

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series:	The Heidelberg Catechism		Pastor/Teacher
Number:	69		Gary L.W. Johnson
Text:	Colossians 3:20		
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A Pressing Duty (Part II)

39. Lord's Day

Question 104. What does God require in the fifth commandment?

Answer: That I show all honour, love and fidelity, to my father and mother, and all in authority over me, and submit myself to their good instruction and correction, with due obedience; (a) and also patiently bear with their weaknesses and infirmities, (b) since it pleases God to govern us by their hand. (c)

(a) Eph.5:22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. Eph. 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Eph. 6:2 Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) Eph. 6:3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. Eph. 6:4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Eph. 6:5 Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Col. 3:18 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Col. 3:20 Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Col. 3:21 Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged. Col. 3:22 Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: Col. 3:23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Col. 3:24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. Prov. 1:8 My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: Prov. 4:1 Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. Prov. 15:20 A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother. Prov. 20:20 Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness. Exod. 21:17 And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death. Rom. 13:1 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. 13:2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. Rom. 13:3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: Rom. 13:4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Rom. 13:5 Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. Rom. 13:6 For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Rom. 13:7 Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. (b) Prov. 23:22 Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old. Gen. 9:24 And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. Gen. 9:25 And he said,

Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. 1 Pet. 2:18 Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. (c) Eph. 6:4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Eph. 6:9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him. Col. 3:19 Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. Col. 3:20 Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Col. 3:21 Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged. Rom. 13:2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. Rom. 13:3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: Matt. 22:21 They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

We live in a society that is in upheaval; and while some claim that this is part of the march towards a better society, most people, especially Christians, see this, not as an advancement, but an erosion of the ethical foundation that holds our country together. There are many factors that have led to the present crisis, and the issues are indeed complex. "Growing individualism and narcissism, the closing of the American mind, and ignorance of the Bible have resulted in an ethical crisis, affecting even evangelical Christianity."¹ We see this *ethical crisis* in business, in medicine, in sports, certainly in politics (this field of human endeavor *always* seems to be open to ethical criticism – sometimes, like the present, it is exacerbated!). Nowhere is it more obvious than in the home. The break-up of the family signifies the demise of the society. The statistics are more than just alarming. They tell us *why* our society has turned so violent and *why* the attempts by the federal government are so futile. The Bible considers chief and fundamental relationships in the home the primary principle on which the home is based to be that of authority and obedience. "The family," writes Hoeksema, "is the beginning, the basis, the root, of all the different relationships that exist and develop in the organism of the human race. From the home develops society and all the different relationships that are implied in that term. From the home also develops the institution of the state and all the different gradations of positions of authority which there are in the state as an institution."² The family is the cornerstone of a strong society. As the family goes, so goes the society. What is the duty of children towards their parents? Our text says, "Children, obey your parents." The word translated *obey* is HUPAKOUETE. Literally, it means "to listen under (as looking up), to take heed, to obey."³ The word, therefore, imparts a humble subjection to an appointed authority. The duty of children to their parents is two fold, and in the Christian home, a strong motive is attached.

I. REVERENCE

This is clearly set forth in the fifth commandment, "honor your father and mother" (Exodus 20:12). Note the structure of the Ten Commandments. The first four address Israel's relationship to the LORD God. The remaining six set forth the principles guiding Israel's relationship with the covenant community, and more broadly, with people as people. "The fifth commandment is thus both as foundational to commandments six through ten as the first commandment is to commandments two through four."⁴ The word honor, KĀBĒD, means "heavy," in the sense of weighty or noteworthy, impressive; thus persons in positions of responsibility and authority are deserving of honor (cf. Malachi 1:6).⁵ It is interesting to note Leviticus 19:3,14 which reads "each of you must fear his mother and father." The NIV in has *respect*; the NASB has *reverence*. "Honoring parents involves several aspects. Naturally the notion of honor means that children will *take to heart* the *instruction* given by their parents. In this way they submit to the 'good instruction' of their parents, as the Heidelberg Catechism puts it (Lord's Day 39). To honor is to listen, to hear-ken (hear carefully) to their instruction. Further, to honor is to *show deference toward* parents, because they are placed over children and therefore deserve respect. This deference can be expressed in various ways. Rachel addressed

her father with the phrase 'my lord' (Gen. 31:35), and Solomon bowed down before his mother when he went to visit her, although by that time he had become king (1 Kings 2:19). Among us things are not so formal, but we may still expect children to show deference to their parents by their language and forms of address. Children must let their parents speak first, answer respectfully, be quiet when parents are speaking to them, say 'thank you' when they receive something from them, and the like. Using good manners shows respect for those relationships in which we cannot simply 'let ourselves go.' Manners are the brakes that conscience provides to slow us down in thinking only about ourselves and our own pleasure. This is why etiquette is such an important part of a moral disposition. The primary and most decisive schooling in this subject that we will receive for our entire lives happens in the home. What we learn (or fail to learn) there will have good (or bad) repercussions in other relationships across the entire range of the social order."⁶ The Hebrew word YĀRĒ is used in reference to God. The fear of God produces loyalty to God as well as moral response and devotion to His Word. Fear in this sense is respect or reverence and awakens trust. "The fear of the righteous before God's judgment of the wicked goes hand in hand with joy and understanding of what He has done."⁷ This kind of *fear* is due parents. How can children *reverence* their parents?

A. Respect in Words

How do you speak to your parents? The Bible says we should cover ourselves with humility when speaking to our parents (cf. Jeremiah 31:9; Genesis 22:7; 27:18; I Samuel 24:8). Children should heed their parents' counsel (Proverbs 4:1; 23:22).

NOTE: Children who speak disrespectfully to their parents are a grief to their parents (cf. Luke 15:29, 30; Genesis 26:35; 27:46; Proverbs 20:20). God declares such children to be disgraceful and rebellious (Leviticus 20:9; Exodus 21:17; Deuteronomy 27:16; Proverbs 30:17).

B. Respect in Conduct

Solomon the King showed respect in his conduct towards his mother (I Kings 2:19); so did Joseph (Genesis 46:29; 48:12). Note Jesus' attitude towards Mary and Joseph (Luke 2:51).

II. OBEDIENCE

Children show obedience by following the instructions of their parents as well as by seeking their counsel (Proverbs 15:20; 23:22, 24, 25; 15:20). A child has to depend on his or her parents as an infant, but older children likewise should rely on their parents' counsel. This should include *all* the major decisions of life, i.e. vocation, marriage, etc. The *extent* of this obedience is declared to be "in all things." This underscores the absoluteness of the command.

III. THE MOTIVE

The lawful obedience of children to their parents is said to be "*well-pleasing* to the Lord." The Apostle Paul used this term to designate the goal and motivation of the Christian's whole life (Romans 12:1, 2; 14:18; II Corinthians 5:9; Ephesians 5:10; Philippians 4:18). As in the observance of all God's commandments, there is an "exceeding great reward" (Psalm 19:11; Genesis 15:1), so we should also note how the Apostle states this in Ephesians 6:1 where he cites the fifth commandment and states that this "is the first commandment with a promise." This is, like all other such promises, a revelation of a general purpose of God, and makes known what will be the usual course of his providence. "The general promise," says Hodge, "is fulfilled to individuals, just so far as it shall serve for God's glory and their own good."⁸

CONCLUSION: Parents stand in the place of God with their children. Parents bear His image in their parental authority and relationship (Malachi 1:6; I Samuel 2:30). Parents deserve to be honored by their children. When the Apostle Paul unfolds the catalog of sins that describes depraved minds in Romans 1:26-32, he specifically includes "disobedience to parents" as among the most heinous of sins.

¹ W.A. VanGemen, "The Law is the Perfection of Righteousness in Jesus Christ: A Reformed Perspective" in *The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian: Five Views*, ed. W.G. Strickland.

² H. Hoeksema, *The Triple Knowledge: An Exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism III* (Reformed Free, 1972), p. 277.

³ This word, in the active imperative, denotes absolute obedience. It is the word Paul uses in reference to submission to Christ, the gospel and the apostolic teaching (cf. Romans 6:17; 10:16; Philippians 2:12; II Thessalonians 1:8, 3:14).

⁴ John Durham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Exodus* (Word, 1987), p. 290.

⁵ *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament I*, ed. R.L. Harris (Moody, 1980), p. 427.

⁶ J. Douma, *The Ten Commandments: Manual for the Christian Life* (P & R, 1996), p. 172.

⁷ *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament VI*, ed. G.J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren (Eerdmans, 1990), p. 302.

⁸ Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (rpt. Revell, n.d.), p. 359.