

“HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER, I.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Heidelberg Catechism: Lord’s Day 39

Scripture Texts: Exodus 20:12

Introduction.

This evening we cross over to the second tablet of the Ten Commandments. The two tablets of the law follow the same pattern of the two summary commandments Jesus gives.

Matthew 22:37-39 Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

The first four commandments focus on loving God, on God and worship, on our vertical relationship.

The second six commandments focus on our human relationships, on the horizontal, and horizontal religion begins at home.

If we take the first commandment to heart, the next three will follow. Do not reduce Him to images or take His name in vain or profane His day of rest.

If we take the fifth commandment to heart, the next five will follow. With due honor and respect for others we will not murder, cheat, steal, lie or covet.

This is the hinge commandment. Learning at home to love and obey the authority of our parents, leads us to loving and obeying the authority of God. And we honor God when we honor them.

Parents are our first personal, tangible encounter with authority and God’s rule over us.

This is a commandment about authority. As the first commandment in the first four, so the first commandment in the second six, deals with authority. Authority in each realm, spiritual and temporal, heaven and earth.

God is the only absolute authority, all authority on earth comes under His authority. Learning to love and obey God begins at home. And learning to love, respect and submit to all earthly authority begins at home. Proper regard for God and for those He has placed over us will lead to a well ordered, blessed and good life. In other words, it will go well for us.

Two parts to this, a command and a promise.

The command, Honor.

Honor your father and your mother. Both of them equally.

The verb honor means “to be heavy”, give weight, hold in esteem, elevate, reverence, give deference to, even to glorify. What is owed God is owed those over us. The Heidelberg uses several words as synonyms to this one word, honor, love and loyalty; obedience, submission and patience.

What does honor look like toward those in authority over us?

First of all, it is unqualified, no “ifs” or “it depends.” Human sin and shortcomings are acknowledged and don’t obscure God’s grace in placing others over us. Does this mean there are no exceptions? Of course not, I said only God is absolute. But we must understand the principle first and get that clear before we think about when there might be an exception as in the case of something immoral, illegal or contrary to Scripture.

Honor looks like obeying, respecting, showing reverence, deference.

Not uncovering them, exposing them or their weaknesses or shortcomings,
(Exposed their nakedness like Ham did to Noah).

Standing up for them and defending them, being an advocate, being loyal, supportive.

In the face of any slander, liable, unjust accusations, you speak up.

By not taking advantage of them or their trust or their resources.

By not grumbling, complaining, murmuring.

Being a blessing, saying and doing what blesses them, builds them up.

Father and mother.

It all of this begins at home. Parents and the realm of home are mentioned first and are representative of all other authority. This is so because the home is the first government established among men. Home government is the fundamental and foundational building block for all other governments.

The home is the first government, the first school, the first church, the first nation. Obedience at home means a healthy future in our schools, churches, and nation. Rebellion here means chaos.

This command is a big deal, and disobeying this command is a big deal. Any rebellion or contempt shown in this realm is the most destructive to self, soul and society.

Romans 1:28-31 God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. 29 They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full

of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, *disobedient to parents*, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

II Timothy 3:1-4 In the last days there will come times of difficulty. 2 For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, *disobedient to their parents*, ungrateful, unholy, 3 heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, 4 treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

Everyone talks about the destruction of the family and of family values these days. Teachers have a front row seat as they are the ones to witness the breakdown of authority in the homes, the lack of discipline and respect. May God give all of us diligence, discipline, wisdom, discernment and much prayer to be faithful to this command. Pray for what Malachi says:

Malachi 4:6 He will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.

All the commands are heart commands, they grow out of love for God and for others. This is the hope of each generation, for without the heart there is no affection and without that no obedience and without that no stability and order.

Honor and care for elderly parents.

This is a command for children, but not just for children. In one sense, we are all children. The clearest way for children to do this is obedience. The clearest way for adult children to do this is honor and respect.

Our calling as parents is to care for our children and our calling as children is to care for our parents, there is no end point. To honor and reverence them is to honor and reverence life.

Esteem them publicly, speak respectfully to them and about them.

Including them in our own family life.

Communicate and affirm our love for them. Seek their wisdom and counsel.

Forgive them for their unwise decisions, unrealistic expectations, hurtful words or actions.

Stop blaming them for your own choices, decisions and sin.

Make sure their basic needs are met (Matt. 15:3-9).

Joseph took care of his aging father. Jesus took care of his mother.

Some of us have some repenting to do.

Examine your life. “Do I reverence my parents? Do I speak to them and about them in a way that honors?” “Have I uncovered a loved one?”

One more thing, honor your grandchildren's father and mother, support, don't interfere, pray!

And all those in authority over me (Heidelberg Catechism, Q 104).

We have more than one father and mother. Only one biological father and mother, but many others in other kinds of fathers and parents.

In the sovereign providence of God someone has been placed over each and every one of us. We are all under subjection and we must all learn submission and respect.

They have attained their position not by being worthy of it, but merely by God's ordination, He has willed it.

This commandment begins at home, the first realm of rule and authority and discipline but extends outward to civil, political, economic/financial, educational and spiritual authorities.

We are to honor those who are over us politically, who govern, judge and maintain law and order.

Romans 13:1 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. **2** Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. **3** For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, **4** for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. **5** Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.

I Timothy 2:1 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, **2** for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. **3** This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior.

We are to honor those who are over us and rule or judge or guide us. They have responsibility to preserve and protect order and maintain harmony and justice in our nation. Honor the office.

We are to honor those who are over us spiritually, who are our spiritual fathers, elders and pastors and spiritual leaders.

I Timothy 5:17 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

Their offices are honorable, they represent God and His authority.

We are to honor those who employ us, who sign our paychecks, who provide for us means to provide for our families.

Ephesians 6:5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, **6** not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, **7** rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, **8** knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.

The Promise, so that you may live long in the land and so that it may go well with you.

Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline. **8** Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. **9** They will be a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck.

Proverbs 4:10 Listen, my son, accept what I say, and the years of your life will be many. **13** Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life.

Proverbs 6:20 My son, keep your father's commands and do not forsake your mother's teaching. **21** Bind them upon your heart forever; fasten them around your neck. **22** When you walk, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; when you awake, they will speak to you.

The spiral is easy to trace. Spiritually, disobedience leads to disobeying God. This leads to psychological problems, fears and desires, which in turn effect social habits and relationships, which finally cause physical problems related to rebellious habits, drugs, violence.

Children need guidance and impoverish themselves by rejecting it. Children who disobey and disrespect their parents suffer loss, and make it harder to honor a Father in heaven.

A child who disobeys is not free. Disobedience is enslaving. Without submission there is no freedom.

A train off the tracks may appear to be free, but a trail of destruction suggests otherwise. Rebellions freedom is an oxymoron, it is a form of bondage that leads to prison.

The signs of rebellion are all around us, the clothes, the tattoos, the piercings, the music of death and destruction. It's not just self-expression, it is plain and simple rebellion. It is not freedom, it is slavery to sin and disobedience.

Rebellion in the home spills over into our schools, churches, and nation, and this leads to anarchy, chaos and lawlessness.

Apart from submission to Christ there is no freedom. And apart from submission to those authorities given to us by Christ, there is no freedom.

Application:

The family is the basic *social* unit. No nation is stable if the family life is weak. A society that destroys family has a death wish, it is destroying itself.

The family is the basic *spiritual* unit. No church is stable if the family life is weak.

This commandment is about the value of family and relationships, about order, role and place. It is about treating parents with honor and dignity. This leads to long life in the community life.

We honor our parents when we repay the love and trouble they've taken in our lives. And we pass on the promise and the hope of a good future when we teach those coming behind to honor their parents and their elders, to respect age and wisdom, and not the folly of youth.

The Old Man and His Grandson, Grimm's Fairy Tales:

There was once a very old man, whose eyes had become dim, his ears dull of hearing, his knees trembled, and when he sat at table he could hardly hold the spoon, and spilt the broth upon the table-cloth or let it run out of his mouth. His son and his son's wife were disgusted at this, so the old grandfather at last had to sit in the corner behind the stove, and they gave him his food in an earthenware bowl, and not even enough of it. And he used to look towards the table with his eyes full of tears. Once, too, his trembling hands could not hold the bowl, and it fell to the ground and broke. The young wife scolded him, but he said nothing and only sighed. Then they brought him a wooden bowl for a few half-pence, out of which he had to eat.

They were once sitting thus when the little grandson of four years old began to gather together some bits of wood upon the ground. "What are you doing there?" asked the father. "I am making a little trough," answered the child, "for father and mother to eat out of when I am big."

The man and his wife looked at each other for a while, and presently began to cry. Then they took the old grandfather to the table, and henceforth always let him eat with them, and likewise said nothing if he did spill a little of anything.