

Honor Thy Father and Mother

By Al Felder

“Honor thy father and mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” (Ex. 20:12)

The attitude that sons or daughters have towards their parents has great emphasis placed upon it within the word of God. In fact, when the children of Israel were lead out of the land of Egypt God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses upon Mount Sinai. Four of the commands dealt with man’s duty towards God, and six of them dealt with man’s duty towards each other. The command to honor ones father and mother is the first of the commands that deals with man’s duty towards each other.

Not only is this the first command in the list dealing with human relationships, it is the first command given with a promise. The very order, in which these commands were given, as well as the commands themselves, was for the purpose of teaching the Israelites something very important. God comes first and foremost in one’s life. Next, in order for a person to fulfill all other duties in human relationships he or she must learn to honor father and mother.

All but one of the Ten Commandments is repeated in the New Testament. The command to remember the Sabbath is not repeated. God explains this for us within His word. *“¹⁴Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; ¹⁵And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. ¹⁶Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: ¹⁷Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.”* (Col. 2:14-17) Christ in His redemptive work fulfilled the Law of Moses and took it out of the way and nailed it to His cross. Therefore, the Law of Moses is not a binding law between man and God today. Today, we are under the New Covenant or Law of Christ. Those laws that were exclusive to the following of the Law of Moses were not carried over into the New Covenant. They were shadows of things to come. They pointed forward towards the coming of Christ and the establishment of a new and better covenant.

Having this understanding helps us to rightly divide the word of God. When we look for authority in what we do, we look to the New Covenant. For it is the binding law between man and God today. However, this does not mean that the Old Covenant is of no use today. We can study it to learn more about the commands that we have to follow such as the subject of our discussion, and we can learn more through the understanding of the various shadows and what they pointed towards.

Having said that, we do find that the command to honor thy father and mother is repeated in the New Testament and it is re-enforced. *“¹Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. ²Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; ³That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”* (Eph. 6:1-3) Great emphasis is placed upon this command in the New Testament. In fact, it was a subject that Jesus addressed on a number of occasions. Before we study it from the New Testament, let us first go back to the Old Testament and learn of its application there.

Under the Law of Moses, God plainly commanded the death penalty for disobedience to this command. *“¹⁸If 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: ¹⁹Then 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; ²⁰And 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. ²¹And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear.”* (Deut. 21:19-21) This command is shocking to us today. Every father should be awakened to the responsibility of teaching his children to obey God, and every disrespectful son or daughter should be convicted to see how God hates this sin.

As we look further in the Old Testament we find other acts punishable by death that violated this command. *“¹⁵And he that smitteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death. ¹⁷And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death.”* (Ex. 21:15, 17) If a child was to strike one of his parents, such an action was punishable by death. Also, if a child spoke to his father or mother in a disrespectful way, the punishment once again was death.

Young people, you must realize the seriousness and severity of this sin. If you would please God today you must honor your father and mother. To lift a hand against, or to curse your father or mother leads to death. You may not face the physical consequence of being stoned to death today, but such actions will lead to a spiritual death, a separation between you and God, if you do not repent. The command to honor thy father and mother is at the very foundation of all Christian duty, decency, and morality.

Just as the disobedience to this command was met with a great punishment, the obedience to this command gave a great blessing. It is the first command given with a promise. The promise is a long life. Obedience to father and mother requires restraint and self-control that leads to good health and a long life. Young people, whether you realize it or not, your father and mother aren't out to ruin your life or keep you from having any fun. They want the

very best for you and the rules that they have set in place are for the purpose of keeping you safe.

Also, by honoring father and mother, you will please God. God's blessings will be upon those who honor their father and mother. All spiritual blessings exist in Christ. Those who obey God and are faithful to Him are granted these great and wonderful blessings. Honoring father and mother is necessary in order to be a faithful child of God and receive these great blessings.

How exactly does one honor father and mother according to the Bible? Thankfully God does not leave us to guess or wonder what we must do. He has left us instructions in His word on how sons and daughters can honor their father and mother.

Well, we have already noticed some actions that do not honor father and mother. One of those actions involved the way that a child spoke to his or her parents. We learned that a child was not to curse his father or mother. This simply means that you are not to speak evil to or about your parents. This requires you to have a respect and reverence for your parents.

Your parents have a position of authority over you that is given to them by God. *"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."* (Rom. 13:1) This particular passage deals with the governing officials, but it teaches us that all authority comes from God. Within human relationships God has delegated a certain amount of authority to individuals depending upon the role that they serve. Within the parent-child relationship, God has given the parent authority over the child. This position of authority is to be respected. A child's respect for his or her parents is a true display of his or her respect towards God.

As we pointed out, the way a child talks to his or her parents demonstrates the respect, or lack of respect, for father and mother. With this in mind, I believe that it is very important how a child address his father or mother. Look to the Bible and consider how faithful sons and daughters of old addressed their parents. *"And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"* (Gen. 22:7) At face value this may seem like a simple verse, but it provides us with the interaction between a reverent son and his father. Notice how Isaac addressed his father with respect.

It is greatly disturbing today to see the disrespect used by young people when addressing their parents. For quite some time now, society has been encouraging young people to talk to their parents as if they were equal. Some young people address their parents the same way that they do their friends by addressing them with their first name. Could you imagine Isaac speaking to his father the way that some young people speak to their parents

today? Instead of saying father, he probably would have said, “Hey Abraham, where’s the lamb!”

People do not refer to the mayor of a city, a congress member, or the president by their first name due to a respect for their position of authority. It is for that same reason that children should not call their parents by their first name. Children should realize that their parents are their superiors in age, wisdom, and in position. For sons and daughters to speak disrespectfully to their parents is a grave sin in the sight of God. In order to honor your father and mother you must speak to them with the respect that their position holds.

Second, a child honors his father or mother when he obeys them. *“Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.”* (Col. 3:20) Your parents have been given the solemn responsibility by God to raise you according to His word. They make rules for you to follow in order to accomplish this task. As a child, God commands you to obey your parents.

We also find the idea of submission within this relationship. *“One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity.”* (1 Tim. 3:4) Submission not only requires the act of obeying, it also requires that a child have the proper attitude towards his parents. Submission means that you subject your judgment and will to another person. Young people, until you have a home of your own, you are under your parent’s authority. During this time period there will be situations in which you must do as you are told.

Children often think that they are wiser than their parents, but God commands them to be in subjection. I will never forget a story that brother Don King told me about a preacher of the Gospel in the Philippines. This man’s daughter was dating a boy whom he did not approve of and believed would do harm to the church. The man instructed his daughter to no longer see the boy and she obeyed without hesitation. How could this be? Most conversations of this nature in our society would be followed by yelling and doors slamming. She was in subjection. She honored her father.

Third, honoring father and mother requires financial provision. As you grow, there will come a time when you are ready to have a family of your own. You will be an adult with your own children. This, no doubt, will bring changes to your relationship with your parents. They will not have the same extent of authority that they once had over you, but you are still obligated to honor your father and mother.

The respect and devotion due parents continues until death. Every child owes a debt to his or her parents that can never be paid. They cared for you, nurtured you, provided for you, and saw to your every need. Such a sacrifice should never be forgotten or made light of by the child.

The honor that mature men and women give to their parents should be expressed in financial support and provision. Jesus addressed this issue Himself. *“⁴For God commanded, saying, Honor thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. ⁵But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightiest be profited by me; ⁶And honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.”* (Matt. 15:4-6) The Jewish leaders had a rule of corban. This meant that a man could take money that would normally be used to provide for the needs of his father or mother and dedicate it to God. According to the Jewish leaders, this would free him of his obligation to his parents.

Jesus criticized the Jewish leaders for this and said that they had made the word of God of none effect by their traditions. According to Jesus, sons and daughters who honor their father and mother support them in old age and provide for their needs. Jesus said that this was involved in the command to honor father and mother.

Further commands are given on this subject in the New Testament. *“But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God.”* (1 Tim. 5:4) If you claim to be a religious person, show your religion by taking care of your parents in their old age. We also find that this passage extends beyond ones parents and includes other widows within your family.

We live in a sad day in which people abort their unwanted children and cast off their old. The value of life in general is not held in high regard in our society nor is the obligation that one has to his or her parents. Nursing homes are full of elderly people today who have been placed there by their children and forgotten about.

Many people have neglected their obligations to their parents and have left their fate in the hands of the government. This is a shame. *“But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”* (1 Tim. 5:8) God certainly takes such matters seriously. A man who neglects the needs of his parents is wicked. According to God’s word, we should not leave the care of our parents up to the government or even the church for that matter. In order to honor father and mother a man must provide for the needs of his elderly parents.

So much of human duty and morality is involved in honoring ones parents. Honoring father and mother means respect for law and order. This in turn will lead to a respect for the laws of government. No government of man has ever been able to sustain itself without well-ordered homes. When the family decays, respect for all authority is lost and society plunges itself into chaos and disarray.

More importantly, however, those who honestly honor their fathers and mothers will have proper reverence for and devotion to God. They will promote righteousness and obedience to law and government. They will also revere holy things and pass on their moral character from one generation to the next.

In closing, there is one final way that a child can honor his father and mother. The final and best way that you can honor your parents is by turning to your father and mother's God. Your parents have raised you and trained you in the ways of God. They have watched you, protected you, and prayed for you. With great joy and sometimes with tears they have raised you longing to see the day that you would obey the Gospel of Christ. Nothing you could do in this world would so please them and so honor them than to turn to their God.