

The Fifth Commandment

by A.W. Pink

The Fifth Commandment requires us to honor and obey all those in authority over us, whether they be our parents, rulers, or masters.

Scripture: Genesis 48:12, Exodus 20:12, 1 Samuel 24:11, Romans 13:1-7, Ephesians 6:2-3, Colossians 3:20, 1 Timothy 5:17, Titus 2:9-10, Hebrews 13:17, 1 Peter 2:17

Topics: "Obedience to God", "Honor and Authority"

Description

A.W. Pink emphasizes the broader implications of the Fifth Commandment, which calls for honoring not only our parents but all authorities established by God. He explains that this commandment is essential for maintaining order in society and that reverence should be shown to parents, rulers, and spiritual leaders alike, regardless of their worthiness. Pink highlights the reciprocal nature of this duty, urging obedience and respect from children to parents, subjects to rulers, and servants to masters. He also notes the promise of long life associated with honoring one's parents, which serves as both a motivation and a reminder of God's blessings. Ultimately, Pink calls for a return to the divine standard of respect and submission in a world increasingly marked by insubordination.

Transcript

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

This commandment to honor parents is much broader in its scope than appears at first glance. It is not to be restricted to our literal father and mother, but is to be applied to all our superiors. "The end of the Precept is, that since the Lord God desires the preservation of the order He has appointed, the degrees of preeminence fixed by Him ought to be inviolably preserved. The sum of it therefore will be that we should reverence them whom God has exalted to any authority over us, and should render them honor, obedience, and gratitude. . . .

But as this precept is exceedingly repugnant to the depravity of human nature, whose ardent desire of exaltation will scarcely admit of subjection, it has therefore proposed as an example that kind of superiority which is naturally most amiable and least invidious, because that might the more easily mollify and incline our minds to a habit of submission" (Calvin). Lest any of our readers--in this socialistic and communistic age, when insubordination and lawlessness is the evil spirit of our day--object to this wider interpretation of

the commandment, let us ponder the following considerations.

First, "honor" belongs primarily and principally to God. Secondarily, and by derivation, it pertains also to those whom He has dignified and made nobles in His kingdom, by raising them above others and bestowing titles and dominion upon them. We ought to revere these just as surely as we do our fathers and mothers. In Scripture the word "honor" has an extensive application, as may be seen from 1 Timothy 5:17; 1 Peter 2:17, etc. Secondly, observe that the title "father" is given to kings (1 Sam. 24:11; Isa. 49:23), masters (2 Kings 5:13), and ministers of the Gospel (2 Kings 2:12; Gal. 4:19) "Wherefore it ought not be doubted that God here lays down a universal rule for our conduct, namely, that to every one whom we know to be placed in authority over us by His appointment, we should render reverence, obedience, gratitude, and all the other services in our power.

Nor does it make any difference whether they are worthy of this honor or not. For whatever be their characters, yet it is not without the appointment of the Divine providence that they have attained that station on account of which the supreme Legislator has commanded them to be honored. He has particularly enjoined reverence to our parents, who have brought us into this life" (Calvin). It scarcely needs to be said that the duty enforced here is of a reciprocal nature, those of inferiors implying a corresponding obligation on superiors; but limited space obliges us to consider here only the duties resting on subjects to their rulers.

First let us consider the duties of children to their parents. They are to love and reverence them, being fearful of offending due to the respect they bear them. A genuine filial veneration is to actuate children, so that they abstain from whatever would grieve or offend their parents. They are to be subject unto them: mark the blessed example which Christ has left (Luke 2:51). "Children obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing unto the Lord" (Col. 3:20). After David was anointed for the throne, he fulfilled his father's appointment by tending his sheep (1 Sam. 16:19).

They are to hearken to their instructions and imitate their godly practices (Prov. 6:20). Their language must ever be respectful and their gestures betoken submission. Though Joseph was so highly exalted in Egypt, he "bowed himself with his face to the ground" before his father (Gen. 48:12). And note how king Solomon honored his mother (1 Kings 2:19). As far as they are able and their parents have need, they are to provide for them in old age (1 Tim. 5:16). Secondly, let us observe our duties to rulers and magistrates whom God has set over us.

These are God's deputies and vicegerents, being invested with authority from Him: "by Me kings reign" (Prov. 8:15). God has ordained civil authority for the general good of mankind, for were it not for this men would be savage beasts preying upon one another. Did not the fear of magistrates restrain those who have cast off the fear of God, were they not afraid of temporal punishments, we should be as safe among lions and tigers as among men. Rulers are to be honored in our thoughts, regarding them as the official representatives of God upon earth (Eccl. 10:20; Rom. 13:1 ff; Acts 23:5).

They are to be revered in our speeches, supporting their office and authority, for of the wicked it is written, "they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities" (2 Pet. 2:20). We are to obey them. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well" (1 Pet. 2:13, 14). We are to render "tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour" (Rom. 13:7).

We are to pray for them (1 Tim. 2:1, 2). Thirdly, let us consider the duties of servants unto their masters. They are to obey them. "Servants obey in all things your masters according to the flesh: not with eyeservice as menpleasers, but in singleness of heart fearing God" (Col. 3:22) . They are to be diligent in duty, seeking to promote their master's interests, "showing all good fidelity" (Titus 2:10; and see Eph. 6:5-7). They are to patiently suffer their rebukes and corrections, "not answering again" (Titus 2:9).

So strictly has God enjoined them to a quiet submission to their masters that, even when a servant has given no just cause for rebuke, yet he is to silently suffer the groundless anger of his master. "Servants be subject to your masters with all fear: not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully" (1 Pet. 2:18-20). O how far have we wandered from the Divine standard! Finally, we should mention pastors and their flocks, ministers and their people, for between them also is such a relation of superiors and inferiors as brings them under the direction of this fifth commandment.

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17) . Christ has so vested his servants with authority that He declares, "He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me" (Luke 10:16) . So again, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the Word and doctrine" (1 Tim. 5:17).

This "double honour" is that of reverence and maintenance. "Let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things" (Gal. 6:6 and cf. 1 Cor. 9:11). How solemn is this warning: "But they mocked the messengers of God and despised His words and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy" (2 Chron. 36:16). To this precept is added this promise as a motive and encouragement to obedience: "That thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

First, as an Old Testament promise this is to be regarded typically of the Eternal Life promised by the Gospel, since Canaan was a figure of Heaven. Secondly, it is repeated in the New Testament (Eph. 6:2, 3 and 1 Pet. 3:10), since it is often God's way to lengthen out an obedient and holy life. Thirdly, all promises of earthly blessing, however, must necessarily imply this condition: they shall be literally fulfilled to us if this would promote our eternal happiness--otherwise they would be threatenings and not promises. In His mercy God often abridges this promise and takes His beloved home to Himself.

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