

The Fifth Commandment

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We will begin this sermon by turning to Deuteronomy 4, verses 39 and 40. If you know anything about the book of Deuteronomy, you will know that this was just preceding the re-stating of the Ten Commandments which appear in Deuteronomy 5.

Deuteronomy 4:39:40 Know therefore this day, and consider it in your heart, that the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else. You shall keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command you this day, that it may go well with you, and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days upon the earth, which the LORD your God gives you, for ever.

Among this world's version of what they call "Christianity," there are those who think the keeping of God's commandments is considered with varying degrees of suspicion, at the very least, and by out-right hostility by some who hold for opinions based on what they think the part works play in salvation. In fact, whether they realize it or not, they will actually look as though keeping the commandments is a curse, and that you are cursing yourself by making strenuous efforts to keep them.

I want you to notice that God Himself *urges* His children to keep them "that it might be *well* with them." Notice something that is missing from there and that God does not say that the keeping of them will produce spiritual salvation. But, He does say that they will produce a prosperous life that includes long life. Each commandment is vital for a pattern of life that produces stability, safety, and enjoyment to community life. This pattern is very important.

At the beginning of this series of sermons on the Ten Commandments, I stated that I felt the commandments are arranged in an order, beginning with the most important one—the one which, if broken, will inevitably lead to the breaking of the others and result in chaos in one's worship of God.

The first commandment presents God as the Sovereign Creator and Ruler of His creation, and He will not allow the worship and honor that is due Him be given to others, because that would only result in a misdirection regarding the purpose of life, and frustration of attitudes, and emotional and physical pain, and ultimately death.

It is pretty obvious to any one of us that God does want us to keep His commandments. We have to understand that salvation cannot be gained by works, but on the other hand, as Herbert Armstrong said, anybody who receives salvation works, not to *receive* salvation, but to give evidence of his glorifying of God, and to give evidence to the world who a Christian really is. A

Christian is one who is working, sacrificing, and using his time and energy to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Salvation is by grace through faith. The commandments are kept by faith.

The commandments are to be kept with an understanding that the keeping of them is not going to produce spiritual salvation, yet the keeping of them is very important to our being in the Kingdom of God. The first commandment has to do with *what* we worship. Most of the time the god that gets between us and the true God is the self. We are to worship the Creator, who is the author of a way of life that will produce right relationships. This commandment demands that we make the Creator-God the source of our belief and values.

The second commandment teaches us that He wants no one to be concerned with what He looks like. He has purposely hidden this, except to tell us that we generally look like Him. We were created in His image, but we do not know the specifics about Him. He has done this because physical dimension can be misleading regarding character. In our relationship with Him we are to emphasize the spiritual; that is, His character, the quality, and His attributes and His purpose.

The second commandment then has to do with the *way* we are to worship Him. Jesus defines it in John 4: 24 that we are to worship Him "in spirit and in truth,"—always being aware that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. Jesus said that the words He said unto them, unto *us* are spiritual, and they are life.

The third commandment emphasizes the holy quality of His character and offices as exemplified by His name. His names reveal what He is. It is the responsibility of those claiming to be Christians to add to and to uphold the reputation on the glory of all that those names imply.

When we were begotten—that is, converted and received His spirit—His name became *our* family name, and the name of that family is *God*. We were enveloped within, or immersed by the spirit of God into that name. The third commandment therefore has to do with the quality of our witness in bearing that name. Do we bring Him honor, or do we bring Him shame? This is what the third commandment addresses for you and me.

You can see in your mind's eye that the commandments and the arrangement of them is taking us step by step toward a conclusion. Each one is in the right place for developing a way of life that is going to produce the prosperity God wants us to have. Part of that prosperity *is* spiritual prosperity, but it does not produce eternal life.

The fourth commandment slides in, because it provides the means by which God's family members can keep things pertaining to God's purpose aligned with His creative purpose. The Sabbath provides a more formal environment for coming to know truth, and that is truth regarding God's plan and understanding His purpose ever more clearly, understanding and knowing His character and personality, and having right and true goals toward which to expend our time and efforts and energy.

He shows that when Israel failed to keep the Sabbath, they lost track of the wholesome quality of His purpose. Sabbath-breaking and idolatry go hand-in-hand. Either will produce the other.

The first four commandments then complete that section of the commandments, and these

specifically define our relationship with God. They encompass a magnitude of God's power and name. They exhort us to focus our time and energies on His purpose, plan, character, promises, and our vital part in the completion of His creation in us as an individual. Surely, as it says in the book of I Corinthians, "God is our all in all."

Today we are going to move on to the fifth commandment. It begins the second section of the ten. In its place, like the first commandment is to God, it is first among those commands which govern our relationships with each other; that is, with men. The effect of its keeping, or failure to keep, has an influence on the prosperity of our life and our relationships. Brethren, like the first commandment, it is huge in terms of what our life is going to be like. It is not only to keep in importance in this regard, but it also acts at the same time as a bridge between the two sections of the ten. This aspect of it is also very important because when the fifth commandment is properly kept it leads to reverence for and obedience to God Himself, and God is the ultimate parent.

As we begin I want to define three important words. We are going to go to Exodus 20, in the first listing of the Ten Commandments.

Exodus 20:12 Honor your father and your mother: that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God gives you.

We are going to look first at the word "honor." The underlying Hebrew word indicates "heaviness." It indicates something that is weighty in the doing. Depending upon the context, that same word can be translated as "severe." It can also be translated as "rich"—something that is rich in meaning and understanding.

The same Hebrew word has a sense of whatever context it is in to indicate something that is long-lasting; a continuous sense. In other words it is like a burden that you never get rid of—a burden kind of negative in our mind. But the word "honor" is not intended to be negative at all, but positive; therefore it is something weighty, but it is always going to be a responsibility that is with us. It is a good responsibility; not bad at all, and when we keep that commandment it produces wonderful things for those who do. That is why this word is used in the sense of honoring, glorifying, imposing, pondering. It is an adjective, but it is used in the sense of a noun. Putting this all together, this honoring implies a life-long responsibility.

In English, the word "honor" is an almost perfect match with the Hebrew word. The word "honor" in English means "to give high regard and esteem to; to give special recognition to; to bring or give respect and credit to." You can put any one of those names in there, and they show clearly what God means by this commandment. You shall give your parents respect and esteem and have a high regard for them.

The English meaning of the word "honor" does not end there, because it also means an outward token, a sign or an act that manifests high regard for. In other words, this is not something that is hidden. Children are to *obviously* honor their parents in such a way that is somewhat akin to when a man is decorated for bravery on the battlefield. What do they do? They publicly honor that person. They put the badge of honor right on the person, and it gives recognition.

This word "honor" carries all of those things with it that is the responsibility of the child to the parent. This is not something hidden. God intends that, though it is a life-long responsibility, it is something that becomes obvious in the conduct of the child, that the child is obviously honoring his parents, and that the child himself is just like the badge that brings the honor.

There are two synonyms for the word "honor" that I want to give a little bit of attention to, because it helps us to understand this Hebrew word a little bit better. The one is the word "respect." The word "respect" specifically means "to have a deferential regard for," and thus to treat with propriety and consideration. The child is to treat his parents with propriety and consideration. The word "respect" can be understood to mean "to regard as inviolable." In other words, it is like the parents might not always be right, but they are always the parent, and you do not cross them.

The second word that helps us to define the word "honor" is the word "reverence." Sometimes that word will be translated as "reverence" as the context demands it. Reverence is somewhat different from respect. We will see that it is actually on a higher level than the word "respect." It means to show deferential respect. In other words, respect is a platform, and reverence is one step higher than that. It is *deferential* respect, and this respect is turned a notch higher because the word "reverence" implies adoration and awe in a *good* sense. If it happens to show up in a *bad* sense, it is "shame; embarrassment." But that is not the way God means it. He is looking here in the fifth commandment at things that are positive.

Never forget that this is the first commandment with promise. What is the promise? Long life, which implies not just that you are going to live a long time, but you are going to live a long time in prosperity. Just to live a long time is no good if, during those times, you are doing nothing but suffering.

It is very helpful, as we continue to go through this, to understand that it is primarily aimed at the function of parenting, but it is most certainly not limited to that area. The keeping of this law also includes within its spirit that honor and respect be given to civil and teaching figures as well.

In Acts 23: 1-5 the apostle Paul called the high priest a bad name, not realizing it was the high priest. I do not know how he did not know, but he had been away from Jerusalem for a while. They that stood by the high priest said, "Revile you God's high priest? Paul immediately apologized and quoted the scripture, saying, "For it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of the ruler of your people.' " Paul understood that the spirit of the fifth commandment is not limited to parents, but that in its spirit it expands out to civil authority and teachers in general.

Why does God want one to honor his parents or other authority figures? The first reason is because the family is the basic building block of society. I think everybody understands that. Another way of saying this is that the stability of the family is basic to the stability of a community. You know full well this is happening, as the family breaks down in the United States, chaos is becoming ever more evident out in the public. It has its roots right in family life, and gradually, like a cancer, that bad family life is extending itself out into the community. The more respectful each family member is for the other family members, and especially for the parents, that respect will carry on in the strengthening of the entire community.

There is another thing that has to be. I do not know if you ever thought of it in this manner, but the family is also the basic building block of government. The lesson and the principles learned from honoring, respecting, and submitting to one's parents will result in a stable society—stable enough to produce and promote the development of the whole person. I will tell you why the whole person is essential here.

Turn with me to Isaiah 3:1-5, and verse 12. What he is describing here is a period of time in Judah's history when God was exercising His control over the weather. He was producing a great deal of hardship, and of course the people were feeling it in the lack of water and in the lack of food production. Verse 2 adds to this, because He was not only plaguing them in the weather, God was also taking away what is given in verse 2: the mighty man, and so forth.

Isaiah 3:1-5 For, behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, does take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water. The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient, The captain of fifty, and the honorable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator. And I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them. And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbor: the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honorable.

It is obvious that we are seeing a time when the culture is breaking down, and one of the features of the culture is the breakdown of family life.

Isaiah 3:12 As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead you cause you to err, and destroy the way of your paths.

The issue in this chapter involving people concerns adults in positions of authority, but those adults had never truly matured. They were certainly old enough to be in positions of authority, but they were not mature people.

When dishonoring parents is taken to an extreme, one of the things it does is produce anarchy. Anarchy is described as "an absence of government." It describes general disorder; a time when each person does "what is right in his own eyes." Without saying it directly, but picking up the sense within the context, what is happening here is that over a period of time the anarchism within the family had reached out and infected the community as well. This is a well-understood principle by those who are conservative observers of any society.

When the family breaks down, eventually it reaches out and infects the entire community. That is what we are looking at here in Isaiah 3. The result was that the people aged. They grew up, but they grew up immature. Do you know why? Because they dishonored their parents, they did not learn the understanding and wisdom the parents could have given them in a different

circumstance. So these people went into community public life basically children in terms of maturity.

Someone trained to dishonor will resist authority on every front. This is why it begins to infect other areas of the community, whether they are civic authorities, supervisors on the job, the teacher in school, or the coach of the team. At the foundation of these actions is self-centeredness. They pay little attention to honoring community standards because they do not respect them any more than they respected their parents.

Did not the parents in this kind of situation become nothing more than "old foggies" who, according to their children, did not know anything? Really, the basic flaw was largely in the parents because they did not uphold their responsibility in training the child in the way he should go. Isaiah 3 is showing the fruit of that, and it is coming back to bite the parents by them having to face life in a community in which everything was going wrong.

Tell me something. Can you honestly say that our political leaders today are making wise, common-sense decisions? I do not think so. It is not just the political leaders either. It is also those who are leaders in the economic area. It is leaders in the educational areas as well. The whole thing is coming down, and you can almost bet your bottom dollar it started in the family, and it has reached its evil tentacles out, and we are beginning to reap the whirlwind.

We will not go into it, but God shows that it will eventually get to the place where those who might be qualified to be in these positions will say, "Oh no! You are not going to put me in that position." This is an unsolvable problem here, and even though they probably have way better abilities and character to carry out the responsibility, they will not do it because it is going to be a fight from beginning to end and they do not want to be in that kind of a situation.

This attitude that is seen in the children described in Isaiah 3 eventually builds to the place where they think always that they know what is best for them and for everybody else too. Unfortunately, those kinds of people are almost always very presumptuous, and they put themselves aggressively into positions of leadership, and they are not qualified to lead. These people do not discipline themselves, but they think they should have the right to discipline others.

All of us should be able to relate to this because of the history that is being written before us here in the United States and in Great Britain. Those people who are living reasonable well maybe did train their children well to some degree, but they really have no relationship with God that they can turn to.

I can guarantee you that if things would go on long enough, and God did not intervene, you would begin to see a swelling of resentment within the nation among those we would call to be more balanced and sound-minded in their approach to these things. Irritation and grumbling would begin to occur. After several more years of this, the first thing you know, it would be followed by general disorder, confusion, ultimate chaos in civil war and a revolution would occur. That is the pattern through history. Unfortunately, history testifies to us that when such things occur, those who overthrow the government tend to be just as bad as the group they threw out.

At any rate, in due course, a whole culture's energy is used to merely survive. That occurs when

the civil war erupts. There are, very likely, people who are putting together militias in this nation because they already feel things are reaching a place here in these United States, that with the right provocation, they are going to do something about it. I do not know how successful they would be, but on the other hand I would also think that those people in government are wise enough in what *they* are doing, so that if a civil war does erupt, they can meet these militias who are going to eventually rebel. It always happens. I do not care whether the country is France, or Russia; a place is eventually reached where these things occur. This is the very path America is following. This immaturity is a direct result of not honoring parents.

People of this mindset have a hard time cooperating because their mind is always competing. Siblings are competing with siblings, and competing with their parents. They age feeling put upon, taken advantage of, and thus become quite defensive about themselves. Because children are not made to respect their parents' advice, they grow up not understanding what truly works, and thus they lack wisdom. That is what Isaiah 3 is describing. This failure reveals itself in the self-will and self-indulgence which can be taken to the place of sheer rebellion. It condemns children to learning the lessons of life through hard experiences of personal warfare.

There is a second reason why this fifth commandment exists, and why He wants us to teach our children to respect us, as parents, and other authority figures within the community. That second reason is that God wants us to learn to honor our parents because the family is the basic building block of the Kingdom of God as well. God *is* a family. He *is* a parent. He *is* begetting children, and those children have a much easier time adapting to submitting, obeying, and reverencing Him if they have already had practice in doing it with their parents. It really gives them a head-start along the right way. They understand the commandment and that the godly principles learned and the character built within the human family unit are transferable into the spiritual family relationship in the Kingdom of God. God expects a character and a manner of living transference derived from keeping this commandment from parents to Him, because the parents are His agents in behalf of the children. We will see this confirmed by the scriptures.

Let us go Malachi 2, and we will see it stated dogmatically that parents are God's agents for preparing children for the Kingdom of God. This entire chapter is addressed generally to Judah, and specifically to the priests who were within the Judah kingdom.

Malachi 2:9-16 Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as you have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law. Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother by profaning the covenant of our fathers? Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah has profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, and has married the daughter of a strange god. The LORD will cut off the man that does this, the master and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offers an offering unto the LORD of hosts. And this have you done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regards not the offering any more, or receives it with good will at your hand. Yet

you say, Wherefore? Because the LORD has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously: yet is she your companion, and the wife of your covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a *godly* seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the LORD, the God of Israel, says that he hates putting away: for one covers violence with his garment, says the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that you deal not treacherously.

I am going to read this from a modern translation. Just listen. Maybe it will make it a little bit clearer to you. This is from the *Revised English Bible*.

Malachi 2:9-16 [Revised English Bible] Have we not all one Father?

[Malachi is limiting this to Israel, and God is the spiritual Father of Israel. He is not the spiritual Father of the other nations of the world, but to Israel He was.]

Did not one God create us? [One God created Israel as a nation. God is saying, "Look, I have priorities over you, and you only. Respond to Me. I am your Father."]

Why then are we faithless to one another by violating the covenant of our fathers? Judah is faithless, and abominable things are done in Israel and in Jerusalem in marrying the daughter of a foreign god. Judah has violated the sacred place loved by the LORD.

[He is accusing them of idolatry in what they were doing by marrying someone from a different family of people who did not worship God at all. That was something that was strictly forbidden.]

May the LORD banish from the loins of Jacob any who do this, whether nomad or settled, even though they bring offerings to the LORD.

[This is serious business!]

There is another thing you do. You weep and moan, drowning the LORD's altar with tears, and still He refuses to look at the offerer or receive favorably a gift from you, and you ask why?

[Why are we doing all this and God never responds? Malachi answers them back, and he says:]

It is because the LORD has borne witness against you on behalf of the wife of your youth. You have broken faith with her, though she is your partner for life by solemn covenant.

You begin to see that what He is discussing here is a breakdown in family life, most specifically the idolatrous marriages to those who were of another land who did not worship the LORD God, and if things did not work out, they divorced them. So we have idolatry. We have divorce that was not supposed to take place because these bad marriages were made, and so the whole family structure was degenerating.

Let us look at this again a little bit more closely.

The people were wondering why their offerings to God were given but no blessings were returned from Him. His answer is because of their covenant-breaking idolatrous marriages and divorces. In His answer He specifically states that one of the purposes of marriage is that God wants *godly* children; not just children. He wants *godly* children produced by the marriages.

This will probably be interesting to you. I hope that it will. Are you aware that the Hebrew word that is translated into the English word "godly" is Elohim? Interesting, is it not? He wants children who are like Elohim; not just any old kids. He wants kids that are like Elohim. That is one high standard. And why does he point the gun, as we might say, at the parents? Because the parents were not doing their job. They were not doing what He created marriage for.

Marriage was created immediately after the creation of Adam and Eve, and because of the position it becomes very obvious that God intended the institution of marriage to play a major role in the creation of the image of Jesus Christ in His children. But the book of Malachi takes it one step further. In a sense, it is saying, "I do not want only *you* to be in the image of Jesus Christ, I want you to start your children down exactly the same path so that when they go out on their own they are ready to be converted. And so He is accusing them, saying, "The reason I am not blessing you is because you are failing in both responsibilities. You are failing in the marriage itself. You are failing to rear children who are godly."

It is interesting that the word there is translated "godly." What it means more specifically in this sense is that He wants children with reverence and love for God. I will explain why it is this way. He wants children who are devout, pious, belonging to or emanating from God. This is what the word "godly" means. Let us compare it to another attribute of God.

Godliness and holiness are not specifically the same. Godliness is a respectful, reverential attitude. It is pointing to an attitude. It is a respectful, reverential attitude. Holiness, on the other hand, indicates one who is *living* in a manner like God. There is a difference between these two words, but as attributes—that is, as qualities of character—they are absolutely essential.

God expects that the children will look at Him with reverence, with awe, and with respect, *ready* to be converted. That is a parent's responsibility; not to convert the children, but to have the children pointed in the right direction so if God moves to convert them they are ready to repent because they respect God, they revere God, and they will honor Him in that way.

Since I mentioned holiness, I want us to go to the book of holiness, which is the book of

Leviticus. I am going to turn to just one scripture in the book of Hebrews, chapter 12, verse 14.

Hebrews 12:14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

I went to this scripture to point out how important holiness is. A person who is holy is one who is *living* like the Lord. It does not mean the person is perfect, but is one who is devoting his life to imitating God, and is striving in his life to reach some degree of holiness over and above the holiness that comes to us as a result of the forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ and the receiving of God's Holy Spirit. Sanctification is unto holiness, and so a person who is holy in his life is one who has been started down the road and is applying his time and energy to growing in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ and is trying hard to live like God lives. Now without holiness, no one shall see the Lord.

We are going to go back to the book of Leviticus, because Leviticus is the one book in the Bible that is specifically devoted to holiness. In fact some people just call it "the book of holiness." It of course has all those laws regarding the ceremonial regulation, and each one of them gives vivid description of what a holy person will live like. The burnt offering is somebody who is totally dedicated to God, completely burned up, sacrificing the self in order to be like God. And on and on it goes, right through. We are going to look only at the beginning of two chapters because more than any other place in the Bible these two chapters are specifically directed at family life and community life.

Leviticus 18:1-5 And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, I am the LORD your God. After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein you dwelt, shall you not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall you not do: neither shall you walk in their ordinances. You shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD.

I think it becomes clear here that when this introduction is filled in with the laws that follow in this and in the next two chapters, that God intends that separation from the world begins in the home at the very earliest possible point in a child's infancy, with a right example from the parents, combined with positive instruction. In order to really fill that out we would have to go through it verse by verse. But those of you who know, chapter 18 mostly focuses on sexual immorality. Hardly anything will destroy a family like sexual immorality.

Leviticus 19:1-4 And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, You shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy. You shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my sabbaths: I am the LORD your God. Turn you not unto idols, nor make to yourselves molten

gods: I am the LORD your God.

These introductory verses provide the starting point again for the more specific commands that follow. Here at the introduction it is though God is saying, "This is the foundation of good family and community relationships. Aim to be holy, and to be clean in God's eyes through your conduct by obeying God's laws. This will separate you."

I want you to notice an interesting feature. God draws attention here at the beginning of chapter 19 to three commandments specifically: The 5th commandment, the 4th commandment, and the 1st—to idolatry as His keys for accomplishing the beginning and growth of holiness, first in a family setting, and then also in a community setting. This indicates that in God's eyes in terms of holiness in good family and community relationships, keeping these commands is the major guide and regulator—actually necessity—for producing good results: the 5th, the 4th, and the 1st. This is because these commandments provide a foundation for regulating social relationships within a community.

Of special interest might be the order in which God sets them. That is usually telling. Honoring parents. Did you notice specifically the mother, because she is mentioned first? And then comes the Sabbath. It too is mentioned before idolatry. So in terms of good family relationships, that is the order a child is introduced to the commandments. In an infant and in one child's life, the mother is primary.

Do not forget that all of this instruction is given with one common thought in mind. It is to produce holiness and good family relationships. God says, "You shall be holy for I the Lord your God am holy." Why does He say this? It is His way of pointing out to us, His converted children, that He Himself is the model. He is the standard we are to follow in our child-training practices. Do you want to be holy like God is? Raise your children this way, and eventually *they* will be holy like God is holy. We have to get them started. As His children, He is the One we are to copy. In our family and in our responsibility, we want our children to copy us. The chain goes from the children, to the parents, and right up to God. In that way a transference of reverence will take place so that conversion can take place in the children.

Now how important are parents in God's eyes? How important are they in this mix?

We are going to go to Exodus 21. What these verses say is all the more interesting because of where it is. It is right in the terms of the Old Covenant. Verse 15 shows how important a parent is in God's eyes.

Exodus 21:15 And he that smites his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death.

Pretty serious, is it not? Let us take this one step further. Look at verse 17.

Exodus 21:17 And he that curses his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death.

I wonder how many teenagers have cursed their parents. Do you think a parent is not important to God? It is the job that a parent is supposed to do that is so important to God. The parents are to prepare that child to be converted. To the modern child psychologists, these are shocking statements, and for us it ought to at least give us pause to begin to grasp the seriousness of being consistently concerned about our child-training responsibilities.

None of these verses indicate that the child is in any way to be beaten into submission. God has a whole program for producing the right kind of children, and beating them into submission is not part of it. They do, though, imply a great height of serious responsibility to produce a godly child that glorifies God. This responsibility is to follow God's pattern in child training. "I am the LORD. I am holy." He is in effect saying, "Follow Me. Follow the way I rear children, and you will lead your children in the right direction." Now is God patient? Is God kind? Is God generous with His affection and in His mercies as well? Does He not give correction in due season and in due measure as well? Does He ever cross over the line? Accusing Him of crossing over the line would be accusing Him of not following His own pattern. He does not do that. His judgment is perfect in every way. Let us turn to where we see an expounding of this in the book of Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 21:18-21 If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shall you put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear.

The reason I wanted you to see this is because this is an expounding of what we just saw in Exodus 21, and it modifies it so that you will understand that these verses indicate a process-evaluation by people not directly, and thus less emotionally involved in the disobedience of a child. In other words, both the parents and the child are going before a judge and each then presents their case. The decision is actually taken out of the hands of the parents for evaluation by somebody not directly connected to the situation. In other words, it was not up to the parents to be the judge of their child in terms of the capital punishment of a child. That had to be done by somebody else who was not so emotionally involved.

Does it offend you that God's standard is so stern? I hope that you do not pass it off as something of little consequence or significance. All you have to do is look at what is happening in Britain and in the United States and you can begin to understand what is going on, where the roots of this society in which we are living sprang from, and how this society has become so dangerous and so uncomfortable to live within.

A very great deal of it goes right back to very poor child-rearing practices that parents do not

understand. They do not really love their children. They do not know how to love their children. They do not know why they should love their children, and the children just grow up, influenced by what is going on in the environment, in the around and the about. And so as the environment continually gets worse, it brings forth more and more rebellious children who are upsetting the apple cart everywhere.

I can pick up on something here that I learned from the book "The Fourth Turning"—a record of the history those men wrote of how each generation reared their children. I was reared by the "Hero" generation. The "Hero" generation is the one that went to war. They came back deeply impressed by what they went through, with the thought in their mind, "My children are never going to go through anything like that." And so they reared my generation, and my generation became even more lax than the "Hero" generation before it. My generation was very good at making money, but we ignored largely right child-rearing practices. Do you know who we produced? The Boomers!—in one sense the worst generation that this nation has ever lived through in the last hundred years or more. It was the most self-centered generation.

I know that my child-rearing practices were not what they could have been and it happened. It happens because we just go along with what is going on in the world. But God is calling upon His converted children who are parents of young children, to rear them to be holy, to be ready when they step out into the positions of leadership as young adults, that they are ready to be converted.

I want to read one thing from the *Keil-Delitzsch Commentary* on Exodus 21, verses 15 and 17. We read those verses, but I think what they said is meaningful because they said it so nicely.

They said, "Maltreatment of a father and mother through striking, man-stealing and cursing, were all placed on a par with murder and punished in the same way. By smiting a parent, we are not to understand smiting to death, but any kind of maltreatment. The murder of a parent is not mentioned at all and is not likely to occur, and hardly conceivable. [But boy! it is happening today!] The cursing of parents is placed on a par as smiting because it proceeds from the same disposition, and both were to be punished with death because the majesty of God was violated in the person of the parents."

Do you remember why Moses was not allowed into the Promised Land? What did he do that was so bad? He struck the rock! Do you understand the symbolism? He lost his temper, and he smote his spiritual Father.

The only reason I wanted to go into this is because of Ephesians 6, verses 1 through 4. We will go through this quickly because it has to do with responsibility of both parents and children.

Ephesians 6:1-4 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor your father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with you, and you may live long on the earth. And, you fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Paul here addresses both the children and the parents. He makes clear that the children have a

responsibility before God, and keeping the commandments has very definite benefits for them that they should anticipate receiving. This is right in agreement with the verse we started out with in Deuteronomy 4: 39-40.

He mentions the prospect of long life, which also contains the implication of prosperity as well. Their prosperity will be the gradual development of understanding and wisdom learned from the parents, which are precursors that help produce the long life and the prosperity. They learn from the parents that honest hard work produces prosperity. That is just one little example. In an overall sense, Paul is reminding children that obedience to parents has its rewards. But a question arises. Is there an age or circumstance under which the child's responsibility to honor his parents ever ends?

Remember, at the beginning I showed you that honor means "a long-lasting burden" responsibility. So the answer to that is both yes and no. This is why Paul qualified the children's obedience. He said "in the Lord." That qualifies. His qualification means that the child owes obedience to his parents within the framework or the boundary of what belongs to the Lord's way of life and responsibility. If parents want to require a child to do something that breaks, let us say, the commandments of God, the child has a larger responsibility to God than he does to his parents, and therefore he should submit to God above rather than to his parents. This takes some judgment on the part of the children, but it is qualified that there are times that a parent, before God, can be disobeyed.

Here is another qualifier: The cleaving of a spouse to the spouse—that is, of one to the other—trumps responsibility to a parent. In other words, it is the spouse that is to be responded to before the parents. So at marriage, the weighty responsibility shifts to another.

I want you to go to Colossians 3: 21.

Colossians 3:21 Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.

This is directed at fathers. There is a reason for this. It does not mean that a woman, the wife, cannot do what it says here in this verse. They can do it too, but men are more likely to do what this verse says, or prohibits, than a woman will do. So special attention is given to the fathers. That is why he says this.

Colossians 3: 21 is better translated into modern English: "Do not embitter or exasperate your child, lest they become discouraged." The words "to anger" are not in the Greek. Anger is not involved here. It is exasperation, or becoming bitter, that is involved. Men, the idea is not to do things, like being over-bearing, constantly fault-finding and nagging. They will produce in the child things like listlessness. They will become moody. They will become sullen because they do not think dad is fair. They are not becoming angry, but they are becoming gradually bitter.

What God is saying here through Paul is that the twig (the child) is to be thoughtfully bent with caution lest it becomes broken, its self-esteem destroyed. We do not want to destroy the child's self-esteem through bitterness. So God is saying to you then, "Go ahead and correct, but at the same time be patient with their inexperience." Correction should never be revenge. It must be

given for the child's good and must always be within measure."

Now back to Ephesians 6: 4, because he says almost the same thing, but it is not quite the same. This is actually a great deal stronger than Colossians 3: 21. "And you fathers, provoke not your children to wrath. But bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." This phrase—"provoke not your children to wrath"—can easily be translated as "Do not enrage your children to anger." This is a notch higher than just being exasperated.

Now discouragement growing from exasperation leads a person to want to give up. This will leave the child listless, sullen, and want to give up. By way of contrast, enraging a child tends to make the child fight back to create a great deal more defensiveness. Anger stirs action in a way we do not want. Neither the exasperation nor the anger is good, but the anger is the worst of the two. The word translated "provoke"—"Provoke not your children to wrath"—and the word translated "wrath" are exactly the same word, and could be rendered as "Do not arouse your children to enragement."

Overall, Paul is teaching "Do not promote an angry mood or disposition in your children, because children will eventually reflect back the disposition of the parent." Firmness in correction is fine, but men, you had better be careful about the temper the correction is given in. Paul is talking about a father being unjust in correction; about favoritism in correction; over-correction; neglect of correction, and even physical cruelty. Instead, we are to nurture.

The English word "nurture" indicates feeding, caring for, providing nourishment. But the underlying Greek word more specifically implies education or instruction, as if in school, or for the purpose of producing a disciplined mind. The word thus covers verbal instruction, chastening, and the use of drills needed to produce Christian character. He says, "Do it." "Give your child responsibility." "Evaluate them." In other words, "Do it perfectly." The word does not indicate in any way that any of these approaches is even harsh, let alone cruel. However, taken together, it does indicate an organized and consistent plan being followed.

The word "admonition" indicates a warning given and thus draws specific attention to verbal instruction. Children, at the very least, ought to be warned verbally. Paul actually approaches three things here.

number 1: "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."
[Ephesians 6: 4]. It touches on the standard or quality one is to strive for.

number 2: He touches on nurture, which indicates that which is physically done to and with the child in terms of consistent regimented training, including discipline.

number 3: Admonition draws attention to what is said and how it is said to the child.

Taken together, then Paul is saying that child-training is not something that can be left to chance or sloth off with a rather careless resigned attitude as if it is a necessary evil.

That is rather an abrupt ending, but I have used up all my time, and I think that I gave enough so that you get the point that keeping the Fifth Commandment is very, very important, and that it is the responsibility of the parent to make sure that the child learns the lessons of the Fifth Commandment and is made through a training program to keep that commandment right in the family.