

variance to the truthfulness of God.

The Ninth Commandment: Applications

Out of the broad nature of the command grows a number of applications both positive and negative. The most obvious is the truth already suggested in Deuteronomy 19: that one will not bring a false charge against a neighbor. Perhaps, for example, while walking carelessly with your mind on other matters, you fall in front of your neighbor's house. Noting a slight variation in the sidewalk surface you blame your neighbor for negligence and sue. You know it was your fault but you falsely charge your neighbor. The law denies you this appeal and asks you to act responsibly.

We might note that in some of these areas people justify themselves on the ground that it is something everyone does. That is not however, the proper basis for conduct or truth. In a world where "false witness" is a standard means of operation, the one who supposedly belongs to God should live above it. The call for His people was to be like God, not like other sinners. So we are safe in saying that integrity is more important than advantage or convenience, if we honor the law.

Slander against a neighbor is also outlawed in this command. The slander might be an idle word of gossip or perhaps a malicious half-truth. Both are defilements of the neighbor and violate God's law. It is possible to say or do some of these things in an offhand or unintended action but that does not eliminate the error or vindicate the guilty. We must learn to be careful and guarded in our attitudes towards others.

As with other commands the best defense is to love one's neighbor. That means we desire one another to have the best that God gives, for love is the unselfish seeking of the welfare of others. Knowing that malice