



The Ten Commandments #9

by Ronald L. Dart

I think the whole world was *aghast* when the story of the pedophile ring broke. *The Guardian*, in the United Kingdom, had the story. They said,

The paedophile ring, whose members referred to it as “the club”, was discovered when a worker for Save the Children in Denmark found a picture on the internet of a Danish man molesting his nine-year-old daughter. The man’s face was hidden, but he was identified by the corporate logo on his clothing, [...]

The Guardian - August 9, 2002 - Parents charged in paedophile ring

Which doesn’t speak very well for how intelligent he is.

[...] leading authorities to his home, where they arrested him and his wife and found information on their computer which guided them to other participants.

The Guardian - August 9, 2002 - Parents charged in paedophile ring

It turned out to be...

A network of parents who sexually molested their own children and traded pictures of them on the internet[. It] has been cracked by American and European investigators, the US customs service said yesterday as it announced 20 arrests on both sides of the Atlantic.

The Guardian - August 9, 2002 - Parents charged in paedophile ring

Where are we coming to? It’s good that society is cracking down on this kind of behavior, but sooner or later we’re going to have to face the fact that society has *led us* to the place where we find ourselves. They have done so by abandoning the first commandment of human relationships.

You may have heard of the Ten Commandments. The first four commandments have to do with Man’s relationship with God. The last six commandments have to do with Man’s relationship with Man. And the first commandment in that series (and it *should be* the first commandment in that series) is this:

Exodus 20

AKJV

¹² Honor your father and your mother: that your days may be long on the land which the LORD your God gives you.

“Honor your father and your mother.” Now, this is a concept that is not that well understood. Honoring your father and your mother is not merely a prescription for living a long life. It’s a prescription for *an enduring society*. Let me read it to you again, and think *carefully* about what it is saying:

Exodus 20

AKJV

¹² Honor your father and your mother: [...]

This is spoken from Mount Sinai, the sound rolling down the mountainside for the *whole nation* of Israel to hear it. God says to *all of them*,

Exodus 20

AKJV

¹² Honor your father and your mother: that your days may be long on the land which the LORD your God gives you.

Now, I want to digress for just a moment, because I want to establish and clarify this phrase, “that your days may be long upon the land”. The Law of God is a long list of prescriptions of different things that these people were supposed to do. They are not arbitrary. They are not just things that God dreamed up because Man needed some kind of a set of laws to live by. They were laws to enable a society to function, to prosper, and to endure.

For example, in Deuteronomy 4, verse 25, we find a law that says this:

Deuteronomy 4

AKJV

²⁵ When you shall beget children, and children’s children, and you shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, and shall do evil in the sight of the LORD your God, to provoke him to anger:

²⁶ I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you [*if you go down this road*] shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto you go over Jordan to possess it; you shall not prolong your days on it, but shall utterly be destroyed.

Now, I grant you, all of us need to take *care* about these commandments, individually; but this warning is to a *people*, to a *nation*, to a *society*. “You had better give heed to these commandments because if you don’t you’re going to soon perish from off the land. You will no longer *be* a people.”

Then there’s Deuteronomy 25, talking about another principle of law. It says,

Deuteronomy 25

KJ2000

¹³ You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a great and a small.

¹⁴ You shall not have in your house differing measures, a great and a small.

You are to be consistent in your business dealings with other people.

Deuteronomy 25

AKJV

¹⁵ But you shall have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shall you have: that your days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD your God gives you.

The whole idea is: this set of laws is given to you *as a society to preserve* your society. It's to preserve you as a people. It's to preserve you in the land, so you can prosper and live there a *long* time. Later in Deuteronomy 32, verse 45:

Deuteronomy 32

AKJV

⁴⁵ And Moses made an end of speaking all these words to all Israel:

⁴⁶ And he said to them, Set your hearts to all the words which I testify among you this day, which you shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law.

⁴⁷ For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life: [...]

Think about that. Moses tells the people, “Now, pay attention to all the laws of God. They are not a vain thing for you. They are for your life.”

Deuteronomy 32

AKJV

⁴⁷ [...] and through this thing [...]

What thing? The obedience to the Law of God.

Deuteronomy 32

AKJV

⁴⁷ [...] you shall prolong your days in the land, where you go over Jordan to possess it.

These are statements made to a *society*, a community, a nation. They are obligations upon *everyone* if they expect their *society* to continue. This expression, “that your days may be long upon the land” is a formula which basically means “so you can *survive as a people*”.

Now returning to the Fifth Commandment—the very *first* commandment of the human relationships set:

Exodus 20

AKJV

¹² Honor your father and your mother: that your days may be long on the land which the LORD your God gives you.

A society that fails to establish the rights of parents, and the rights of children—the rights of the family—is *not going to continue*. It will *not be* long upon the land, and that is what the Fifth Commandment is all about.

The Law of God was *very firm* on this issue. In the remarkable blessings and cursing chapter of Deuteronomy, it's a case where they had to stand up on one side of the mountain and pronounce a law, and all the people on the other side had to agree to it and say, “Amen.” And here's what they said:

Deuteronomy 27

AKJV

¹⁶ Cursed be he that sets light by his father or his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen.

They agreed to it. *No one* was to be allowed to “set light by” his father and his mother. The family relationship, the responsibility of parents, the honor due to parents was to be maintained by *all the people*. Note well: *Everyone* had to agree to this law. It was a *societal* responsibility, not merely a personal one.

There’s an interesting set of proverbs that addresses this. It’s found in Proverbs 30, verse 11. Solomon says,

Proverbs 30

AKJV

¹¹ There is a generation that curses their father, and does not bless their mother.

¹² There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.

¹³ There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up.

¹⁴ There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.

Now, you might not think about it initially, but he makes a connection here between a generation that curses their father and their mother and a generation whose teeth are like swords and their jaw teeth like knives to devour the poor from off the earth and the needy from among men. They have *no* respect for the poor, and sadly, even for the poor of *their own family*.

What does God say about this, about the person who disrespects mother or father, and what kind of responsibilities fall on our shoulders as a result of this?

Paul wrote to Timothy that...

2 Timothy 3

AKJV

¹ [...] in the last days perilous times shall come.

And he listed a whole group of things about what people would be like in the last days; and one of them, oddly enough, was “disobedient to parents”. Well, you know, kids are always a little disobedient; but Paul’s obviously talking about something much more serious than that. How do we get to the place to where there is a generation that curses their father and doesn’t bless their mother? How do we get to the place to where the family has completely gone to pot? Well, the Bible prescribed against this. It started with the Fifth Commandment saying,

Exodus 20

AKJV

¹² Honor your father and your mother: that your days may be long on the land which the LORD your God gives you.

There were other laws, like Exodus 21:15:

Exodus 21

AKJV

¹⁵ And he that smites his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death.

In that society, you couldn't stand up and hit your dad. If you did, it was death. Exodus 21, verse 17 says,

Exodus 21

AKJV

¹⁷ And he that curses his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death.

You don't stand up and rail against your parents. There are certain minimum standards of respect, of honor of behavior toward your parents that was absolutely *demande*d of these people. They were to fear God, and they were to stay away from that kind of behavior. And here's one of the interesting laws—one that you might find a little disturbing, but let's consider what it means, and how it might be applied. It's in Deuteronomy 21, and verse 18.

Deuteronomy 21

AKJV

¹⁸ If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not listen to them:

This is a kid who is completely out of hand and beyond the control of his parents.

Deuteronomy 21

AKJV

¹⁹ Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out to the elders of his city, and to the gate of his place;

²⁰ And they shall say to the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard.

²¹ And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shall you put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear.

Hmm. I suspect these laws sound very harsh to the modern man (I doubt if very many of them ever had to be carried out), but what they *do* accomplish is they establish a community responsibility for *maintaining the structure of the family*. It recognizes, in the most *severe* terms possible, that the support, the protection, the maintenance of the integrity of the family is a *societal* responsibility. Right now, in our society, that responsibility has largely been abandoned. Communities have to hold parents' feet to the fire regarding the care of children, but they also have to maintain the authority of parents *over* their children. We cannot follow the letter of these laws today—that's not possible—but we should be very cognizant of the *spirit* of them, because the objective of these laws was to maintain the *integrity of the family*.

You know, back in the '70s and early '80s, we established a no-fault divorce tradition in this country. And I think it was well-intentioned on the part of the people who brought that in; but, you know, there is always the law of unintended consequences, and one of the things that everybody forgot about was the importance of maintaining the integrity of the family *for the sake of society* as a whole. Yeah, I know, you were unhappy in your marriage, and it was awfully nice to be able to walk out of it and get away from all the unhappiness and discomfort. That's okay for you as a person. It's *terrible* for society, for the families to come apart, *especially* when there are still children in the home.

Society has a *vested* interest in keeping families together. Why? Well, if I can borrow a popular political phrase, “It’s the children, stupid.” You have got to, as a society, maintain the integrity of the family for the sake of the children. If you don’t, you’re going to wind up with a generation that curses their father and does not bless their mother—a generation...

Proverbs 30

AKJV

¹² [...] that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.

¹³ There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up.

¹⁴ There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.

We have managed to get there, haven’t we? God spoke to Moses in Leviticus 19, and he said,

Leviticus 19

AKJV

² Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them, You shall be holy [*a separate people*]: for I the LORD your God am holy.

³ You shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my sabbaths: I am the LORD your God.

And of *all the things* he might have said on the heels of saying, “I want you to be holy”, the *first* thing he said was, “You shall fear every man his father and his mother”.

King Solomon, in collecting all of these proverbs that people should listen to, included a few that are important on this. He said in Proverbs 1, verse 8:

Proverbs 1

AKJV

⁸ My son, hear the instruction of your father, and forsake not the law of your mother:

⁹ For they shall be an ornament of grace to your head, and chains about your neck.

This is a remarkable statement, but again, it is so *obvious* that one wonders why should it be remarkable. “My son, listen to the instruction of your father.” “Well, why should I listen to the old man? What does *he* know?” Well, he knows probably 50 years worth of stuff that *you* don’t know. “Don’t forsake the law your mother.” Why should you listen to your mother? Because she knows things that you don’t know. They have your well-being at heart. They are trying to help you live a life that will be productive and profitable and where you won’t get hurt. Proverbs 15:

Proverbs 15

AKJV

⁵ A fool despises his father’s instruction: but he that regards reproof is prudent [*wise*].

Proverbs 20, verse 20

Proverbs 20

ESV

²⁰ If one curses his father or his mother, his lamp will be put out in utter darkness.

Now, that is a graphic that I can understand—to be out there in complete and utter darkness and have your light go out is a *fearful* experience. And the person that curses his mother or his father...the time is going to come when he is going to need light and isn't going to have it. He's going to be in *complete darkness*.

And you know, connected with this Dr. Laura Schlesinger in her book, *The Ten Commandments*, makes an interesting point: You can't expect kids to honor their father and their mother unless you *teach them* to do so. Schools at one point were making an attempt to try to explain the importance of values that are taught by family to the kids; and they get them in school and they go over all these things, but the problem the school has now...they can't tell kids that this concept or this value is right and this other one is wrong, because the schools no longer have any basis for their values. So if you don't teach your children these values at home, they're not going to get them *anywhere*.

And these aren't just Old Testament ideas, by the way. Paul wrote to the Ephesians in chapter 6:

Ephesians 6

AKJV

- ¹ Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.
- ² Honor your father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; [*The first one where there's a promise connected with it.*]
- ³ That it may be well with you, and you may live long on the earth.
- ⁴ And, you fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

You know, most of us would have very little difficulty hearkening back in our life to a time when our dad really broke that principle. It's pretty hard...when you consider how stubborn we have been, or how stubborn we were as kids, and what a pain in the neck we were as kids, that somewhere along the line Dad was not going to lose it, and Dad wasn't going to say something that would provoke us to anger. And this is something I think that is crucial for parents to understand: If you expect your kids to respect *you*, you have got to respect *them*. The teaching of respect, self-respect, respect for elders, respect for other people, goes up, goes down, goes out, and comes in. It is not directional, and it is something that children *have to be taught*. Otherwise, they will *never* know it.

You know, it is really unseemly to see kids (oh, 8- or 9-year-old kids) come up to an older gentleman (might be 60, 65) and call him by his first name. It shows a breakdown, I think, in our society and the values that we used to have, where children were taught to respect their elders.

Now I'm going to make a departure that may surprise you: The Fifth Commandment is not merely about standing up when your parents enter the room. It's about something much greater than that.

Matthew 15

AKJV

- ¹ Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying,
- ² Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

Jesus, I think, must have looked at them with a certain amount of astonishment in his eyes, and he said,

Matthew 15

AKJV

- ³ [...] Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?

⁴ For God commanded, saying, Honor your father and mother: and, He that curses father or mother, let him die the death.

Now, we know that's right, right? Because we just read that back in the Old Testament. So Jesus fixed a glare on the Pharisees and said,

Matthew 15

AKJV

⁵ But you say, Whoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatever you might be profited by me;

Now, that's really odd. What in the world does that mean? Well, essentially what he is saying is this: that the tradition was that a man could have a mother or a father who was in need, and who came to him and said, "Look, we need some help, son." And the son would say, "It's Corban"—that is to say, it's given to God [Mark 7:11]. "I'm sorry, this is already dedicated to God. I can't let you have it." If he does that...

Matthew 15

AKJV

⁶ And honor not his father or his mother, [*you say*] he shall be free. Thus have you made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

Do you realize what Jesus just said? He's talking about honoring your father and your mother with money, or food, or clothing, or something that they need. He went on to say to the Pharisees,

Matthew 15

KJ2000

⁷ You hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying,

⁸ These people draw near unto me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.

⁹ But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

They turned the commandments of men into commandments *upon* men (which they would claim, I guess, was from God) that men had to do. Now, you don't have to think very long about this. Whenever people who are in some kind of religious situation or religious authority, as the Jews were at that time, and they say, "Oh no, you don't have to give this to your mother and your father, you can give it to the temple"; or, if we want to translate it to now, you could say, "Oh no, you don't have to give that to your mother and your father, you can give it to the church", you don't have to think very long to figure out where they're coming from, do you? Proverbs 28:24:

Proverbs 28

AKJV

²⁴ Whoever robs his father or his mother, and said, It is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer.

Well, what Jesus reveals here is that the Fifth Commandment tells us that children have an obligation to *take care of their aging parents*, and you would think we would know that. And I'll tell you right now, if it's a question of taking care of your aging parents in their hour of need, and giving money to the church, take care of your parents. There is another proverb that says...it's in Proverbs 23, verse 22:

²² Listen to your father that begat you, and despise not your mother when she is old.

You know, there are a couple ways to understand this. The word “despise” has a rather broad meaning in the Bible. It means “to look down upon”. It can also mean “to set at nothing” or “declare as unimportant”. And if your mother or your father are old, and they are living below the poverty line—I mean *real* poverty, as you *know* it to be, not some government figure—and you have a choice of helping them out or giving to the church, *obviously* you help your parents first. I figure that will be controversial in some quarters, but so let it be. This is Jesus’ interpretation of the Fifth Commandment. To him, it was not an abstraction to say “Honor your father and your mother.” It was *real* help, on the ground, for *real* needs, of *real* people, and it took precedence over offerings to the temple.

What’s this all about? I’ll tell you: It’s about *family*. It’s about the *coherence* of the family. Some senator once opined... I was watching him on television one Sunday morning... He opined that one of the best government programs—that everybody agrees that this is a good government program—was Social Security. Well, I wondered about that. So I asked some friends of mine who were old enough to remember life *before* Social Security. And I said, “What was it like back then? What did old people do when they could no longer support themselves? Did they starve? Did they go hungry? Did they live on the streets?” “No”, my friends told me. I said, “What did they do?” They said, “Families took care of their own people.”

Well now, where would families get the *money* to take care of their elderly? That’s a logical question; we have to think about that, because that can get expensive. Well, have you taken a look recently to see how much money the government takes out of your paycheck? And did you know that your employer *matches* that amount of money? Go ahead, grab your paycheck, look at the stub, and see how much money the government is taking out—every month—out of your pay for Social Security; and match it, double it, because your employer is putting that much in *again*. And you do know, don’t you, that the same thing is true of *all* your siblings and *all* your family members; and that probably all of you combined, if you look at all that money combined, would have *no trouble at all* taking care of needy family members. The government took away from us the money we might have used to support our aging parents and said, “Don’t worry, *we’ll* take care of them”, thus relieving you of any obligations under the Fifth Commandment, and thus weakening the bonds of family.

Now, I asked my friends about people who had no family, or they had a family that *couldn’t* help them. And they said, “Well, where we lived, the county had *a home* for people like that.” And I slapped my forehead and I said, “*Of course*, there was a county home just down the road from where I grew up.” I visited there once or twice, and in fact it was every bit as comfortable as most nursing homes that I visit *now*, in the age of Social Security.

And in the community the churches visited there. They helped the people that were there. They would go sit down and talk to them. They would come on Sunday morning and sing songs to them. They would actually in some cases fill their little needs. They would buy a comb for an old lady. They would help an old man with his problem he has with his feet. And I wondered how efficient a government bureaucracy could be, in collecting funds from hundreds and maybe thousands of miles away, compared to what counties, family, churches, friends, generous neighbors could do right there in our own community. And I wonder, naturally (as I know *you* do), how much of our Social Security taxes goes down some government rat-hole or disappears in fraud. Think about it.

There’s not much we can do about that, but it does *not* relieve us of the obligation imposed by the Fifth Commandment. So what can you do about it? Well, if you’re a young person just entering the workforce, think *now* about how you’ll be able to help your aging parents some day if they should need it. Stop wasting money on things you don’t really need. When you move into your new digs, don’t load up your credit card for furnishings; furnish your home from the local thrift store, garage sales, estate

sales—with stuff you can pay *cash* for. Save money, invest money. This will accomplish three important things: One, when your parents need help, you'll be in a position to help them without hurting your own family. Two, you will have an estate to leave your kids that will make *all* the difference in their lives. Three, you will have raised your standard of living to match your best expectations you had when you were coming out of school. You will have improved *your* life, the life of your *kids*, the life of your *parents*. And the funniest thing of all, you will have accomplished this because you took the Fifth Commandment *seriously*.

Exodus 20

AKJV

¹² Honor your father and your mother: that your days may be long on the land which the LORD your God gives you.

Transcript of a *Born to Win*
radio program by
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