

Law of Love 5

by Vernon Higham

The sermon explores the commandment to honor one's parents, emphasizing the role of grace and the heart in fulfilling this duty amidst various challenges.

Duration: 32:30

Scripture: Exodus 20:7-8, Exodus 20:12, Matthew 22:37-39, John 4:23-24, Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, Ephesians 6:3

Topics: "Love"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of the Ten Commandments in our lives. He emphasizes that in today's unruly age, where there is a lack of respect for authority, the commandments serve as a guide for living a righteous life. The speaker explains that the commandments initially condemn us and show us our sins, but through Jesus Christ, we can find forgiveness and fulfillment of the commandments. Jesus fulfills the commandments and pays the penalty for our brokenness, offering us grace and the opportunity to live according to God's will.

Transcript

We're still looking at the Ten Commandments, and now we come to the second part where the commandments apply to human relationships. And now we're in Exodus 20 and verse 12. Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. I may just remind you of the Ten Commandments, that their first role is to condemn us and to show us our size. And so we preach the law of God with the intention of showing us our need.

That is the first purpose of the Ten Commandments, and that we have fallen short of the glory of God. And that we recognise that the penalty of falling short of the glory of God, his commandments, is the second death, the wages of sin is death. Then the gospel is this, if I may just put it briefly to remind us of the background here, is Jesus Christ himself, the Son of God, who does something that we fail to do.

He fulfils the Ten Commandments, and he does that for you and for me. And then he pays the penalty for our broken commandments, he does that for you and for me. And when we come to a state of grace, where the grace of God, by grace I say through faith and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God, when the grace of God approaches our hearts and we are given the gift of faith whereby we are able to believe, then God's grace is in our hearts.

And then he writes his law, remember the verses in Hebrews, in our hearts, and the evidence that God's grace is in our hearts is now the way we respond in our lives by fulfilling the Ten Commandments. Now, this doesn't mean to say that we shall make a tremendous success always, but it does mean that there must be effort there, work out your own salvation in fear and trembling, yet it is God who both worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure. Yet there must be a real effort in our parts and grace given by God and resources given that we might live now the law of God.

So the Ten Commandments have a new role. First of all, they condemned us and Christ fulfilled the law for us and Jesus Christ paid the penalty on the cross for our failure. Then the grace of God enters our hearts.

Then the law of God, which is a law of love, remember, love God, love your neighbour, we are now given grace to fulfill that law. And so we look at the Ten Commandments through the eyes of Christ, the eyes of grace and the heart of grace, and a new ability. In one way, we could put it like this.

Last week we were talking about the Sabbath and the keeping of the Sabbath. It is the only commandment of the love of God where he asks us to give an outward expression of all the others being subjective, or mostly so anyway, that he only is our God, we worship him in spirit and truth, and also that we honour his name, although that also can be outwardly, but mainly it is inwardly. Then we have the outward expression where we keep the Sabbath, and it is a very important thing to do.

We preach a sermon, as Spurgeon put it, even as we walk to church with our Bibles, that we keep the Sabbath and we keep it holy and wholly, w-h-o-l-l-y, holy unto the Lord. We have no right to break it. And the only thing that we are allowed to do on the Lord's Day are deeds of mercy and deeds of necessity.

Everybody has to work that out for himself. Then we come to the application in another way now. Those are things towards God.

That's how we love God. I want you to love me and love me only. I want you to worship me in a way which I prescribe, in spirit and in truth.

I want you to keep the flesh under control. I also want you to honour and revere my name. Then if you want an outward expression, keep the Lord's Day.

Keep it holy and wholly unto me. Then we come to the expression now in our human relationship. I saw a lovely illustration.

It's given by one of the Puritans, and I'd like to use it. He talks of a ladder which has 10 rungs to it, 10 steps to heaven. Love God, love your neighbour.

We can try and climb that ladder, we can't. So what the Lord Jesus Christ does, he climbs the ladder, he fulfils the law of God. He also pays the penalty for our failure.

Then he comes down by the Holy Spirit and gives grace to you and grace to me to believe. Then he holds your hand and takes you up the ladder right to the Lord God. Then he brings you down and says, live on earth until I take you up the ladder finally home.

It's a very lovely picture. So now why do we need it? Now we are living in a very unruly age where there is no respect at all for authority. There is no respect at all to the governments of countries.

There is no respect for any police kind of estate or the keeping of law and order. There is no respect of the demands made by the authorities of a country. There is very little respect paid to magistrates or to those who have the rule over us in that way.

There is very little respect paid to headmasters and schoolteachers. There is very little respect paid to masters in industry or in the work where we are in. There is very little respect paid to the authority of a church.

There is very little respect paid to those who are fathers in the faith. All that is there. We live in an unruly age.

And shall I express this to you? The Ten Commandments are a foretaste of heaven. It is an eternal Sabbath where we shall worship God alone, in spirit and in truth. It is an eternal Sabbath where we shall honour his name.

We won't do all the little schemings regarding keeping the Sabbath and make a thing a deed of mercy and truth when we could have done it on Saturday. There will be perfect honesty there. And there, also regarding human relationships, all those things will be in perfection.

Now here on earth, if we really love God, and those commandments come first, if you really love God, then you and I will try and keep these other six. We will try. And by his grace, we'll be enabled to do so.

And it is a foretaste of heaven, of our heavenly father. If you honour your heavenly father, then honour your fathers on earth. That's what he's saying.

For one day, we shall have to give him all the honour and all the glory and all the praise. And so now, if we in any way resent this particular commandment, then let us remember it is his command. And that one day, if we are destined for heaven, if we are children of grace, then this is a foretaste of heaven itself.

You're not going to find there a very enjoyable place unless you are willing to say, well, because the love of God is in my heart, then I desire that something of the behaviour of heaven should be in this church at least. And maybe even permeate into society and affect the people round about us as well. Yet this morning, I confide myself to the aspect of the commandment, which is honour thy father and thy mother in the very real sense of a family relationship.

Now, it can be applied in a very wide way, and it can be quite justified in doing so. But I prefer to keep it in our relationship. Do you remember the epistle of John, where we stayed a very long time? And this verse, if a man say, I love God.

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he's a liar. It's very strong language. John was like that.

He is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath not seen, how can he love God whom he hath seen? And then he goes on to say, that he who loveth God, love his brother also. So we begin with the commandments regarding God.

Love God. How are we able to love God? Only if there is grace in our hearts. That is the only way.

So if you and I would claim this morning that we have been converted, born again, the expression that you choose, justified, adopted, the many descriptions that we can have for the same work of grace, if we are able to say that we are the Lord and that we love God, then says God, I want you now to come down this

ladder and live out your love for me on earth, in your family, in society, in the world, and in the age, and in the situation that you find yourself in. Ah, but I'm in an impossible situation. I've got an impossible family, you might say, or I've got impossible people at work.

He's not asking you for the details. He's saying, I've given you this, and I'll give you grace. And if you're in a particularly difficult situation, then you'll have special grace.

Some of the commandments will find light. Some will find easy, difficult. It will vary.

And some of you will find this commandment very easy because you may have very lovely parents. Others may find it hard because you did not have easy parents. So it will vary.

He asks us all to honour them. Honour your father and your mother. So firstly, the home.

The greatest test of all is what you and I are like at home. Would you agree? You see, it's easy for me to be nice here, my best behaviour. It's easy for you to be nice here, on your best behaviour.

But what are we like at home? They know you there, and we know them. A husband and wife know each other very well. Parents and children, and the children have almost a cruel way sometimes, but very astute.

We are summing up their parents. They know you. However young your children are, past the age of just crying for milk at that stage, they get to know you pretty well.

They know your science. It's a very frightening thing, but they know our science. And we know our children.

And in that situation, you might say, well, there is a hardest place of all. Well, we could take the situation of the Pharisee and the attitude and say, well, right, so I'll keep the commandment. And in Mark 7, I'll read verses 9 to 13.

And he said unto them, For well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother. And whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death.

But you say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother, making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered. And many such like things do ye.

Now there is a Pharisaic way of dealing with the commandments, where they might say something like this. Oh, well, there are my parents. Here is a gift.

And I have given my nominal due to my father and my mother. And so they dismiss what is required of the law. And it is this, to honour them.

Now notice, scripture is very careful here. Very precise. You can give more if you like.

But the least you must give is honour. You are allowed to give more. But it is allowing for the situation of a sinful world, where you may have lovely parents or you may have very difficult parents.

But in all cases, this is the minimum requirement. Honour. Honour your father and your mother.

Now then, we are now, as you can see, in the relationship of the home. In Ephesians 6 verse 2, remember I read this at the beginning, this commandment is quoted. Honour thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee.

Now then, let us put it in its context, that we just kind of, the children may not just feel, well, so convicted that they feel that they are the only ones that the commandment is getting at. There is a relationship here of parents and children. As parents, we must not be provocative.

And you fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Now, although it is mainly honouring fathers and mothers we are talking about here this morning, yet at the same time, in a Christian home, I think it is salutary for myself to remember as a father, and parents here to remember, we must not be provocative and make it difficult for our children to honour us. Now, how can a Christian father make it difficult for his child to honour him? Well, I'll tell you how.

By making the Christian faith a real burden. Now, I believe that we should keep family worship, but it should be considering the children. Shall I put it in a very friendly, ordinary way now? I'm being now very, very practical.

When the children are, say, two and three years of age, or when they're babies, of course, they can just be in a little carcot by the side and you can have your family worship and there's only the problem of noise, and that's always noisy. But there's just that problem, that's all. Then, when they can understand you and they can talk, I think it is hard to just put a child like that.

They'll grow to hate the word. Let them run round. But you tell them, we're having family worship.

Now, do you know children are strange and wonderful little beings? They learn more by example than by a rigid rule. A child will desire to be like his parents, and before long, that child, when he sees you bow your head in prayer and put your hands together, will have very little meaning to it, but will want to do the same. And when they are playing, you'll find, I wonder how many of the children here play chapel? You don't make them do it, do you? Don't they do it? I did it as a child, because I love church.

They play chapel, and so it's a very natural thing. And as they grow a little older, four and five years of age, that's when you have family prayers that you don't read Psalm 119 right through, and then read Calvin's commentaries on every verse. I heard of one parent that used to read two chapters of the Puritans to a five-year-old.

Well, can you blame what kind of child that's going to be? He's going to rebel. The world can teach us a great deal. How do they teach little children in an infant's class in school? There is a measure of freedom, but before long, that freedom is gathered in, and before long, you'll find there is no question about it.

They sit around with you, and they want to be there, and they want to read their verse, and they feel it's an honour. I'm saying that now in a friendly, advisory way to you as parents. Don't be provocative.

And also respect a little of their independence. There are some things you tell them, and you mustn't do that. That's quite so.

There are dangerous things. But there is an area where they've got to find out for themselves. You can tell them, I don't believe that is right, but you have to decide.

You must respect them too as personalities. So don't make the burden of our face so heavy upon them that they will use the excuse that millions of people use today. Now, I know it is ill-founded in most cases, but in many cases it was well-founded.

I was made to. Now, at the same time, I think it's ridiculous to say to a child like this, you can come to chapel if you like. Well, that's foolish because we are a Christian family.

We bring them. Of course we bring them. But at the same time, we show that we love to come.

But there is an area in the home where you show a certain amount of freedom. Now, I just speak to you now in an ordinary way, in a helpful way. Add a little to that or take from it as you choose.

I can't give the perfect way. But I can give you some little advice in that way, being a father myself, not being provocative or making it so hard, making it a lovely thing and a happy and a joyous thing. And so that we pray when our children are young, let our prayers be brief.

If we want a longer family prayer afterwards, then the husband and wife can get together and have a longer time with the Lord if they wish. But remember, children are children and they can't sit still for long. And yet you can make it a very lovely thing where they will bring their own little prayers, where they will speak to the Lord, and where they will share their little anxieties so we can win their honour.

But that's not really what we are dealing with today. But I'm putting that as an aside and hoping that it is helpful at the same time as well. Honour your father and your mother.

Now, it is saying this, it is not a hard commandment when there is grace in your heart. Now then, where you have lovely parents and where we have lovely parents, it is not difficult because not only can we honour them, we can love them and embrace them and do many things for them. But many, many people are not so blessed.

And they have parents who are antagonistic towards them and seem to hate their own children. It seems to be like that. Then what do you do then? The commandment is this.

Don't despise them. As a Christian, ask God for grace to honour them and respect them as people. That's not hard, is it? See the wisdom of God there.

You may give more. You may give more. Now then, some parents are very demanding and others are the opposite and others are difficult.

And you can give more if you wish. But the requirement in a Christian is this, that he should show respect and that he should honour. It is wonderful if you can give more and more than that.

But this is what he requires because he's bearing in mind that it will be very hard for some. Some will find the commandment easy. Some will find it difficult.

The home, the heart. Now there is a battle. Now I'm speaking most particularly now to those who may find it hard.

There is a battle that must be lost or won there. Because you see, he's asking for honour, not a lip service like the Pharisee. Oh well, I've done my little duty.

I've given my little financial contribution. I've said, Corban, I've made my gift. I write my yearly letter or whatever it is.

I do that. I'm just a kind of an outward observance. They were past masters of giving an outward observance of these things and without the spirit, the letter of the law, without the spirit and they missed it altogether.

They had no grace in their hearts and so they could only give an outward form of it. And an outward form of the Ten Commandments are very hard indeed. But when they are from the heart, it's very different.

Now then, we must face up to this spiritually. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Now what do I do now with honouring my father and mother? Each situation will be a different one.

So we sit down and work it out. Now you've got to think of it like this now. There will be some parents who will make such demands that they would come between a husband and wife, even though they may be lovely.

So you've got to work it out. That's your first duty to your partner. Yet you must honour your father and mother.

So you've got to work it out without being hurtful to your parents. So whatever situation, then there are an abundance of illustrations that you and I can think of in this particular case. So work it out and work it out spiritually in your heart and that you know before God that you're honest in this.

Then ask God to give you grace either to withhold a little because too many demands are being made and yet honouring your parents and yet seeing to it that your own family is not neglected in any way. Yet honouring your parents or if you're finding it difficult to give any honour at all, asking God for grace that you might give them the honour that is due to them as your parents, whatever they are like. As a Christian, for you never know, it may be your respect for them will be the means of them eventually honouring God the Father by coming to Jesus Christ as saviour.

Honour your father and mother. In the home and the battle is in the heart. Now why the heart? Well because if it is not there, it is not genuine.

So I must have it not as a kind of all right, I will keep this commandment and nobody will be able to point their fingers at me. I've done my duty by my parents or that kind of thing. Well you might say yes, you could say about a certain person with the Pharisees, with many of them I'm sure, that they kept their duty and yet in their heart there was no honour to their parents and no respect at all.

And so they had never fought it out there because there was no grace there. But you have grace and I have grace, the grace of God in our hearts. So ask God for grace upon grace that it may be truly and genuinely from the hearts.

The home, the hearts. Now remember this is a commandment which is afforded. We've gone up the ladder, he's taken us up to look at God.

We now can love God. He's brought us down the ladder to live on earth and we start with the home, the most testing place of all. What you are like there and we start with our own parents and our children.

Then he makes, this is the first commandment who promised the hope. Now in the Old Testament we know because of the very frailty that the promises were given on earth very often. Now it was a general rule and not an absolute one.

That you know that the platitudes given to Job when he was in trouble, they said you must have been a very wicked person because if you're a good man then God will flourish you and give you much on this earth. And that was a general rule that God allowed. Yet in the Old Testament there are notable exceptions where there are young people who did all these honourable things and good men like Job who did these honourable things and yet suffered.

So there are exceptions in the Old Testament. So now we have to look at it with the eyes of the New Testament. Now look at it in this way, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

The emphasis must be there, the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. And think of Canaan for the Jews. Then in verse 3 in Ephesians 6, that it may be well with thee and then he quotes the Old Testament about the earth.

We know that it may be well with thee and that thou mayest live long on the earth. There is also the link to the Old Testament. But for us now we must regard it in this way, the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee and that it may be well with thee here on earth.

There are benefits of keeping the commandments by God's grace as a Christian here on earth. Look at the chaos there is in the unruly generation we have. There is no church discipline today.

There is no church order today. There is no order in society. There is no respect for kings or queens or magistrates or law and order.

And this has come even into the evangelical churches today so that every man doeth what he thinketh or seemeth right in his own heart and is his own authority. That's the age we're in and will not submit. If we are candidates for heaven where we submit absolutely to God, then submit here.

Hard as it may be sometimes, then submit here. That it may be well with thee. Now honouring father and mother.

Now what does this now mean? Well, it means this. It's well pleasing in the sight of God. So that you are actually doing something that God is asking.

You say, now let us see how loving me is working out in your home. First of all, I'm going to pay your home a visit. I see you're with your parents or your parents live there and I would ask you to do this.

Honour them. Respect them. Now I tell you, my child, even on earth it will be well with thee.

Examine that and test it. When a nation doesn't honour their father's inauthority it is anarchy. Isn't that right? When a family has no respect for the father it is chaos in the home, in the world.

Now in the Lord and in the church and our spiritual fathers there is the appeal here. Honour them and it will be well with thee. Here on earth there are benefits here.

What the benefits are I do not know. But God will give benefits here on earth. Then in the Old Testament, the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

This is in a twofold way. Canaan is used in the Old Testament and in the New in a twofold way. The Canaan was always known as the land of promise.

They were a wandering people as they left Egypt. Now for us we can say Canaan is like the new life. Now after the wilderness experience we suddenly come to our Canaan and there we see there the promised land of the Christian life.

There will be difficulties there, a land of giants. There will be those of Satan who will come against us. There will be hardships there.

Yes and nevertheless it is a land flowing with milk and honey. It will be well there despite all the battles that will come against us. So we go through the Jordan you might say where we are immersed in Christ and we come out the other side and we enter into the Canaan of God.

The land of promise where we may claim God's promises and it will be well with thee in the Christian life in this new land. What kind of land is it? It has rules. What are the rules? Before the Ten Commandments in the wilderness condemned thee.

But it was all settled in the Jordan of Calvary. What about the Ten Commandments now? Ah grace now given the rule of this land is to love God and love thy neighbour. Where shall I start to thy neighbour? Start at home.

Honour thy father and thy mother and it will be well with thee with Canaan on earth. But Canaan is also used in another way. When I tread the verge of Jordan bid my anxious fears subside.

Death of death and hell's destruction land me safe on Canaan's side. There is a Canaan of heaven itself and there I had to go into the eternal place and I am answerable for the Ten Commandments as the role in the life of the Christian for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Did you love me and love me only? Did you worship me in spirit and in truth? Did you honour my name? Did you honour my day? Did you honour your father and your mother? And so we are learning here what is the fortiest of heaven itself.

If we do it will be well. It will be well in any case because we are redeemed but in a very special way it will be well and we'll be able to say oh sweet and blessed country the home of God's elect. Oh sweet and blessed country that eager hearts expect.

Jesus in mercy bring us to that dear land of rest who are to God the Father and Spirit ever blessed. We've gone up the ladder again and we see that we honour him in every way. We come down the ladder again if you like we're here on earth.

What shall I do Lord? I want you to have a forties of heaven. I want your church and your family to be a little haven of heaven itself. I want you to love me and love me only.

I want you to worship me in spirit and in truth. I want you to honour my name. I want you to keep my day and with each other honour your father and your mother and it will be well with thee.

And in the land especially and in the land of heaven itself. Let us pray. Oh God and our Father we come to thee in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour and ask thy blessing for thy name's sake.

Amen.

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