

utilize the life God gives in a maximum way.

The Fifth Commandment

What does this command say? The teaching is given in two parts: the command and the promise. In the command we are told to honor father and mother, while in the promise we are assured that our days will be prolonged in the land. Surely this command had special meaning for Israel as they moved to Canaan. They were going to a land unknown and shrouded in mystery. But the Word of God was firm: respect the order I establish and it will be well with you in this land. The principle of the command is as firm today as when it was given but the application is somewhat altered. Paul, writing the Ephesian letter, notes that this is the first command with promise. He does not particularize that promise, but his meaning is obvious. Those who hear the commands of the Lord will be honored in the provision of God that meets their particular need. The thrust of this promise covers many commands but it begins with the closest of relationships: parent and child.

Have you ever noticed how familiarity may at times produce a special contempt? It seems that persons often react badly where they should not simply because of an overly familiar relationship. A man, polite and soft-spoken to women in general, may shout at his wife; a counsellor known for kindness and thoughtfulness to others may be harsh to his own family, and a child courteous to aunts, uncles and visitors may show great disrespect for its own parents. These situations may be reversed, of course, but they exhibit a basic failure of our natures. Secure in a given course we are often neglectful of the very persons that have made it possible. Our command is designed to offset this problem. We begin by honoring Father and Mother.