

Honour to Whom Honour is Due

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[0 : 0 0] Our friends, let's pray. Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have said that your word is living and active, sharper than any sword, penetrating to the division of soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and you have made it able to judge the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

So please enable me to speak your word faithfully today and please cause it to do as you have promised it will. And we pray this in the name of Jesus Christ and for his glory.

Amen. Well, before long, the carers noticed. When Timmy arrived at the home, he regularly stole food and hid it under his pillow.

Now, the counsellors questioned him and the story eventually came out. Timmy's mother was a prostitute. Timmy's father regularly beat him and then made it up to him through sexual involvement with Timmy.

And because of the household violence, things like regular mealtimes and having food on hand were unheard of. And so Timmy learned to steal and to hide food for his self-preservation.

[1 : 1 0] Now, let me tell you that at the other end, there are other stories. Take Norman, for example. These are real stories I need to tell you, but just names have been changed and so on.

Take Norman as an example. Norman is 77. He lives at home with his wife and two sons in their late 40s. Both sons are unemployed and not interested in seeking employment.

Norman has been beaten several times by his sons. On the last occasion, Norman was beaten because he presumed to use his son's towel. After another incident, Norman was interviewed by the local police.

And Norman tells the story but refuses to sign a complaint. Norman knows that if he does, there'll be another more severe beating as soon as he enters the house again. Norman's sons are living on the dole.

They are also living on Norman's social security and pension income. He is doing some part-time work in secret in order to have his own spending money. Friends, somewhere between these stories of child abuse and elder abuse are stories that most of us are familiar with.

[2 : 1 9] Stories of parents who are unwilling to let go of their children or stories of manipulation of children by their parents and of parents by their children. Stories of raging arguments about when children will be home, about norms of behaviour and about where they'll live, who they'll mix with, who they'll marry, which career they'll have and all those sorts of things that we're all very familiar with.

Or stories, if you like, at the other end about elderly people in homes who are never visited by their children or grandchildren. The nursing home, the hostel my mother is in, the nursing staff have told me that it is somewhere between 15% to 30% of people that are visited by their families.

The rest are not visited at all by their families. That's not even once a year. At all. That's the world we live in, friends.

A world where children are set against their parents and parents are set against their children. A world where those who gave life feel it is their right to rule that life.

And a world where those who are given life have forgotten from whom it came. That's the God. This is the situation that God speaks to in the fifth word from God in Exodus 20 verse 12.

[3 : 38] Honour your father and your mother so that you may live long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. And today we're going to have a look at this commandment and we're going to look at what the passage itself means.

We're going to look at the rest of the Old Testament to see what it says about the relationship between parents and children. And that we're then going to take a peek into the New Testament to see what it has to say and finalise we're going to, finally we're going to summarise what it means for us.

So let's get some perspective on the verse. The first thing to notice, have it open there in front of you, is that there's a pattern to the Ten Commandments. Remember them? Commandments 1 to 4 set out principles relating to our relationship with God.

Commandments 5 to 10 set out principles relating to our relationship within a covenant community. The pattern here seems to indicate that the first four commandments are the foundation for those which follow.

Having said that, it appears as though the command about parents and children forms a special function. It appears to be a bridge, I think, between the two sets of commandments. For example, it shares with the previous command, the Lord your God.

[4 : 48] It also uses the words such as honour, which is often used in reference to our relationship with God. And the next thing is, honouring your father and your mother is then linked with the same sorts of blessings and curses that are talked about in relation to honouring God.

So how can we summarise all of this? Well, perhaps we could put it this way. The structure of the commandments makes it clear that the most important and foundational relationship in our life is our relationship with God.

He is the giver of our life. However, when we begin to look at our relationship with other people in the world, we need to recognise there is a foundational relationship in our relationship with people in the world.

For whether we are married or single, young or old, we do share a common bond. We all have parents. Now, some of us may not know our parents, but we all have them.

And these parents were together the channel of God's gift of life. In many ways, you see, they were like God to us. So now let's have a look at the word honour that is used here.

[5 : 58] The word honour is linked to the word glory and the general sense behind it is the idea of giving weight or importance to something or someone. It means to prize them highly, to respect them, to glorify and esteem them.

It has nuances of caring for and showing affection. It's a term that's frequently used to describe the proper response to God. It's a word that is close in meaning to the idea of worship.

So, let's take a note of a few things about this commandment. The first thing to say is that the commandment probably has adult children more in focus than young children.

And quite an important thing, it's probably directed toward adult children more than young children. Second thing to note is that it's an extraordinary commandment in the context of the ancient world.

You see, other nations talked about honouring their fathers. this commandment adds mothers as well. The mothers among you will be glad to hear that.

[7 : 03] And then, in the version of this commandment in Leviticus chapter 19 verse 3, it's even bolder because in Leviticus 19 verse 3, the mothers are listed before the fathers. The third thing to notice about this commandment is that it is somewhat open-ended in its meaning.

You see, when we read the commandment, we want to ask questions like this, don't we? What does honouring one's parents mean practically? Does it mean obedience?

Does it mean doing something they say no matter what? What if the parents are wrong? And if there's, is there ever even a time when children will outgrow this commandment?

Have I outgrown it, for example, in relation to my mum? However, I think this commandment is deliberately vague. Unfortunately, that is the case. No, I think fortunately that is the case.

God just wants to be clear to us. We are to honour our parents. And we need to work out how the details work out. This command, this is the command, and it invites all children to respond in any way that honours their parents.

[8 : 15] It tells them that in dealing with parents, respect, esteem, having regard and concern for, showing affection for, consideration of, appreciation, are to be the order of the day.

The fourth thing to notice is that the command is open-ended in timing. Did you notice that? In other words, there is no indication in the text that there's ever a time that you stop honouring your parents.

It goes forever. Well, I suppose, until they die or you die. there's no indication that there's any time when you stop honouring parents.

It appears as though there's never a day in human life when this obligation is removed for you. Lastly, let's have a look at the promise that's attached to this commandment. God says, honour your father and your mother so that you may live long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

First thing to say about the promise here is it's probably not meant to be taken individually. That is, in other words, it's not saying that if we personally honour our father and mother then God will personally ensure that we live long in the land that he gives us.

[9 : 24] In any case, it was intended for Jews but it probably means that if the nation of Israel gets this thing right in their life they will have a long stay in the land.

The commandment therefore functions I think as a warning to the people of God. This commandment is so important says God and it's so important to God that breaking of it will jeopardise their possession of the land that the Lord their God has given them.

Let's see some of the detail about this commandment. Let's see what else the Old Testament has to add to it as a whole. This commandment shows the extreme importance that God gives to the integrity of the family doesn't it you see?

God wants his people to live in stability and to have the best. These good things are fostered in good communities and good communities are fostered by good family life.

Family life is the bedrock upon which the community of God's people stands and so in the rest of the Bible there are strong warnings to both groups of people both parents and children.

[10 : 30] You can see this within a few short verses in Exodus. If you're in Exodus just flip forward to chapter 21 verse 15. Have a look at it where God says that the death penalty is to be handed out to someone who curses their father or mother.

Throughout the Old Testament we're told that failure to keep this command is a grievous sin. A most grievous sin. It is linked to extortion of the poor and the disadvantaged sexual sin despising God's holy things.

This is a very important commandment. There are a couple of other things that need to be said about the Old Testament and this commandment. As I indicated earlier it's my belief that this commandment is primarily directed to adult children.

It's also open ended in terms of timing. We are to honour our parents all our lives. However we need to ask what impact marriage has on this commandment don't we?

And you've probably already been asking that question as we've been going along. And all I can say is this. Genesis 2 tells us that marriage is about leaving your father and your mother and cleaving to your wife.

[11 : 39] That is it's about setting up a new family. It's therefore about becoming parents yourselves. And I take it that that does change things somewhat for you. You are responsible for making decisions for your family and this family is a separate unit from the families you came from and that will inevitably bring some changes for you.

But let me tell you what it does not change is that you are to honour your father and mother. It may very well change the details of how you express that but it does not change this commandment.

Now there's much more I could say in relation to the Old Testament but let's move on to the New Testament and again open your Bibles. The first place to start when we get to the New Testament is Jesus himself. New Testament tells us that he was not only a means of salvation for us he is also the ideal righteous man.

He lived as we were meant to live and are meant to live. So now if that's so you'd expect to see that in his relationship with his family wouldn't you? And that's exactly what happens. I want to concentrate on just a few verses that capture this.

First turn in your Bibles to Luke 2.51 Luke 2.51 Once you get to the New Testament it's easy Matthew, Mark, Luke chapter 2.51 It is speaking about the relationship of Jesus with his parents and it says this Then Jesus went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them.

[13 : 06] In other words Jesus lived in submission to his parents. However the surrounding verses indicate that Jesus clearly saw that his primary relationship was his relationship with God and the rest of his ministry supports this.

You see he himself treated his mother with respect and honour however it did not deter him from his primary obligation to God. Now Luke 2.51 tells us about the beginning of his life let me show you the end of the life of Jesus turn in your Bibles to John 19 so you're in Luke just one more book toward the back you know back into the New Testament Luke sorry John chapter 19 Jesus is hanging on the cross dying and as he does so he looks down and sees his mother below him and in his dying breath he makes sure she is looked after as life ebbs out of him he honours the one through whom his life had come look at 19 25 to 27 near the cross of Jesus stood his mother his mother's sister Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene when Jesus saw his mother there and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby he said to her woman here is your son and to the disciple here is your mother and from that time on this disciple took her into his home it's a wonderful picture isn't it a man dying looking after his mum making sure there's someone to look after her this balance reflected in the life of Jesus himself is also reflected in the teaching of the disciples for Jesus

God must always come first and you can see this in a number of passages I want to turn to just one look at Luke 14 so go back to Luke Luke 14 verses 25 to 33 Luke 14 25 to 33 large crowds were travelling with Jesus and turning to them he said if anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother wife and children brothers and sisters yes and even his own life such a person cannot be my disciple and whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple now suppose one of you wants to build a tower won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it for if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it everyone who sees it will ridicule you saying this person began to build and wasn't able to finish or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king won't he first sit down and consider whether he's able with 10,000 men to oppose the one who's coming against him with 20,000 if he is not able he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way and will ask for terms of peace in the same way those of you who do not give everything you have cannot be my disciples now friends

Jesus is very clear in this passage he's saying our love for God and the things of God is to be so strong that our love for other important parts of life is like hatred in comparison Jesus is not telling us to hate our parents he's just saying that our love for God has to be so much stronger than any love we have for anything and anyone Jesus is reflecting what was there in the Old Testament even the commandments itself make clear that God is to be the first and primary focus of our attention and our affections however Jesus did not for a moment think that we could use God's demands on us in this area as a way of neglecting our obligation to honour our parents in fact on one particular occasion he slammed the Pharisees for encouraging people to do exactly this in the pursuit of godliness I put the reference in your outlines it's Mark 7 9 to 13 at least

I hope I did now let's move to some other parts of the New Testament to see what others have to say we read 3 verse 2 tells us exactly with Romans 1 what the Old Testament and Jesus have told us a wrong attitude to parents is a most grievous sin and disobeying your parents is a sign of rank ungodliness Paul makes it clear that disobedience to parents is a sign of uncontrollable and grievous sin a world where people no longer honour their parents is a world says Paul gone astray from God and caught in the depths of depravity that's what Romans 1 is all about now let's have a look at Colossians 3 verse 20 and Ephesians 6 so in your Bibles keep flipping go past Romans and keep going and you'll eventually hit Colossians look and listen to

[18 : 21] Colossians 3 verse 20 children obey your parents in everything for this pleases the Lord now just go back a book or two to Ephesians 6 1 to 4 again Paul says children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right honour your father and mother which is the first commandment with a promise so that it may go well with you and you may enjoy long life on the earth fathers don't exasperate your children instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord now there's just a number of things to notice with those two references first what Paul says here is a bit different in focus and meaning from what occurs in the Old Testament for example it seems to primarily focus on younger children rather than adult children and second Paul talks about obedience which is a lot more specific than honour isn't it honour sort of takes in everything obedience is very clear and that makes a lot of sense isn't it if the focus is younger kids you'd be wanting to tell them obey older kids might be much broader honour so third thing

Paul specifically balances out what was not in the fifth word but implied in the rest of the Old Testament parents have an obligation to children as well in particular fathers who are the head of their households are to be sensitive to the needs of their children they are not to abuse their position of authority by being overbearing and exasperating their children nevertheless it's clear that Paul sees that the Old Testament commandment carries down to the New Testament people of God they are to be marked as people who honour their parents of both sexes God you see has forgiven them God has forgiven you he's changed your heart and Malachi prophesied the hearts of fathers are to be turned to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers moreover Paul clearly thinks that living by God's word in this area will bring rewards things will go well with the people concerned for God's laws are intended for their good not for their harm now we've done a lightning tour of what the

Bible has to say in this area now let's now turn to the modern world the contemporary world and see how we can draw it together let's look at the issue of child abuse and if I could put it this way elderly abuse the first thing to say is that human sin is never an excuse in God's eyes from the very first page of the Bible to the very last God has a particular interest in the poor and the disadvantaged he reaches out in care to them and he protects them and he tells his people you've got to do the same what's more God is clear that wherever sin threatens life or health of the Christian it must be dealt with quickly and thoroughly the threatened one must be protected and the abusive one must be dealt with in such a way that they can no longer cause a threat first it means that wherever and whenever we see children abusing parents or parents abusing children within our church community we must not hold back on acting to exercise discipline both sins are very prevalent in western society although it is only the second that is spoken about we have neglected the first we are duty bound to speak and to act and it is a terrible terrible thing that we in the church have not done so in relation to the abuse of children it is a terrible thing and a terrible indictment upon us as

Christian people second it means that where our society gives the possibility of speaking out and affecting our society's norms we should do so because this reflects God's will for his world third it means that we should do what we can to provide refuge and help to those who are victims of either abuse and fourth it means that we should do what we can to point people toward Jesus who can both forgive the sinner change hearts and bring human reconciliation as I surveyed the Old and New Testament earlier I specifically talked about what happens when you get married however there's a whole other group of people that are affected particularly these days isn't there many of you are among them you see in today's world adult children are not necessarily married lots of them aren't particularly in males they stay on forever in their household in the parents household so how should adult children act what should their relationship be with their parents particularly if they're not married haven't left their family their father and mother and cleaved to their wife and become one flesh me word and he said for now then they answered it and think

I'm right and talk about the issue with me and with each other and try and work it through with each other. First thing I want to say is that if you are unmarried with parents, you're in the same situation as married people in that God wants you to honour your father and mother until the day that you die.

[24 : 16] Second, I think that while you continue to live in their house and are dependent upon them, then your attitude toward them and their rules should not change unless they wish it to.

And third, once you've moved away from living in their house and being financially dependent upon them, I think you should act toward them as a married person acts toward their parents. So there's just three little hints for you. You can think about them, talk about it with each other.

Now I need to though talk about authority and obedience here. As I look at life in the Bible, it seems to me there are two sorts of authority. Okay? There's the authority that exists because of status or office.

Does that make sense? A police officer or your boss has this sort of authority. authority. Now, there's another sort of authority though, isn't there? There's an authority of content.

A doctor, a lawyer or an electrician has that sort of authority. That is, they know their business supposedly. They should know what's best for you and they're giving you advice of content.

[25 : 23] Do you understand the difference? So advice of, sorry, an authority of office or status and an authority of content. For Christians, Scripture has the authority of content, doesn't it?

It tells us what we should be doing and is authoritative. Now, when the authority that exists because of status or office agrees with the authority that exists because of content, you should obey without question, shouldn't you?

When the two line up, obey without question. So when a police officer tells you to slow down your speed limit near a school, obey without question.

He's got office and content, as it were. So when a parent tells you to do something, which God also tells you to do, submit without question.

Now, but when the authority of status disagrees with the authority of content, then disobey but explain yourself is my advice. For example, if someone in authority tells you that you cannot tell people about Jesus, do what the disciples do in Acts, that is, refuse to obey but explain why you're disobeying.

[26 : 36] You want to have a look at that? Acts 4 and 5 gives you examples. Or when a parent tells you that you cannot regularly meet with God's people, respect your parents. But explain to them gently and with careful timing that you must obey God.

That make sense? Next one. A third category of decisions. This occurs when the authority that exists because of status or office speaks on something about which the authority of content has nothing to say.

Okay? So if you like, let me put it in crude terms. When the authority of status, there's nothing in the Bible that says anything about what they're saying.

What should you do then? Discuss but obey. So, for example, if the police officer tells you that because of bushfires, you should not drive on in the direction you are going.

By all means discuss, but obey. Unless there's a greater commandment from God that would cause you not to. When a parent tells you to do something on which God has nothing to say, then by all means discuss it with them, but in the end, honour and obey your parents.

[27 : 52] Friends, we are Christians. We are different to the world. We know Christ. And we have experienced his forgiveness. And we have seen the fatherhood of God.

And if we are children, we should honour our parents. And honour them in our language, that is, in the way we talk about them. And honour them in our obedience. Honour them in our love.

And respect. And in the weight we give to their opinion. And if they are old, we should honour our parents. Heather and I have longed to go to the mission field for many years.

But I am the oldest son in my family. And my father is dead. And I will stay here to see my mother die. I regard that as being, in this situation, more important.

It's far more important to honour my mother. I am here to look after her, to care for her. I'm aghast that people, that a whole host of the people in her hostel are not visited.

[29 : 04] That is a terrible thing. If they are old, we should honour our parents. Honour them by giving them our presence, by contacting them, by not allowing them to be lonely, by listening to them, by ringing them.

I know of children who ring their elderly parents in hostels every day. Now, I don't do that. But I know of others who do. We should make sure that our parents are adequately cared for, not just financially, but socially and in terms of family.

We should honour them by giving them glory and honour. Friends, I know Christian people who rarely phone their parents and who never visit them. And if you are among them, repent.

Change your way of living. It is ungodly and God does not like it. Change. Some of our parents were good and godly parents and some were bad.

But we have been welcomed by God the Father despite our sin. And we have been loved by His overwhelming love. And even if we have been treated badly by parents, we are to love them as God has loved us even though we abused Him.

[30 : 26] Love as you have been loved. Accept as you have been accepted. Forgive as you have been forgiven. Now, I understand, friends, that there may even be people here tonight who have been abused in ways that are extreme by parents.

And I understand that that may cause very significant difficulties. And I understand that honouring may need to take a slightly different shape for you. And I understand that.

And if you're in that situation, then please come and talk to me or Mark and talk about it and talk about how you can do that. But friends, we are Christian. We've been loved and forgiven by God.

And we are to honour our parents. Let's pray. Father God, please help us to reflect your love of us in our honouring of our parents.

And Father, we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[31 : 38] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.