

ILLINOIS LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

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As we continue our review of the Ten Commandments we will presently enter upon what is known as the Second Table of the Law, the commandments we Lutherans number four through ten. The Lord Jesus summarizes the Second Table of the Law as follows: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Matthew 22:39)

Our neighbors whom we are to love are actually ALL of our fellow human beings, including our enemies, for in Matthew 5:43-45 the Lord Jesus states: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

Thus, the commandments comprising the Second Table of the Law concern our relationship with all our fellow human beings, and how we are to show love to them in accord with God's will. However, realize that what sinful human beings consider "loving behavior" is not necessarily genuine loving behavior as God specifies in His Word. Some of the behaviors which man considers "loving" are actually sinful and not truly loving, for our Lord Jesus plainly states: "from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man." (Mark 7:21-23) Hence, God gave His Commandments to show us our sin and to instruct us as to what truly is "loving behavior" and what is not.

In this month's Topical Bulletin we will consider the 4th Commandment: "**Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.**" (Exodus 20:12) In the New Testament the 4th Commandment is rendered: "**Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.**" (Ephesians 6:2-3)

In accord with Holy Scripture, Luther's Small Catechism states:

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

THE AUTHORITIES WHOM GOD HAS PLACED OVER US

Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God that we may not despise our parents and masters, nor provoke them to anger, but give them honor, serve and obey them, and hold them in love and esteem.

As we proceed with this Topical Bulletin we will see from the Holy Bible that "parents" are father and mother, while "masters" are various other persons whom God has placed over us in the home, schools, church and Sunday school, places of employment, and state and federal government.

In regards to parents, the following Bible passages are relevant:

“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.” (Proverbs 30:17)

“Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.” (Proverbs 23:22)

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.” (Ephesians 6:1-3)

“Children, obey *your* parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.” (Colossians 3:20)

“Honour widows that are widows indeed. But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” (1 Timothy 5:3-4, 8)

Comments: Disobedience and disrespect of one's parents is forbidden. It is our duty to lovingly respect, honor, and obey our parents in the Lord. It is our duty to continue to honor our parents and care for them when they are advanced in years and/or have lost a spouse. The exception to God's command is found in Acts 5:29 where we read: “We ought to obey God rather than men.” Thus, if father or mother command that which is clearly contrary to God's Word, we are not to obey them, although we continue to respect them and their parental office. Scripture also specifies parents' duty: “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” (Ephesians 6:4) “Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.” (Colossians 3:21) Hence, parents are not to be overly harsh, but are to rather patiently educate their children in God's Word that they may know their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and know God's will and strive to live in accord therewith.

In regards to pastors and teachers in the church, the following Bible passages are relevant:

“And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves.” (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13)

“Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer *is* worthy of his reward.” (1 Timothy 5:17-18)

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you.” (Hebrews 13:17)

*Comments: Love, honor, obedience, and support is our duty toward faithful pastors and teachers. The exception to God's command is found in Acts 5:29 where we read: “We ought to obey God rather than men.” Thus, if pastors and teachers command that which is clearly contrary to God's Word, we are not to obey them, although we continue to respect them in regards to their office. Holy Writ specifies the God ordained duties and characteristics to be found in pastors and teachers in the church: “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” (2 Timothy 4:2) “For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.” (Titus 1:7-9) “If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God; if any man minister, *let him do it* as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be*

glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” (1 Peter 4:11)
Hence, pastors and teachers are to teach God’s Word, to put forth pure Scriptural doctrine and practice, and are not to deviate therefrom. Furthermore, pastors and teachers in the church are to be an example of Godly conduct to others, for they will give account to God concerning their teaching and practice.

In regards to teachers in public schools of all levels, and older folks everyw here, the following Bible passages are relevant:

“Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I *am* the LORD.” (Leviticus 19:32) {hoary head = grey hairs}

“Rebuke not an elder, but intreat *him* as a father; *and* the younger men as brethren; The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity.” (1 Timothy 5:1-2)

“Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all *of you* be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.” (1 Peter 5:5-6)

“Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by *your* good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.” (1 Peter 2:11-12)

Comments: Honor, respect, obedience, and honest, humble conduct is our duty toward those placed over us in schools. In fact, we should be respectful to all our elders everywhere we may meet them. The exception to God’s command is found in Acts 5:29 where we read: “We ought to obey God rather than men.” Hence, if our elders or anyone placed over us in schools command us to do that which is clearly contrary to God’s Word, we are not to obey them, although we continue to respect them in regards to their office.

In regards to employees and employers, the following Bible passage is relevant:

“Servants, be obedient to them that are *your* masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether *he be* bond or free. And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.”
(Ephesians 6:5-9)

Comments: Respect, obedience, and doing the best honest job we can is our duty to our employer; and, we are to conscientiously so conduct ourselves because we are Christians who are serving our Lord by being witnesses for Him in word and deed while in the workplace. The exception to God’s command is found in Acts 5:29 where we read: “We ought to obey God rather than men.” Hence, if our employers or anyone placed over us on the job command us to do that which is clearly contrary to God’s Word, we are not to obey them, although we continue to respect them in regards to their office. Furthermore, if we are an employer, it is our duty to treat our employees decently, in a good manner that is pleasing to our Master in heaven. Employers are not to be tyrants on a power-trip.

In regards to civil authorities, which includes those in federal, state, and local government, the following Bible passages are relevant:

“Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.”

(Matthew 22:21)

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to *execute* wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God’s ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.” (Romans 13:1-7)

“Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, *but* gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.” (Titus 3:1-2)

“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using *your* liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all *men*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.” (1 Peter 2:13-17)

Comments: As Christian citizens, it is our duty to honor and respect those in governmental offices at the local, state, and federal levels. We are to obey the laws and ordinances enacted by civil government, including paying the various taxes levied upon us as citizens. The exception to God’s command is found in Acts 5:29 where we read: “We ought to obey God rather than men.” Hence, if our governmental leaders and law-enforcers command us to do that which is clearly contrary to God’s Word, we are not to obey them, although we continue to respect them in regards to their office.

In regards to all whom God has placed over us, the following Bible passage is relevant:

“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and *for* all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” (1 Timothy 2:1-6)

Comment: It is our duty to pray for ALL THOSE PERSONS GOD has placed in authority over us; yea, we are to pray for all our fellow human beings.

If we are honest we must all admit that we have failed to keep the 4th Commandment. We’ve broken God’s Law in thoughts, words, and deeds, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23) But thankfully, there is hope for us in God’s only begotten Son Jesus Christ who has redeemed us, for “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9) “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16) Let us therefore cling to Christ Jesus in heart-deep faith, daily repenting of our sins and striving to amend our lives more and more in accord with the dictates of Holy Scripture. m.e.l.