

TEACHING GOAL

To study the foundational concepts of the fifth commandment.

DOCTRINAL

Q. Which is the fifth commandment?

A. The fifth commandment is, Honor thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

S.C. 63, L.C. 123, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 91

SCRIPTURAL BASIS

Study Passage: Mark 7:1-23

Support Passages: Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16; Ephesians 6:1-4; Matthew 15:1-20; Proverbs 23:22-25; I Timothy 5:1-2; Romans 13:8-10

BIBLE STORY

John 19:26-27: Jesus honors His mother at the cross.

MEMORY ASSIGNMENT

"Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old." (Proverbs 23:22, ESV)

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APPLICATION

The Ten Commandments are not conditional laws. Hence, when it comes to honoring our father and mother we must honor them whether they are good to us or not, simply because they are our parents.

SUMMARY

Our purpose in this lesson is to deal with the basic concept explicit in the fifth commandment which concerns our relationship to our natural parents. In future lessons we will deal with the broader concerns of the commandment relating to anyone who is our superior and our attitude toward higher authority.

We are commanded to "honor" our natural parents. Paul teaches us to give honor to whom honor is due.¹ We are to honor the aged.² Honor in the New Testament translates the word *timao* and in the Old Testament the word *cabadh*. These words in the original languages of the Bible refer primarily to the concept of heaviness and the verb forms mean: give weight to, give reverence to, set a value upon, etc. In the Leviticus passage, "honor the aged" parallels "revere your God". To honor human beings, then, means to treat them as persons, showing them the same honesty, appreciation, love and respect that you would want them to show you. Our Lord gave us an example of honoring our parents when, at the cross, He gave His mother to the care of John. Shortly His earthly ministry would come to an end so Jesus provided for His mother in this manner showing her His love and respect.

If we are to give honor to whom honor is due are we then to honor parents or other authorities who have treated us badly? The answer, of course, is yes. Those in authority over us, including our natural parents, are not due honor for their own sin. You should not honor an alcoholic or adulterous father in such a manner as to encourage his sin. However, you may well honor him because he is your father and therefore seek to bring him to repentance helping him to turn away from alcohol and adultery. In like manner we are to "Honor all men; love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king."³ We are to respect our masters even if they are unreasonable.⁴ The honor that is due them is not related to their unreasonableness or their sin rather it is related to their authority over us. We honor them not necessarily for what they do but for who they are.

The fifth commandment is addressed primarily to the adult community and the force of the commandment is that we as adults should not forget our parents when they become old. This was the very charge Jesus lodged against the Pharisees in our study text. "And he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition! For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.' But you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, "Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban" ' (that is, given to God)— then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down.

And many such things you do."'⁵

The practice of declaring something to be a Corban (a votive offering) was used for the express purpose of sheltering one's resources or wealth from being used to provide for one's aged parents. If you had an extra house that you did not wish to give to your parents to use in their old age, you could say it was Corban. This legally declared that the property was a gift to God, for His use, therefore the property could not be requisitioned for anyone else's use. The Lord said that this practice was a flagrant violation of the fifth commandment. It was the very opposite of rendering honor to one's parents. Furthermore, He said that this practice "made void the word of God" and that it was an example of hypocrisy.

Children are to "obey their parents in the Lord, for this is right,"⁶ and to obey them is to love them and honor them. Paul goes on to adduce the fifth commandment in support of his assertion. Of course he speaks to those who are not yet adults but the principle remains, our natural parents are to be honored whether we are young or old, whether they have been good to us or not. This then is the foundational concept in the fifth commandment but it applies to a much wider set of relationships as we shall see in the next lesson.

¹ Romans 13:7

² Leviticus 19:32

³ I Peter 2:17

⁴ I Peter 2:18

⁵ Mark 7:9-13, ESV

⁶ Ephesians 6:1