

God's Promise to Godly Children

The Ten Commandments

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Well, for those of you that are visiting, we welcome you and we would just let you know that we're in the middle of an extended series studying the 10 Commandments found in Exodus 20 and I would invite you to turn there, all of you to turn there with me as we have paused and lingered over the fifth commandment found in verse 12 of Exodus 20. Exodus 20:12, I believe this is the third message that I've done on this commandment and we have two or three more messages working out the implications of this commandment still to come, and let's just take a look at that verse for a moment and then I want to make some introductory comments.

Exodus 20:12 says,

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

There's no question about the applicability of this commandment to each one of us because all of us have parents, whether they're still living or not, many of us have children and so there is a universal application to this, to every person in the world today. And I want to just make a sense of context for you with the particular emphasis that we're giving on the fifth commandment here. It might seem a little bit unusual to spend so many messages on one particular verse but I want to give you a sense of perspective that we are part of something bigger than ourselves, we are part of something that transcends our lifetimes as we do something like this and emphasize the fifth commandment in the way that we are doing.

The Puritan, Ezekiel Hopkins, who lived in the 17th century, wrote a 442 page book on the 10 Commandments. It's one of the main resources that I am using in the midst of this series. In that 442 page book, he devoted 104 pages, nearly 25% of the book, only to the fifth commandment, nearly a quarter of the book was given to a focus on this one commandment. And we as a church, we gladly identify with that lineage, we identify with his theology, we identify with his emphasis here in the 10 Commandments and particularly with the fifth commandment. What we're doing here in the emphasis that we are giving, is merited by the biblical text primarily but there is also a historical strand in

Christianity where this kind of emphasis is given. It's that important in Scripture. It's that important to God. It's that important to you.

And you talk to people who have lived a while and talked to older people, sometimes as you get into talking about family, they can talk with regret about how they treated their own parents. I was speaking with someone not long ago who was remembering how she had fought against the one who had raised her and struck her, and I've seen this in my own family with young people striking their parents and things like this. That's a horrible violation of love, needless to say. It's a great sin against God to act in such a manner because it is such a great violation of love, it's a great violation of the order of the universe, and it is a great sin against God primarily because, as we said last week, God has given to children the very parents that he intended them to have and God intends, no matter what the failings of those parents are for children to honor their parents and to give a sense of love and devotion to them. There should not be a cold distance between a son and his father, between a daughter and her mother. This is not the way that God intended it to be and God tells children to honor their parents and, beloved, he did so with a full recognition that there would be parents who were not worthy of honor, and still placing upon the children the responsibility to respond in this way. And this is a very vital matter of human order, and particularly in the church it should be a particular matter of concern for young people to live in response to their parents in a way that honors them. And when I say young people, I don't simply mean toddler children, I'm including in that those that are in their youth and in their young adulthood, that there should be a sense of responsibility and a sense of embracing what God has commanded if you are in Christ, and to respond to your parents in that way. And as we're going to see in a moment, if you look at your life and you see that there are obvious ways where you have fallen short, Scripture gives you a pattern that you should observe and follow and ways for you to work out repentance in your life if you have dishonored your parents with sour attitudes, with spoken words against them, with separating yourself and isolating yourself from them. This is not the pattern of God and we need to come to grips with that and honor God by honoring our parents with the way that we respond to this commandment. It's that important to God and for a young person, even an older person in Christ to take a look at the way that they respond to their parents, the way they responded in the past, and to either repent of where you have fallen short or to give thanks to God because he's given you parents that you love and respect, wherever we fall on that spectrum, this is a matter that searches out each one of us in a way that no good Christian would seek to ignore.

What I want to do today as we look at this text, is I want to focus on the promise that is attached to this commandment at the end of verse 12 where God says that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you. I want to do that toward the end of the message and our prior two messages have kind of worked up to that point, but for now as we start here, I wanted to expand on the things that I said last time about honoring your parents through the stages of life, and I wanted to give you a practical guide to honoring your parents. A practical guide to honoring your parents. And for all of us to embrace this is something that I'm praying the Lord would work out in our hearts today. I'm going to give you five areas in the way in which you can honor your parents the way that you should honor your parents, and pointing to Scripture in each example

often simply by looking at examples from the biblical figures that God's inspired word has left for us, okay? So we're just going to take these five and go through them one by one rather quickly just to stimulate your thinking, just to give you a source of reflection upon that and to make it an opportunity for you to examine yourself. You see, we're not simply doing this, we are not going through this simply to acquire mental knowledge about what the commandments are and what they mean. That is the foundation of it but that is not a full response to the 10 Commandments at all. The 10 Commandments call for a response, they call for obedience, and where you have violated the commandments, they call for repentance and warn you about the consequences of not doing so.

So they're very searching. It reminds me of what the Apostle Paul said to the Corinthians, he said, "Examine yourselves to see if you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ lives within you unless indeed you fail the test." And so, beloved, I just want, you know, I'm just trying to be really candid, really transparent here and to just lay things out in the way that Scripture does for them. No one who is a true Christian would take a hard resistant attitude towards the things of which we're going to speak here today. That would not be possible because the Spirit of God – follow the logic here – the Spirit of God is the one who inspired the 10 Commandments and wrote them as well as the rest of the Bible. The Spirit of God is the one who drew you to faith in Christ if you are a Christian, and gave you new life in Christ and the new life that the Holy Spirit gives to a man, to a woman, to a boy, to a girl, is a heart that consistent in desire and affection with what the word of God expresses. It could be no other way. The Spirit wrote the word, the Spirit wrote Christ, as it were, on your heart and there should be a consistency between the two where your affections are drawn to the word of God.

So to have a hard attitude, a hard attitude, a hard attitude against one of the commandments is very troubling. It's not consistent. That doesn't compute. And to have a hard attitude in particular against parents, to have an unforgiving attitude toward your parents because of some perceived wrong that they did, maybe legitimately wrong against you, that hard attitude is inconsistent with a claim to being a Christian. My friends, that doesn't compute because, and you can think about it this way, I'm just laying groundwork here obviously to help you have your heart be open to it, however your parents may have failed you during your lifetime, beloved, is nothing compared to the way that you have broken faith with God through your own disobedience toward him. And if you claim to be a Christian, embedded in that statement is a statement that, "God has forgiven me all of my sins in the Lord Jesus Christ and I rejoice and I thank God for the fact that He has forgiven me of my sins and He has washed me and He has accepted me despite my transgressions against Him." That's central to being a Christian. Well, Scripture says that if you have been forgiven by God, therefore you must go and be willing to forgive others.

Look at Matthew 6, and sometimes we need the plow of the law of God to dig up our hearts in order to bring us to a place where the seed of Christ and forgiveness can be planted deeply in the soil. I want you to think about the context with your parents as we read Jesus' instruction in prayer. He says in verse 9, "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father

who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And," this is Jesus' model for prayer, "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." "God, forgive me and as I ask You to forgive me of my sins, I'm conscious of the fact that I'm not holding anything against anyone as I pray to You. I have forgiven those who have sinned against me." "And do not lead us into temptation," verse 13, "but deliver us from evil." Jesus goes on to say in verse 14, "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions."

And so this is very sobering the way that Christ ties together a forgiving spirit with the fact that ties together the forgiveness of our sins with having a forgiving spirit. It's not that we forgive others in order to earn God's forgiveness, rather if God has forgiven us and given us new life in Christ, that's going to condition our hearts to have a soft and forgiving attitude toward those who have forgiven us because we realize God has forgiven us of so much more, and if we have received forgiveness, how can we withhold it?

Now this is very central to the proper functioning of a family. It's very central to the proper operation of this commandment as we're going to see. So it's just so vital for us to see it. And look, I say these things to you sympathetically. I say one that has my own multitude of sins to be forgiven. I say this not having fully honored my parents as I should have. I've learned some things along the way. I've changed some things along the way. But I've not at all been the son that I should have been to my father and to my mother, and some of the hateful things that I had in my heart especially toward my dad many years ago, are things of which I am deeply deeply ashamed as I remember them here. So I'm speaking to you on a level basis here. I'm saying these things to you as one who needs forgiveness as well. I'm not here to castigate you but I am here to impress upon you the importance of what we are talking about and, you know, and we'll save for maybe next week the way that we address parents in this same context, for now, we're talking about children vertically toward their parents.

So let's look at a practical guide to honoring your parents as our first point here this morning, and the importance of these things, I trust, have been sufficiently clear to us that we don't feel like we can just brush these things off as if it's not important when the Spirit of God convicts us and brings something to our mind. This is a matter of God speaking with authority from his word to your soul. It's that important.

So how can we practically, what kinds of things practically would we look at when it comes to honoring our parents? Well, I'm going to give you five things very briefly. First of all, your speech should be full of respect and honor to your parents. The way that you speak and talk with them or speak about them should be full of respect and honor and deference. Your words toward them, your words about them should be soft and humble even if they have failed in the way that they have held their office. And for that, I just want you to turn to 1 Samuel 19 for a biblical illustration of this. 1 Samuel 19 in the first five verses. Here we see the way that Jonathan spoke to his father, Saul, when Saul was

sinning in his attitude toward David and had murderous intentions toward God's anointed subsequent king.

1 Samuel 19:1, "Now Saul told Jonathan his son and all his servants to put David to death. But Jonathan, Saul's son, greatly delighted in David. So Jonathan told David saying, 'Saul my father is seeking to put you to death. Now therefore, please be on guard in the morning, and stay in a secret place and hide yourself. I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are, and I will speak with my father about you; if I find out anything, then I will tell you.'" Then look at how he interacted with his father whose heart was full of sin as he did. Verse 4, "Then Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, 'Do not let the king sin against his servant David, since he has not sinned against you, and since his deeds have been very beneficial to you. For he took his life in his hand and struck the Philistine, and the LORD brought about a great deliverance for all Israel; you saw it and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood by putting David to death without a cause?'" Do you see what Jonathan is doing here? He's appealing to his father. This is not a harsh rebuke. He's trying to reason with his father even when his father is blinded by the sin in his own heart. And he appeals to him, and he reasons with him, and he speaks kindly to him, and he remembers and reminds Saul of things that Saul himself had said and done in the past that are consistent with the appeal that he is making to him. His speech, in other words, was full of respect and honor even though his father was acting in a dishonorable way when he did.

A soft tongue, Scripture says, can often turn away wrath, and all the more is that necessary when children are speaking to their parents whether as adult children or young parents, all the more there should be this soft tongue addressing parents even in their failures, speaking to them and watching what you say and how you say it so that it comes out in a manner that somehow one way or another is somehow recognizing their position in your life, recognizing the command of God on you as you interact with them, and letting your tongue reflect that in the way that you speak to them. Soft, humble words that even can turn away wrath, that's part of honoring your parents.

Now secondly, not only your speech should be full of respect and honor but your body language, your body language should also show respect to your parents, and for that let's just look at Genesis 48. There are some cultural differences here in what we're about to see from the way that things are done in our day and age, but nevertheless you find this. Here in Genesis 48, Joseph is the son speaking to Jacob, his father. And Joseph is a man of high position. He's the Prime Minister of Egypt with authority over all of Pharaoh's domain. And in that high position that Joseph has, he speaks to his father, Jacob, now known as Israel and you recall the story, Jacob had come to Egypt and they had sought food in their famine. Jacob thought at one point that his son was dead, he had not seen him for decades, and yet through the providence of God he's now in the presence of his son and his son is speaking to him.

Let's begin in verse 8, chapter 48 of Genesis, verse 8, "When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, 'Who are these?' Joseph said to his father, 'They are my sons, whom God has given me here.' So he said, 'Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them.'" A grandfather

asking for his grandchildren to be brought near so that he might pronounce a blessing upon them. It's a very tender moment here. Verse 10, "the eyes of Israel were so dim from age that he could not see. Then Joseph brought them close to him, and he kissed them and embraced them." He loved the family, the family love being expressed here. And Israel said to Joseph, verse 11, "I never expected to see your face, and behold, God has let me see your children as well." You almost hear the emotion vibrating in his throat, can't you, at the wonder of this moment. "Joseph, I thought you were dead and now you are with me and your children are with me too. This is far beyond anything that I could have imagined, Joseph." And what did Joseph do in verse 12? "Then Joseph took them from his knees, and bowed with his face to the ground." He honored his father in response to the words that his father had spoken to him and he physically manifested that honor by bowing down to the ground in response to what his father had said.

Now for today in our day and culture, I'm not suggesting that children need to bow down to their parents like this. I don't think that the cultural matter transfers over like that, but there is a clear principle here of honor being expressed in a bodily reaction to your parents. Joseph, let me remind you, was the Prime Minister of Egypt. People bowed down to him and gave him honor, but when it came to his father, Joseph bowed down to him and showed respect to his father. Listen, that is so much different, that is so much different from the silent, passive aggressive nature in the way that so many children respond to their parents. It is so much different from the ungodly tendency to ignore parents. So much different than the ungodly tendency to roll your eyes at your parents when they speak to you. So much different than to defy them with your words or to react physically against them. The stories that I've heard of the way that supposedly Christian children respond to their parents even in this body are just shocking to me, the things that I have heard. It should never be that way and I would not be a faithful pastor if I didn't call attention to it in this kind of context. And if you, you know, without getting into more detail than that, if you know that this is speaking and convicting you, you need to repent, my friends. You need to take this seriously and realize what a violation of God it is, what a violation of love it is by your bodily actions or by violent reactions against your parents, that you would dishonor them with the physical body that God has given to you. This is unthinkable. This is unthinkable and should never be found among people who claim to know God.

Now thirdly, and we're just kind of sweeping through these quickly trusting the Spirit of God to impress them upon our hearts where that's necessary. Thirdly, your life should manifest a pattern of obeying your parents. A pattern of obeying your parents. Let's consider another matter that involved David in 1 Samuel 16. And you know, young people, one of the things about having Christian parents when we talk about things like this, and one of the reasons that I'm kind of being so detailed in what I'm saying here, is that godly Christian parents, you know, they're not going to demand their rights from you, especially as you get older. They're not going to sit you down and threaten you or any of that. In many cases, they'll just bear it silently. They'll accept the pain. They'll accept the disrespect in graciously trying to overlook the ungodliness that you have manifested to them. They do that out of a sense of grace and concern for your soul and not demanding honor, rather waiting for you to give it voluntarily. Well, that's not a sign

of weakness on their part, that's a sign of self-control and self-restraint that they don't escalate the conflict in light of the provocation that you brought to them.

So this is just, you know, we just really need to rethink all of these things in many cases, but anyway in 1 Samuel 16:11, your life should manifest a pattern of obeying your parents. Let me just look at one verse. You remember how the prophet Samuel went to Jesse because one of Jesse's sons was going to be named king and anointed as the future king of Israel, and Jesse paraded his many sons before him and the Spirit of God told Samuel, "Not this one. Not this one. Not this one." And all of the sons that were present were gone, there weren't anymore and Samuel says, "Do you have any other sons besides this one?" And he said in verse 10 of 1 Samuel 16, of the ones he had seen, Samuel said to Jesse, "'The LORD has not chosen these.' And Samuel said to Jesse, 'Are these all the children?' And [Jesse] said, 'There remains yet the youngest, and behold, he is tending the sheep.' Then Samuel said to Jesse, 'Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here.'" David at that time in his life, had the seed in his heart, I should say, all of the skills and qualities that would make him a man after God's own heart later in his life and he'd be recognized that way. He was a man of skill and courage as was manifested in the way that he handled even his shepherding responsibilities. He was talented. He was chosen by God for great things that had yet to be revealed to him, but what I want you to see is this, is that he was humbly tending sheep, one of the lowest occupations in the time, he was humbling tending sheep when we meet him in this instance, just as his father had told him to do. In obedience, he's out in the field when this young man had a future as the greatest king of Israel and being one day the father of the line that would lead to the Messiah. That's how great he was and in humility there in obedience his father, he's out in the field tending sheep.

Let me remind you also, you don't need to turn here but what Scripture says about our greater David, the greater David in his youth. In Luke 2:51-52 it says that Jesus "went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." Look, for those, you know, for children that think they're too good to obey their parents, that they're too high and lofty to give honor to their parents, the earthly example in the human life of Jesus Christ utterly convicts and condemns you. Jesus, who was God, Jesus, who made his parents, lived in subjection to them. He honored them. He obeyed them perfectly without fail. Christ's obedience to the law was super and comprehensive, and so from his heart he never had a sinful attitude toward his father or mother, not one time. He lived in perfect subjection to them, never spoke back, never defied them, never was inappropriate with them, and you and I are going to think that we're beyond that, we're somehow better than our Lord and we can live differently to our parents than he did? The example of Jesus Christ settles the matter and the priority of honoring your parents for those who claim to know Christ.

Now look, look, if you're going to say, "But I'm not a Christian and I don't care." Well, do you know what? That's a different matter. What I'm concerned about is those claiming to know Christ, professing to be Christian, and living in such violation of what the Lord and

what the word so clearly says. That's the problem. That's the problem that we have to come to grips with as we deal with these matters.

Now fourthly. We've talked about your speech, your body language, your life, fourthly, your heart. Ultimately these things are all about the heart, aren't they? Your heart should be receptive to the guidance and instruction of your parents. Now sometimes dad, sometimes mom, they're not real good about this, sometimes they're not real faithful in their role but you still need to be mindful of what your responsibility is vertically before God in the way that you respond to them.

So in Proverbs 6, you can turn there with me, Proverbs 6:20 where Solomon said to his son, "My son, observe the commandment of your father And do not forsake the teaching of your mother; Bind them continually on your heart; Tie them around your neck. When you walk about, they will guide you; When you sleep, they will watch over you; And when you awake, they will talk to you. For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; And reproofs for discipline are the way of life." Solomon speaking to his son, Scripture speaking to us by extension says listen to what your parents say. Give your heart to them. Be submissive in attitude toward them. Be receptive to the way that they instruct you, and if you will do that, there will be blessings that follow as a result.

So Scripture speaks to our hearts and says, "Don't forsake the way that your parents have taught you." So there's this heart attitude of not simply external compliance but of an inward humility and respect that makes you receptive to what they have to say. Now as you get older, you start to grow into Christian discernment, you start to realize areas where certain things were unbiblical and, you know, and you can set aside some of those things as you grow in understanding and say, "That wasn't biblical. You know, that wasn't godly." But even as you do that, you do it with a sense of sympathy and respect that says, "Ah, it's so sad to me," speaking for myself, "so sad to me that my dad was not a believer, so sad to me that he handled his office as parent sometimes in ways that were not righteous. But do you know what? Do you know what? He wasn't a believer. He wasn't a believer and so, of course, his parenting was going to be marred by sin." And even in the recognition of your parents' faults and their sins, there can still be a humble soft attitude that looks upon them with compassion. Don't you want God to look on you with compassion for the ways that you sin and fall short of his glory? Well, then if you want that from God, surely you can give it to the ones who gave you your physical life. What we find here is just how searching the law of God is, how convicting it is, and how it covers all of life, and one of the things that we see, one of the things that we see from this and we see how far-reaching this is into every corner of this particular relationship, you know, it reminds me of Psalm 119:96 that says, "Your commandment is exceedingly broad." God's law is just so broad and so comprehensive in its searching of our hearts that, you know, that we're just humbled by it.

Finally, if you're convicted by any of these things, let me give you a final thing. We've talked about your speech, your body language, your life, your heart. Let's go to a fifth one, final one for now, your repentance. Your repentance toward them should be open and unconditional. Your repentance toward them should be open and unconditional and

for this I invite you to turn to the gospel of Luke 15 in that well-known story about the prodigal son. You know how it goes, younger son wanted to be out on his own, goes to his father, in essence says, "I wish you were dead. Give me the inheritance that belongs to me." The father gives it to him and the son goes away, squanders it all with prostitutes and feasts and loose living as Scripture describes it in verse 13. Then verse 14, "when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished." Luke 15:15, "So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him." But here we come and we see his moment of repentance. Verse 17, "But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him,'" and here's what I want you to see, he is rehearsing his repentance before he expresses it to his father. He's thinking it through and thinking through what needs to be said in light of the awful offense that his life has been against God and against his father and he says, "Here's what I'm going to say, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight,'" in other words, I have sinned against God and I've sinned against you in what I've done here. And verse 19, he embraces the consequences of that conclusion and he says what is true. He says, "I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men." "I'm not asking for anything except a drop of mercy that I don't deserve. I don't deserve to be called your son. After all of your goodness, all of your kindness and the way I responded, oh, father, forgive me! You don't have to take me as a son, I'm just asking mercy, make me a slave, make me a hired man." He says, "That's what I'll say. That's what's fitting for this occasion." He doesn't justify himself. He doesn't excuse anything that he's done. He takes full responsibility for it and says, "I'm going to say all of this and I'm just going to lay it all out." No accusation against his father. No statement about what his father had done to provoke anything in him. He takes full responsibility for his own heart and conduct and without shifting the blame to dad, he says, "This is all on me. This is all on me. That's what I'm going to say to my father when I go see him."

So in verse 20, "he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him." The father here representing the saving nature of God and how willing God is to forgive repentant sinners. So the father just runs to him and throws his arms around him and is kissing on him. But notice, notice this, that even in response to the obvious compassion that his father has upon him, he still says what he needs to say. He still expresses it.

Verse 21, "the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'" He lays it out. He speaks it honestly. He kept his prior heart commitment and said what he needed to say, and in response to that his gracious father says, "No, there is forgiveness here. Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate." But

notice that it wasn't the son who was demanding this, this was a gracious undeserved gift from the father to the son and the son for his part, was making an open unconditional statement of his own sin and came seeking forgiveness from the father that he had sinned against and all of that being a picture of the way that God receives sinners, but the underlying reality points us to the way that true repentance manifests itself. It doesn't minimize it, "Uh, you know, hey, I was kind of bad. No, I was so bad that I don't deserve to be your son." And he pronounces judgment on himself in order to seek his father's forgiveness.

Well, beloved, all of those patterns merely illustrate what the New Testament itself says about the child/parent relationship. Ephesians 6:1, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right." This is right. This is the right thing to do. This conforms with what God requires. This conforms with the way the world should operate. This is right. Colossians 3:20, "Children, be obedient to your parents in all things for this is well pleasing to the Lord." You know, if you can't, even if you can't do it for the sake of your parents, do it for the Lord's sake, do it to please him and trust him to bless you as you do that which is difficult and take responsibility for your own bad attitudes and actions.

Look, your parents are weak and sinful. Most of you know my adult children, some of which are in this room, and their dad is weak and their dad is sinful and their dad has fallen short, but the fact that the parents are weak and sinful changes nothing in terms of how you respond. Remember that the Lord loves sinners who fall short of his glory, and in Christ children can love even their imperfect parents. Children can honor even their own imperfect parents and do you know what? It has to be that way. It has to be that this can be done and should be done and must be done because do you know what? The only pool that we've got to draw upon is imperfect sinful parents who fall short of the glory of God. There aren't any perfect ones. So to hold your parents to a standard which you, yourself, cannot meet before God is not right and we all need to humble ourselves and confess our sin before God and then seek to restore some things in relationship with our parents while we still have time to do so and thus do what is well pleasing to God as we do.

So that's a practical guide to honoring your parents. I'm not even halfway through my notes. That's all right. Let's look briefly at point number 2: a promise for those honoring their parents. A promise for those honoring their parents and for this go back to Exodus 20. Unlike the other commandments, God attaches a promise to this commandment. God says, "I will do something in response to the one who honors this commandment." So he says in Exodus 20:12, "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you." Remember this was spoken to Israel at the first, and he makes a promise to that generation of Israelites, "You honor your parents and I'll extend with blessing your time in the land."

In the church age in which we live, this promise, turn to Ephesians 6:3 with me where Paul quoted the fifth commandment in support of his opening of chapter 6, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord." He quotes Exodus 20:12 in support of that and thus shows how the moral law applies in the New Testament age not just to Israel. But then he

goes on and he says, "which is the first commandment with a promise," verse 3, "so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth." And so the Apostle Paul writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, sees that the promise in the Old Testament has applicability to the New. God makes a promise to godly children about blessing that they will receive if they simply honor him by honoring their parents.

Proverbs gives us a divine commentary on this in Proverbs 3:1 and 2. You don't need to turn there, just listen as I read, this will save us a little bit of time. Proverbs 3:1-2 says, "My son, do not forget my teaching, But let your heart keep my commandments; For length of days and years of life And peace they will add to you." There is a far-reaching implication to the way that a young person responds to the fifth commandment and for those of you that are really young, you know, you're not even a teenager yet, boy, what an opportunity for you to set your life according to a pattern and principle that will bless you throughout the remainder of your life. Children who obey their parents, children who honor their parents – watch this – they are learning a principle which enables them to live under the authority of other God-ordained institutions of government, of employers, of church, even in marriage. All of those realms in biblical ethics have embedded in them a God-ordained principle of submission that is to be followed.

So the child who learns the principle of submission in the home at a young age is one who has been well prepared to live in submission to a boss, live in submission to elders, live in submission to a husband, live in submission to government. And do you know what happens? You know, I know our culture has utterly rejected this and would mock everything that I'm saying here but I don't care, just for the record, I don't care what anyone outside the church thinks about what we say here. The truth of the matter is that peace and prosperity flow from a life that is like that. Show me a young man, a young woman who lived in rebellion to their parents and I'll show you someone who lives in rebellion in other areas, who lives in rebellion to government, who fights against police, who argues against church leadership, who argues against an employer, who has difficulty in the marriage because they're so hard to live with. The greater principle sweeps through all of those areas of life. This is fundamental that God promises this blessing and security to the one who lives this way.

Look at Proverbs 4. Listen to the security that is promised to the obedient child. You know, why would you want anything else other than blessing and security from God? Proverbs 4:10, "Hear, my son, and accept my sayings And the years of your life will be many." Long life if you just live in accordance with what I say. "I have directed you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in upright paths. When you walk, your steps will not be impeded; And if you run, you will not stumble." Drop down to verse 20, "My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your sight; Keep them in the midst of your heart. For they are life to those who find them And health to all their body. Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life." Just this promise of security, of confident living, of blessing that is upon those who honor their parents. Scripture is replete with this and so we can say without fear of contradiction that obedience in the home brings blessing. Honoring your

parents brings blessing. Interacting with them in a loving gracious way brings blessing. It pleases God. Period. Full stop.

Let's think just beyond just the words printed on the page there and think about their implication. Think about what this means. Think about what this means for those who do not obey their parents, who do not honor their parents. All of a sudden that blessed promise implies a threat, implies a warning. If you don't honor your parents, you won't enjoy this kind of life. It's positive and negative. It's a promise and a warning. It will not go well for those who dishonor their parents. Listen to just three verses here. There's a lot more I could have quoted. Deuteronomy 27:16, "Cursed is he who dishonors his father or mother." A divine curse on those who do not honor their parents. Wow. That's serious. Proverbs 20:20, "He who curses his father or his mother, His lamp will go out in time of darkness." Proverbs 30:17, "7 The eye that mocks a father And scorns a mother, The ravens of the valley will pick it out, And the young eagles will eat it." That doesn't sound too good, does it?

Do you know what? If I were you, I wouldn't want to be on the wrong side of that promise. I just don't think that would go well and be good. And let's think this through, let's think this all the way through in practical life, and what guarantees that outcome, that negative outcome. It makes it certain, the providence of God, the providence of God catches disobedient children in their sin. The providence of God is arrayed against disobedience. Just think with me. Think of kids who drive recklessly in violation of laws. Think of kids who use alcohol and drugs as a way of expressing their rebellion. Think of kids who engage in promiscuity and pursue their significant other against the warnings of their parents in life and suddenly find themselves with an unintended unwanted pregnancy. Think about those who go in a different direction and pursue the LGBTQ lifestyle. Listen, beloved, it's just a matter of fact that all of those things put you in a circle of violence, of betrayal, and even suicide. What starts in a seed form in rebellion to parents manifests itself out as children grow in their capacity to do different things, rebellion against parents grows into rebellion in other areas, and rebellion in those other areas shorten your life. You can do the research on those in the transgender or homosexual lifestyles and their life expectancy is shortened by decades, by up to 20 years. That's serious. This is just the outworking in society of what God said from the beginning in his holy word.

Now brief word of qualification. Sure, there are some people who honor their parents and nevertheless die young. There are some. There are exceptions to the general rule. There are some people who rebel and live to an old age. But that's the exception to the prevailing guiding principle found in God's word. And my friend, my young person friend, I plead with you to hear me now: you will not be the exception that gets away with it. You will not be the exception, not after hearing a message like this, not after seeing it in God's word. You've been warned. God will hold you accountable. So your working prevailing assumption should be, if you don't honor your parents, your life is going to be short. And then after that, to realize that you'll face an eternal judgment in hell for your sin and rebellion not just against your parents but against the God who told you these things. This is serious.

What are we to do with all of this? Well, first of all, remember that God cases this commandment with a promise. God desires your blessing by calling these things to your account, first of all, and he simply warns you that you would take seriously so that you would be driven back into the path of obedience and honor. But a thoughtful child, a serious child, a reflective child, may realize the sad reality that, "Do you know what? I don't have the power for this. I see that this is the right thing to do but I don't have it in me to do that. I lack the power to do what I know is right." Well, welcome to good company, the Apostle Paul spoke about that in Romans 7. Part of you may want to obey but you find that you just can't do it. Well, that's part of the function of the law is to bring you to a point where you despair of your own power, you despair of your own righteousness, and you cry out to the Lord Jesus Christ and say, "Lord Jesus, save me from my sin! Save me and give me the power to live the way that You call me to live, the way that I know is right. Help me! I can't do this on my own!" Then a whole new matter of promise is brought in, in the faithfulness of Christ.

But this commandment shows us that you cannot live this life, you cannot obey the law of God in your own power, in your own flesh. We understand afresh why Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." You need to be born again to live this way. You need the indwelling Holy Spirit to empower you to live this way. And for those of you that you know you've fallen short, this has been a painful convicting message to hear, let me offer you in the same spirit of that father who ran to his prodigal son, let me offer you the words of Jesus as a closing encouragement to you. In John 5:24 he said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." Call to Christ for mercy. Ask him to give fresh life and fresh power to you. He made a blood atonement at the cross for sinners just like you and God raised him from the dead to forgive sinners just like you. May God in his infinite grace and mercy give us wisdom to process this and to respond as we go out of here in a way that would be pleasing to him and fitting for those who make a claim to godliness.

Let's pray together.

Father, we just ask You to search our hearts, bring sin to light to our minds, and then help us to repent and make appropriate amends where we've fallen short. Be gracious to those who are repentant and, Father, may the hound of heaven pursue those who have hardened their hearts in response to what has been said here today. Send us out from this place changed, chastened and forgiven, Father, in the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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