

Biblical Theology by Dr. Chuck Baynard

Lesson 40 (HCLD 39)¹

Preparation: Begin and end each study time with prayer. Pay particular attention to the background reading and pray over each passage asking God to reveal Himself to you.

Background Reading: Read all the Scripture verses in footnote # 1 & 2.

Question: Which is the fifth commandment? Whom do father and mother in the fifth commandment mean?

Answer: A123: The fifth commandment is, Honor thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.[a] By father and mother, in the fifth commandment, are meant, not only natural parents,[b] but all superiors in age [c] and gifts;[d] and especially such as, by God's ordinance, are over us in place of authority, whether in family,[e] church,[f] or commonwealth.[g]²

Here is the heart of the matter for the condition of the whole world today. I believe we can lay the misery of the human state of affairs at the feet of sin. Sin having both an eternal price, and a price that is paid in the coin of this world, human misery. Quite properly the Westminster Assembly in the *Larger Catechism* spend some ten questions and answers in dealing with the fifth commandment.

With only a moment's reflection it should not perplex us that this is the first commandment in the second table of the law. Without due attention here, the other five cannot be effectively understood nor obeyed. Here is the fountain from which all human relationships with one another flows. The world of psychology puts much emphasis on the relationship of a person and their parents and its relationship to their mental well being. Here they touch a great truth of God, but in their blindness run off in another direction screaming of self worth at the price of neglect of Gods commandment for a full and blessed life on earth.

This centerpiece of the second table is so important to who and what we are as God's creation that I submit that obedience to this one commandment brings about an apparent blessing of God upon the most heathen of nations. I would point to many eastern nations as proof of the statement. These nations go so far as to worship their ancestors. Yet for social order and harmony among the people of the nations, few rival their societies. We should note here that one of the criteria of the psychological world used, as a measure of mental health is the ability to live and interact with society as a productive member of that society. This is part of the truth they touch in their search for mental stability. Their error is that they cannot see beyond self to understand how and why the relationship to parents and society in general matters at all. They see each individual as having the power to live happily among others as being inherent in the creation, with never a thought for the Creator of all. Most world religions seek this harmony within and with nature as the ultimate goal for the human soul.

This commandment is not only contrary to the theories of the mental health profession, but the very nature of sinful man. God at no time tells man to love himself, which comes with being a sinner from birth and before. We do not have to teach our children how to be selfish. Who has ever heard a parent tell a child to quit being polite and to not share what they have with others? The words of such are foreign in

¹ Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 39

Q104: What does God require in the fifth Commandment?

A104: That I show all honor, love and faithfulness to my father and mother,[1] and to all in authority over me,[2] submit myself with due obedience to all their good instruction and correction, and also bear patiently with their infirmities, since it is God's will to govern us by their hand.[3]

1. Eph. 6:1-6, 22; Col. 3:18, 20-24; Prov. 1:8-9; 4:1; 15:20; 20:20; Exod. 21:17; Gen. 9:24-25

2. Rom. 13:1-7; I Peter 2:18; Matt. 22:21

3. Eph. 6:4, 9; Col. 3:19, 21; Prov. 13:24; 30:17; Deut. 27:16; 32:24; I Tim. 2:1-2; 5:17; Heb. 13:17-18

² a. Exod. 20:12 b. Prov. 23:22-25; Eph. 6:1-2 c. I Tim. 5:1-2 d. Gen. 4:20-22; 45:8 e. II Kings 5:13 f. II Kings 2:12; 13:14; Gal. 4:19 g. Isa. 49:23

the culture of all nations I am aware of. Can we ever imagine this admonishment, “John you quit sharing with your brother this very minute or else?”

At the head of the second table stands the commandment to honor father and mother. I urge all to stop and read the whole section of the Larger Catechism dealing with the fifth commandment. Read the Scripture proofs listed, and prayerfully ask God to open your heart and mind to the tremendous power released in your life from the understanding and putting into practice this commandment. Note the statement of the Westminster Assembly concerning the second table is both to love and to do unto others. The book of James deals with the actions (works) that are wrought by faith, going so far as to say that one cannot exist without the other. So it is, as we obey this commandment, our works toward our parents are a real measure of the faith that lies within the heart. Proper understanding and application of this commandment will empty the nursing homes, retirement communities, and other places of storage man has developed for his parents. Rather than completing their golden years in peace and harmony sharing the lessons they have learned from life, we find our senior members so much rubbish, to be properly stored until it can be disposed of. Unless we can see the value of the relationship we have with our own parents, we will not see our responsibility to others under this commandment.

Some will take offense at this statement as they rationalize away why they have forsaken their parents to the hands of strangers in their last days. How easy it is to find peace within ourselves that such actions are the only way in that we cannot care for them at home any longer. The medical profession and extended caregivers help foster this decision from hell, and apply the salve of the same origin to our conscience.

We must learn that the commands of God are clear and to be obeyed and that our rationalizing negates not the first dot of the moral law. Indeed it may be that “we” have decided there is no other way and our parents are thus better off where they can be properly cared for. It may even be true that the child(ren) visit often, even daily and see that their material needs are met. Yet Christ chided the Pharisees of His day for making non-scriptural contracts whereby children forgot their responsibility to their parents.

This is not to say that there is no need for these facilities and that some need a level of care that cannot be given in the home. Though I think man plays that card too easily and too soon in the life of too many elderly parents. I think the industry of elder care flourishes because of material considerations, not the ability of the children to honor their parents. For example it costs several thousand dollars per month to keep parents in such places. If this money came from the pockets of the children, I think they would accept the "burden" of caring for their parents at home. In most cases it does not and the children remove all assets from the name and control of the parents so they are truly destitute and then the government pays most or all of the costs for the storage of these unwanted parents. This is another instance of civil government and society standing opposed to the word of God. The sin is ours, and we must own it as such, repent of it, and take care of the elderly in our midst, or else we as a nation will continue down this slippery slope into the very pit of hell.

Note that it doesn't even have to be our own parents involved. We sin when we condone the action and don't help families in the church, much less the outer world care for the elderly at home, as the blessing from God they are, instead of the burden man says they are.

It is sad to look around a retirement home and see all the children without godly counsel in the very shadow of the storage facility where God's heritage to the generation has been stored and forgotten. How many young people struggle to begin their own business in this shadow, when the wisdom to do so lies within stone's throw. The blessing of each generation thrown aside as so much excess baggage, as the nation dies for lack of wisdom. The folly of the lie from hell concerning self worth, even at the expense of casting out ones own parents never ceases to amaze me. Is it any wonder then that the church of another generation could sink so low as to sell indulgences necessitating the reformation of the church? All this and we have only dealt with the surface issues of one point, elderly parents, and that not exhaustively.

Read again these words of the Westminster Assembly as you plan the last years of your parent's lives or as you condone others to so store away the wisdom of the age, given by God as a blessing.

Here we also see the ultimate result of the first petal, the breaking of Gods law, even as we break the heart, and steal the very soul of our own parents. The blessing and glory of the hoary haired cast aside. Often by the very parents we are talking about who in pure vanity saw not glory in the white head of age, but disdainfully have spent the last years of their life faithfully dyeing the hair, lest any know they were God's blessing and the white hair of glory had been gracefully given from the hand of the Creator.

Grandparents have invited their grandchildren to break God's command and live their whole life disrespecting their grandparents because the grandparent thought they were too young to be a grandparent and taught the child some cute name devoid of respect by which they were to address the grandparent. Often we find this same sin among middle aged parents, who seem to want to deny the ultimate blessing, the giving by God in grace the life of one of His little ones for their care and teaching during this temporal life. Spend some time listening to what children call their parents, or grandparents and gain some insight into why the nation is fighting road-rage and disrespect as one of its number one crimes.

We could spend days here and not begin to uncover the depth this commandment has on who and what we are, not only in this generation, but the next thousand generations if the Lord tarries. Note that this sin most often crosses the lives of at least three and perhaps as many as four generations at once. I would that I could compel all to spend the next week on their knees in prayer, reading and considering the great depth of this commandment as it is so beautifully laid out by the pens of the Westminster Assembly. Alas, the best I can do is say, friend here is the key to life on earth, and reward in heaven, drink often and drink deeply of this knowledge from God. Honor your father and mother that you may live long upon the earth.

When we do consider this commandment and its far reaching affect on many generations, can we also wonder why man's inhumanity to man is so great? With the almost total disregard of this commandment, can we understand how a nation can rise up against its own flesh and begin wars of so-called ethnic-cleansing? Can we consider the misery of our parents in their last years and not understand that a just God will require repayment in this time as well as the next for such an utter disregard of His grace bestowed? Truly the fool has said in his heart, there is no God. Last but far from least note how the

Westminster Assembly applies this principle to all our relationships with others, even those who can truly be called equals. Again I plead, please consider these words of wisdom from God, who has been so graceful toward us. Hear the voice of God crying out through the generations to love, cherish and honor our parents while on earth, trusting their remains to Him in eternity, not taken up as an idol. Understand this is but our reasonable service, and not our martyr's badge to wear, nor cross to bear. Grace and blessings flow from this commandment, will you partake of this word of life?

Suggested Sermon Outline

The Fundamental Family

What does God require in the fifth commandment?

That I show honor, love, and faithfulness to my father and mother and to all who are set in the authority over me; that I submit myself with respectful obedience to all their careful instruction and discipline; and that I also bear patiently their failures, since it is God's will to govern us by their hand.

I. Show Respect to Those in Authority

A. The family forms the fundamental school for society. 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*. (EPHESIANS 6:1-4)

B. The lessons learned in the family apply to all social relationships. *Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers*. For there is no power but of God: *the powers that be are ordained of God*. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and *they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation*. (ROMANS 13:1-2)

C. Loving parents look beyond their home situations to the impact of their lessons on the children in their care. My son, *hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother*. (PROVERBS 1:8)

II. Be Respectful Even When the Authority Is Flawed

A. Parental authority is important by definition even when the child may have every reason to think his own opinion superior. Harken unto thy father that begat thee, and *despise not thy mother when she is old*. (PROVERBS 23:22)

B. The family lessons form patterns for understanding all the other human relationships. GOOD AND BAD. *Servants, be subject to your masters*

III. God Uses Authority to Benefit People

A. The authority system in contrast to the atomization of contemporary society benefits those who use it to honor God. *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord*. *Husbands, love your wives*, and be not bitter against them. Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers, *provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged*. (COLOSSIANS 3:18-21)

The obligations of authority and submission extend to all those who participate in the structure.

B. The focus is on honoring God rather than just on coping with immediate situations.

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 eye-service, as men-pleasers; 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*. (EPHESIANS 6:1-9)

C. Every social structure can be measured and interpreted in terms of the Biblical family.

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For *there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God*. Whosoever therefore *resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God*: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? *do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same*: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But *if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain*: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore *ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake*. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for *they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing*. Render therefore to all their dues: *tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour*. OWE NO MAN ANY THING, BUT TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER: FOR HE THAT LOVETH ANOTHER HATH FULFILLED THE LAW. (Romans 13:1-8)

D. However, do not confuse minor authorities with God. They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, *Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's*. (Matthew 22:21)