

Sermon to the Saints of God assembled at Topeka, KS: Sunday, May 2, 2021

Honor thy Father and Mother

For modern "Christianity", the Ten Commandments have become trite, rote, red-state marketing material. They are bastardized and abused – reduced to a shadow of their power and authority in this godless generation. These blessed commandments, written by the very finger of God in the presence of Moses on Mount Sinai are full of instruction for the sheep. There is much to say about each of these commandments; I will endeavor to expound one of them for you this morning.

Exodus 20:12 "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee."

There are a few things that make this commandment stand out in my mind:

- It is one of only two commandments that are given in the positive – it's a "Thou shalt", rather than a "Thou shalt not". It's proactive, and it is the driver, the heartbeat for the other nine.
- It is the "first commandment with promise" (***Ephesians 6:2***) For that matter, it is the only commandment that has a specific promise attached to it.
- It is commonly reduced to "obey your parents", which doesn't do justice to the powerful concepts at work here. "Obey your parents" is certainly a critical part, but it is not the whole story.

Before we proceed, let's get some context. The Ten Commandments are a compendium of our various duties toward God, and toward our fellow man (our neighbor). These Commandments are repeated and instructed by Jesus Christ in the New Testament in multiple ways, therefore codifying them as a primary part of the Moral Law that remained in effect, even after the Ceremonial Law was fulfilled upon the death of Jesus Christ, and the Veil of the Temple being rent in twain. One of the places that our Lord gave these commands was in Matthew 22:

Matthew 22:37-40 "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Now clearly those two commandments that I just read do not read the same as the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20. Because of that, Satan's silver tongued false prophets love to treat these words like they are the ushering in of a whole new order of things wherein hippie, Birkenstock wearing, Super-Bell-Boy-Jesus has overthrown that hateful, bigoted, bully God of the Old Testament. They bastardize these words, and then hang their entire religion on them, at the expense of every other word in the Bible! 'You don't need to worry about all of those antiquated, hateful, style-cramping thou-shalt-nots. Just say that you "love" God, and that you "love" your neighbor, while vigorously encouraging them in their sin. Voila! A Christian! Cue the harps!' What folly! The fact is that these two Commandments are a compendium, a summary of the Ten, all of which clearly speaks to our whole duty to God and to our neighbor. There is nothing new here. Verse 40 clearly tells us that the entire Old Testament (the Law and the Prophets) hangs off of these two commandments.

This first and great commandment that Jesus Christ lays down – to love the Lord thy God – contains the first table, or the first four, of the Ten Commandments. These come first in order, because our duty toward God is the reason for our duty toward our neighbor, and wherever there is question in our lives, our duty toward God is preeminent, and it is to be honoured above all.

1. Thou shalt have no other gods before me
2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image
3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain
4. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy

The second of Jesus Christ's commandments – to love thy neighbor as thyself – contains the second table, or the remaining six of the Ten Commandments.

5. Honour thy father and thy mother
6. Thou shalt not kill
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery
8. Thou shalt not steal
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness
10. Thou shalt not covet

Seeing then that Honour thy father and thy mother is a principal part of loving our neighbor, should help us begin to get arms around this commandment. There is an explicit command to honour. Who is to be honoured? How do we render this honour?

Before we answer those questions, I think it's critical to understand that there is also an implicit commandment, that runs toward those who would be honoured: behave honourably! Specifically, let's look at the duty of parents in that regard.

Psalm 127:1-5 *"Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep. Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate."*

Children are an heritage of the Lord! Heritage - that is, an inheritance, a portion. That incredible blessing is not one that is earned or deserved, and is to be acknowledged as a free gift of our Creator, and to be treated with the utmost of sobriety and care. Those children are not only an heritage OF the Lord, but are an heritage FOR the Lord. That heritage is to be carefully preserved from generation to generation. We can talk all day about children obeying their parents, but if children are obeying parents that are teaching the commandments of Satan, rather than those of God, then what becomes of God's heritage? We see all around us the efforts of our idolatrous neighbors to preserve their "heritage" by passing it on to their children. It makes my head hurt to think of the endless litany of idolatrous, superstitious practices and festivals that are carefully attended to all around this world in the name of preserving the godless heritage of humans! We're talking about the heritage of God here! It is incumbent upon us to faithfully pass it to our children, who in turn are required to pass it to their children. Let's look at the words of Joshua on that topic, having just raised up a memorial of twelve stones for perpetual remembrance on the occasion of the miraculous crossing of the Jordan River.

Joshua 4:20-24 *"And those twelve stones, which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal. And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. For the LORD your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over: That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the LORD your God for ever."*

You have a duty to preserve the heritage of the Lord! It is a cyclical duty – the parent is to instruct their child, the child must honour their parents, and in turn instruct their child, all in honour to our Father in heaven. Seeing the systemic, repetitive nature of that duty, in the preservation of God's heritage, should help you understand why I say that this commandment is so unique and critical, and it is the driver of all the other commandments. It should help us to understand why the Lord would attach a particular promise to it – “that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.” Indeed, righteousness exalteth, and preserves a nation (**Proverbs 14:34**). Keep that promise in mind as we look at the next two passages – both of these passages speak to the duty of the parents, not the children, and yet they speak to the same promise.

Deuteronomy 31:12,13 *"Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: And that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it."*

Deuteronomy 6:1-25 *"Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; Then*

beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you; (For the LORD thy God is a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth. Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah. Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes, which he hath commanded thee. And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the LORD: that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers, To cast out all thine enemies from before thee, as the LORD hath spoken. And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD our God hath commanded you? Then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand: And the LORD shewed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes: And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he swore unto our fathers. And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us."

When God gives the gift of a child, there is a non-delegable duty that is immediately assumed by those parents, to raise up that child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Anything short of that, is to declare war on the God that gave you that child! To refuse that duty, is to show yourself a God hating rebel, and for you, that blessing becomes the worst kind of curse. A child is a unique opportunity in a person's life - that child is a blank slate, and the parents have a unique sway over that child - what a blessing, to be able to use that opportunity to rehearse the nature, laws and attributes of the Almighty God in the ears of that child, and to insist upon obedience to those simple commandments! What a blessing, to be able to show obedience to God in that matter, as good stewards of the gift that he gave! It is a work that a parent is to engage in EVERY DAY that they have authority over that child - to teach them - line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, there a little. Crafting them, as weapons of war, for the Lord!

Let us return now to the explicit commandment, and the questions that we seek to answer: What is this honour, and to whom do we owe it. Let's start by bringing Paul's exposition of this commandment into the analysis.

Ephesians 6:1-9 *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him."*

Further, let us take into account these words of Peter:

1Peter 2:17-20 *"Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God."*

The duty is to honour. That word means to glorify. Regard with respect. Esteem. Obey. To make honourable. We are supposed to render that honour in the Lord: consistent with, focused on, and unto the Lord. We are to honour our father and mother, and any who have authority over us in this life – in fact, Peter tells us that we are to honour all men (that is where, and insomuch as it is due). All those that are in authority over us, that govern over us in our lives, have been appointed to that role by the sovereign King of all creation. We are to render due honour to them, in the Lord, according to their station relative to our lives, and according to their gifts. For example, we are to render appropriate honour to Parents, Grandparents, Aunts and Uncles, brothers and sisters in the church, Pastors, Bosses and co-workers, Police, Government officials, teachers, doctors, etc. We recognize the Lord's prerogative to put people in authority over us. We render this honour toward men, but UNTO GOD. On the contrary, the ungodly are

disobedient to parents (**Romans 1:30, 2 Timothy 3:2**), are without natural affection (**Romans 1:31**), despise government, and are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. We also recognize the absolute preeminence of God, and that he is to be honoured and obeyed BEFORE MAN. In other words, my duty to honour and obey someone in authority over me ends where they command something directly contrary to God. Like the three Hebrew children who said “O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.” Or like Moses, who came to years, and refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. To be clear, we cannot cast off authority simply because we don’t like the person, or we don’t like the way that they are treating us – that is to be endured with patience and good cheer, as it is pleasing to God.

Of course, this commandment speaks specifically to parents, as they most directly stand in the room of God for their children. In a temporal sense, your parents gave you life, and gave of their lives for your care. They, like God, are the law giver for their children, and they are to be obeyed, respected, esteemed, and made honourable by their children. Obey them. Be grateful to them – not in word only, but sincerely, and in deed. Willingly submit to their rule. Receive correction from them with a thankful spirit. Speak well of them, and speak respectfully to them. Lean upon their instruction and counsel, esteeming it better than your own. Be particularly diligent to receive their instruction and correction regarding your duty to God. Notice that father AND mother are specifically listed, whereas often father is put for both. I believe that the specific inclusion of the mother is to stir children up in their duty to give equal honour to her, where they might otherwise be slack. Children are apt to be less respectful to their mothers, particularly when you get a person who has come (or is coming) to years, and is puffed up in pride, thinking that they know better than their mother, and therefore despising her. Honour your mother, young people. Honour your mother, young men. Don’t manipulate your mother. You know what she expects, and ought not to craftily play upon her kindness toward you, in order to accomplish your desire. You know what your parents require of you – don’t merely give them what they require, but diligently seek to relieve their burdens. Care for them in their old age, as they cared for you in your youth. Jesus Christ rebuked the Pharisees for discarding their parents – they would only care for them if there was a benefit in it. Is the law of your parents more rigid than you desire? Are they harder on you than you desire? This is no reason to dishonor them, but rather God is to be thanked that your parents care for you, and particularly that they care for your everlasting soul. Bear with them. Submit to them. It is right, and it is pleasing to God.

Proverbs 1:8,9 *"My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck."*

Proverbs 30:17 *"The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it."*

To despise and reject your parents authority, particularly their instruction in the Lord, is to despise and reject God. Woe unto you!

Again, Parents are to be obeyed only inasmuch as it is consistent with our duty to God. Remember, our duty to our neighbor is always subordinate to our duty to God. We ought to obey God, rather than men (**Acts 5:28**). In this regard, Jesus Christ tells us that we are to (comparatively) hate our father and mother, or else we cannot be his disciples (**Luke 14:26**). Disobeying the ungodly instruction of parents is not dishonourable to them, but rather, it is supremely honourable to God. In such instances, we must still be respectful in our dealings with our parents, and in fact we honour them with our example of obedience to God. Once we come to years, to continue with them in open sin against God would be dishonourable, and would make us pleasers of men, rather than God. If you are a minor who finds themselves in this position, I would tell you this: The Lord God has purposely, and perfectly set the bounds of your habitation. At this hour, you honour God by being obedient to your parents. Read the scriptures. As much as in your power, do your duty to God. Seek the Lord in prayer. Obey your parents.

Let us briefly turn our focus back to the duty of the parents - specifically: "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord". This is a topic that deserves more attention than I can give it this morning, but the following quote from Barnes is sufficient for the moment:

Barnes: "The object of the apostle here is, to show parents that their commands should be such that they can be easily obeyed, or such as are entirely reasonable and proper. If children are required to obey, it is but reasonable that the commands of the parent should be such that they can be obeyed, or such that the child shall not be discouraged in his attempt to obey. This statement is in accordance with what he had said #Eph 5:22-25 of the relation of husband and wife. It was the duty of the wife to obey—but it was the corresponding duty of the husband to manifest such a character that it would be pleasant to yield obedience—so to love her, that his known wish would be law to her. In like manner it is the duty of children to obey a parent; but it is the duty of a parent to

exhibit such a character, and to maintain such a government, that it would be proper for the child to obey; to command nothing that is unreasonable or improper, but to train up his children in the ways of virtue and pure religion."

Remember friends that as we raise these children that the Lord has blessed us with, we are doing it unto God. We cannot be outcome oriented, as we do not know, nor can we change whether any particular human has grace or not. We cannot through extra harshness, or extra leniency create salvation. We must be steady in our reliance upon the commands and remedies of God. We must know the frames of each of our little ones, and provide instruction and correction accordingly.

As parents, even when we are at our very best, we are still tainted by the flesh. We know that our righteousness is as filthy rags. That, I believe, is the reason that this commandment explicitly focuses on the duty of the child. Regardless of the behavior of those in authority over us, we have an affirmative duty to 1) control our spirits, and render proper honour where and in what measure it is due, and 2) render honour to God; we are accountable to him whether our parents taught us that or not. This commandment forces the prideful human creature to observe the proper order of things. It is about subjection, submission, and humility - those things that these wicked human hearts so desperately despise. We live in a generation that despises instruction. Words fail me to express how backwards this generation is. Conforming their thoughts and actions to ANY authority, particularly God, is anathema to them. Therefore, they are anathema to God, and they will not receive the eternal promise. Let us submit ourselves, and live.

I love you. Amen