

Sermon 6-23 and 27-2010 Honoring God's Representatives - The 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment

Dear Family of God:

A boy living out West in the frontier days was asked to explain in his own words what the fourth commandment meant. He was asked what does it mean to "Honor your father and your mother..."

He thought for a moment and said: "Yesterday I guided a stranger over the mountain pass. I was barefooted and the rocks on the trail cut my feet. When the stranger saw my feet bleeding he reached into his pocket and gave me some money to buy some shoes. I gave the money to my mother because she did not have any shoes either. I think that in going barefoot, I was honoring my mother."

The 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment is the first commandment which speaks of our relationships with people. The first three commandments dealt with our relationship with God.

This commandment speaks of **respect for authority**. It speaks of honoring parents but the commandment goes well beyond respect for parents. It includes all those in authority.

Why does god start with respect for parents as the foundation of this commandment?

Our home is the basic structure of society. Homes are the blocks which comprise the structure of our society's very foundation. One who does not honor his parents will have little respect for any person or anything upon the earth.

This is also the only commandment with a promise. The person who learns to respect authority will naturally profit with a long and productive life.

The Hebrew word for Honor means **"to make heavy."** It means to place value upon someone. The Bible says Job was heavy. He wasn't overweight but he was honored by people throughout the land.

We are called upon to value the positions of authority in our lives...

I. Who are the representatives of God?

A. Home - Ephesians 6:1-2 **“Children, obey your parents in the Lord,** for this is right. Honor your father and mother which is the first commandment with a promise.”

\* A child’s view of God is greatly affected by his image of his earthly father

\* If children are going to respect authority outside the home it has to start inside the home

\* The Bible clearly speaks of the blessings of honoring parents and authority

To honor is to treat authority with respect. There is no qualification given that they are to be treated with honor only if they are honorable and with respect only if they are respectable.

When it comes to people in authority, we do not honor their sins or their weaknesses, but we honor the fact that they are God’s agents.

He who learns to honor his parents will honor all authority and God Himself!

Satan wants to destroy the family. He wants to stop the family from training children in God’s Word. He wants to disrupt families, to create quarrels, to cause chaos and to remove children from their parents’ discipline.

There are some in our world today who actively seek to pull the family apart. F. M. Esfandiary wrote in the L.A. Times in 1978 “To free the child, we must do away with parenthood.”

Our children are growing up fast. Some say too fast. The age of adolescence has continued to drop through the years. In the year 1600 the age of adolescence was 17. In the year 1900 it was 14. Today it is 13.

Maintaining the family unit is a concept distinct to Christianity.

- In the Roman empire adults were drowned in the Tiber River at age 60 when it was believed they failed to contribute physically and culturally to the good of all.
- The Persians abandoned their elderly to die
- The Eskimos placed the elderly on large pieces of ice abandoning them to the waters of the North

God is saying to His children: **I want my people to be different!**

Think how much our parents put out for us.

- Our mother going through months of pregnancy and the trauma of childbirth
- Our father toiling to provide for us through his backaches and graying hair
- Honor your father and your mother and it will go well with you...

B. Church – Hebrews 13:7 **“Remember your leaders, who spoke the Word of God to you.** Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.”

Being a leader in the church is an awesome responsibility. Leaders are “men who must give an account” before God for their faithfulness and the welfare of the members of the church.

Leaders in the church attempt to reach people with the Word through encouragement to worship, study the Bible and support the work of the Kingdom. It is not easy work. That is why the Bible says we are to pray for our church leaders.

- Pray that leaders use the Word correctly
- Pray that leaders use encouragement and patience
- Pray that leaders live lives as a model for others to follow
- Pray that leaders make decisions for the welfare of the kingdom

A young pastor was called to a church out of the Seminary in England in the late 1800's. After his first sermon to his new congregation, one of the elders went up to him and said: "Your sermon was terrible and you are not a very good preacher." The young pastor asked for prayers on his behalf. Soon the whole congregation started praying for the pastor's sermons. In time this young pastor became one of the greatest preachers in England.

C. State - I Peter 2:13-14 "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men; whether to the king as the supreme authority or to governors who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right."

Romans 13:6ff "...for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing..."

The only time we are not to obey our leaders is when they tell us to do something that is contrary to God's Word. Then we follow what it says in the Book of Acts: "We must obey God rather than man."

We honor our leaders in government as God's representatives as they work to provide order to our society that we may live in peace and safety.

II. Why do we have positions of authority?

A. God has established these positions

1. **It pleases the Lord** - Colossians 3:20 "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord." Obey – to get under the authority of your parents and listen

"Everything" as long as it is in line with God's Word

- Children do not have the maturity or information to make the right choice
- As parents we are not to allow our children to make up his or her own mind regarding faith, curfew, dating, etc.
- Proverbs 22:6 "**Train up a child in the way he should go** and when he is old he will not depart from it."

- The word “train” means “to make narrow, to set limits on options”

2. **They serve the Lord** – Romans 13:1ff “...for there is no authority except that which God has established...for he is God’s servant to do you good...it is necessary to submit to the authorities...”

B. God desires to bless us through these positions

1. For the care of our souls - Hebrews 13:17 They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. May our church leaders lead us in God’s Word, warn us of sin, encourage us and pray for us.

2. For the care of our bodies - Romans 13:3,6 “...authorities are God’s servants...”

Thank God for policemen and firemen who serve to keep us safe. Thank God for our Armed Forces who serve to protect our nation and freedom. Thank God for teachers and those in the medical profession. Pray to God for the leaders in our government that they may do what is right for our welfare.

III. How does God want us to honor His representatives?

A. By serving and obeying them

Romans 13:7 says we are to give our leaders “respect and honor”

I Thessalonians 5:12 “Now we ask you...to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord...hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work.”

B. By submitting to them - “to willingly place yourself under their authority”

When our government passes a law we obey it unless it contradicts God’s Word

When a policeman stops us we obey, when a teacher corrects us we listen, when a parent speaks we obey...

Ephesians 5:20 **Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.**

God says obey authority for your good so that your life will be one in which the Gospel works.

When we sin against this commandment – God forgives through the cross.

When we fail to keep this commandment – we look to Jesus who kept this commandment for us.

Lord, we thank you for this commandment and help us to listen and follow those you have put in authority over us for our physical and spiritual welfare.