

Honor Your Parents and Authorities

SCOTT HOEZEE

The relationship between parents and children is one of the most sensitive realities most of us ever experience. A good relationship contributes to wholeness, a sense of inner peace and a sense of security; but bad relations between a parent and a child can lead to lifelong hurt, instability, and often deep and abiding anger. It is testament to how important family relations are, that a loving connection leads to great joy, that any sense of betrayal leads to things as dire as depression and other debilitating mental situations. Today on *Groundwork*, we look at the commandment that speaks to the parent-child relationship. Stay tuned.

DARRELL DELANEY

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Darrell, this is now the third episode in a planned eight-part series on the Ten Commandments. In the first episode of this series, we covered the first three commandments, that all tied in with reverence for God. In the previous episode, we looked at the fourth commandment on keeping the Sabbath holy; and now, starting with this program, we turn to the remaining six commandments, each of which is quite short compared to the slightly more expansive first ones, and particularly, there was a whole lot...a bunch of words on the sabbath commandment on the last episode, but these are pretty short, and here is the fifth one from Exodus 20, and it is repeated in Deuteronomy 5: (Ex. 20:12) Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

DARRELL DELANEY

Scott, when I look at these commandments, I always think of the symbol of the cross, because the first four are vertical, your relationship with God; and the last six are horizontal, your relationship with one another; and as Jesus sums it up: The greatest commandments are loving the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and loving your neighbor as yourself, which sums up the entire law. We see why when we look at these in detail.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; you know, really, as you were saying, the scope of these commandments is interesting. Of course, there are things as big as the cosmos, right? Knowing who the one true God is. Worshipping the one true God only, not idols, using that God's name with reverence, right? So, there are big cosmic concerns; but then, there are a lot of civil society concerns that you would expect to see in a set of laws like this. It regulates murder, theft, public lying, lying under oath. Those are all things you might expect, but what is interesting is that God in these commandments...he makes it clear that he is also very interested in the nitty-gritty parts of our lives, isn't he?

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes, he is; and in theological terms we call this the transcendence of God, and the eminence of God...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, God is not only the Lord of the cosmos and every detail of its billions of stars and stuff we may never, ever see, but he is also deeply, intimately connected to every area of our lives in the practical...in the boots on the ground parts of our lives that we say...in our existential way, we sometimes say that that is the real meat...the real life...and he cares about all of that as well.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Sociologist, Christian Smith, has identified a movement that has been gaining some traction the last quarter century, let's say, ten, fifteen, twenty years, called *moral therapeutic deism*, and this is kind of a version of, you know, the view of God that he is the old man upstairs, you know, we have all heard that: God is far away from our everyday lives; yes, he just kind of wants us to be nice to each other, that's all. God is not terribly interested in what happens in your bedroom; he is not terribly interested in what happens around the family dining room table...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, the Ten Commandments say that is wrong; God is *very* interested to know what happens around the family dinner table. That is why he wants to talk parents and children through this fifth commandment.

DARRELL DELANEY

I mean, spiritually speaking, he is there at the table. He is not aloof, not wondering what is going on in heaven. He is actually very involved. I mean, the Hebrew words *lifne Adonai* means before the face of the Lord; and when these commandments happen, and when God has communications with people, everything that happened was considered to happen before the face of the Lord, because he is openly attentive and he is paying close attention to our everyday lives, and we need to remember that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I suppose some people might kind of think that is kind of creepy. It is like big brother. God is kind of nosey; but that is not the point at all. The point is love. God loves us, and God wants us to be flourishing, God wants us to take delight in his world...in his creation; and God knows that when families are healthy, that is going to happen a whole lot easier. So, he is not being nosey, he is being loving by making sure that the granular details of our lives honor God—the God who, in the New Testament, Jesus teaches us to call our Father. God is our Father; God is our parent as well.

DARRELL DELANEY

I think that there are some complexities when it comes to the father language we are talking about; and we will talk about some of that brokenness later in this episode, but it is important for us to know that when Jesus walked around on the earth he said: My Father, my Father, my Father; but then something changes after his death, burial and resurrection, where he begins to tell everyone to say: This is my Father and your Father. So, now God has incorporated the family relationship and the family terms into this new covenant relationship, and this commandment reminds us that that family unit is absolutely important.

SCOTT HOEZEE

In fact, as somebody once said: God's love affair with the human race seems to be a family affair. God was always deeply...the covenant itself is kind of a familial thing, right? So, God is interested in families, and God wants Israel to be healthy in this regard. The family seems to be the building block of Israelite society, and it is also, of course, the way by which the Promised Land of Canaan gets parceled out. Families and tribes, you know, get certain parts of the land, and it is supposed to stay in the family in perpetuity. Once God

gives you that gift, it is supposed to stay there. So, families were vital to God, and that is why there is this commandment for children to honor their parents.

DARRELL DELANEY

In Ephesians 6, it says this: Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ²Honor your father and mother—which is the first commandment with a promise—³“so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, Paul, in the New Testament now, is carrying on this theme; and indeed, in the New Testament in many of Paul's letters, there are...some bibles even use this as a subheading in the Bible translation...household regulations, or household rules. Paul will have a lot to say to husbands and wives and parents and children, to make sure that what God emphasized through this fifth commandment continues.

By the way, in the verse you just read, Paul says this is the first commandment with a promise. I kind of think it is the only one with a promise, right? This is such an important area, to have good relationships between parents and children, that it actually has an impact on having a good life on the earth...that it may go well for you in the Promised Land. It is interesting that he ties those together.

DARRELL DELANEY

I also think it is interesting too, Scott, that historically speaking God has always worked in family units. The enemy is always seeking to destroy family units. Because God is a family being, it is pretty clear when you look at scripture that he not only introduces himself generationally but familially; and so, this could be a reason why some of the family units are a primary target for the enemy; but also, they could be a very powerful place of redemption and belonging and identity. We even see it in adoptive situations, where they are not even biologically part of the family, but they are brought in, and they have been made whole and they have been able to heal in these family units; and that is why I think God wants us to remember the importance of honoring parents in these situations.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, some of the best novels I have ever read...some of the most searing novels...the ones that just really stick with you...are the ones that really drill down into family life. Good family life, but as we will talk about a little bit later, when family life goes bad; because when it goes bad, that is very, very hurtful, and that is something we are going to want to talk about before this episode if finished; but first, as we go on into the next part of the program, we will note that in the tradition of the Church, this commandment about parents and children has gotten expanded on, and we want to look at that; so, stay tuned.

Segment 2

DARRELL DELANEY

I am Darrell Delaney, with Scott Hoezee, and you are listening to *Groundwork*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And this is the third program in an eight-part series on the Ten Commandments, focusing on the fifth commandment, to honor your father and your mother; but Darrell, as we noted at the end of the last part of the program, in the history of the Church as reflected in some catechisms, like the Reformed classic, the Heidelberg Catechism, this has gotten expanded beyond just the family. So, let's listen a minute to the Heidelberg Catechism: What is God's will for you in the fifth commandment? And the answer is: That I honor, love, and be loyal to my mother and father, and all those in authority over me; and I submit myself with proper obedience to all their good teaching and discipline; also, that I be patient with their failings, for through them God chooses to rule us. But then that same thing goes on to say: But you know what? Parents aren't the only authorities out there. There are governing authorities, there are presidents and prime ministers and kings and queens and police forces, and the principle from the mother and father thing extends to, as it says here: *All* those in authority over me. So, that expands it a lot.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes, Scott; this statement in the Heidelberg Catechism reminds us that God has chosen people and authorities to be put over us for us to be put on the straight and narrow, so to speak; and it takes humility to honor them in the position that they hold; and then, you will see in this passage...actually, we have one here in Romans 13 that brings this out clearer. It says:

Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. ²Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. ³For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. ⁴For the one in authority is God's servant for your good.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Interesting passage in Romans 13; by the way, that servant word that was in the fourth verse that you just read, Darrell, that is the Greek word *diakonos*, from which we get our word *deacon*. These people, presidents and kings and queens and prime ministers and governors and mayors, are God's deacon. Now, that is kind of a startling thing to say; but Darrell, we have to remember where Paul was writing these words, or to whom Paul was writing these words. The authorities he is referring to weren't very nice.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, it is different than our day when we have presidents and prime ministers and officials and leaders, and we have the freedom of speech to say we don't like this, we don't want to do that. In this day, they have Caesar, and Caesar is declaring himself to be the lord. So, when you said Jesus is Lord in that day, you are actually declaring a political war statement against Caesar, and you could get killed for that. So, it is interesting that even though that dynamic makes our dynamic look like a cakewalk, that is happening, and Paul is not saying: Don't resist it; don't rebel against it; don't fight it; don't overthrow it; don't revolutionize it; but actually submit to what God has established, because Caesar wouldn't be in power if God's sovereignty wouldn't have put him in that place.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And yet, Caesar actively persecuted the Church, and was a force of terror. So, it is quite remarkable in this context. Very different from today, where we say: You know, I don't like the politics of Prime Minister Y, or President X, you know, whoever; but boy, this really does magnify it. Now, to be clear, this did not extend so far that if the Caesar told you to denounce your faith in Jesus as Lord, that you had to obey him...

DARRELL DELANEY

No way.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Because he was God's deacon; no. There were limits. Most of the apostles died rather than do that. So, obviously we are not saying that when the governing authorities tell you to do what is wrong spiritually, that that is okay. No, but in the ordinary run of things, in the ordinary governance where they help keep the lights on and they maybe work for the public health and they keep airplanes flying in this day and age and they have law enforcement to protect the people...the innocent. In so far as they do all of that, then you honor them as God's servant because their authority is a chip off of God's authority. God is sharing his own authority, interestingly, with these people.

DARRELL DELANEY

You know what is interesting to me about this, Scott, is that when you talk about God sharing his authority with these people in institutions, God sees it as an extension of the commandment. So, we are supposed to honor, we are supposed to obey, and we are supposed to allow our humility to come underneath those people who are under that situation to lead. They have an office that actually needs to be respected; and so, we need

to understand when we are submitting to those authorities, that we are actually allowing our humility to go for us, that we obey God and honor God when we obey and honor these.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And that is probably why in the history of the Church, if you go way, way back and look at some of the earliest sort of set prayers...they are written prayers...they were sometimes called collects, but way, way, way back in Church history, back even to the days of the Roman Empire, it was a regular occurrence in those prayers that we prayed for kings and queens and princes and princesses and all those in authority...

DARRELL DELANEY

God save the Queen.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; it is always in those prayers to pray for all those in authority, to give them wisdom, to give them strength, to give them health, to keep them safe, because that, in the early Church in those first prayers and collects that they wrote, that was simply a reflection and an extension of what Paul was saying in Romans 13; and it is something that, you know, was called to Jesus' attention once, right? They asked: Hey, is it okay to pay taxes to Caesar? The Pharisees were hoping to trip Jesus up and make him say something treasonous that would get him thrown into jail. Jesus asked for a coin and said: Whose picture is on that? Caesar's. Well, give it to him then; if that is what he wants, give it to him. Pay the governing authorities. Pay your taxes, Jesus is saying, because that is how God is superintending the world.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, the fact that God is superintending the world by using people that he placed in authority positions...I think that if we in this day and age are not careful, we will miss that we are actually honoring God when we honor those people in those positions, and we will get to some difficulties in that, because when you have people, you go into people who have human error. They have faults, they have sin natures, and so, we are planning on getting into what it means to...when people default on those promises, when people are not perfect or when the relationships in family have been broken and hurt, we plan on talking about that in this next segment. Stay tuned for that.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney.

Scott Hoezee; And we are looking at the fifth commandment: Honor your father and your mother; and we have just noted in the previous segment of this program, Darrell, that the Church has traditionally expanded this to all those in authority, and we read Romans 13, where Paul tells the Romans, even with the oppressive Roman government they were living under in Rome...it is Romans, after all...honor them as God's servants, and he makes a promise here. He says: You know, if you do...if you keep the law...everything is going to go well for you. You will be commended. It is sort of like saying to children: You know, if you are obedient at home, everything is going to go fine in your house. I wish that were always true, right?

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; unfortunately, like I just said earlier, Scott, that when you have people involved, you are going to have human error, you are going to have brokenness, you are going to have problems, you are going to have sin involved, because people are not perfect; and so, there are situations where parents have not lived up to the ideals of what they should have lived up to, and there are ruling authorities in governments and official figures who have not actually held the integrity of the roles and offices that they bear. I mean, I could speak candidly about this one, Scott. I have had challenges with law enforcement, I have had challenges with

people who have power over me and didn't use it in a way that was liberating or helpful to me; and it hasn't been very healthy; it has been painful. These are people who I am called to submit to and honor God by submitting to, but yet, the dilemma is that they haven't actually earned that, and it is painful.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, we know, particularly in the United States, that there have just been way too many unarmed black men, and sometimes women, who didn't do anything wrong, who were killed at the hands of the police. In recent years, as we record this now, names like George Floyd and Breonna Taylor are two names that have been on people's lips, but sadly there are lots of other ones; and so, the idea that, you know, those who are in authority should hold no terror for you if you do what is right, that is just not always true. Some people who do nothing wrong are terrorized by the police, are targeted by them; and that is very much an abuse of power that we want to talk about, but we can also shift it back, Darrell, to what happens in households when there is a tyrannical father or a manipulative mother; then what?

DARRELL DELANEY

Well, I believe that it is important for us to note that, number one, God is the one who holds accountable these officials and these parents. He is the one who will actually bring the justice to that situation, or bring the healing to that situation. If they abuse that power, if they overextend in those ways, because, I mean, God knows that we are going to mess it up, and he put things in the scripture...specifically in this verse in Colossians, where Paul says:

(Col. 3:20) Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. (And then this verse for fathers) ²¹Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

So, they have to realize that there is a power dynamic there, and they have to use that power in the way that God wants them to use it; and when that doesn't happen, then children become discouraged and damaged.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; and as we noted at the very, very beginning of this program, Darrell, the mental health damage that can come when there is severe abuse, or even maybe there is no physical abuse, but it is verbal or it is just super manipulative. That creates lasting damage. People end up, you know, needing a lot of mental health help to overcome that. So, there are people in all of life...mothers and fathers, grandparents, uncles and aunts, police officers, presidents and mayors...there are some people who have authority just by virtue of their position, but the Bible also, I think, makes it clear, Darrell, that some authority also needs to be earned, right? One of the...and you mentioned this earlier, in the previous segment...one of the implications of that verse we read from Romans 13 about God sharing his authority...well, that means if God has shared his authority with you, you better use it like God would use it, then, too. Wield this authority the way God would wield it, in loving and compassionate ways.

DARRELL DELANEY

I think that you are talking about the difference between an ascribed status and an achieved one...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, you know, when the authority has been given to you by God, that is something that you have been ascribed to, as the table that you were talking about in the family, as the table you were talking about in government and municipal operations and things like that, God has ascribed that status; but then you have to walk in integrity and use that in a way that is achieving the governance and the peace that he is looking for, whether it be at home, whether it be in your city, or whether it be in your country, or whatnot; but then, what happens when those things aren't happening? What do we do as Christians? That is what I want to talk about. What do we do when those things fall by the wayside, or people default on that office?

SCOTT HOEZEE

And real quickly I think we will just make four observations, Darrell. I mean, the first thing I think when we are the victims of abuse of authority is to grieve. If you are denied a loving relationship with your father or mother or both, that is a legitimate source of sorrow and grieving and lament; and we need to be honest about that and cast those sorrows and laments on God. We need to express our anger to God. As we have said in programs on the psalms of lament, God can take it. So, when things go wrong, we need to grieve.

DARRELL DELANEY

I think that lamenting is an appropriate response for a believer because it holds two truths: 1) God is good, and 2) The world is broken; and we bring them both to God and say: God, make this make sense to me. I don't understand what is happening to me. Why is it? I didn't ask to be born as a child. Why are these things happening? Why is my father gone? Why is my mother not here? Why are these addictions happening in our family that makes us dysfunctional? I didn't ask for this. And so, to lament that is a healthy way to say: Okay, God; please make this make sense.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; and kind of a second and third point, too: People who are abused by an earthly father...and especially if it was something horrible, like sexual abuse...if those people in our congregation say they have a hard time calling God my Father, if they just choke on that a little bit, let's give them a break.

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Let's not be too quick to tell them they should just get over it and call God Father because that is what the Bible tells you to do; and similarly, Darrell, if you have been the victim of a police shakedown because of the color of your skin, I am not going to tell you how you should react to that. I am not going to tell you... That should be protested—that should be prosecuted, right? Obeying the governing authorities doesn't mean we just put up with anything. Some things need to be protested.

DARRELL DELANEY

I think that in the instances of what you are saying for those who have this pain...this wound that comes from a family member, especially in this father situation, it may take some time for them to allow God to speak into that situation and be healed from it so they can call God their Father. We need to give grace and time for that, but we also need to make sure that when there are injustices, that we need to speak up and we need to continue speaking up. As a person who has experienced some of those injustices, having a gun pulled on me when I was a teenager for no reason. We had no record and no problems, but we had these profiles happening to us. That is a situation where we need to continue speaking even though we feel like our voices are silenced, because that is what is right to do.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Because what we want our parents and what we want to do as parents, and we want the governing authorities to do is to wield this great gift of God-given authority in ways that God would approve of and that would glorify God and make life on this earth better. That is the goal of this fifth commandment.

Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Scott Hoezee and Darrell Delaney. Join us again next time when we study the sixth commandment: You shall not murder.

We have a website, groundworkonline.com. Visit it and tell us what *Groundwork* means to you and what you would like to hear discussed next on *Groundwork*.

DARRELL DELANEY

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