

Our Fathers and Our Mothers: The Fifth Commandment Romans 13:1

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The Fifth Commandment reads:

Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

Q04: What does God require in the fifth Commandment?

A104: That I show all honor, love and faithfulness to my father and mother, and to all in authority over me, submit myself with due obedience to all their good instruction and correction, and also bear patiently with their infirmities, since it is God's will to govern us by their hand.

Some Scripture:

1 Timothy 5:1 Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren;

1 Thessalonians 2:11 As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children,

Ephesians 6:2 Honor thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)

Exodus 21:15 And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death.

Exodus 21:17 And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death.

Deut. 21:18-21 If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear.

Deuteronomy 27:16 Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen.

Proverbs 6:20 My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother:

Proverbs 10:1 The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.

Proverbs 15:20 A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man

despiseth his mother.

Proverbs 17:21 He that begetteth a fool doeth it to his sorrow: and the father of a fool hath no joy.

Proverbs 19:26 He that wasteth his father, and chaseth away his mother, is a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach.

Proverbs 20:20 Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.

Proverbs 27:10 Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not; neither go into thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity: for better is a neighbor that is near than a brother far off.

Proverbs 28:24 Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, It is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer.

Proverbs 30:17 The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.\

I. The general power of human authority is set forth very clearly in the passage we read a few minutes ago in Romans 13.

a. There is no power but of God and all authority comes from Him. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring order into our lives. Just as He moved upon the face of the waters in creation and brought differentiation and order into Creation, so it is He who brings order into the lives of nations, and order is one of the great gifts of God to nations.

b. The Holy Spirit is spirit of both the Father and the Son in the Holy Trinity is is therefore the author of what we would call nature and what we would call grace. Because both come from God, it cannot be that there could be set in true opposition to each other. When the Pharisees asked Christ whether it was proper to pay tribute to Caesar, His reply was "Give Caesar the things that are Caesar's and give God the things that are God's." The things that bear the image of Caesar belong to Caesar, and the things that bear the image of God belong to God.

c. In this, everything thing that is called "father" has its origin in God, according to what we saw several weeks ago concerning God in Ephesians 3:

14. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15. Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

16. That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

d. When God promised Noah that he would no longer destroy the world by flood, He divided the nations according to families and tribes, and patriarchs rules those families, and the origin the governments of human kingdoms and nations were the fathers of those tribes. This came to be known in a figurative sense, where leaders are called fathers, such as George Washington is called the Father of our nation. Recognizing this, every king goes to great pains to establish the authority of its

rule.

e. The same thing was in the OT church, when it was established by Moses. The leaders of the nation were the old men, the elders of the tribes. Even the priests were descended from one man, Aaron.

f. When Christ came, He promised the rule of the Spirit and not of the flesh. In the New Testament, however, the elders of the churches were not heads of tribes, for the church was not patriarchal primarily, but elders were gifted men, so the term became used figuratively, although usually men were chosen for the age and gravity. It is certainly true that the heads of families are very often gifted men who are qualified to be elders in the church, and it is true that the family remains the ordinary way that men learn the principles of government so that they may be wise to rule in the church, but even unmarried men and young men may be qualified to be elders, and many outstanding leaders of the church have been such. We think of the Apostle Paul and in more recent times G. Gresham Machen. Even Calvin was unmarried when he undertook the reformation of Geneva, and he was known as an outsider and a “Frenchman” during much of his time there.

g. It took a long struggle for the church to free itself from tribal rule. One of the great issues in the Middle Ages was the authority of the Pope. One of the major reasons for the wickedness and immorality of the Popes, was that they were always chosen by the leaders of the families of Rome, who often used bribes, coercion, and even murder, to have their own family members elected pope by the “fathers” of the city of Rome. Nicholas the II was the first to institute reform and have the popes elected by the bishops of the church. The reformation did away with the pope, but returned to the New Testament practice of electing elders who were gifted by the Holy Spirit and not simply the heads of families. The leadership was to be spiritual in the church, not tribal.

h. The reformation also delivered nations from tribalism, for the leaders of the state were to be chosen by the free vote of the people, so that gifted and qualified men might be chosen, irrespective of their tribal affiliations. In the New Covenant, the people were to be ruled by the Spirit, not by the flesh. This was to be true in both the state and the church.

i. It then became a derived principle of the reformation doctrine, that if rulers were to rule in the fear of God for the welfare and benefit of the people, the people would have the right to change those rulers, and had the divine right to do so. If the people had the right to choose their secular and spiritual “fathers” so to speak, then they would have the right to remove them. Hence, the governments of both church and state had provisions for the peaceful removal of leaders, in order to protect the rights of the people. This followed from the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer, which priesthood was the great engine of liberty and freedom that dominated western civilization. In order to avoid bloodshed and

revolution, peaceful means were written into the charters and constitutions, and this is biblical and righteous.

II. The doctrine of the catechism is very well established in Scripture.

- a. That I show all honor, love and faithfulness to my father and mother, and to all in authority over me,
- b. Submit myself with due obedience to all their good instruction and correction,
- c. Also bear patiently with their infirmities,
- d. Since it is God's will to govern us by their hand.

III. Lessons:

- a. To those who have authority.
 - i. Fathers and Mothers are to rule in the fear of God. Fathers are to provide and be in charge. Mothers have real authority and are to be loved, respected, and listened to. God made both mothers and fathers.
 - ii. Those in authority in the church may not go beyond the rule of Christ. Authority is collective, in the plurality of elders and deacons, although individual authority may be granted. The duties of elders, deacons, and pastors are clearly spelled out in the constitutions of our church.
 - iii. Those in authority must fulfill all of the duties that are commanded of Christ and spelled out in our constitutions, so that the church may be well tended.
 - iv. The same thing can be said of the state. Rulers are not to do as they please, but are under the rule of the constitutions and laws of the state. They also must fulfill the duties given to them by law, and may be removed if they are derelict in their duties and responsibilities.
- b. To those who are under authority.
 - i. We are to obey and not add to the burdens of those who have responsibility to rule well. Children, do not make the task of your parents harder, but make it easier. Help, don't hinder.
 - ii. Love must rule: "Owe no man anything, but to love one another." This is said in the context of government. Not only fathers and mothers for their children, but children for their fathers and their mothers. Between elders, deacons, and members; between magistrates and citizens. Respect and honor must flow both ways. Remember, that we are all to be the people of God, and are to esteem each man, woman, boy, and girl, as the image of God who has responsibilities to each other and to God.
 - iii. Abuses of authority are to be dealt with in a proper and godly way—by reformation and not revolution. If a child in the church is abused by a parent, the elders of the church have a duty and responsibility to intervene, even to delivering the offender to the secular power for trial and punishment. An abused woman has the same rights. If elders are guilty of crimes against their people, the state may lawfully and biblically intervene. We also have legitimate ways of protesting the actions of lawless men in office in the state. It is right that the people hold such accountable.

There is so much more that could be said, but it is enough to say what the catechism says. Human government is the gift of God. In a sinful world, nothing human is perfect, but the biblical doctrine makes civilization and culture possible, and raises the standard for all of us. May God bless you.