

## REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE : SUNDAY 4 DECEMBER 2011 EVENING SERVICE

**Sing before:** Psalm 19:1, 2

*Let us commence this meeting with God by declaring openly to one another and to God:*

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Beloved grace and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, through the mighty working of God the Holy Spirit.

**Amen**

Psalm of praise: Psalm 150:1, 3

**Prayer:**

- **Doxology**
- **Worship**
- **Confession of sins**
- **Forgiveness**
- **Gratitude**
- **Prayer for the need of the congregation of the church, the authorities and the sinful world and appeal to God's promises**
- **General prayer**
- **Enlightenment from the Holy Spirit for the sake of the ministry of the Word.**

**Amen**

Psalm 34:6, 7

**Scripture reading:** Ephesians 5:21; 6:1-4; 1 Peter 2:11-12, 18-25; Heidelberg Catechism Sunday 39:104

**Scripture text:** Ephesians 6:1, 4

**1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.**

**4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.**

(Ephesians 6:1, 4)

**Heidelberg Catechism**

**Q. 104.**

**What does God require in the fifth commandment?**

**A.**

That I show all honour, love and fidelity, to my father and mother, and all in authority over me, and submit myself to their good instruction and correction, with due obedience; (a) and also patiently bear with their weaknesses and infirmities, (b) since it pleases God to govern us by their hand. (c)

(a)

Eph.5:22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

Eph.6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.

Eph.6:2 Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)

Eph.6:3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

Eph.6:4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring

them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Eph.6:5 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;

Col.3:18 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

Col.3:20 Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.

Col.3:21 Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.

Col.3:22 Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:

Col.3:23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

Col.3:24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

Prov.1:8 My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother:

Prov.4:1 Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding.

Prov.15:20 A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother.

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

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

Rom.13:1 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.

Rom.13:2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

Rom.13:3 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:

Rom.13:4 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.

Rom.13:5 Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.

Rom.13:6 For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.

Rom.13:7 Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

(b)

Prov.23:22 Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.

Gen.9:24 And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him.

Gen.9:25 And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.

1 Pet.2:18 Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

(c)

Eph.6:4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Eph.6:9 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.

Col.3:19 Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.

Col.3:20 Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.

Col.3:21 Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.

Rom.13:2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

Rom.13:3 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:

Matt.22:21 They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

**Theme:** Thankful believers subject themselves to the authority appointed by God.

Beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ, the disregarding of authority or the questioning of authority is not something unknown to us. In the broad spectrum of the community old and young, big or small, revolt against the authority appointed over them. Boringly we read about the results of these revolts in the newspapers, we see it on television, and hear about it over the radio. It is farm-murders, ill treatment, armed robbery and traffic violations on the roads of our country. But the rejection of authority does not only happen outside in the wide world. Even inside the homes of many people the children rebel against parental authority. Even in the household of God, in the church, people rebel against the authority appointed by God over them.

Many explanations for this trait in our community have been put forward by social scientists and psychiatrists. The post-modern frame of mind is given as one of the main reasons why people are presently rebelling against authority. Prior to the Second World War mankind had the idea that they were improving. To them, no borders curbing human development existed. But the Second World War stopped mankind in his tracks and many realized that humanity was not improving. This realization led to many other ideas. One of the ideas born out of this realization is the following: Does people in positions of authority always tell the truth? Are they always right? Must we merely just agree to everything that they tell us?

This critical view on people in positions of authority and the doubt about their words mainly came to be because people became disillusioned. Disillusioned because seeing and experiencing that everything told by people in authority is not always the truth. Not only disillusioned but also dumbfounded, and in a certain way this dumbfoundedness adds to questioning all authority in one way or another.

Regarding people in authority and their words critically is good. You cannot just believe everything on face value. But together with the critical regard you must consider the yardstick that you use. And you must ask yourself: Is the yardstick that I apply the one that suits my circumstances best, or is it the yardstick of God to which I, as a believer, also submit myself to?

Brothers, sisters and children, thank the Lord for not leaving us in the dark about which yardstick we must apply. Every Sunday the Lord announces this yardstick **Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.** (Exodus 20:12)

Now note in what ordinary way the Lord works with His children. He does not approach us with an extraordinary command. There, in the circle of love where we were born the Lord teaches us our first lesson of accepting authority. The first authority we get to deal with is not the authority exercised by a head of

state, a teacher or a church official. The first authority the Lord wants us to submit to is that of the intimate family circle.

We confess in our Catechism that indeed **I must show all honour, love and fidelity, to my father and mother.** For the believing child experiencing love and care from his/her parents, it is easy to also render them love. A believing child knows that God granted him/her this man and woman as his/her father and mother and wants to, because he or she wants to obey the will of the Lord, submit him/herself to them. The Lord, through His grace, lets us learn the first lessons of authority by the friendly hands of a father and the loving hands of a mother. The Lord teaches us, who was received and born in sin, to submit ourselves to authority in the place where it is the most easy to learn.

Seeing that we still are sinners, we are continually reminded to submit ourselves to the authority of our parents. As believers children must be obedient to their parents. Children, you must obey your parents, not in the first for the sakes of your father and mother, but for the sakes of God. Because you, children, are believers and have respect for God, therefore you are obedient to your parents. You did not choose which man and woman you wanted as parents. God chose them for you. And God's choice is always the best for us.

Children living disobedient to their parents and not wanting to, in the circle of family love, subject themselves to authority are in danger of colliding with problems outside the family circle. A child not wanting be obedient to his parents will have difficulty to be, if ever, obedient at school, at church or towards the state. Such a child despises the authority appointed over him or her and actually, because He appointed specific people in authority over the child, despises God. **Through them, God wants to rule us.**

Beloved, in the Fifth Commandment God does not only address our children. In the Fifth Commandment the parents are also facing God, called to responsibility. What we parents, in the intimate circle of the family do to our children is relevant to the lives of our children. As the household man, in a certain sense stands at the source for the child. Should the water at that source become poisoned, further downstream it will also be poisonous. What father and mother in the household do with the child and by word and deed teach the child has a determining relevance to the child's life at school, church and towards the state. Should, in the family circle, the child not be taught submission to authority, outside the family circle he will have difficulty learning it or possibly even not learn it at all.

Therefore in Ephesians 6 Paul also admonishes the parents. **And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath** (Ephesians 6:4) Do not pester and provoke, or treat them unreasonably or unjustly causing them to lose their respect towards you and in that way sin against God. We indeed confess that children **must subject themselves to the good teaching and discipline** of the parents. The parents therefore have the responsibility to continually test against the Word of God whether their teaching and discipline is good. Remember, respect, love and faithfulness is not enforced to children. Respect, love and faithfulness follow in the footsteps of good teaching and discipline. Somebody who does not want to discipline their child does not truly love the child and cannot expect love from the child.

The tragedy of a house lacking good teaching and discipline is also exemplified in the Bible. In 1 Samuel 3 the Lord teaches us about it. Eli had a weak attitude towards his children. He did not want to discipline

and teach them, as the Lord wanted him to do. Therefore the Lord brought the eternal punishment over the children of Eli.

Disciplining your child is not the easiest and most pleasurable thing to do. But the Lord, because He gave that specific child to you as parents to rear for Him, commands us parents to do it. The foundation for the child's earthly and spiritual life is cast in the family circle. What we do with and what we teach our children will determine whether they will be a letter from Christ containing the writing that they are children of God. Or our conduct will determine whether that child, for himself, you as parents, the church and state will be a problem – a child to whom God the Father, will look at in sadness, because he does not want to subject himself to authority.

Now we children may ask: Must I, under all circumstances, always honour, love and be true to my father and mother? Yes you must do so. The honour/respect given to your father and mother is not to their person. You do not honour your father and mother as persons. You must honour and respect them because they are your parents, the parents God Himself decided to let you have. And the love for them is true and sacrificial love.

To prove His love for us our Heavenly Father sacrificed His Son. Children, who are thankful for the love proven to them by the Father through Christ, now also prove sacrificial love to their parents. They offer their pleasure, time and whatever it takes to render love to their parents. Furthermore, so that their parents may have trust in them, must the children also prove faithfulness towards their parents. Children, render faithfulness to your parents, especially when they become old, ailing and even a nuisance. Remember the Fifth Commandment is not coupled to any timeframe. Shem and Japheth, even when he was drunk and disrobed himself, rendered honour towards their father Noah. Ham did not do so and therefore his child Canaan received the punishment of being the slaves of Israel. This brings us to what we confess in the last sentence of Sunday 39. We must patiently bear with the **weaknesses and infirmities** of our parents. Our parents may have many infirmities and weaknesses: not only age and its problems, but also may lack perseverance, they might be spendthrifts; there are unfaithful fathers; mothers not physically and spiritually caring for their children, parents continually fighting and being abusive. Seen from the side of the child these all are infirmities and weaknesses. Facing God these are serious sins but still, due to these infirmities and weaknesses a child may not despise his parents. You must still, because they are your parents, honour, love and be true to them. And pray for them, also pray for God to convert them, should they persevere in the sin.

And children, notwithstanding these infirmities and weaknesses, you must remain obedient to your parents. This, God demands from you. Somebody who is obedient to his parents renders gratitude to God for the salvation Christ effected for him. Must I always obey my parents? Yes! Except where parents command something that is in direct conflict with God's word. Then we must be more obedient to God than to people. No person, not even our parents may expect us to obey them should what they demand from us be in opposition to the Will of God. The Lord's command to our parents is in fact that they must rear the children by the discipline and admonishment required by the Lord.

Beloved, up to now we have only considered what the Lord demands in the Fifth Commandment in conjunction with the relationship between parents and children. But the Fifth Commandment does not deal only with the Lord's demand in the family circle. The Law of the Lord has authority over every terrain of our lives. Therefore the demand of the Fifth Commandment also has relevance on all circles of

authority where we are dealing with authority carriers and subjects: At school, at church, at my work, towards the authorities and everywhere else.

Must we thus also honour the government of the day who has ties with communism and displays heathen traits? Yes, brothers and sisters. This government ruling today over us in South Africa does not have authority from themselves. God has given it to them to rule us. Therefore we confess that we must render to everybody appointed over us all honour love and faithfulness.

The believers Paul is writing to are people who had to flee for their lives from where they lived. Where they lived the church was in fact persecuted. And no matter wherever they fled to they were surrounded by heathens. In order to make a living they had to work and where else than working for the heathens could they work. Hardened heathens were their masters.

By the grace of God some of these hardened heathens at least had a sense of humanity. People who were good-hearted and friendly. Subjecting yourself to the authority of such people is easy because the master is good towards you. But the demand of the Lord is also valid for a master who is unreasonable. You also have to subject yourself to his authority even should it go against your grain and natural disposition. Therefore the Lord earlier on warns us in 1 Peter2: **abstain from fleshly lusts**, our natural disposition.

Man's normal nature is treating people well who treat you well but also to ill-treat those who ill-treat you. The lord warns us against this natural nature because it **destroys your life**. Should the authorities or some carrier of authority treat you badly or unjustly, do not seek ways of undermining or rejecting their authority. You will just ruin your own life. Should you suffer due to a punishment by the authority because you rejected the power of the authority you have earned the punishment. God in fact handed the sword to the authority for punishing transgressors. Therefore, do not do anything whereby you let it be known that you are trying to hamper the work of the state or are rejecting its power. You will just be destroying your own life. And at any rate, you are not only rejecting the power of the authority, you are also rejecting the power of God who appointed the authority over you.

We should rather thank God for Him still ruling over us by the authorities so that order could prevail in the community. What would happen should there be no instances of authority? Just consider for a moment how it would be, should there be no instances of authority. Everything would be in utter chaos. Through the government appointed by the Lord over us He, in fact protects us against such chaos. How must we react should the government or any instance of authority deals in an unfair and unjust way with us? In the first place you should say to our natural disposition: "No, I am not going to retaliate by doing something bad", In the second place Christ set us the example, He also suffered unjustly under government institutions. But not once did he badly retaliate. As Peter teaches: we must follow in these footsteps of Christ.

Now we have to add this: There is a big difference between the suffering of Christ and our suffering. In the full sense of the word Christ suffered innocently. And in this way He caused us to no longer be slaves to our natural disposition. In Christ we conquered the fleshly lusts and can manage to submit ourselves to the power of unfair and unjust authorities.

Then we must also not forget praying for the government. Pray for the Lord to, through His Spirit, intervene in their hearts and minds. Further, we as prophets, must take steps against the authorities acting in an unchristian and evil way. We, indeed, were anointed as prophets.

Beloved children, God demands that you must be obedient to your parents rendering them respect, love and sincerity. Do it, because by doing so you are obedient to God. Beloved parents, God demands that you must rear your children by admonition and discipline in the way the Lord wants you to do, Do it, because by doing so your children will render you obedience, respect, love and sincerity. Beloved congregation of Christ, God demands us to render obedience, respect love and sincerity to everybody appointed over us. Let us also do it, because by doing so we prove our thanks to God for the love and mercy He rendered us by, through Christ, redeeming our sins.

**Amen!**

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 119:4, 5

The Lord bless and keep you, the Lord make his face shine on you, the Lord turn His countenance to you and give peace.

**Amen**

**Rev. Coenraad Vrey  
Reformed Church Bellville  
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