

Must Honour Father and Mother! – Deuteronomy 5:16

INTRODUCTION – Children are born to dishonour their parents. It is in their sinful DNA. Therefore they cannot help but dishonour them. This is not to say that since they are born this way it is acceptable. It must not be compared with a person who is born right or left handed which is not a transgression. But to dishonour parents, even though it is by birth, is still a sin. This is because of the sinful nature that every sinner is born with. Every child is born with the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. There is no denying this truth.

Knowing this sinful inclination in every child, God in His infinite wisdom placed “Honour thy father and thy mother” as the first of the Ten Commandments that relate to sinning against fellow human beings. The next five of the Ten Commandments relate to man’s transgression against his neighbour. When the Ten Commandments were first given, it was a new and unique revelation. Before these six commandments were given, sinful man would dishonour parents, kill, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness and covet and not know that they were also transgressions against God. Today sinful man would still not know unless they have heard of the Ten Commandments.

For the first time the people of Israel realized, and thus were without excuse, that when they sinned against their neighbour, they also sinned against God. They were able to make their restitution and restore their relationship with their neighbour but there was nothing they could give to the LORD to restore their broken relationship with Him. The LORD wanted His people to know that when they transgressed the first four of the Ten Commandments, they sinned against God directly. But when they transgressed the following six Commandments, they also sinned against God. The only way for the wrath of God to be appeased was through the Levitical animal sacrifices. These animal sacrifices were to be offered by faith and according to Holy Scriptures for the worshipper and also sinner to experience genuine forgiveness of sins. The Levitical sacrificial system of sacrifices was a type of Christ. The worshipper looked forward to what Christ would do for them on the cross of Calvary just as we today look back to what Christ had done at Calvary. Both groups of believers are saved by faith, for without faith it is impossible to please God.

Of all the sins that man commits against one another, there is none worse than breaking Commandment number five! It is noted that of Commandments five to ten, the fifth Commandment is the only one that is stated in the positive whereas the others are stated in the negative.

I. Honour by Command -- Deu 5:16 – “Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.” – The fifth Commandment in Deuteronomy is not the same as the one in Exodus 20. **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.” Exodus 20:12 was written by the finger of God, one of the Ten Commandments that the LORD wrote on two tablets of stone. Moses explained Deuteronomy 5:16 before the LORD took Him home to glory. Both these verses were inspired by God. Comparing the two we realize that Deuteronomy 5:16 has the additional clause “as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee.” A commandment is void of any options for the hearer. All children are to honour their father and mother. This is an absolute commandment as with the other nine commandments. There is no circumstance where the child is excused from obeying it or is justified in dishonouring the father or mother.

God did not say to children to honour their father or mother when the latter are nice or kind to them. They are to honour them even when they are unkind or evil or abusive toward them. Regardless of their parents' behaviour, children are commanded to honour them. To honour them is to respect them highly. They are not to speak ill of them under any circumstance. They are not to call them names behind their back or to make light of them in front of their friends. Even if the parents do something wrong, the children are not to gossip and tell their friends. Whatever the wrongs of the parents that they witness at home must be kept private at all costs. To speak to anyone about it would constitute breaking Commandment number five.

This is the LORD's commandment, not the father's or the mother's or the church's or any man made authority's commandment. The reason is that our parents are chosen for us by God. God makes no mistakes. Our parents are not perfect and they will make mistakes in bringing up children, and some of them might even be abusive or are drunkards or addicted gamblers. This is an unconditional honouring that every child must give to their parents. To not honour them is to imply that the LORD made a mistake in choosing them as parents to their children. Know that the LORD will use every aspect of your parents (good and bad) to shape and mould you to who you are. Your character is formed by both the good and bad examples in your parents.

Some may have parents who handed them to their siblings (who maybe did not have children of their own) to bring up because they did not have the funds to feed all the children. You might resent them when you grew up and realized that your "parents" are actually your aunt and uncle, and your "aunt and uncle" are actually your parents. You might be jealous of your siblings who were brought up by your parents and you were the only one who was given to be brought up by your aunt and uncle. As an unbeliever you would have these "normal" feelings and you would feel justified to feel this way because you do not know the sovereign God. However, after salvation you ought to realize that your entire upbringing including being brought up by your aunt and uncle is an act of your Heavenly Father and not man, and the bitterness and anger must be replaced by forgiveness and God's love. You now know that it was only through your aunt's and uncle's upbringing that you can be moulded into your present character which the LORD will use for His glory and the blessing of others.

The believer's beginning has always been ordered by the LORD. He chose for all His children their earthly parents knowing that they were the best for them to shape their character and not just the external looks and features that they inherited from their parents. The difference is that before salvation we were not aware of the LORD's presence in our lives watching, feeding and protecting us through our parents. After salvation we begin to be aware of the LORD's presence and working, and upon looking back we can see the way and presence of the LORD in our lives preserving us and keeping us from harm's way. The sovereignty of God is the foundation underpinning the fifth Commandment. Honouring our parents is an absolute commandment that has no exception, otherwise the Commandments cannot be called absolute!

II. Honour Practically – Eph 6:1 – “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.” – What is the difference between obeying and honouring our parents? Obeying our parents is practical. Honouring our parents is from the heart. To honour them is to have the highest esteem for them. But honouring our parents is not a feeling of respect only, for it must result in obedience. To say that we honour our parents and we do not obey them is lying. Obedience must not be done grudgingly. That is where the honouring of parents comes in. Obedience must be done willingly and respectfully. Children must not obey their parents in front of them and then dishonour them behind their backs. To obey is to honour and to honour must result in cheerful obedience.

To obey them is to obey the LORD, for the LORD gave us our parents from birth. There is no other authority above a child of God except that which the LORD has placed. They are there to help us do what is right. They are the external impetus that the LORD gives us that we can see to help us obey with the fear of God in our hearts. Therefore when our parents command or ask us to do something, it is actually the voice of the LORD that we ought to hear and not our parents! If they say to be home by 10 pm, we should be home by 10 pm. We can bargain with them nicely and ask for a later time but the final decision is always the parent’s. After we are married and have our own homes, do we still obey them? Yes we are still to obey them but in a different way. Parents will still give advice whenever they feel like doing so. We must not be rude to them but graciously thank them for the advice knowing that it will ultimately be our decision for our family that we are responsible for.

Obedience is always **in the LORD**. There is no teaching to honour them in the LORD. We honour them because the LORD commanded it and because it is an attitude of the heart that has no exception. Our parents are not perfect. Some parents are evil. They might ask their children to commit crimes or lie or do things that might be immoral or unethical or unbiblical. Since obedience reflects our holy witness for Christ and if we obey that which is sinful or unbiblical, our witness for Christ will be damaged. That is why obeying our parents is not blind obedience. It is an obedience that has the Bible as the parameter. The phrase “in the LORD” does not only teach the scope of the obedience but also the attitude of obedience. If parents ask the child to do something that the child disagrees with and the parents insist that the child does it, the child must obey cheerfully and not grudgingly. He must subject his will to his parents’ will all the time until he leaves home. Then he will have more freedom to decide on his parents’ advice. But as long as he stays under his parents’ roof he must be subject to their rules and jurisdiction.

As long as what our parents ask us to do is not unbiblical or immoral or criminal, we are to obey. This is the right thing to do as God says. Children are to obey their parents because it is the right thing to do in the LORD. If the parents are unbelievers they need to see this “right” done for their salvation’s sake. Their child was rude and argumentative before salvation. Imagine the impact when after salvation he is respectful, helpful in the home with house chores without being asked, diligent, trustworthy and always obedient. If the parents are believers, they need to see the fruits of salvation in their child’s life. This will surely encourage them. The salvation of the child is always the greatest desire of every Christian parent. To have this desire and prayers

fulfilled by the child's holy testimony and doing the "right" spiritual things will surely bring great joy to the parents' hearts and will strengthen their faith.

III. Honour Beneficially – Eph 6:2-3 – “**2** Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) **3** That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.” – Every family in Israel combined together made up the society of Israel. If all the families in Israel had obedient children, the family unit would be strong. The society of Israel would be strong. This is the promise of the LORD to Israel. The phrase “live long on the earth” is for the NT church's application and “thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee” is for the OT nation of Israel. It is not meant to be understood or applied to the individual as if every believer would die young because he did not honour his parents. The promise with reference to the Land is to be applied to the nation in OT, and the earth in NT times. In the former, when families obeyed their parents, Israel became a holy witness for the LORD. As a holy witness for the LORD, the LORD would protect Israel from invaders and oppressors. When families in Israel were broken because of children dishonouring parents, society would break down. Israel would become a sinful witness for the LORD when parents divorced and children had single or multiple fathers and mothers like what we see in today's culture. The holy witness of Israel would be compromised and without repentance, and the LORD would punish Israel by removing her from the Land. In this sense Israel would not be long upon the land. This happened and she was removed from the Land by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

When this promise is applied to the NT church we see that the LORD has replaced the word “land” with “earth.” Christian homes are the emphasis in the NT witness. Since the gospel is preached all over the world, i.e. Christianity has covered the face of the earth, godly homes within the Christian Faith is the key to prevent the earth's destruction. In non-Christian homes, dishonouring parents leading to disobedience is the norm. This should not be in Christian homes. But when Christianity is corrupted, i.e. turned apostate as what we see today, “Christian” homes are no better than non-Christian homes. Dishonouring parents and disobeying them is also the norm. The world will become like Israel in her transgressions. When the transgressions of the world are full, the LORD will destroy it just as He destroyed Judah. **2 Peter 3:6-7** “Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: **7** But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” This prophetic passage of the last days has now become a dark reality, **2 Timothy 3:1-5** “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. **2** For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, **3** Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, **4** Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; **5** Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.” [Emphasis added] The phrase “without natural affection” means no parental love. When sons and daughters grew up in broken homes they will become parents who will have no love for their own children.

APPLICATION – We need to know how serious the LORD is regarding dishonouring our parents. The penalty for dishonouring parents was death. **Exodus 21:15** “And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death.” And **Exodus 21:17** “And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death.” To honour our parents is to obey them in the LORD. We do not bad-mouth them or diminish them in any way. They are not perfect but they are our God appointed parents to give us life. We honour them because they are our parents! They do not need to be Christian parents or good parents or caring parents. It is an unconditional command to honour them, for they are appointed by God to shape and mould us to be who we are, to be used for God's glory.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If a parent abused a child and the child is hospitalised, should the older sibling who witnessed the criminal act report to the police?
2. If you see your mother steal from your father to feed her gambling addiction, should you tell your father knowing that he will scold her and might even institutionalise her to stop her addiction?
3. What will you do if you know that your father signed a statement of faith in church that he does not drink at all so that he can teach in Sunday School, but he drinks wine at home?
4. A new 16 year old believer went home and told his unbelieving parents that he is now a Christian and would like to attend church every Sunday. The parents became very angry and forbade him to attend. What should he do? Should he obey God and attend church at all costs including lying to his parents that he is going to the library to study but actually he is going to church; or should he just obey his parents and not attend church?
5. Should parents still give curfew to their grown up children (late 20's and above) who still live with them due to the high cost of buying or renting a flat or room in Singapore? Is it biblical for a newly married couple to live with their parents or should they move out and have their own home?