have access to honest and faithful testimony.

So to ensure truth in the matter, it is necessary to confirm a testimony. This is done by getting the testimony of other witnesses, and by cross-examination. This is a biblical requirement. Under the Mosaic Law, this requirement was spelled out in Deuteronomy 19:15 and Deuteronomy 17:6. That is that nobody could be condemned without the confirmation of more than one witness. Just because one person came along and said, "I saw you kill this man," a person could not be put to death on that testimony. There had to be a corroboration. There had to be confirmation of this person's testimony and that he was not just saying this because he had it in for the accused. This is also in the church age. The same testimony is repeated–the requirement of confirming testimony (Matthew 18:15-16, 2 Corinthians 13:1, 1 Timothy 5:19, Hebrews 10:28). You may look those up at your leisure. But all of these are scriptural declarations for the biblical requirement of confirming testimony. God's rule is that people are obliged to tell the truth within the framework of legal proceedings.

However, there are limitations upon the courts in the pursuit of the truth. The Bible law of true testimony does not condone torture, for example, or coercion in order to get a testimony from a person. As a matter of fact, the Bible indicates that even when a person voluntarily confesses, it is the duty of the judge and of the court, as God's representative, to confirm that person's confession.

You remember the incident in the book of Joshua concerning Achan, who before the battle of Ai was guilty of taking some things in battle that he was forbidden. He took some gold; some silver; and, some garments. This was secretly done. It was the loot of war. The soldiers were forbidden to take anything. He did this secretly. They lost the battle of Ai. Joshua went to God and said, "Why?" It was pointed out to them that the problem lay with Achan. Achan confessed and said, "Yes, this is what I did." But before judgment was passed upon him, they sent people to his tent, and they brought out the evidence. They said, "Sure enough. Here is the gold; here is the silver; and, here is the Babylonian garments which he took." His confession was then confirmed, and then he was executed.

The Bible protects a person from being forced to make a false incriminating statement against himself. So we have laws today prohibiting the state from compelling a person to incriminate himself. The citizen has a right not to have to tell upon himself. This is not found in any societies outside of those which have a biblical background, such as ours. In a society which has a biblical background, the principle is that you're innocence until you're proven guilty. In a non-Christian oriented society, such as communist countries, the opposite holds true: You are guilty once you are accused, in a communist country, until you are proven innocent, which violates the scriptural principles.

The Fifth Amendment to the United States Constitution, of course, embodies this protection, and that's what is meant by people taking the Fifth. When they say, "I'm taking the Fifth," that means that they are saying. "I'm claiming my right under the Fifth Amendment not to say anything that incriminates myself. I don't have to give you evidence against myself."

This rules out such things as the lie detector. A lie detector actually begins with the concept that you're guilty, and we're going to have to prove that you're innocent. In effect, this makes the innocent person have to testify against himself. Because it is a machine, the innocent may end up actually incriminating himself–actually coming out on the polygraph being declared guilty. I know of situations where innocent people thought they would simply clear things up and take a polygraph test. In the process, perhaps without realizing it, they put themselves in a position, "I declare myself guilty, and I'm going to prove myself innocent." Lo and behold, when the polygraph test information comes back, they say, "Yes, we confirm what you have declared. You are guilty." And they had to suffer the consequences.

I could describe to you cases of that that I know of. Sometimes, the same people go back to somebody else and get another lie detector examination, and this one comes out and says, "Yes, you are innocent." But the point here is that this is why the courts of law shy off from a lie detector test. That is because it puts you in the position of saying, "I am guilty," which is contrary to the Word of God, "and now I'm going to prove myself innocent."

The same thing is true about wiretapping. It violates this principle against self-incrimination. The Bible says that you can't do anything to a person until you have confirmed by eyewitnesses that he is guilty of this crime. It has to be more than one witness. It has to be taken under oath before God, and it has to be consistent testimony examined by cross-examination, so that the judges have confirmed that these people are telling the truth. That's the way you confirm things in a court of law. So wiretapping is an invasion, again, of listening to what a person says, and using that to incriminate him. Certain conversations are privileged communications. When you talk to your doctor, nobody else has the privilege of having access to that information. The same is true of speaking to a pastor-teacher, or speaking to your lawyer. That is privileged conversation that no one else can secure access to in order to incriminate you.

Now, in the era of the tape recorder, this does not always apply. Written records, under certain conditions, have been declared open range for courts of law to seize in order to incriminate a person. What a person says on tapes, and records of his own private conversations and his own private records, if they can be secured, can be used to incriminate him. Now, here's the problem where, in a way, the courts are using written records and using tapes to cause a person to incriminate himself, which in a way really violates this basic principle.

But on the other hand, those who are witnesses to a crime, who are not involved in the crime, they, by biblical standards are obligated to testify, and testify truthfully to that which they have seen and that which they have heard. This is part of the duty of citizens to enforce the law of the land. Failure to testify to a crime is to make you party to it.

**Perjury**

Now, what about those who did practice perjury? Perjury under the Mosaic Law was viewed as a very serious offense. It was, in effect, lying under oath. So we read in Leviticus 19:12, "And you shall not swear by my name falsely. Neither shall you profane the name of your God. I am the Lord." The word "profane" here means "blaspheme." When you perjure yourself, you are blaspheming the name of God. Deuteronomy 17:6-7 say, "At the mouth of two witnesses or three witnesses shall he that is worthy of death be put to death. But at the mouth of one witness, he shall not be put to death. The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death. Afterwards, the hands of all the people. So you shall put the evil away from among you."

In the Old Testament, the fact that the citizens were responsible for enforcing the law was made clear by the fact that when witnesses brought testimony of a man's guilt concerning murder, for example, and he was condemned to death on the basis of their testimony, they would take him out in the field; put him in the low place; and, it was the witnesses against him who had to lift the first stones to cast upon him to execute him by the method of stoning. The people whose testimony had brought upon this person the judgment of death were the first to enforce the penalty.

In Deuteronomy 19:16-21, we are given the Old Testament penalty for those who are guilty of perjury. The Bible views this as a very serious offense, and it gives a very serious penalty for it. Deuteronomy 19:16-21: "If a false witness rises up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong, then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges, who shall be in those days." You'll notice how this is totally a theocratic setup as a court of law. Here's a man who is accused, and he tells his accuser, "You're lying. I didn't do that. I didn't say that. I'm not guilty of that." They are brought before a court of law, which is religious in its orientation. That's the only kind of courts there were in the Old Testament.

Verse 18: "And the judges shall make diligent inquiry. And behold, if the witness be a false witness, and has testified falsely against his brother, then shall you do unto him as he had thought to have done unto his brother. So shall you put the evil away from among you. And those who remain shall hear and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you. And your eye shall not pity; but the life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."

What this Scripture is saying is if a person was guilty of perjury so that if his testimony had been believed, the victim would have been executed, and they discover that this man has perjured himself, then the penalty for the perjurer is death, though the victim is proven to be innocent, and he lives. But the perjurer was put to death for his perjury, or anything else that he did down the line of a lesser nature. That's the point of this "eye for eye, tooth for a tooth," and so on. If he was perjuring himself so that this man would have been faced with a fine of $1,000, and they discover that he was lying, then the perjurer would be fined $1,000. That's a pretty good system.

**Capital Punishment**

I want you to notice that the Bible says that those who remain shall hear and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil against you. We are told that capital punishment does not deter murder. That's human viewpoint. The Bible says that punishment which is commensurate to the crime does deter those who want to pursue that particular crime. You can take either God's viewpoint on the matter, or you can take human viewpoint, with its cockeyed statistics that it cooks up in order to prove that something is not the case (the statistics that are trying to prove to us that capital punishment does not deter murder). It is fantastic. As a matter of fact, the recent studies now are simply reversing that, and openly and clearly indicating that since capital punishment has been eliminated, murder has risen precipitously.

In the very near future, the United States Supreme Court is going to go one more step, and it may now take us to the end of the line. Up to now, it is only illegal to execute a person unless he has committed a crime in which everybody who commits that crime is executed. For example, we may have the rule that everybody who kills a policeman is executed. No other penalty is given. The Supreme Court, in the next few weeks, is going to make the decision whether capital punishment, as such, is cruel and unusual punishment. It will surprise me very much if they did not decide that it is, and that will be the end of a very basic scriptural requirement for dealing with capital crimes.

One of the reasons for that kind of punishment is that it deters others from doing it. I read of a country the other day where when a person steals anything, he is automatically executed. If he's proven guilty of stealing, he is executed. They don't have too much stealing. That is because you eliminate it in two ways. The people who are inclined to steal aren't around to do it anymore, and the people who might be tempted to it, but who have some judgment and restraint, decide not to do it. So suddenly you have security all around.

So the penalty for perjury in the Old Testament was whatever would have happened to the person that you were falsely witnessing against is done to you. If a person is not discovered in his perjury, his perjury does not escape God. Proverbs 19:5-9 tell us that the punishment comes from a divine direction. The Bible equates perjury with blasphemy against God, as we read in Leviticus 19:12. The oath of a witness is saying, "I hereby declare that I'm going to be as true as God is true." When you say, "So help me, God," that's what you're saying. You're saying, "I'm going to let God help me be as true in what I say as He is truthful. So this is a horrendous blasphemy against God to say, "I am going to let God help me to speak the truth," and then to lie about it.

American courts are basically based on biblical authority for integrity and justice. Courts without such foundations are humanistic, and they decline in a radical and brutal injustice because there's no way to believe what anybody is saying unless you have someone who is above the human element.

Furthermore, the Mosaic Law, as we read in Deuteronomy 19:21, forbids pity toward a perjurer. There is not to be any pity toward the perjurer. He is destroying social order, and his punishment is essential, as we have seen, for controlling evildoers.

**Violation of the Ninth Commandment**

Freedom of speech, which is very precious to us in this country, does not mean the total right of expression without reference to the truth or responsibility. This also comes under this ninth commandment: freedom of speech–yes, but freedom of speech which is restrained by the confines of the truth. We have several directions of violation in practice of the ninth moral principle in our society. For example, the distorted reporting of the news media is a violation of this principle. It is not unknown for the news media to actually slant stories, and worse, to set up the report.

**The News Media**

You perhaps remember reading the results of the government investigation against one of the major television networks where they had gone out during one of the student riots and wanted to get pictures of the students rioting. The television personnel arrived on the scene with their own placards; with their own signs; and, with all that was needed for a riot. And they distributed it and got everybody set up and got the camera set and then they said, "OK, go." So they started rioting, and they took pictures of it, and they gave this actual documentary report on television. Somehow, somebody let the cat out of the bag and the courts got hold of it and discovered that, sure enough, that's exactly what one of the major networks had actually done.

Another documentary on narcotics in this country went to a college and got a group of students who were willing to participate in a pot party. The network brought the pot and everything necessary; they set up the cameras; and, they proceeded to interview students under the influence of marijuana so they could have this documentary. This is distorted, slanted, deceptive news violating this principle. This is not a true testimony.

**False Advertising**

False advertising in merchandising is a violation of bearing a true testimony, and that's commonly done. A lying tongue is one of the seven things that God hates the most. In Proverbs 6:16-17, God tells us the seven things that He hates above all others. The lying tongue is right up there at the head of the list. False statements are made in daily human relationships, often to build a case for something. You want to make somebody look worse than he is, or you want to make something look better than it is, so you lie about it. This is frequently done in wartime, but that exaggeration is a violation of the ninth moral principle.

This is the same thing when one preacher meets another and one asks, "Well, how are things going?" And he says, "Oh, fine." That's what you always say. You never say, "Lousy." You say, "Oh, just fine." And he says, "How is your attendance?" Well, there were 100 people there, but he says, "Oh, we're running about 500." Now, do you think that isn't done? Don't kid yourself. It's done all the time. I see thousands before me here right now. If necessary, I'll see more on occasion. That is, again, that subtle little thing that we do all the time.

**Slander and Gossip**

You have to think in your own case how you do this. This is a practical day-by-day violation of the ninth moral principle. You're padding the figures. The gossiper and the slanderer, of course, falls under this category. He is failing, in effect, to give an honest testimony. That's why Leviticus 19:16 prohibits the practice of slander. That is because here you're destroying the character and the reputation of a person. It is not true that sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me. It is true that sticks and stones will break your bones, but words will also hurt you. That's exactly what the Bible is condemning under this principle. Proverbs 10:18 says that a slanderer is a fool. He brings upon himself a destructive effect that can only be described as the work of a fool.

Psalm 101:5 says something even more horrendous. It says that God washes His hands of a slander. God just cuts him off. So the gossip and slandering technique, which comes closer to home for most of us, is something that you may want to give a second thought to relative to this moral principle. God operates on this principle. If we violate it, we play the fool, and God will wash His hands of us in the consequences of our slander. Many people (many believers) have cut themselves off from great spiritual blessing, enlightenment, and fantastic eternal enrichment with treasures in heaven. How have they cut themselves off? Because of their gossip and their slander. They could not learn that vengeance is the Lord's, and God says, "You leave vengeance to me." Slander and gossip is an attempt by human beings to exercise divine vengeance.

**Flattery**

Flattery is a form of a lying tongue that God hates. That's a false testimony, and it is the common practice of the business world to flatter in order to gain certain ends.

The popularity of the gossip columnists indicates a readiness of people to break the ninth moral principle. Some people turn immediately to the gossip column in the newspaper. They just can't wait to see what Liz Taylor has done or what Teddy Kennedy is up to in his boat someplace. They just can't wait to see what the latest hot scoop is here and there.

I saw a television program yesterday where a couple of parents had some boys who were trying to put out a newspaper. It was a little town, and the newspaper wasn't selling. So they were advised that what they needed was human interest stuff–stuff that people like to hear about. They were told that the fact that Susie fell at the school yard and cut her left knee is not big news. So they started listening to what the adults were saying, and they heard all kinds of interesting things.

Then they went out to the garage and they printed out their next newspaper. They said, "Mr. So-and-so says that Preacher Jones is dry as an old dusty well. Mrs. So-and-so says that Mrs. So-and-so's custard at the church bake was like eating through a piece of shoe leather." They just went right down the line because they had heard everybody saying these things. Now they had a newspaper that would sell.

Fortunately for their parents, the parents got an advanced copy. When they saw what was being written, they said, "Have you sold any of these?" And the kid said, "No." "Oh," they said, "that's good." But the kid said, "We distributed them all over town." This is a free copy in order to get business going. Then you had these adults chasing all over town, sneaking up and grabbing these papers out of the mail boxes before anybody in town could read it.

Then they said, "Oh, we're relieved. We got them all." The evening went on. Nobody called. Nobody made any issue. They said, "I guess we got them all." Then the boy said, "Yes, you've got all of that issue, but you didn't get the second one. They said, "There's another one?" The kid said, "Yes, we have a second whole sheet." And then they thought, "Oh, horror, they passed these out." They said, "No, we threw them out in the trash can since you didn't want us to publish the other one."

Oh, they were all relieved. Well, the end of the story was that one-by-one, the three adults involved went sneaking out to the backyard to the trash can to get a copy of the one they didn't see because they wanted to see what these kids had heard around town.

So this is the routine of violating the ninth moral principle because it's so juicy and interesting to get in on the slander and the gossip. You have to be smart to know how the gossip is working on you. Somebody may call you on the phone that usually hasn't called you, and they say, "Hello, dear, how are you doing? I've been thinking about you." You be smart enough to say, "Drop dead," because since they haven't been in the habit of checking on you (friendly, friendly), and they haven't seen you around, they think that maybe you have some hot scoop. So they're being friendly in order to get their nose into your business to see what they can find out. So you just stomp on the snout and button up. Just start pouring out smoke screens so they can make fools of themselves as they carry your smoke screen around. This is practical violating of the ninth moral principle. Remember that the Word of God says that if you don't cut it off, you become guilty of that person's wrong doing.

There are a few more things we should look at, which we will do next time, on how the ninth moral principle works with judges and courts. This principle is a tremendously wonderful provision on the part of Almighty God. It is the cornerstone of personal security and of civil order. We will look at that next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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