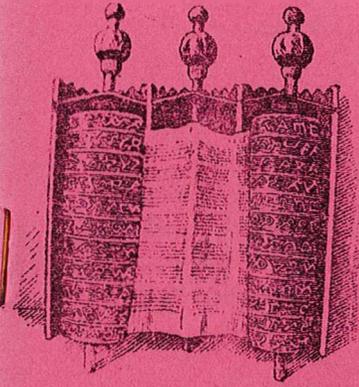


LOVING

YOUR

NEIGHBOUR



WHY BLAME PARENTS?"

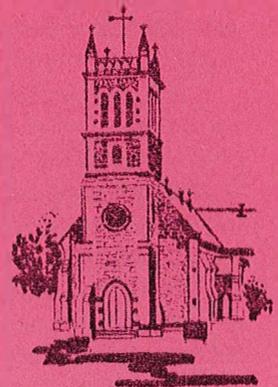
COMMANDMENT V

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

by

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COMMANDMENT V .. "WHY BLAME PARENTS?"

The Reverend Ian Cox

Many books have been written for parents on how to bring up their teenage children: "Troubled Years", "Dare to Discipline", "Living with Teenagers", to name a few in our Library. There are a few with a different slant written for teenagers: "How to Bring Up Parents" being one of them.

There is a question which many parents must be asking: "Are parents really to blame for the problems of youth today?" Parents are continually discouraged because they are told that it is all their fault.

The former Customs Minister, Don Chipp, has said that parents are to blame for failing to keep their family together, and has blamed the collapse of the family unit for a massive swing to drugs by teenagers. Some psychologists, doctors and youth advisers, when giving advice to troubled parents, tell them, "Give your children what they want - anything. Your children have their rights, you know. It is your duty to give things to your children." Is this the answer? Are these counsellors giving incorrect advice, or are the parents to blame?

The Fifth Commandment does not say that parents are to blame. "Honour your father and mother", says this Commandment. This has been called the Children's Commandment. In the plan of the Ten Commandments it fits into the group commonly called "our duty to God". Honouring our parents is actually our duty to God. It is also interesting that this Commandment becomes the basis of all relationships in the remaining five Commandments.

Honouring parents has nothing to do with the fact that they are Christians or not. To honour our parents is the command of God. It is not an idle command. It occurs more than once in the Bible. It is repeated in Leviticus 19:3 and Deuteronomy 5:16. Jesus draws our attention to it in Matthew 15:4 and Mark 7:10. It is reinforced by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians and Colossians. The whole idea of father-

hood or parenthood, family life, etc., is based upon God. So this Commandment is not just a nice idea for the continuation of the human race, but it is God's command to uphold His delegation and authority, and so obtain His blessing. So God commands, "Honour your father and your mother."

What does 'honour' mean? Originally it meant to fix the value or price of an object or person. The word was used of Jesus Christ in Matthew 27:9, where Judas and the Jewish religious leaders fixed the price of Jesus as 30 shekels of silver. These people had their values wrong: 30 shekels of silver was an insult, not an honour. Many children today have their values wrong about their parents, too. When I talk about children, I don't just mean those who are between the ages of 5 and 15. I include those between 15 and 50 as well. Many children speak of their parents as 'the old man' or 'the old woman'. Surely that is not respect or honour? There are many children who neglect their elderly parents because they are always talking about the past, or they feel they are hopeless and helpless. In taking this attitude they show that their values are wrong.

To honour someone is to set a high price upon them. A husband has his values right about his wife when she is precious to him. A Christian has his values right about God when he has felt God's love in his life, forgiveness and the blessings of being a child of God.

Those people who are precious to us are the ones we honour - God, husband, wife, children or parents. To these we honour by obeying, trusting, respecting and pleasing them.

So the Scriptures command us in relation to our parents, that as children we should honour them. Not only as a proper duty, but rather for love's sake as a positive delight, as a grateful expression of conscious debt, genuine admiration and a deep appreciative regard.

"Our youth now love luxury; they have bad manners, a contempt for authority, disrespect for older people. Children nowadays are tyrants; they no longer rise when their elders enter the room; they contradict their parents, chatter

in front of company, gobble their food and tyrannise their teachers." So Plato wrote in the 4th Century B.C. The problem of children not honouring their parents is not new. It is an age-old problem.

The ancient world set the duty to parents as a very high one. The oldest Greek laws deprived a man of his citizenship rights if he struck one of his parents. In Roman law to strike your father was as bad as murder, and the Jewish law not only commanded children to honour their parents in the Fifth Commandment, but also commanded death if a person cursed his parents (Leviticus 20:9). It is the sign of a supremely decadent civilization when youth loses all respect for age and fails to recognise the unpayable debt and the basic duty it owes to those who gave it life.

Jesus also denounced the proud pharisees who neglected their parents, not giving them money and service. The Apostle Paul saw the same problems of children not honouring their parents in his day. Writing his second Letter to Timothy he says, "But understand this; that in the last days there will come times of stress for men will be lovers of self disobedient to their parents. They have rejected God's command."

Paul goes on with a list of evils that follow on this disobedience. First of all they are ungrateful and are so intent on pleasure that they won't even thank those who gave them life. This attitude is echoed today by young people who say, "I didn't ask to be born". Paul continues, "They are unholy and inhuman". The Greek word for 'inhuman', 'astorge', means 'having no natural affection for the family'.

The child denounces family ties and cuts itself off from its parents. It is unnatural, unchristian and unholy. A child in its selfish quest for pleasures of life will refuse to acknowledge even the basic duties upon which life is built. This is what happens when children do not obey the Fifth Commandment. This is what happens when they fail to honour their parents.

There must be many people in this city who are

living in this unnatural way. Cut off from their family; children not speaking to parents, parents not speaking to children. Maybe there is a child or parent in this congregation living in this intolerable and unnatural situation. Jesus told the parable of the Prodigal Son, of the father who was ready to welcome his son home; the son who had wasted away his life. Jesus spoke of the Father who is ready to forgive, who is ready to put a new spirit into the lives of people who have messed up their lives; who realise they have broken God's Commandment. Jesus promises a new start for those people. If you are ready to admit that you have been wrong in disobeying God's Command, then there is a friend and a Saviour waiting for you. If you are a parent, then there is strength and forgiveness so that you may receive your child back into the family and once again be under the blessing and obedience of God's Commandment.

God commands us to honour our parents, and with that command there is a promise: "Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you."

In Ephesians 6:1-3 this is repeated by Paul with an addition from Deuteronomy. Paul combines the Exodus Commandment with the Commandment from Deuteronomy, so we have 'that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth'.

For the child who honours his parents there are two promises:

"that it may go well with you", which is an immediate blessing which God is willing to bestow upon you; and a blessing for the future:

"that you may live long on the earth". This does not mean that if you obey your parents you will be sure to live a long life, but where there is respect and obedience of children for their parents, then that family, tribe or nation will be made strong and enduring. This principle has been illustrated in the history of both the Jewish and Chinese races. Both these races have long held the high principles of

family unity and obedience.

Christian parents and children can be assured, then, that where this Commandment is kept, God will use that family to work His purposes out.

Home life is the area where the Spirit of God should first be applied. Home life should be the place where children are brought up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. In this two-way relationship between parent and child the home life is based on a God-given pattern in a prayer we know so well - the Lord's Prayer, which is a prayer of a child praying to his or her Heavenly Father, but also is the relationship of parents to their children and children to their parents. In a Christian home, on the basis of this prayer, the father's name is honoured, his will is done. In this home the parents provide support and protection, both physically and morally, for their children.

In such a home children will learn respect and obedience to God, to their parents - honour and obedience - and will have a proper regard for public authority in city and state.

PRAYER

O GOD, the Father of all the families of the earth, write into our hearts the true knowledge of this Commandment.

Give us grace to faithfully honour and obey our parents, that we may always be ready to honour and obey You; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN.

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