

With Liberty and Justice for All – Deuteronomy 16:18-22

Introduction – We move into an extended application of the fifth commandment: *“Honor your father and mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you...”* (Deut 5:16) which moves us to the second table of the law, *“love your neighbor as yourself.”* This exposition begins with applications of the source and nature of authority in the civil realm. To hold to the Ten Commandments is to hold to the belief that God and God’s law speaks to all areas of human relationships and governments.

Finding the Fifth Commandment – As with our observations on Moses’ sermon/commentary on the Ten Commandments, explicit references are hard to find. We first have to remember that Jesus taught us that all of the law was summarized in the Ten Commandments, and even in just two. Second, we see similar promises in the fifth and in this exposition, *“...that you may live and inherit the land which the LORD your God is giving you”* (v20). Paul will also tell the Ephesian Gentiles that the Fifth Commandment applies to this Gospel era (Eph 6:1-4), which also commands both ways; the children’s responsibilities and the parents’ responsibilities. Finally, when we understand that the command to honor father and mother is summarizing all hierarchical human relationships and governments, we see that what Moses is dealing with here is under that topic.

Honor Your Father and Mother – If all of that is true, it also follows that the relationship between parents and children (more broadly, the family) is the foundation of all other human relationships. *“The family is the primary and basic authority for human society. If parents are not obeyed by children, no other authority will be honored or obeyed. Hence, the law speaks of the key authority in terms of whose authority social order stands or falls”* – Rushdoony.

Local Justice (vv18-19) – Judges are to be appointed *“in all your gates...from your tribes”* and so they not only judged the people, they were from the people. Bringing the law to bear upon particular conflicts is evidence of the establishment of case law from the scriptures. Three prohibitions follow –

No Perverting Justice – Justice is perverted when it is derived from something other than the law of God, for every law has a Lawgiver behind it. This means that justice will be perverted when it is based upon a false religion as well, be it Sharia law or secular humanism. Justice is perverted when the poor or the mighty are given preferential treatment (Lev 19:15).

No Partiality in Justice – Literally, judges are not to “recognize faces” and so the idea of a good ol’ boys network is no justice.

No Bribe-taking in Justice – Godly judges cannot be bought, for their standard of judgment is the Word of God and not the depth of someone’s wallet (Prov 17:23). On a side note, it is not necessarily a sin to bribe a judge in an already corrupt system if it is in order to obtain justice (Prov 17:8, 21:14).

A Commandment with a Promise (v20) – God’s minister proclaims God’s law, and the judge applies that law to the conflicts of life in the civil realm. There are sovereign spheres of government (family, church, civil) but there is only one Lord of all of it. This is why how we handle our civil affair brings forth consequences from the hand of God. This was not true only for the Jews; the principle addresses our era as well (Eph 6:1-4) which also means that passage should be taken beyond simple individualistic application.

No Other God’s in the Courts (vv21-22) – Moses expounds on this. The context is the discussion of civil justice, and even there, the Canaanite gods or any other idols are not to be honored alongside Yahweh as Lawgivers. Not only was Israel to take down all false gods, they were not to set up any false gods within their society either.

Applications – Let’s work our way back with how this is to work out for us today:

Asherah Poles of Pluralism – The Ten Commandments are being torn down from our courts and replaced with what? By what standard? Pluralism, understood biblically, is nothing more than polytheism, and polytheism has no final court of appeal except whichever god happens to be strongest at the moment. Our secular humanism, rampant with “tolerance” and relativism, is bearing her children: tyranny, chaos and death.

Today’s Source of Civil Corruption – The source of the corruption is not in Washington D.C. The source is in the pulpits of America. American Christianity does not believe it has anything to say to the civil authority. It does not believe it has any moral authority to speak prophetically to the civil government. Worse, it doesn’t even teach by example within its own midst what it means to submit to the clear teaching of Scripture.

The Wrong Kind of Reformation – Why does it seem as though every election produces so little change? Why does it seem like we keep rearranging the furniture instead of truly bringing forth a reformation in our halls of justice? The cry of conservatism (including most Christian conservatism) is “back to traditional values!” But the traditional values of the 40s-50s (empty of a direct submission to the Word) are what brought us this mess. If Christ is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all.

Faithfulness Starts in the Home – Children, if you want a great country tomorrow, what can you do today to make a difference? Obey your parents. Honor your father and mother. There is a promise to you and to your people if you do. Learn to submit to God’s Word, humble yourselves before the mighty hand of God, and He will lift you (and your people) up.