

Each of our Scripture lessons today speaks against placing our self and our names, personal needs and reputations above those of our neighbor. Given the fact that our dear Lord has given us His name in Holy Baptism, and with it has promised upon His reputation to defend us and care for our every need, we can and should in all security and confidence devote ourselves to the defense and care of our neighbor and his good name.

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF CONCORD
SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
LARGE CATECHISM
EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

254] Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor..

255] Over and above our own body, spouse, and temporal possessions, we have yet another treasure, namely, honor and good report [the illustrious testimony of an upright and unsullied name and reputation], with which we cannot dispense. For it is intolerable to live among men in open shame and general contempt. 256] Therefore God wishes the reputation, good name, and upright character of our neighbor to be taken away or diminished as little as his money and possessions, that every one may stand in his integrity before wife, children, servants, and neighbors. . . .

260] Therefore this commandment is given first of all that every one shall help his neighbor to secure his rights, and not allow them to be hindered or twisted, but shall promote and strictly maintain them, . . .

263] . . . this commandment forbids all sins of the tongue whereby we may injure or approach too closely to our neighbor. . . . Now, whatever is done with the tongue against a fellow-man God would have prohibited, whether it be false preachers with their doctrine and blasphemy, false judges and witnesses with their verdict, or outside of court by lying and evil-speaking. 264] Here belongs particularly the detestable, shameful vice of speaking behind a person's back and slandering, to which the devil spurs us on, . . . For it is a common evil plague that every one prefers hearing evil to hearing good of his neighbor; and although we ourselves are so bad that we cannot suffer that any one should say anything bad about us, . . . yet we cannot bear that the best is spoken about others.

Therefore, to avoid this vice we should note that 265] no one is allowed publicly to judge and reprove his neighbor, although he may see him sin, unless he have a command to judge and to reprove. 266] For there is a great difference between these two things, judging sin and knowing sin. You may indeed know it, but you are not to judge it. I can indeed see and hear that my neighbor sins, but I have no command to report it to others. Now, if I rush in, judging and passing sentence, I fall into a sin which is greater than his. But if you know it, do nothing else than turn your ears into a grave and cover it, until you are appointed to be judge and to punish by virtue of your office.

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