

Sing before the service: Psalm 119:34

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 66:7

Prayer

Psalm 103:9

Scripture reading: Mark 7

Scripture text: Mark 7:10-13; Catechism Lord's Day 39

For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that. (Mark 7:10-13 NIV)

There is a tendency among some people to try and change the contents of the Bible.

- They refer to what is written in the Bible but then ascribe a meaning to it that is different from the meaning the Lord meant it to be.
- According to those people it has a different meaning now – not the same it has always had.

This tendency is not really new or modern as we might think.

- It has always been like this – people explaining and changing the Lord's revelations (based on their own insight) to suit them!
- This is why the Lord once said the following:

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

(Matthew 5:17-18 NIV)

Changing the meaning of God's commandments is looking for serious trouble! Hence the same applies to the principles embedded in the fifth commandment!

One day the Lord was involved in an argument with the Pharisees and teachers of the law.

That day they were arguing about the fact that people add and apply values to certain matters – completely different from what the Lord has established.

On this occasion they confronted the Lord about the fact that his disciples did not comply with the Jewish traditions of hand washing before eating.

- The point was that these people did comply with these laws but for the wrong reason.
- They did not wash and scrubbed themselves in order to serve the Lord with a clean body. Remember, their dirty bodies symbolised their sins – unacceptable to the Lord.

They could not accept this! *They denied the fact that they were sinful!*

- They said they complied with the requirements of ceremonial washing in case they had touched or bumped against a gentile during the day – or perhaps had to speak to one of them.
- They believed that it could make them unclean and therefore they had to wash themselves to get rid of the taint of the gentiles.

In order to prove to them how dull they were and to what extent they missed the point, the Lord Jesus spoke to them about the fifth commandment – the commandment about authority.

- As an example He spoke to them about parents who are too old to look after themselves.
- In the meantime the children had inherited all their possessions. By law the children had to look after the parents.

However, the children did not want to do it, because they did not want to give their parents anything so that they could also live an honourable life. When their parents needed something badly, the child would just say, “Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban.”

The word **corban** means *gift* – but specifically *a gift devoted to God*.

The result was that the parents had to go home with empty hands and had to make do somehow.

- This happened while the authorities never checked that those gifts indeed reached the temple!
- They all knew that the children kept all those “gifts devoted to God” for their own use!
- Sanctimoniously the teachers of the law and the Pharisees simply looked the other way and noticed absolutely nothing.

Meanwhile they were the people who had to see to it that the law of the Lord was complied with conscientiously:

Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you. (Exodus 20:12 NIV)

Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death. (Exodus 21:17 NIV)

With so-called new insights and truths the believers can stray from the Lord. Customs originate which do not serve the honour of the Lord.

Take note that the Word of the Lord in many places refers to authority and acknowledgement of authority. The Ten Commandments require direct obedience to parents. 1 Timothy 5:17 commands respect and submission to the authority of the elders:

The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. (1 Timothy 5:17 NIV)

Why does the Lord demand respect for authority and that we should teach our children about authority?

It's simple: Parental authority is the oldest form of authority in the creation. The Lord uses the family and the forms of authority in the family as the basis for all forms of authority in human society.

Parental authority has two meanings for children.

- On the one hand children deal with their parents.
 - Their parents lay down rules and responsibilities the children have to abide to.
 - However, children can easily outwit or bluff their parents and do not obey them at all!
 - They can even be so disobedient that they grow up to be bad adults.
- On the other hand they also obey God – because their parents are the link between God and them.

- Although they can outwit their parents, they cannot outwit God.
- God brings these children into contact with other matters in his counsel: the church, school, teachers and eventually all forms of authority in the society.

Authority has three elements:

- The first element is *honour*.
 - Honouring your superiors also includes the following:
 - love
 - faithfulness and loyalty
 - trust
 - obedience
 - In the New Testament the apostle Paul combined all these into one word: *obedience*.

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

(Ephesians 6:1 NIV)

In very simple terms it means that every time we do not submit to authority, it resembles Adam's disobedience in paradise.

- The second element is *submission*.
 - Submission means that bounds have been set. The Lord sets bounds that may not be ignored.
 - *Of course, submission means that the authority should be in line with the holiness and will of God!*
 - Accordingly, a true believer must submit to such authority otherwise you go against the Holy Spirit who works obedience to God in our hearts.
 - Disobedience means that such a person rebels against what is holy in the eyes of God.

This places a heavy burden on the legislator. He cannot pass laws that are not in line with the counsel and the will of God! If he does, the true believers should not obey him.

- The third element is *tolerance*.
 - Tolerance and love are closely linked.
 - A person who cannot yield to love will certainly not submit to authority.
 - Hence, such a person should listen to the Lord who says that he should be tolerant with regard to all those in authority over him.

Remember, the Lord Jesus as man also had people in authority over Him. He had to obey Caesar.

“Caesar’s,” they replied.

Then he said to them, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.”

(Matthew 22:21 NIV)

Likewise He had to obey the authority of his Father and what His Father told Him to do. And this is where we find Him praying to his Father:

Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.” (Matthew 26:39 NIV)

The Lord Jesus did not have to obey the command to die and to rise from the dead.

- He is and has always been the eternal God Almighty.
- He wouldn't have lost anything if He had returned to heaven there and then.

His obedience to the command of his Father was on our behalf – because by obeying the command He provided salvation for us who confess Him as our Saviour and who obey his commands.

The descent of the Holy Spirit was, amongst others, to enable us to know what God requires of us and to obey Him. This also applies to the commandment of authority.

With regard to authority, our confession teaches us the following in the Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 39:

104. Q. What does God require in the fifth commandment?

A. That I show all honour, love, and faithfulness to my father and mother and to all those in authority over me, submit myself with due obedience to their good instruction and discipline,[1] and also have patience with their weaknesses and shortcomings,[2] since it is God's will to govern us by their hand.[3]

[1] Ex. 21:17; Prov. 1:8; 4:1; Rom. 13:1, 2; Eph. 5:21, 22; 6:1-9; Col. 3:18-4:1. [2] Prov. 20:20; 23:22; 1 Pet.2:18. [3] Matt. 22:21, Rom. 13:1-8; Eph. 6:1-9; Col. 3:18-21.

Amen.

Closing prayer

Closing psalm 89:6

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

Amen

Dr MJ du Plessis
Reformed Church Bellville
Date: 21 October 2007 (evening)