First Century Fellowship Ministry

A Biblical Church of God

The Ninth Commandment

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor

(Exodus 20:16 Deuteronomy 5:20)

In the 1950's there was a weekly series on TV called Superman. The introduction stated, in part, "Superman, who stands for truth, justice and the American way." We have lost something along the journey, I think. Truth and justice do not seem to be the American way or any other country's way, for that matter. It would seem, "…, the ancient serpent who is called the Devil and Satan, who is deceiving the whole world:" is busily at work. (Revelation 12:9)

The word *truth* appears in the Bible more than 200 times, and the word *honor* appears 170 times, depending on the translation. God seems to have put a lot of emphasis on *truth* and *honor.*

What exactly is, bearing false witness? "A false witness who speaks lies, and he who sows discord among brethren." (Proverbs 6:19). "He who speaks truth shows forth righteousness, but a false witness deceit." (Proverbs 12:17). "A faithful witness will not lie, but a false witness will speak lies." (Proverbs 14:5). So, a false witness can be said to be a deceitful liar. A person who lies or deceives others.

Today we lie as a way of life. We try to establish a "cost/benefit" way of dealing with lies. "If I say this and get caught in a lie, what will it cost me? What is my benefit?" Businesses routinely distort or deceive customers with false product claims and misrepresenting the product and themselves. We lie on job applications, on our taxes. We go to court or enter into contracts and *swear* we are truthful. Politicians lie, lawyers lie, bankers, business associates, friends, the list can go on to include all phases and members of our society. We even have degrees of lying to make us feel better. White lies, little white lies, fibbing, fudging things, putting someone on. And a new favorite in government and industry, plausible deniability! Many think it is easier to lie than to live the way God wants us to. They feel God's way is too oppressive so they take Satan's way and become slaves to sin. "Who exchanged the truth of God for the lie; and they worshiped and served the created thing more than the One Who is Creator, Who is blessed into the ages. Amen." (Romans 1:25).

What does that say about us? We have come to expect it. Unfortunately, we have also come to accept it. Why do we accept it? How do we follow people whose "truth" changes to suit their environment or situation? How can they be trusted or defended? Jethro, Moses father-in-law, advised him to delegate some of his duties to others to lighten his responsibilities so he would have more time to do God's work. "You will surely wear away, both you and this people that are with you, for this thing is too burdensome for you. You are not able to perform it alone. And you shall choose out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness. And place them over the people to be leaders of thousands, and leaders of hundreds, and leaders of fifties, and leaders of tens." (Exodus 18:18, 21). They knew the only way to justly rule under God and in God's kingdom was through truth. They wanted truthful and honest men. Men with integrity. Look how far we've come!

We must strive for a system where truth, honor, integrity and above all, faith in the word of God abounds. It should be the rule, not the exception. Jesus, whose character is a perfect example of the character of God the Father, told His disciples, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6). When asked by Pontius Pilate if He were truly a king Jesus responded, "As you say, I am a king. For this purpose I was born, and for this reason I came into the world, that I may bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice." (John 18:37).

For those who desire to have a personal relationship with the Father through His Son, Jesus Christ, you must accept the Word of God and surrender yourself to its truth. Ephesians 1:13 states, "In Whom you also trusted after hearing the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation; in Whom also, after believing, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise."

Changing our ways is not easy. Jesus is our example, though. He was born of flesh so He would, and did, experience everything we do. He was made man to die for our sins. As long as He remained pure, sinless, He was the perfect sacrifice. Because of the law of sin and death Jesus had to be made mortal to be able to die for our sins. He resisted Satan right to the end. "For to this you were called because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow in His footsteps Who committed no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth; Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when suffering, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him Who judges righteously; Who Himself bore our sins within His own body on the tree, so that we, being dead to sins, may live unto righteousness; by Whose stripes you were healed." (1 Peter 2: 21-24).

Jesus set the example personally for His disciples. Paul speaks of his weakness. "Now you know that at first I preached the gospel to you in the weakness of the flesh; and the temptation-namely, my trial in my flesh-you despised not, nor rejected with contempt; rather, you received me as a messenger of God, even as Jesus Christ

Himself." (Galatians 4:13-14). On one occasion Paul complained to God about a "thorn in his flesh, an angel of Satan to buffet" him. "I besought the Lord three times for this, that it might depart from me; But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you; for My power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, most gladly will I boast in my weaknesses that the power of Christ will dwell in me." (2 Corinthians 12:8-9). So, we can see that weakness of the flesh and can be overcome with our commitment and devotion to God. As children of God we are never alone. He is always there to listen to us and remember, in our times of weakness His power in us is made stronger.

For our part we need to pray and surrender our lives to God and empty ourselves of "self". We must diligently seek His help. "Having therefore a great High Priest, Who has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, we should hold fast the confession of our faith. For we do not have a high priest who cannot empathize with our weaknesses, but one Who was tempted in all things according to the likeness of our own temptations; yet He was without sin." (Hebrews 4:14-15).

We need to worship Him in spirit and in truth. (John 4:24). We become members of God's family and the church that Jesus built by repenting, being baptized and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38).

To be true disciples of Jesus we must love Him unconditionally and keep His commandments. "If you love Me, Keep the commandments-namely, My commandments. Even the Spirit of truth which the world cannot receive because it perceives it not, nor knows it; but you know it because it dwells with you, and shall be within you." (John 14:15, 17). The prophet Samuel sums it up, "Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart, for consider what great things He has done for you." (1 Samuel 12:24).