

Five!

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- [0 : 00] So, I mentioned that for various reasons it's perhaps challenging for me being here tonight, preaching on this particular passage, but in fact there's a challenge for all of us here because this is God's law, and God's law challenges us.
- In this specific passage it's telling us that there are people whom we need to obey, people whom we need to honour, and that's challenging to us for a number of reasons, partly just because of our sinful nature.
- We don't like to be told what to do, we like to do our own thing, that's the essence of sin really, but God's word is telling us no, that we're not to live like that. It's challenging to us I think also because in 21st century Western, particularly British or Scottish society, we're very independent aren't we, even compared to elsewhere say in Europe.
- We maybe don't take as much to do with our families as some societies do, we're very independent in that regard. So God's word challenges us. Well as we look at this commandment tonight, I want us to do three things.
- First of all we're going to look at ourselves in light of God's law, then secondly I want us to look at Jesus in light of God's law, and then finally we're going to return to where we started, we're going to look at ourselves again in light of what we've considered.
- [1 : 29] So first of all we look at ourselves in light of the fifth commandment. What is it specifically saying to us? Honor your father and mother.
- First of all what does it mean by father and mother? Now you're probably thinking well that's obvious isn't it? Surely he knows that much. What's your father and your mother?
- Well obviously it is speaking about our relationship to our parents, but there is a verse in the Bible elsewhere where it says give to everyone what you owe him.
- If respect then respect, if honour then honour. The idea it's a little bit like say filing things on your computer, maybe on your hard drive you have a folder, you put various things, that folder has a name, in that folder there's actually all sorts of documents, they all relate to a particular theme, but all sorts of different things.
- The commandments have been understood a little bit in that way. So each commandment is highlighting a specific issue, but it's actually standing as an example for a whole category of issues.
- [2 : 39] So for example with the fifth commandment, the specific example that's being given to us here is that we're to honour our parents, speaking about our relationship to our mothers and our fathers.
- But the Bible also says that servants are to honour your masters. In our society maybe we would think more in terms of employees.
- Elsewhere it says that citizens are to honour their rulers. Now that's not easy for us is it? Because we live in a society where we're not encouraged to honour those who have authority over us, politicians for example, in fact we're encouraged really to hold them in contempt.

You see that to a certain extent even with the debate on independence, whichever side you're on and whichever politicians are representing the different sides, sometimes the debate very much has to do with policies and principles and facts.

But often the debate descends really into very personal attacks on individuals. That's not really to do with independence and it's not honouring them.

[3 : 50] Citizens are to honour their rulers. For those of us who are Christians, the Bible says that Christians are to honour their leaders. Some of you I don't know, many of you, maybe some of you are visiting, but many of you are part of this congregation.

Sometimes you have a minister and you have elders and they have responsibility for you and you're to honour them. Now sometimes that will be easy for you to do and everything's going well, but sometimes maybe things won't be going so well.

Maybe your minister or your elder will have to come to you and say, well look, this part of your life, what you're doing just now, that's not really right.

We don't like that. And our temptation at that point is to say, well mind your own business. It's my life, not your life, but in fact there's a passage, it's in 1 Thessalonians.

Now we ask you brothers, Paul says, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. There are people who have responsibility for you at times, maybe they will need to admonish you, they all need to challenge you.

[5 : 05] That's not easy for them, it's not easy for us to receive, but when that happens you need to honour them. Sometimes perhaps in a congregation there will be a decision that has to be taken and maybe it's not a black and white decision.

Maybe it's not an obvious choice between good and bad and the session takes a particular decision and maybe you don't agree. Well how do you respond?

The Bible says that we're to honour our leaders and to obey them. The temptation very often is for us not to do that, it's not an easy thing. We're to honour all sorts of people whom God has placed over us.

Of course that goes both ways, if we are to honour them that it also means that those who have authority over us are to behave in certain ways. Derek read the passage immediately after quoting this 5th commandment, Paul goes on to say, fathers do not exasperate your children instead bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

So it goes both ways. But if there are these various people that we're to honour, what then does that actually mean? Honour your father and your mother.

[6 : 18] What has God telling us to do? Broadly speaking there are two things. It involves actions and attitudes.

To honour somebody in the first place very often it will mean to do what they say. In Ephesians chapter 6 that we read, Paul says children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right.

Honour your father and mother. To honour somebody means to obey them. Now some of you are younger maybe you're still living with your parents, my own son is here, he was looking forward to this sermon.

For children at a certain age at least it will involve obeying doing what they say. For all of us if we're in a church we have leaders who are over us at times we will need to obey them.

We do what they say. If we have a government over us we need to obey the laws of the place where we live. Now obviously there are qualifications to that.

[7 : 23] As children grow up for example there's a difference between someone who's 10 and that child's relationship to his or her parents. There's a difference between a 10 year old and a 50 year old so that changes.

Also of course there's the fact that sometimes we'll be in situations where we're not able to obey. For example Peter on one occasion he had been forbidden to preach about Jesus and what was Paul's response?

Well it wasn't to honour that, sorry Peter's response. He said judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God.

We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard. Supposing a child had parents of a different religion and they said well we don't want you being a Christian, we don't want you going to church, we don't want you to do that.

You couldn't obey that could you? Supposing the government were to command us as Christians to do things contrary to God's law but we wouldn't be able to obey that.

[8 : 29] But normally we should do what we're told to honour somebody it means to listen to them. Obey your leaders and submit to their authority it says in Hebrews.

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. To honour people means to obey them.

It has to do with our actions. But also honouring people it's more than our actions it has to do with our attitude.

Now Paul in Philippians Paul is writing to this congregation he's speaking about the way that in the past they have obeyed him and he goes on to say do everything without grumbling or arguing so that you may become blameless and pure children of God without fault and a warped and crooked generation then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life.

Do everything without grumbling and arguing. We don't know what it's like to do the opposite of that don't we? Somebody tells us to do something and we do it but we make it perfectly obvious how much we dislike doing it.

[9 : 43] We grumble and complain and talk about them behind their back. Paul will say no that's not what you're to do you're to have a different attitude than that. So for example that passage in Hebrews obey your leaders that has to do with our actions but then he goes on to say obey them so that their work will be a joy not a burden.

These leaders that you have your minister and your elders how do you conduct yourself with regard to them? Do you live in such a way that it makes their joy that makes their job to be a delight something that they like to do or do we behave in such a way that it makes their role to be burdensome?

This commandment is speaking to our actions we're to obey people but it's also speaking to our attitude. So we've looked a little bit at this commandment and we've looked at ourselves in light of this passage.

As your Creator the God who made you he has given you his law. He tells you that there are people whom he's placed over you there are people whom you're to obey people to whom you're to have a respectful attitude.

But what effect then does God's law have on us? One effect is that we realize what we're really like.

[11 : 12] When I moved to Edinburgh this past summer I was starting a new job and I had to get a photo ID. So one day first thing in the morning I get the bus in and I get off and I go through Waverly and stop the little photo booth to get my photo taken for my photo ID and I wait while it spits out the photo and then I look at it and I go, oh dear.

Is that what I look like first thing in the morning? What must I look like by the time it's the end of the day? Sometimes we're a bit taken aback when we see ourselves as we really are.

That's the effect that God's law should have upon us because we like to think well I'm basically a good person aren't I? Occasionally mess up a bit but basically good but as we come to God's law as we meditate on it and as I think well right what kind of son have I been?

And more than that because this applies actually to what kind of father I've been. What kind of father have I been? How have I treated those in the church who have authority over me?

What kind of employee have I been? I haven't been basically a good person half-eyed. That's not what my heart is like. And with all of these commandments it should be challenging to us.

[12 : 32] And part of the reason that we know that is if we go back to Exodus chapter 20 what was the people's response when they received the law?

Did they think oh that's just what I'm like. I'm such a good person. When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain smoke they trembled with fear.

They stayed at a distance and said to Moses speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die.

When God's people experienced the holiness of God as it was revealed to them through the commandments and through that experience of God it had a profoundly humbling effect on them and it made them cry out for a mediator.

Somebody to go between them and God. And so I want us to think tonight not only of ourselves in light of God's law but I want us also to think about Jesus in light of God's law.

[13 : 36] On one occasion Paul tells us that just exactly the right moment God sent his son born of a woman born under the law.

Jesus came under the law. Jesus's earthly life was shaped by God's law. So when we think of the law we shouldn't think just of ourselves and the extent to which we have or haven't kept it.

We should also think about Jesus. Because in the law in a sense we find a portrait of Jesus. Because he did live this way.

So what about the fifth commandment then? What reason is there to think that Jesus did this? Apart from the general principle that Jesus didn't sin. But two passages that come to mind.

The Bible doesn't have an awful lot to say about Jesus's relationship to his physical parents. But for example in Luke chapter 2 some of you will be familiar with the passage Jesus and his family had traveled to Jerusalem for one of the festivals they had left.

[14 : 46] Jesus had stayed behind. And when they realized that he was missing they were panicking they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. And after three days of search and they found him in the temple courts sitting among the teachers listening to them and asking them questions.

Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished. His mother said to him son why have you treated us like this?

Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you. Why were you searching for me? He asked. Didn't you know I had to be in my father's house?

They did not understand what he was saying to them. Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart.

Now a couple of things stand out in that passage. Maybe most of all Jesus is questioned to them. Didn't you know that I had to be in my father's house? We'll come back to that in a moment.

[15 : 49] But also think of Mary standing there. Now Mary maybe understood a lot but maybe she didn't have quite as clear a picture of who Jesus is and what he was doing as we do.

But she was seeing all of this and hearing all of this and she was treasured in it in her heart wondering what all of this meant. But here in verse 51 we read that Jesus went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them.

Jesus honored his father and mother. And that's really remarkable isn't it? His children always think that they know better than their parents.

Sometimes maybe they do but they always think that they do. Well with Jesus it was always the case. You know Jesus always knew better than Joseph and Mary.

And we see them coming to Jesus and in a sense telling him off. Why have you done this Jesus? But notice that Jesus is very respectful to them. In fact it's emphasized that he went home and he was obedient to them.

[16 : 58] If Jesus, given who he was, if Jesus honored his mother and father. And how much more should we? So there's one episode at the beginning of Jesus's life.

There's another episode at the end of Jesus's life. We read it's in John chapter 19.

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopus and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there in the disciple whom he loved standing nearby he said to his mother, Dear woman, here is your son.

And to the disciple, here is your mother. From that time on this disciple took her into his home. Now a couple of things to understand here, Mary at this point apparently had been widowed.

We're not explicitly told but it would appear that Joseph had died. Jesus was the eldest son. He had been responsible for looking after her. He wasn't going to be there anymore.

[18 : 07] So Jesus looked and there was John, the disciple whom Jesus loved. It's usually understood to be the apostle John. There was John and Jesus entrusts Mary to John.

Jesus was making provision for his mother when he wouldn't be there. Now the astonishing thing about that is Jesus was dying.

Jesus was actually on the cross dying and he saw Mary there and he was concerned about her and he made sure that there was going to be somebody who would look after her.

Maybe that's not so astonishing actually when you think of what Jesus, the whole reason Jesus was doing that was because of his love and his concern for us. So perhaps it shouldn't be so surprising to us.

But there was Jesus looking at Mary in a sense honoring his mother. Obviously the relationship had changed. He wasn't a young boy was he? He was an adult.

[19 : 05] But Jesus was looking out for her. This is relationship with his human parents, Joseph and Mary, was the very embodiment of the fifth commandment.

That wasn't his only parental relationship, was it, if you will? Do you remember that cryptic statement that Jesus made to Mary when they found him in the temple?

Didn't you know that I had to be where? In whose house? His father's house. It wasn't Joseph's house.

It was God the father. Now Jesus very often called God his father. He identified himself as the son of God.

When we speak about Jesus as the son of God it is very complex. At the very least, it does actually mean much more than this, but at the very least it means for example Adam was described as the son of God.

[20 : 08] Later on in the Old Testament we read that Israel was described as the son of God. Later still God said to King David, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you.

I will be his father and he will be my son. The descendant of David, the heir to the throne, in a sense he was called God's son, so Solomon for example.

When we say that Jesus is the son of God it means at least that much. Means more than that, but it means at least that much. He was the son like Adam was the son of God, like Israel was the son of God, like Solomon was the son of God.

But there was a difference. Adam was supposed to be, but he failed. He dishonored his heavenly father and he was expelled from the garden.

Ancient Israel was to be God's son, but they failed. They dishonored their heavenly father and they were sent into exile. Solomon was to be God's son, but in a sense he failed.

[21 : 13] He dishonored his heavenly father. The kingdom in part was taken away from him. Jesus didn't fail.

For Adam and Israel and Solomon, and you and I for that matter, where we have failed to honour our fathers and mothers, where we failed to honour our heavenly father, Jesus has succeeded.

In John chapter 8 there's a passage where Jesus is in debate with his enemies. They're trying to trip him up. At one point they accuse him of being demon possessed. Jesus says, I'm not demon possessed.

I have honoured my father. It's virtually a quotation of the fifth commandment. And that's all the more astonishing when you think of what it meant for Jesus to honour his heavenly father.

Later in John's Gospel Jesus says that the reason my father loves me is that I lay down my life only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.

[22 : 22] I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my father.

For me to have obeyed, to have honoured my parents apart from my sin, it would have been an easy thing. For Jesus to honour his father, it wasn't an easy thing in a sense, was it?

Jesus was obedient even to the point of death on a cross. And yet he did that. Now this is the really important thing. Why did Jesus do that?

Did Jesus obey the law so he could set a good example that we could follow his example? There's some truth in that. But there's more than that.

Remember the passage that I quoted earlier when Paul said that God did just the right time he sent his son, born of a woman, born under the law.

[23 : 20] How does it conclude? To redeem those who are under the law. Jesus' life was shaped by God's law.

It was shaped by obedience to the Father's will. And why did he do that? The reason that he did that was for us.

Because we haven't lived the sort of life that we should have done. When we come to God's law, it's a little bit like that experience of me staring at that photo of myself at seven o'clock in the morning.

We have a bit of a reality check. When we come to God's law, it shows us who we really are in a much profounder sense. It shows us our hearts.

And we ought to be like the Israelites crying out for a mediator. Jesus is that mediator. That's why he came. That's why he was born under the law to redeem those who are under the law.

[24 : 24] As we come to God's law, we see our need for Jesus. Now think of Jesus as we encounter him in the Gospels.

Did Jesus ever say to somebody who came up to him, no, go away from me. You're too sinful. Did Jesus ever say to Peter, well, no, honestly, Peter, you've had too many shots.

You know, that's it. I'm not having anything more to do with you. Jesus never said that to Peter. And he'll never say that to you.

When you become aware of your sinfulness, you can know that you can go to Jesus and that He will receive you and that He will forgive you. And have you done that?

A lot of you I know. A lot of you I don't know. Have you experienced Jesus in that way? If you think of the Psalm that we were singing, the great promise that it makes Psalm 32, that if we turn to God, that if we confess our sins, that He'll forgive us.

[25 : 32] Have you made that your song, apart from just singing it in portion? Do you know Jesus in that way? He calls you to come to Him.

So we've looked at ourselves in the height of God's law. We see what God's law is calling us to do. There are these people whom God has placed over us. We're to seek to honour them.

It involves our actions and our attitude. We've looked at Jesus in the height of God's law. Then finally, I want to come back to ourselves again.

You see, we mustn't ever say, well, Jesus has kept the law, so I don't have to. We mustn't ever say, well, it doesn't really matter if I sin because Jesus will forgive me.

That's what He does. Jesus does forgive everyone who comes humbly to Him, but we mustn't use that as an example. It's an excuse for sinning.

[26 : 33] If we are thinking like that, we would have to ask, well, have I really come to know Him? Because if we have come to know Jesus, if we have come to feel how terrible our predicament is, if we've come to realise how much Jesus loves us, He would do that for me, even though I don't deserve it at all.

If we've come to appreciate that, then the question that we should be asking is, what can I do to show Him how grateful I am?

You know if someone does you a huge favour, well, then what do you do? You start thinking what you can do for them, how you can show how grateful you are.

How much more so with Jesus? If we've come to experience His grace, we should be asking, what can I do then to show Him how grateful I am?

And the answer in part is honour your father and mother. Don't commit adultery. Don't murder.

[27 : 40] Don't bear false witness. Don't covet. That is, if we want to show our gratitude to Jesus, then we seek to live according to His law.

We look at ourselves in light of God's law. Through God's law, we become conscious of sin. One experience that the law will have is to reveal to us our need of a Saviour.

We've looked tonight at Jesus in light of God's law. Jesus lived a perfect life. He was obedient even to the point of death and a cross, and He did that so that He can be your Saviour, so that He can forgive you.

Even when we come back to ourselves again, what does that mean for us? That means in Him we find forgiveness. It means we flee to Him. But it also means that as we seek to live our lives in gratitude, that we should seek to live lives that are shaped by God's law, that we should seek in that sense to follow His example.

We'll bow our heads now as we pray. Our Father in heaven, we rejoice for your goodness to us.

[28 : 56] We come humbly before you. We think of the experience of the Israelites there at Mount Sinai as how your glory was revealed to them and your holiness through your law, and they trembled.

Forgive us for how often we treat you as a trifling thing. You pray, Father, that you would impress upon us a sense of your majesty and your holiness.

Enable us to see ourselves as we truly are, as those who have not kept your law, as those who are unholy.

And in light of that, Father, we pray that you would cause Jesus to be precious to us. We confess how often we take the gospel for granted as we consider that you should send your eternal Son into this world to be our Savior, that He should endure all of the miseries and hardships of this world, that He should endure the taunt and ridicule of His enemies, that He should be obedient even to the point of death, and that indeed that He should endure the wrath of God that our sins deserve.

May we tremble even, Father, at that. But we ask too that we would rejoice. May we hear the voice of Jesus calling to each one of us, that we would turn from our sin to you, coming humbly confessing our sins.

[30 : 36] And we ask, Father, that you would be at work within us by your Holy Spirit. As we consider all that you have done for us, we pray, Father, that you would bless us, and that you would enable us to offer to you all of our lives.

As we experience your grace, and as we come to know the Lord Jesus as our Savior, enable us, Father, to follow after Him. We ask that you would take your law and that you would write it upon our hearts.

As we go out from here, we pray that you would bless us in our relationships. Bless us in our families, with parents and children, husbands and wives.

We pray that you would bless us as your church be with this congregation, with those whom you have given as leaders. We ask that you would bless every person here, that you would bless their relationships.

And we ask, Father, that even in a sinful and depraved world as we cling to the words of eternal life, we pray, Father, that that might be a witness to those around us.

[31 : 39] That they would see our lives as imperfect as they are, but nevertheless, that they would see that there is something different about them. And we pray, Father, that you would be pleased even to use our witness, even in our daily lives, to lead people to your Son.

We pray, Father, for this congregation we rejoice in the evident way, the clear way, that you are at work here. We ask that that would continue.

We pray, Father, that you would bless this congregation, bless all of your people throughout this city. We pray, Father, that you would watch over each one of us now as we go from here.

Hear all our prayers and forgive our sins, for we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.