

God on Parental Authority

The Ten Commandments

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There is a remarkable providence that is taking place in our midst beginning in this moment the fruit of which I want to explain to you. Seven and a half years ago, I started preaching through the Psalms, started at Psalm 1 and coming up on Tuesday we'll be at Psalm 127. Two and a half years ago, I started studying and preparing for a series on the 10 Commandments and there was absolutely no thought of parallel or seeing these things joined together; you think about Sunday and Tuesday kind of being separate. Well, in the purposes of God, that is not the case over the coming month or so. It's very sobering, it's exciting, it's almost frightening to me, to be honest with you, because on Tuesday, on the next two Tuesdays we're going to be in Psalms 127 and Psalm 128. You might think, "Okay, well, big deal." Well, follow along with me and let me show you what's happening here as the Lord, by his Spirit, works in the life of our church. I think you need to see and understand this context of things coming together over the course of years into a particular confluence at a particular point in time; there must be something very urgent and necessary for us as a church to hear and to glean from God's word.

Look at Psalm 127:3 where it says, "Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth. How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; They will not be ashamed When they speak with their enemies in the gate." There's this discussion of children and family and blessing that is there in Psalm 127 that is coming up on Tuesday. In Psalm 128, Lord willing on the following Tuesday, we find this in the first four verses, "How blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, Who walks in His ways. When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, You will be happy and it will be well with you. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine Within your house, Your children like olive plants Around your table. Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed Who fears the LORD." The fear of the Lord issuing in a particular kind of family life that is taking place.

Now parallel to that and, again, remember this is not by design. I tweaked one week of Tuesday preaching to make the sequence come out exactly right but that's all. This is over years that we've been coming and pointing and the Lord had this purpose in mind before the beginning of time and now we see it played out in just a remarkable providence. Today, we come to the fifth commandment in our study of the 10 Commandments in Exodus 20 and I invite you to turn there with me. Exodus 20:12 it says,

12 Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you.

So we have come to a point where a central portion of the 10 Commandments is on display for the next two or three weeks probably. We have an augment, a supplement from another part of the word of God completely unplanned in Psalm 127 and 128, and we come to this in the midst of a time where it's, you know, I mean, I suppose preachers throughout the centuries since the Reformation anyway, have felt like, in one way or another, that the family was under attack, but can we really deny that that's even more pronounced the case in the day and age in which we live? I mean, our government, our society, our culture doesn't even know that there are two genders, male and female; they're confused about that and confused about transitioning from one gender to the next as if gender can be chosen by an act of man's will rather than assigned by God at birth in the nature of the physical body that he gives to them. Can there be any denying that with the prevalence of abortion and what is it now, 70 million abortions since Roe v Wade were established that there is a war on children, as an upcoming book by John MacArthur is going to be titled, "The War on Children," a war on children in the womb, a war on children after they're out of the womb and viewed as objects of the perverse sexual desires of strange men and women and increasingly even that is being accepted by our society? Is there any doubt that we need a word from God about our own families as we have difficulties? Some of you younger families, the joy of raising your children and yet feeling the pressure of seeing them conform to expectations and not wanting them to embarrass you and, "What do I do?" And along with that, I mean, in some ways there's just so much in my heart wanting to come out, you know, and knowing from pastoral experience that many of the parenting materials are geared toward the very young ages of child-rearing, many of those are just geared toward trying to enforce external compliance upon the children so that they do exactly what you want them to do without any kind of regard to shaping their hearts. There are exceptions to that but so much of it is just focused on external matters of, you know, going back many years to material known as "Growing Kids God's Way," going back to matters of emphasizing feeding schedules and things like that, all designed to produce an outwardly compliant child as if that were the goal of parenting. It's difficult for me to restrain myself as I describe some of these things. The institution of the family is hurting, the institution of parenting is hurting and our children are hurting because of the way that God's word is so routinely violated. Take it beyond that, and I don't watch these kinds of tv shows, occasionally I see commercials that remind me of this, of just how our culture conditions us to think of fathers as buffoons and children as these brilliant people with insight, you know, and parents are portrayed as ignorant and silly and foolish, all of this so utterly contrary to what the word of God has to say about the nature of parenting, the nature of family life and its supreme position in the order of God. We need to come back to God's word and be instructed in these things.

So I'm very grateful to God to have the opportunity to speak on these things over the next several weeks. I'm probably going to take my time and violate the two messages per commandment standard that I set for this, but there are multiple multiple reasons to do

that. I'm comforted in the fact that I've heard John MacArthur say that slower is better in biblical exposition. Well, if that's the case, this is going to be really good, this is going to be really slow, and I just think that there is something that we need to do here. This isn't the first time that I've taught on parenting, you know, I've been teaching on parenting for a number of years but it is the first time that I've entered into the subject through the fifth commandment and started there and started in the course of a broader exposition rather than a topical treatment of it. Now let me say this and the last thing that I would have any of you to do, especially those of you with gray beards and gray hair, is for you to think that, "Oh, this is something that doesn't really matter to me. This is for those that are having their families now, they've got young children and all of that." Not at all the case. Where Scripture goes with this command to honor your father and mother applies to every relationship, I'll show you this over time, it applies to every relationship and every aspect of life not only for young parents and young children but for all of us who are reaching the age, you know, are reaching into that portion of maturity where our families are grown. This is broadly applicable and if you doubt that, let me just encourage you to stay with us. And also, let me encourage you, you know, in terms of Tuesday evening, you know, this is an important time in the life of our church and I really encourage you and even admonish you, I never use that word but I just did, I would admonish you to make Tuesday a priority, at least for the coming month, as we see these things coming together. The Lord has something special for us that is going to be deeply impactful for us. What we're going to see is that these materials cover every stage of life far beyond those with young children because to consider parents and children in biblical context, in the context of the Bible, takes us to every relationship in life, it takes us to the goodness of God, it takes us to the fear of God, it takes us to the blessing of God. It is difficult to imagine something that is more comprehensive in scope than what I just described.

With that context said, let me take you to Exodus 20. I want to read the fifth through the tenth commandments to set the stage here as we move into what lies ahead. Exodus 20:12, as I've already read, says,

12 Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you. 13 You shall not murder. 14 You shall not commit adultery. 15 You shall not steal. 16 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. 17 You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Now just let that sit in your mind for a moment, let it just kind of settle in there, and as we begin, let me remind you of the words of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. Keep your finger in Exodus 20 and turn over to Matthew 22. There's something really crucial for us to see here and for me to remind you of as we enter into this study. Matthew 22, beginning in verse 34, and by the way, for those of you with young families, you know, I know what lies ahead and I know that it's going to just be of immense value to you if you're here and taking it in and the Spirit of God helps us at all, this is going to be of immense value to you in setting a trajectory for your family for the years to come and it's

not going to be on silly details, it's going to be on the great principles upon which a family can be raised in any culture, at any time, by anyone that is in Christ.

So Matthew 22:34 says this, "But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, 'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?' And He said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." Jesus, in that statement, distilled down the essence of the commandments, distilled the essence of the Old Testament, the law and the prophets, he distilled it down to a single principle that everything else is designed to support and instruct us in. The goal of the commandments is love. The goal of the commandments is love. That's what the 10 Commandments are designed to teach us. I know that we're not used, before our series you were not used to thinking about them in those terms but the words of Christ giving us a divine commentary on the law, tells us that it is designed to instruct us in the nature of love. With that said, Jesus shows us that the object of our love is twofold. There are two objects to our love. Vertically, we are to love God and the commandments instruct us in that, and horizontally, the commandments instruct us in love for our neighbor. God and neighbor, the 10 Commandments define how we are to love them. Jesus' words on this could not be any more clear. Commandment and law put into issue in the question that was asked him, and he says the summary of these things is found in the principle of love.

Now there are many many places that we can go with this. I'm going to try to stay disciplined with my notes here. Go back now to Exodus 20 and as we've pointed out in the past, the first four commandments are vertical in their expression of love. They are vertical. The object of the love is God himself so that in verse 3 it says, "You shall have no other gods before Me." Verse 4, "You shall not make for yourself an idol." Verse 7, do "not take the name of the LORD your God in vain." Verse 8, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." These verses are instructing us on how God wants us to love him, how God wants us to respond to him. What is the nature of love and faith toward God? How is that expressed? It is expressed in loving him exclusively. It is expressed in loving him in the way that he has commanded. It is expressed in the way that we consider and hold his name in our hearts and use it with our lips. And it's expressed, as we saw last time over the last couple of weeks, it's expressed in coming now in the New Testament age, coming to him through the person of Christ who is our sabbath rest from all of our works. God has shown us and instructed us how he wants us to love him and this is where we start in loving him, it's in these heart attitudes that the 10 Commandments point us to. They tell us how to love God.

Now we finished those in our exposition, now we come to commandments numbers 5 through 10 and these are giving us, evidently and obviously is what I mean by that, they are giving us principles for human relationships. They are pointing us in the direction of horizontal thought and consideration. Look at it there, verse 12, "Honor your father and your mother," that's an earthly relationship. Verse 13, "You shall not murder." Verse 14,

commit adultery, shall not steal, you don't take their life, you don't take their wife, you don't take their property, and in contrast you have positive duties that we'll explore from those things later on. Don't lie to your neighbor. Don't covet things against your neighbor. All of these things, beloved, as understood in the subsequent commentary by the Lord Jesus Christ himself giving us direction in the way that we are to love the people that are in our lives and in the world around us.

Now the commentators and theologians that discuss the 10 Commandments will often talk about the two tables of the love of God. What they mean by that is the first section or the first table referring to this love for God in the first four commandments, the second table referring to the way the commandments apply to our human relationships. First and second table, both with a common purpose of love but just different objects of the love that we are to take into account. With that in mind, it is striking to see that at the head of the second table stands the fifth commandment that the primacy that God assigns to the parent/child relationship is expressed in the very structure of the 10 Commandments. He puts this first on the second table of the law and there's so many reasons for that. Let me just give you a couple. First of all, it makes perfect sense because your parents, your parents are the first relationship that you experience in life. You're born, you're handed into the arms of your mother and that becomes the first relationship that you have, and usually the father is close by right beside. This is the first experience in human relationships that a newborn baby has in its existence.

Now that's really important and so things start there, but beyond that, beyond that, beyond that chronological aspect, there is also an order in life and an order in the universe that the way that parental/child relationships are established and the way that they are structured and the way that they work themselves out becomes a driving force in the way that you and I experience every other relationship in life. You know, you first learn to relate to one another in a family environment and then that spills over as you move out into the world. So by structure in the commandment, by structure of chronology, by structure in subsequent relationships, we see the foundational place that this has in human life. The very structure of the 10 Commandments shows us that our duties to our parents shape our relationships with everyone else, and for most of us, you know, we're coming to this a little later in life. Imagine that, many of you, many of you have not had any sustained systematic teaching on the 10 Commandments and we've all suffered as a result of that, to not have this imprinted more clearly on our minds. You know, in a church that's been fascinated with entertaining people and doing all kinds of weird things and funny things and just wanting to be liked, have neglected that which is most critical and central to relating to one another in the world. Well, we're going to do our part to try to resist that and stand against that tide.

Here's the thing, beloved, very happy as I share these things with you: God has placed you in your existing relationships whether they're good or bad, evil or godly, whatever the case may be. God has placed you in your existing relationships and you need to connect that with what we're talking about here about the second table being an expression of loving our neighbor. While we talk about loving our neighbors, loving our parents, loving each other, understand that these last six commandments, this second

table is equally the word of God to us so that how you love people is ultimately a matter of your obedience to God. You can't separate the two. If God commands us to love our neighbor and we're not loving our neighbor, then we're in disobedience to God, we're not simply failing to honor our neighbor. So to sin against man is always, in one way or another, to sin against God. And you know, just to bring this into the church and just say one thing here in passing, to sin against the unity of a church, of the local church is also to sin greatly against God because Christ died to make us one, to violate that unity is to violate the very purpose of God. It's a very serious sin and so we're sobered by all of these things that we come together with. We have a vertical focus even in our horizontal relationships. There's no avoiding that. There is no denying that. We might as well embrace it and see what God would do to instruct us in this matter. Jesus says, "The goal of the commandments is love for God and love for neighbor." Here we are in the commandments, here we are with the parents and we're going to see where it goes, okay?

Now just by way of preface, this is still introduction 25 minutes into the message, let me just forewarn you, let me just tell you in advance that the fifth commandment has many implications that your evil heart naturally hates. The fifth commandment has many implications that our evil hearts naturally hate and we need to be prepared for that. This is going to cut against the grain of our natural dispositions. The Puritan, Ezekiel Hopkins, who lived from 1633 to 1690, said this in his magisterial work on the 10 Commandments, he said this and I quote, he says, "There is nothing that grates more upon the spirits of men than to be put in mind of and reproved about these duties which are of such common and daily occurrence in the whole course of our lives, yet I beseech you, lay your prejudices and affections under the authority of God's word and be persuaded to believe these things to be exceeding, weighty and momentous." He says this cuts against the grain of the natural man. This tells us how we are to relate to others. And when it's not according to our disposition, we're not going to like it. We're going to resent it and even resent the one who says these things, but what you and I need to do, we need to get beyond all of that and just come humbly, submissively to the word of God and say, "God, teach me, instruct me, shape me, mold me by Your Holy Spirit into what You would have me to be." You know, and what we're going to find is this, is that all of us have failed, all of us have sinned against this commandment, all of us have fallen short of the glory of God, and that's one of the aspects that the 10 Commandments is design by God to instruct us in. It is designed to make us despair of our own righteousness, not to congratulate us for it. It's designed to teach us that we are sinners, not that we are good. And we need that instruction. It is that kind of instruction that will humble a heart to come to Christ. The Bible says the law is our tutor in order to lead us to Christ, and it does, it teaches us, it leads us to Christ by showing us undeniably how sinful we are and how much we are in need of mercy from God if we are ever to be reconciled to him. So this is not the place and time for us to come with proud expectations about how good we are, this is a time for us to come, recognize the culture in which we live, how degraded and perverse it is, recognize that we have fallen short ourselves; it's not just that the culture has sinned against this, it's that we have ourselves; and to come and see what God would instruct us and ultimately lead us to Christ as a result of it.

So with that in mind, I have three headings for today's message. We'll see if we get to all of them. We very well may not. I have said a lot about the importance of this commandment in the introduction and it is important, I suppose, to justify biblically what I have said. So the first thing that we're going to look at is the prominence of this commandment. That's the first heading if you're taking notes: the prominence of this commandment, how much it is spoken about and referred to in the Bible itself. So one more time, let's go to Exodus 20:12 and just remind ourselves that the fifth commandment stands at the head of the second table. Look at it one more time with me.

12 Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you.

It's a positive command, unlike those that follow which says don't do this, don't murder, don't commit adultery, don't steal. This is a positive injunction that we have here, honor your father and mother. Now we have said repeatedly throughout this series and I'm going to say it several times more, that the Bible is the context of the 10 Commandments. It is the Bible, the whole Bible tells us what to think about this individual commandment. That's very very important because other passages in God's word give us – watch this – give us an inspired commentary on exactly what God meant when he gave the fifth commandment and what are the implications of the fifth commandment, so that as we search out what Scripture says about this matter, we find the fullness of what God intended us to know by this commandment. Now with that said, it is nearly shocking to see the biblical emphasis on this theme. You know, I can say that because it shocked me and, you know, I've been around the Bible a while and when I searched this out, it surprised even me to see how emphatically God's word makes a point of this commandment.

So let's just walk through some passages. I just want you to see the passages. I don't want you to take my word for what I'm saying here, I want you to see it in God's word for yourself and I will trust the Spirit of God to work in your heart to persuade you of the importance of this as we go through it all together. So one chapter over, here we go, one chapter over in Exodus 21, remember the command is honor your father and your mother. Exodus 21:17, "He who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death." The death penalty for cursing your parents in the Old Testament economy.

Look over at Leviticus 19, chapters 19 and 20. Leviticus 19. Those of you that have been following our reading plan, you're getting close to Exodus, somewhere around there, it's just another providential aspect of what I'm talking about, how the Lord is just pointing us in this direction. In a positive way in verse 2 it says, ""Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, 'You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.'" What does the holiness of God lead to? What is an implication of the holiness of God in light of the fifth commandment? Verse 3, "Every one of you shall reverence his mother and his father, and you shall keep My sabbaths; I am the LORD your God." He makes this emphatic self-disclosing revelation of himself, "I am the LORD your God." Leviticus repeatedly refers to the fact that he is the one who delivered them from Egypt.

He says, "I am the LORD your God. I am holy, therefore you shall reverence your father and your mother."

Look over at chapter 20, verse 7. Leviticus 20:7, "You shall consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy, for I am the LORD your God. You shall keep My statutes and practice them; I am the LORD who sanctifies you." I am holy. I sanctify you. What comes next? Verse 9, "If there is anyone who curses his father or his mother, he shall surely be put to death; he has cursed his father or his mother, his bloodguiltiness is upon him."

Do you see, beloved, how weighty and momentous all of this is? God states his holiness and then goes immediately into this matter that we're considering here today. It's directly linked in Scripture to the holiness of God and the violation of it in the Old Testament economy called for the death penalty. The one who violated this and cursed his father and mother was to die. How much greater emphasis could the Lord God have put on this matter than just in those simple things that we've looked at already and we've only begun? We've only begun.

Look over at the book of Deuteronomy 21. As you're turning there, we just have to slow down, we just have to slow down and let these things sink in. Deuteronomy 21:18 and following. You young people that talk back to your parents, wow. I hope that you're getting something of a perspective of what a serious crime that is against God that you're guilty of. And those of you that are adults that have unrepented sin like that in your past where you have done and spoken this way, we're getting a sense, we're getting a perspective of how God viewed all of that. Deuteronomy 21:18, "If any man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father or his mother, and when they chastise him, he will not even listen to them, then his father and mother shall seize him, and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gateway of his hometown. They shall say to the elders of his city," this is an official setting now, this is the leaders of the city that this rebellious son is being brought to. He says, "'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey us, he is a glutton and a drunkard.' Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death; so you shall remove the evil from your midst, and all Israel will hear of it and fear." This is how seriously God takes it, that that kind of sin required the death penalty with affirmation of the leaders of the city being involved.

Now this is not the law that applies to us today but don't let that cause you to underestimate the perspective that God puts on this sin, as we're going to see in just a moment. And here's what I want you to see, beloved, as we're looking at this, it's not simply that there are a number of passages that talk about the relationship between parent and children and honoring your father and mother, and the consequences of disobedience to that. Beloved, it's not just the number of citations, it's the force of it. It's that God views it like this. You know, there are other sins where God doesn't require the death penalty as you read the moral code in Exodus 20-22. You'll find other places where God doesn't require the death penalty, you know, the penalty, you know, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. You know, there was to be an equivalent punishment rendered upon the offender in those things, if you put someone's eye out, you lose one of your eyes, you break a bone, you

lost a bone, like that, but when it comes to the matter of parental authority and violating that, it goes straight to the cessation of life. You have forfeited your right to live, God says, when you respond to your parents in that way as he spoke to the nation of Israel. So it's not just the number of citations, the force of it all is compelling.

Let's look over at Romans 1 for a New Testament perspective on this. Romans 1 in that well-known passage about the wrath of God, Romans 1. You remember the context of this chapter is that it says that Paul says, "I am eager to preach the gospel to you," verses 16 and 17, and he says, "The reason I'm eager to preach to you is because," verse 18, "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness." So this is a passage about the wrath of God that leads into a presentation of justification by faith but God here speaks to his perspective on the sinfulness of man, their suppression of the truth, and the way that it plays out, that disobedience plays out in life.

Now verse 28, it says, "just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents." Disobedient to parents being listed right alongside the worst aspects of the depraved ungodly heart. Wickedness, greed, evil, murder, strife, malice, slander, haters of God, all of that lumped together with being disobedient to parents.

I think, I think God takes this seriously. I think this is a great offense against God. And it goes on in verse 31, they are "without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death," nothing has changed, nothing has changed, nothing has changed, this is worthy of the death penalty. "They not only do it, they give hearty approval to those who practice them." Look, this is frightening in light of the condition of the world in which we live. This is frightening in light of the way that families operate today. This is frightening thinking about the past sins of our youth, for some the sins of the present. This is frightening. This is an indication of the wrath of God upon us. This is an indication that it is not all okay.

Look at 2 Timothy 3 where the Scripture says, "But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come." And we're in those last days. This is the last, you know, it's the age before the return of Christ. "For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God," and on it goes. Treachery, reckless sin, conceit, lovers of pleasure not lovers of God, all of this being inextricably linked in God's word to disobedience to parents.

So we step back from this and I left a few verses out just for the sake of time, what we see here is this commandment placed at the head of the second table, this commandment

expanded on and the theme of it expanded on multiple multiple times in Scripture both Old and New Testament, and in both Old and New Testament being said that this sin of disobedience to parents is worthy of death, like I said earlier, it's not just how many texts there are, it's the force of it that gives us a sense of the heed that God would have us to give to this prominent commandment. This jumps out and causes us to stop and think about all manner of things.

Now let me just pause here for a bit of a pastoral word here that I want to say and caution parents with in what I'm about to say. First of all, later, meaning next week or the next one after that, we're going to talk in some specific detail about how this applies in practical manners to young children, teenagers, adults, you know, and moving into old age and things like that. Scripture addresses all of that. We're going to get to that eventually, we're just looking at the big picture right now. Let me also say this for those of you with children that you're trying to raise, it's very important for you to think carefully about how you handle this commandment with your children. We're here gathered in the name of Christ, we're here as adults, you know, most of us claiming to know Christ, and now having families to raise. Well, let me just remind you that your perspective on this, yes, you need to train your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord but you need to be seriously mindful and you need to be seriously mindful of influences that come that point you in a wrong direction. The fact that God views it like this does not give you as a parent a license for severity in the dealing with your children.

Your children are not there to crush into external compliance. In fact, let's look over at the book of Colossians 3 for just a moment to just remind you of this. I feel the need to lay this balancing consideration on the table lest it be taken in the wrong direction by perhaps well-meaning parents. In Colossians 3:20, we see the commandment emphasized again. You could also look at Ephesians 6, we probably will in a moment. It says, "Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord." Then it goes on to say, "Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart." In other words, parents are to hold their authority in a way that does not exasperate their children, that does not crush their spirits, that parenting is to be done in the spirit of love. Isn't that what we've said the whole context of the commandments was? This is teaching us how to love. Somehow this commandment is teaching parents how to love their children, not to control and abuse them and to crush them.

I'm really concerned that no one would misunderstand the purposes of God in this, and that we would be careful with how we carry the authority that God has given to us as parents. Listen, listen, those of you that have young children, I really want you to hear this. You're a Christian. Good, I'm glad for that, I embrace you as a brother and sister in Christ, but to say I'm a Christian is to say I am relying on the grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ, I'm relying on his shed blood to show me goodness that I don't deserve. I'm trusting God to be merciful to me in Christ because I'm a sinner, I'm guilty. Now that's the disposition, that's the heart disposition of a true Christian. Parent, mother, father, let me encourage you to think through the implications of that. Will you have that vertical disposition of relying and receiving on God's grace and then parent your children by law? By crushing them with punishment with every little slight sign of disobedience? I ask

you, where is the place of grace in your parenting? When you say you need grace for your own soul, isn't there room for grace in the way that you deal with your children as well? Man, I still need to learn this. I wish someone had told me this when we started having kids. It would have changed some of the early ways that I parented, you know?

And listen, we're going to run out of time here and that's okay. Listen, there is another aspect, there is another aspect to this and just thinking through, you know, some of the serious ways that I failed as a parent, especially when my kids were young. You know, I approached parenting by the way that my father parented me. What a dumb thing for me to do. My dad was an unsaved man and so he parented according to his unsaved heart, and that meant that sometimes he was harsh, sometimes he wasn't very loving and all of that, you know, and if there was disobedience, he would crack down. And I started out and I can remember a particular time with our oldest where she did some little silly thing that didn't matter in the scope of anything of that day, let alone in the scope of eternity, and, man, I wanted to crack down on her. She was going to learn to obey me and I'm going to thunder with the law, thunder with the belt because she will obey. After all, that's the way I had been raised. I look back on that and I'm just grieved that I approached it that way, and I'd like to think that in time I've changed some of that at least through the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit.

But the point is that you approach parenting, if you're not thinking through this carefully, you approach parenting through the prism by which you were parented. You approach parenting by the prism of the culture in which you inherited. And that may not be the biblical way to raise your children. We need to think, we need to think biblically, we need to parent biblically, and somewhere, somewhere in it if you claim to be a Christian and you want grace from God in your life and in your soul and for God to be gracious to you when you sin, then, beloved, as a matter of integrity if nothing else, there ought to be a place for grace and love and kindness in the way that you parent your children. That's pretty important. That's pretty critical.

So I have so much here to say, so much left in what I've prepared. Look, I'm on your side. I'm on your side. In everything that I've said, I'm on your side. You know, I stand up here as a forgiven sinner, I stand up here as a parent that has failed more than I would care or dare to say, and I understand that you parents, that you have failed also, and that you've failed as parents and you've failed as children, you know? What we see here is this, is that this commandment alone, this fifth commandment alone condemns and convicts us all. It shows us all that we have fallen short of the glory of God, and as a result of that, ultimately this commandment should be instructing us along the lines of reminding us as believers how much we need the Lord Jesus Christ because we would have no hope of heaven in light of the force of this commandment without him.

And along with that, it gives us a sense and it gives us a reminder of the greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ. You remember what, in fact, let's turn there in Luke 2. We speak of the fact that Jesus Christ lived a perfect life. He lived a perfect life. That means that he perfectly obeyed every aspect of God's law both externally and in his heart, and do you know, do you realize that the obedience of Christ includes his perfect obedience to the

fifth commandment in honoring his father and mother? In Luke 2, it speaks of that. In verse 52, "Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." Mary cherished the things about Christ and he lived in perfect obedience to his earthly parents. Well, you think about how much we've fallen short of that at every stage of life and we realize that's a pretty magnificent accomplishment. The Lord kept the fifth commandment and as part of his gracious gift in salvation to us, you and I who have broken this commandment and are worthy of death, in salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ we are credited with the benefit of his perfect obedience to this commandment. In Christ, God looks at us as though we had kept this commandment because Christ kept it on our behalf and that's just one aspect of the overall wonder of the perfect life of Christ and the perfection of the salvation that he's given to us, and we get a sense, we get a sense of the weighty command that we have violated and we're worthy of death, and we get a picture, we get a sense of how great the salvation, how great the deliverance of Christ is that he stepped in when you and I were worthy of death, stepped in, went to the cross, went to the grave, ascended into heaven after his resurrection, we realize that he came to deliver us from all of that and that's only one aspect of the way that we fall short.

So we'll look at these things more in the weeks to come, looking at them with a sense of anticipation of how the Lord would instruct us, looking at them with a sense of humility and a renewed sense of our need for the shed blood of Jesus Christ, and looking at them with the renewed sense especially for our young families that God is giving us a unique opportunity to set a right and godly trajectory for the way that we live and raise our families, and for the rest of us to glean from that and also to encourage these families as they seek to do so. So this is a great time for our church, this is a great time for you to renew your faithfulness to the gathering of the church, this is a great time for us to renew our faithful love to Christ in recognition of what he has done on our behalf.

Let's pray together.

Precious Lord, we all feel the sense of our sin, we're all humbled by the greatness of this commandment and the great importance that you lay on this matter to have instructed us so much in it. I pray, Father, for each one here, for those advanced in age looking back on family and with memories both good and bad, for those adults responding to adult parents, looking to their own children as well, Father, and praying so much for the young children in our midst, for the young men and women in our midst, Father, who have just fallen into patterns of defiance with their parents of hatred and sullen silence toward their parents, O God, all of the hurt that that brings, all of the anguish that that brings, all of the tension that that brings just horizontally and then all of the guilt that that brings vertically before You. O Father, forgive them for they don't know what they're doing, forgive them for their following the dictates of their own fallen heart and in such danger of Your judgment. O God, I pray as we saw beautiful young ladies leading us in singing earlier, Father, representing others like them in the congregation, we pray for each one, Father, that You would bring a spirit of conviction of sin and a spirit of repentance and a spirit of new life in Christ upon those who find themselves convicted by the word of God today. Father, this is not difficult to understand, the guilt that this brings. I pray that Your Spirit would use this in the lives of our young people greatly for

Your glory, greatly unto their salvation, greatly unto the transformation of our families, Father, and may the parents find, may You give grace to the parents as they walk their children through the gospel in the days ahead. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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