

Introduction

The ten commandments touch on all aspects of life in broad detail. In the first group of laws we find the prescription of our conduct before God. There we learn to worship only the Lord, make no images for adoration and to honor His name as well as His day. In the second portion, as we are occupied with our relations to others, we learn that both attitudes and actions must be held in conformity with the Word of God. These restrictions bind us in God's care and liberate us from fleshly sin.

Perhaps none of the commandments has the breadth of interpretation given to it which is ascribed to the ninth command: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor" (Exodus 20:16). Much of the interpretation is applied to simple truthfulness and then carried to unusual aspects of life. A friend refused to allow family friends to give a surprise shower for his wife because they were doing it under deceptive circumstances. Another distant acquaintance felt compelled to tell the absolute analytical truth about every circumstance no matter how it came out or how it affected others. Both of these wanted to be clear of any charge of false witness! To these persons the essential message of the command relates to "telling the truth." But in the Biblical framework the real point is to be sure you say or do nothing to the harm of your neighbor. The concept of "you shall love your neighbor as yourself" is never more meaningfully witnessed than when seen in the light of this law.

When Jesus applied this command in the New Testament, the party to whom he applied it sought to avoid the issue by asking... "Who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29). Telling a parable what is known as the account of the Good Samaritan, Jesus caused him to see that a neighbor is one to whom or for whom you may show kindness regardless of what else