

OpenTheo

5th Commandment (Part 2)



Ten Commandments - Steve Gregg

Honoring one's physical and spiritual fathers is an important commandment, according to Steve Gregg. Beyond just respecting family members, it also includes having reverence for the church and for God. While there may be faults within the church, it is still God's house and a vital part of the spiritual family. Honoring our spiritual father involves standing up for the church publicly and recognizing its importance in our lives.

Transcript

...that while he still had his family relationship, of course, he had a new family, new relationships in a spiritual family. And this is something that the New Testament focuses on, even though we still have the command in the New Testament, honor thy father and thy mother, speaking of your natural parents, yet we are given a new focus. And that is upon spiritual relationships in a spiritual family.

And we'll see that this command, this 5th Commandment, has to do with those relationships also. In Ephesians chapter 5, in a passage which may be familiar to you, it says in verse 22, Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, and he is the Savior of the body.

Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. Now, in this passage, which is probably familiar if you've ever been to a Christian wedding, this is almost always read.

It tells us what you probably already knew, but we need to look at it again, that the relationship between husband and wife, which is a God-ordained relationship, is to be a picture of the relationship between Christ and the church. Now, aside from any other thing that might be said about that, the basic meaning of that is that the family

relationship, at least the relationship between husband and wife, is a picture of spiritual relationships on another plane. And this is only one of the many passages which indicates such a thing.

I'd like you to turn also to 1 Timothy, for another one, 1 Timothy chapter 5, and verses 1 and 2. And this is talking about relationship with people within the body of Christ, who are not your physical relatives, but it says in 1 Timothy 5, 1 and 2, Now, evidently, he's saying that the way that you are normally to treat parents, the way that you would normally treat brothers, the way you would normally treat sisters, this is the way you're to treat the various groups in the church, the young men, the old men, the old women, the young women, that you are to emulate the family relationship in the church. And this, again, is just another passage which indicates to us that natural domestic relationships are intended to be a picture of spiritual relationships. Now, God Himself points this out, even in the Old Testament, in Malachi chapter 1. In this passage, I do want you to look at, if you're lazy and don't look up all the passages, or you don't have to be lazy, maybe you don't have a Bible, or maybe you've got arthritis in your fingers, or something like that, or bad eyesight, in which case it's better for you just to listen.

But I would like you to see the passage on the page as we read it, simply because it gives you entrance through two gates, your eye gate and your ear gate, and makes you doubly able to have it implanted in your soul. In Malachi chapter 1, that's the last book in the Old Testament, verse 6, it says, A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master. If then, God says, if I be a father, where is my honour? And if I be a master, where is my fear? Saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priest that despise my name.

Now, He says, of course, a son honours his father. The Bible says, honour your father, honour your mother. Now, if a son honours his father, and if I am a father, God says, then where is my honour? Evidently, God intends, when He says, honour your father and your mother, not only to honour your natural father, but also to honour your heavenly father.

Where is my honour? He said, I'm a father too, aren't I? And we need to examine this, because there are many ways in which our lives may fail to honour God. And, again, we have practical means given to us in the Scripture of how we are to honour the Father, honour God the Father. I'd like to examine some of those things in the Scriptures with you, so that we might be very clear as to whether or not our lives are giving God the honour that He, in His Word, tells us He deserves.

Now, let's turn, for instance, to John, chapter 5. John, chapter 5, and verse 23. Or we could read verse 22 and 23 to pick up the sentence at its beginning. John 5, 22, For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.

He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father that sent Him. So, how do we

honour the Father? Well, among other things, we certainly must at least honour His Son. You cannot honour the Father without honouring the Son.

He that honoureth not the Son, does not honour the Father that sent Him. So that no one who neglects to give Christ the proper honour, let us do His name, can ever be said to be honouring your Father in Heaven. There are many in the world who are seekers after God.

I imagine they would style themselves. Certainly, modern Jews, if they're devout, they are seekers after the Father. Even the Muslims, of which about a quarter of the world is made up, seek after one God.

They are like Jews and like Christians in that they believe in one God. They believe in a very different kind of God than we do. But Allah is the name they call Him by.

And some people say, well, don't they honour... I mean, if there's only one God, maybe they have the wrong name for Him, but maybe they're just worshipping the same God we are. Well, it doesn't matter. Even if they were worshipping the same God, they're not worshipping Him through the Son.

They reject the Son. And if you don't honour the Son, you don't honour the Father. You might give your body to be burned.

You might bestow all your goods to feed the poor. You might crawl to Mecca on your knees. You might kiss the wailing wall every day of your life.

But if you don't honour the Son, you don't honour the Father that sent Him. Jesus gave the illustration or the parable of a vineyard in Matthew chapter 21. And there, the Jews were... or the rulers of the Jews were depicted as tenants taking care of another man's vineyard.

God was the man who owned the vineyard. The vineyard was Israel. And every time it was... an attempt was made on the part of the owner to get the fruit, he'd send a messenger which represented the prophets who came to Israel and told them to bring forth the fruit that God wanted.

And he said they'd always mistreat the messengers. Finally, he said, I'll send my son. They will reverence Him.

But they didn't reverence Him. They didn't honour Him. And because they did not honour Him, and the Bible says that king who owned the vineyard sent his army down and destroyed their city and wiped them all out.

It's very clear that if you don't honour the Son, that God Himself is being insulted. After all, you know, when you say, well, what if I just kept the Ten Commandments and kept

the law perfectly? Well, good luck. I don't think you can.

But if you did, you still wouldn't be saved. If the law were... if... the Bible says in Galatians 2, if righteousness... if there was a law through which righteousness could be had, then Christ died in vain. That means that Jesus came for nothing.

Imagine if there was some other way people could be saved other than through Christ. Whether it was by keeping certain rules, or by making certain sacrifices, or by doing a great deal of good works. If there was anything you could do to be saved without Christ, then God was a tremendous fool to send Christ to die as He did.

What a cost. What a necessary cost if there was some other way for man to be saved. What a poor economist God is, if there is some way that He had forgotten about, by which men could be saved that would not require the sacrifice of His Son, and yet He foolishly, as some would believe, sent His Son and made such a great sacrifice when it was sadly unnecessary.

It's very evident that if someone does not honor the Son and does not come to God through Christ, they call God a fool. Because He apparently believed there was no way to be saved, or else He would have allowed a different way. Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane prayed and said, Father, if it's possible, let this cup pass from me.

If there's any other way, let's take another way, Jesus said. But the cup did not pass from Him. When they arrested Him in the garden and Peter came to His aid with a sword, Jesus said, put away your sword, the cup that the Father has given me, shall I not drink it? He realized that it was not possible for that cup to pass from Him because there was no other way for man to be saved.

And for any modern fool to say that he can be saved and honor the Father without Jesus Christ, he's calling God a liar and a fool. And it's evident that he certainly cannot be honoring God. He cannot honor the Father if He does not honor the Son.

So, the first way in which we are obliged to honor God, the Father, is to honor His Son, Jesus Christ. That's the first step. If we don't do that much, we can do nothing to bring Him honor.

A second way in which we can honor God is by obedience to Him. And we can turn to a passage in John for that also. In John chapter 8, in verse 49, Jesus tells us, He says, I have not a devil, the Jews were accusing Jesus of having a devil.

And Jesus answered, I have not a devil, but I honor my Father, and ye do dishonor me. Now, He says, I honor my Father. Well, how does He honor His Father? What did He do that honored His Father? He tells us that also, 20 verses earlier, in verse 29, He says, He that sent me is with me, the Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please Him.

That's how Jesus honored His Father. How do you honor Father? You do always those things that please Him. You always obey what you know He wants you to do.

Just as you have to obey your earthly father, you have to obey God the Father. And how much more important to do that? Though both are extremely important. Only to honor God the Father is something you never outgrow.

It's an obligation you must do until the day of your death. And so, we honor God by honoring His Son. We also honor God by obeying Him.

Another means of honoring God is to give Him the honor and the credit for anything good that we do. That honors God. If we do something good, then there's a tendency for us to get glory for it.

There's a tendency for people to praise us if we do something well. In the story of how the men lowered the man who was paralyzed through the roof, that he might be close to Jesus, and how Jesus told the man his sins were forgiven and then raised him up so that he could walk and carry his bed out of there. It says in one of the Gospel accounts, the people were marveling and giving God praise, and they praised God for giving such powers to men, it says, or something like that.

Meaning that they recognized that Jesus did this, but they praised God who had given Him the power to do it. The Apostle Paul was very careful to make sure God got the honor for the things that Paul himself seemed to be accomplishing. In 1 Corinthians 15, in verse 10, Paul said, But by the grace of God I am what I am, and this grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, but I have labored more abundantly than they all.

Now, that means all the other apostles. If you read the context, it says, I've done more work than all the other apostles. No brag, just fact.

He worked harder than all of them put together, apparently, or at least any of them individually. But then he says, lest you get too proud of him, he says, Not I, but the grace of God which was with me. That is, now it's true, I did.

I did labor more than the other apostles, but it wasn't me. It was the grace of God. I couldn't have done it.

I'm not so good. The only way this was even possible is that God gave me the grace to do it. God deserves the honor for this.

And that's what he's saying. He's honoring the Father by giving God the honor and the glory for what he does. There's times, everyone who ministers, as I do, you know, in a pulpit or something, or in music, gets the praise of men at one time or another.

It's one of the pitfalls, really, of ministry. There are many pitfalls of ministry, but one of

them is the praise of men. The Apostle Paul indicated that he was so prone to receive praise of men.

He was so prone to be exalted above measure that God had to give him a thorn in the flesh to remind himself and others that he was a human being, because his ministry was so mighty. But every one of us who speaks for God, even if you're not a preacher in a pulpit, if you give someone some counsel and it blesses them, you do a good deed to them, there's the possibility someone's going to praise you for it. And I've been in the ministry a long time in various different situations.

People have come up and commended me for one thing or another, that they thought I did well. And you never know how to handle that, or at least it's kind of hard to know, because you don't want to just be glibly say, oh, praise the Lord, you know, because, I mean, that's true, but that is such a glib expression so often that people might not really take it seriously. They might not really praise the Lord.

And it's not easy to know how to respond to praise. But the Bible does say that we need to give the glory to God, and that he will bear the glory, it says in Zechariah. But how do you do that? I sometimes have resorted to saying, well, you know, if you have seen something good in me, consider this.

The Bible says no servant is greater than his Lord. And if you see something in me that you are impressed with, just imagine what my Lord must be like, because no servant, and I'm a servant only, is greater than his Lord. So if you think there's some greatness that you see, then it must be very small in comparison to that of God himself, and how much more we ought to think about his virtues, and his strengths, and his talents, and his beauty.

And what a small portion of all of that is manifest in my particular ministry. How much we ought to just give him the honor that is due his name. And so one way that we honor the Father is to give him the glory, and give him the honor and the credit for things that we do that tend to bring praise for men.

Another way that we give honor to God is by celebrating his praise, as we do here. We sing and we praise God. There are psalms to that effect that indicate that that's a way of giving honor to God.

We read about that in Psalm 71, in verse 8. The psalmist says, Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and with thy honor all the day. Let my mouth be filled with your honor. As I praise him, and as I glorify him, he is being honored by my mouth.

My mouth is filled with his honor and with his praise all the day. I trust. It certainly ought to be.

That's the way it is with those 24 elders and the four living creatures in the book of

Revelation. How that all day long, all night, I guess there's no night there, but they're always falling down and they're speaking of the honor of God and praising him, and honoring him with the fruit of their lips. Here in Revelation chapter 5, we have a record of what they say.

In Revelation 5, verse 13, And every creature which is in heaven and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing and honor, and glory and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever. All the living things that God had created were praising him and saying, Honor to him, blessing to him. And so, by celebrating his praise and singing as we do, this honors God.

This is a means of honoring our Father, which is in heaven. But there's yet another way to honor God, to honor our Father, and that is to suffer dishonor for his name's sake. It's an honor to a father, when his son will stand up for him in company of people who will hate him for doing so.

When a man stands among the enemies of his father, and hears his father ill-spoken of, and that son takes a stand for his father, he honors his father by suffering reproach, by taking a stand in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation, we honor God by taking a stand for him. This is a way to honor God, and it's a way that we cannot neglect to honor God. It's a dishonor to God when we hear cursing.

When we hear people blaspheming God, and we don't stand up to his honor. What a reproach it is. How weak, how dishonorable children we are, when this is the case.

When we don't stand for God, and there's an opportunity in our path to do so. Jesus said, He that confesses me before men, him will I confess before my Father, which is in heaven. He that denies me before men, him will I deny before my Father, which is in heaven.

It's an honor to God that you stand and confess him before men. It says in Acts chapter 5 and verse 41, that Peter and John were beaten for their testimony of Christ by the Sanhedrin, and it says in Acts 5 41, that they left the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for his name's sake. They were rejoicing as their backs were laid open and bleeding, that God counted them worthy to let them suffer shame for him.

This is the spirit of those who honor their Father. It's very evident that as we have sometimes failed to honor our earthly fathers, we have often failed probably as often or more often failed to honor God the Father. And I trust that just examining these scriptures will help us to know in what ways we need to really repent and begin to honor God as He is a Father.

If I'm a father, He said, where is my honor? Well, where is it? It ought to be among His people, certainly, among His children. Now, what about, is there really a spiritual counterpart to honoring your mother? Honor your father and mother. I know there's some who would say, well, our mother is Mary.

No, you're mixed up. That was Jesus' mother. She's not our mother.

We are very glad that she lived and that she gave us Jesus, but she's not our mother. Thank you. But there is a spiritual mother.

Now, who is a spiritual mother? Well, there's more than one sense in which that can be answered. If I said, who is your spiritual father? You might say, well, now, wait a minute. Clarify the question.

In a sense, God is my spiritual father. In another sense, the person who led me to the Lord is my spiritual father. After all, Paul did say, treat the older men as fathers and treat them as fathers, and the older women as mothers.

So, in a sense, God is my father. In another sense, the man who led me to the Lord may be my spiritual father, in a sense. Now, what about spiritual mothers? Well, it's clear also that the person who led you to the Lord could be called your spiritual mother.

In fact, the apostle Paul spoke of himself in those terms. He was the one who had led the whole Galatian church into experience with Christ, and when he wrote to them in Galatians 4.19, he said, my little children, in whom I travail again in childbirth for you until Christ be formed in you. That is, Paul was travailing again.

That is, going through labor pains again as that church was about teetering on the edge of apostasy. He says, I'm going through those labor pains again. He described himself as the mother of that church.

In another place, 1 Thessalonians, I think chapter 2, he described himself as a nursing mother to that church. How tenderly he treated him, like a mother nurses her children, or a nurse mothers her children. But that's only one sense.

Just as we might say the man who led us to the Lord is our spiritual father, in a sense, but ultimately there's another spiritual father to whom we owe our honor, and that's God himself. So also we could describe figuratively the person who led us to the Lord as our spiritual mother. But there's another mother to which the Bible makes reference, which the scripture says is the mother of us all, meaning the mother of all of us Christians.

It's not talking about Eve. She's the mother of all humans. In fact, it says that in Genesis chapter 2, when Adam met Eve, he said he named her Eve because she was the mother of all living.

But that's not the mother that we're obliged to honor. But there is a mother of us all that is all us Christians, and that's made reference to in Galatians 4 also. And I'd like you to turn there to find out what that mother is, because we are obliged to honor father and mother, certainly if we have to honor God as our father.

And if he has told us that there is a mother, spiritually speaking, that we are to honor, we ought to know who that mother is. It might seem a strange teaching, but as you'll find, it's a very biblical teaching. Galatians 4 in verse 26, Paul says, but the Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

Now, he said that the Jerusalem which is above, now, I don't know how much you've read the New Testament, or the Old, for that matter, but there is reference in other places in the Bible to a new Jerusalem. But what is the new Jerusalem? Is it just a physical city like the Jerusalem in Israel is today, with certain geographical dimensions? If so, then it's a rather unusual looking city because it's described in Revelation as being a cube of about 15,000 or 1,500 miles each direction. A cube, 1,500 miles up too.

Having 12 gates and streets that are of gold that are so pure that you can see through them like glass. That's the book of Revelation description of the Jerusalem, but I frankly think that's symbolic. I don't necessarily believe that the new Jerusalem really looks like that.

In fact, just because my view of Revelation is that there are a lot of symbols in it. I don't know if you've ever read it, and if you have, I can't imagine that you would deny that it's full of symbols. But I feel that the description of the new Jerusalem in Revelation is symbolic, but there is one thing about it that is said in very clear terms.

If you turn in Revelation 21, Revelation chapter 21, where this Jerusalem which is above is mentioned and described and by the way, remember Galatians 4.26 said the Jerusalem which is above is the mother of us all. Let's see what the mother of us all is. It says in Revelation 21.2 And I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Now that is the strangest thing. A city that is dressed up like a bride. How do you dress a city like a bride? Especially a city that's a cube.

Fifteen hundred miles cubed. According to the dimensions given here. How do you dress such a city as a bride? We are given a hint here, I think, that we're talking in symbolic terms.

And that either the description of the city as a cube is symbolic or as a bride is symbolic or maybe both are symbolic representations. But let's go a little further and see what else we're told about it in the same chapter. Revelation 21, verses 9 and 10.

It says, And there came unto me one of the seven angels, which had the seven vials full

of the seven last plagues. And he talked with me, saying, Come hither and I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. Oh, well, we know who the Lamb's wife is.

If the Lamb is Jesus, who's the bride of Christ? Anyone know who the bride of Christ is? The church is the bride of Christ. No question about it. So the angel was going to show him the church, right? He said, I'm going to show you the bride, the Lamb's wife.

Clearly, he was about to show him the church. What did he see? Verse 10. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and he showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.

Now, I don't know if you find that confusing. I think that in order not to find it confusing, we might have to dislodge ourselves from traditional ways of viewing things. But it seems to me like this chapter is saying that the new Jerusalem is the church.

In verse 2, it says the new Jerusalem was coming down adorned as a bride for her husband. In verses 9 and 10, it specifically said, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife. Well, what did he show him? The new Jerusalem.

Well, how could we call the church a city? The church is not a city, is it? Or did Jesus say something like that to his disciples on one occasion? Like Matthew chapter 5, where he said to his disciples, you, meaning the church, my disciples, he said, you are the light of the world, a city that is set on a hill. It cannot be hid. Now, he described the church, his disciples, as a city on a hill, as a community visible to all the world, exposed.

Now, when we think of what a city was in the old days, it might help us to understand why a city would be used to describe the church. In ancient times, especially in the days of the conquest of Canaan, a city was a sovereign state in itself. In the land of Canaan, when Joshua brought the people in, there were many cities to conquer.

Each of them was sovereign, had its own king. In a sense, each city within its walls was a kingdom under a king. And with that understanding of the city being a sovereign kingdom, we could understand a little more, perhaps, how Jesus would say that his disciples were such a thing.

They also were a city or a kingdom under a king. They were a community of people living under one ruler, maybe not all in one place, but the fact is that the church is the kingdom of God. Biblically speaking, there's no way to get around it, although I've heard some people try to say it's not true.

There's no way to get around it. You read everything the Bible says about the kingdom of God, you can't get around it. It's the church.

You read everything the Bible says about the New Jerusalem, you can't get around it. That's the church. And when Paul says, the Jerusalem which is above is the mother of us

all, that's another thing you can't get around.

The church is the mother of us all. And we shouldn't be surprised that such imagery would be used. After all, if God is our father, he's begotten us.

That's how one becomes a father, by begetting. You've been begotten again by God. You've been born again.

That's how he became your father. You didn't become his child until then. But through what agency did he beget you? A father doesn't have a child all by himself.

He needs a wife. He needs one to carry and bring forth that child. And indisputably, the way that God brought you to himself was through his church.

Now you might say, I wasn't in church when I got saved. That doesn't matter. The only reason you even know that God existed is because you had had exposure to the church, or to one of its members.

The church is the bride of Christ. The church is the mother through whom God is begetting children. And every one of us has been born again because of the agency of the church.

Now you say, what do you mean, the church? You mean the Catholic church? They talk about that being the mother church, don't they? Well, maybe they do. I'm not sure. I've never been one of them, so I don't know whether they talk that way or not.

Could be. But if they do, I know why they do, because it's in the Bible. They talk about the church that way.

But I don't agree. If they say the Catholic church is my mother, it certainly is. And I didn't get saved through the Catholic church, and I'm not sure how many people ever did.

Some maybe did. But I believe the church, the bride of Christ, is a mother of us all. The mother of us all.

I don't mean the Baptist church, or the church of God, or the Assembly of God church, or the Four Square church, or Great Commission Community church, or Pacific Community church, or any other church in particular. The church, which is made up of all true believers in Jesus Christ. Now, there's much confusion about who the church is, and maybe I would forgo talking about this at length if only I felt we were not obligated to honor our mother, the church, just as we're to honor our Father, God.

Now, you might say, that's going a little too far. Well, is it? How do you know you're not going too far by saying we don't have to honor the mother, the church? Certainly in the early days, there was a great deal of honor bestowed upon the church. Not only by its members, but by its enemies as well.

The Bible said that when God's power was manifest in the church, that people feared. It says in one place, after Ananias and Sapphira fell over dead because of their sin, it says no one dared to join themselves to the church after that. Why? The church was too awesome.

It was evident that the church was the agency through which God moved on this planet. It was evident that the church was God's agent in the world. But which church, we would say? In those days, they didn't have to ask that question.

There's only one church in every town. Today, we've got dozens in almost every town you want to go to. And it does get confusing, true enough, because you go to some of them and you say, I don't know if this is a church, you know? I haven't heard the gospel.

I don't even know if they ever opened the Bible here. I don't know if they even know who Jesus is here. And it is true that it's a little more confusing than it used to be to know who the church is, but the church is God's people.

That means that there are some people who are part of the church who attend the Pentecostal church. There are some people who are part of the church who attend the Baptist church. There are some people who are part of the church who attend the church of God.

And some who attend the church of Christ. And some who attend, believe it or not, the Seventh-day Adventist church. Or some who attend maybe even the Catholic church, for all we know.

Or the Lutheran church, or the Presbyterian church, or any other church where there may be people who truly know the Lord and are born again, they are members of that entity which was birthed at the day of Pentecost, which is called the church. And which is manifest in every city through God having a people in every city. And that people is the mother through whom he births new babies into his kingdom.

Now, it's true that in the church today there's much mixture and there's many, it's a mixed multitude. There are many people in every church who are not Christians, sadly. I'm really sad to say that.

I'd like to find a church where everyone in it was really born again. But I'm not sure I've ever located one like that. But whether that be the case or not, that doesn't mean I just throw out the church.

I'm not at liberty to do that. You see, it's very easy for someone to say, well, every church I've been in, I've seen corruption. Every church I've been in, I've seen hypocrisy.

Every church I've been in, I've seen leaders who are on an ego trip. Or who are power hungry. Or I've seen people who are gossips.

I've just seen so much ugliness in the church, I think I'll forget the church. No, you can't forget the church. God hasn't forgotten the church.

The Bible says that he paid a great price for the church. He won't allow the church to be discarded lightly. The Bible says, forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is.

And how much more? Exhorting one another daily, how much more as you see the day approaching? You need the church. You need fellowship with other Christians. It may be that the church that you go to, and it doesn't matter which one you go to, this would be true of almost any of them, may have some corrupt individuals.

May have some hypocrites. May have some leaders who have bad motives. May even have some leaders who aren't even Christians.

That's true of almost every church I've seen. But, it's likely, if you're going to a church that names the name of Christ and that teaches the word of God, that you also are going to a place where there are true believers. Where there is a representation of the true church there.

And you cannot throw out the baby with the bath water. You cannot throw out the church because pollution has come into the church. Jesus said there'd be tares growing up among the wheat in the world, and if it's in the world it's equally true in the church.

There are people who look like Christians who are not. But they are not reason enough to bring dishonor on the church. I've heard people talk about the church, or churches, in such a dishonorable way, who call themselves Christians, and many times, amazingly, think themselves superior Christians.

Because they've learned by experience to have nothing to do with the church. It's amazing how superior some people think they are. And how sad it is that they don't realize they're the inferior ones.

Because the only thing that makes a Christian superior is his servant's attitude. The greatest in the kingdom is a servant of all. The only virtue that really sets a Christian apart as being like Christ is the virtue of love.

Not only loving those who are lovely, but loving those who are unloving. If you love only those who love you, what bank have you? Even the publicans do the same. If you greet only those who greet you, so what? The publicans do the same as that.

You're not special. But if you love those who don't love you, if you love those and greet those who don't greet you, if you refuse to allow a split to occur between you and another Christian, despite their ugly side, or even despite your questioning whether they really are a Christian, you can show yourself to be, not superior, I suppose, but what a

Christian should be. But a person who says, I can't tolerate the church anymore because of hypocrites, that person is inferior, no matter what they think about themselves.

The man who says, I can only fellowship with people who I know are really pure. Well, then you're more narrow than Jesus is. Jesus' fellowship are tax collectors and sinners.

And it is not our place to throw out the church. God birthed the church. He has ever since the day of Pentecost been birthing new children through the church, his wife, his bride, and, as Paul said, the mother of us all.

And if we are obliged to honor physical father and mother, and if that obligation carries over to honoring our spiritual father, God, then it also carries over, by the same token, to honor the spiritual mother, the church. Not this group of people here, not any given group of people, but the church, and never to think ourselves independent of it, and never to sell the church short. The church is going to conquer.

Can you believe that? The church is really going to conquer. Jesus did not start a failure. God is not going to remove the church in defeat and then use some other group of people to accomplish his purposes.

He will not do that. The church, the Bible says, was God's eternal purpose. In Ephesians 1, God's eternal purpose was to bring all things together in one, in Christ, and that is manifest in the church.

And you'd better believe that God's not going to fail in the church. The Bible says, unto him be glory in the church, both now and evermore. In Ephesians 3, the last verse in the chapter.

Unto God be glory in the church. The church is going to reflect the glory of God. It doesn't at this moment as much as we might wish, but it certainly won't anymore if all the people with convictions leave it.

If everyone who feels that they see the light brighter than others leaves the church, that's not going to help the church toward its eventual destiny. The destiny of the church is to reign with Christ. His bride is going to sit at his right hand on his throne with him, the Bible says, in Revelation 3.21. So we must understand that the church is worthy of honor.

And I'll tell you why the church is worthy of honor, and I won't make it up out of my own head. I'll tell you very many scriptural reasons why the church needs to be honored, and you must take it seriously because it's not enough just to honor your father. The mother is also to be honored.

And let's see the various ways the Bible talks about honoring the church. In 1 Corinthians chapter 11, we find Paul aghast that anyone would dishonor the church. In 1 Corinthians

11, in verse 22, Paul is talking about how people come to the church meeting and they take communion in an unworthy manner, and they neglect to care for the needs of each other, and they just look out for their own things to get fed and all.

And he says, what, in 1 Corinthians 11, what, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? Or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? He says, do you despise the church of God? Now, the word despise in Old English, it doesn't mean hate as we modernly use the word despise. It means to degrade. To despise means to look down on, to consider with less dignity than is appropriate.

That's what despise means. And he's basically saying, do you dishonor the church of God? Paul would be aghast at the thought. Amazing how many people who consider themselves spiritual are not aghast at the concept of despising or dishonoring the church.

But many people do it. Well, why should the church be considered worthy of honor? Let's look at a few passages very quickly to see on what basis the church is worthy of honor. Acts chapter 20, where Paul is talking to the elders of the church in Ephesus.

He's called them to the island of Miletus to visit with him. And he gives his final word to them in Acts chapter 20 and verse 28. He says to those elders, take heed therefore unto yourselves and unto all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood.

If God purchased the church of God with his own blood, he must have felt it was worth something. It says in 1 Peter 1, knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. You weren't bought with something cheap and tawdry.

You weren't bought with something that God could create in great abundance. You were bought with something more precious than anything else he had to pay, and that's the blood of his son. Or as Paul says, his own blood.

God purchased his church with his own blood. Are you going to say that church is not worthy of honor? Are you going to say that you belittled that for which God spent his own blood? I think not. In Ephesians chapter 1, we have another reason for honoring the church.

Ephesians 1, verses 20 through 23. It says, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of

him that filleth all in all. The church is his body, and it's not only that, it is the fullness of him, which filleth all in all.

What in the world does that mean? The church is the fullness of Christ? Yes, that's what Paul taught not only here, but in other places. We are members of his body. We are of his flesh and of his bones.

The Bible says in Ephesians later on, lie not one to another, for you are the members of Christ. I thought I was a member of the church. True, I'm a member of Christ, because the church is his body.

It is the fullness of him. A head without a body is not a full person. Jesus is the head over all things to the church, but the church is the rest of the body, and you don't divide a head from a body successfully and maintain life.

The church is the fullness of Christ, and if you don't understand what that means, maybe we need to meditate on it a bit, but whatever it means, it means that you better not dishonor it. How can you dishonor the church, and hope to be not dishonoring Christ, who is the head of that body? There's another reason for honoring the church. 1 Timothy 3.15. 1 Timothy 3, and verse 15 Paul said, But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

The church of the living God is what? It's the house of God. Now, that doesn't mean the building with the steeple on the corner is the house of God. God does not inhabit houses made with hands.

God inhabits human beings. We are living stones being built up into a holy habitation of the Lord. The church made up of individual Christians, people, who are living stones built together into a holy habitation of the Lord, is the house of God, and it is the pillar and ground of the truth.

That means the basis of truth is to be judged by the church. The church, in fact, is the final earthly court of appeals. You might say, well, how could the church as it exists today be the final earthly court of appeals when every church differs about one thing or another? Well, I have to admit that not everybody that calls itself a church is necessarily acting in the church's proper authority.

The basis of the church's authority is that it stands upon the word of God. And as the church holds forth the word of life, as the elders of the church are said to have to do in Titus chapter 1, as the church leaders hold forth the word of God, they are God's spokespeople for truth. And those who are members of the church are God's agents and prophets of the truth.

Are they the pillar and ground of the truth? But the true church, which would be all those

who are loyal to the word of God and to Christ Himself, that body of people, and they're not all found in one place, they're found scattered throughout the whole world, and even in town they're scattered in different buildings on Sunday mornings and other places. That group is God's agent and God's spokesman, spokespeople to this town. The pillar and ground of the truth.

God inhabits His people and you know how people don't like to have their homes insulted. And you'd better not speak lightly of His church because besides all this, the church is God's agent of discipline. Just as a mother has the authority of the father to discipline children, so the church has the authority to discipline its unruly children.

Where does it say that? Oh, several places. One of them that's of significance is Matthew chapter 18. Matthew chapter 18.

And there it says, this is Jesus speaking, the head of the church is speaking here, and He says in verse 15, Matthew 18 15, Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him of his fault between thee and him alone. And if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican. If your brother sins, you try to work it out privately with him.

If that doesn't bear any fruit, go with another witness or two and try to work it out privately still. But if that doesn't work, take him to Mama. Take it to the church.

And if they don't hear the church, they're out. If he doesn't hear the church, treat him like a heathen. That's pretty sharp.

The Apostle Paul alluded to this kind of thing in several places in his writings when he wrote about people who needed discipline in the church and by the church. For instance, in 1 Corinthians 5, there was a man who was living with his father's wife in an incestuous relationship, and Paul said, I've already judged the matter already. Here's what you should do.

When you all come together, that is, when the church comes together, he says, and my spirit is present with you, he says, then what you must do in the name of the Lord is to turn the man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that his spirit might be saved in the day of Christ Jesus. Now, that means, of course, to remove the man from fellowship, to cast him out of the church, out of the protected place where Satan can get at him, to afflict him, to bring him to repentance so he'll come back and get saved. That's what Paul's talking about.

But it's evident that he talks about the church is the agent of discipline. The man won't

repent, bring him before the church. When you all come together, and my spirit in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, then you deliver him over to Satan.

The church has the authority to deliver someone over to Satan for punishment. Now, you may not like that, but that's in the Bible. I didn't make that up.

And besides that, there's more than one witness on that point, because in 1 Timothy, Paul talks about, or 2 Timothy, he talks about Hymenaeus and Alexander, who were heretics, and he said, I have delivered them over to Satan that they might learn not to blaspheme. So you can see then that this is an operation of the church. The church is God's disciplinarian.

There are times when I'm not around to discipline my daughter when she does something wrong, but my wife has the authority to discipline in my name, in my place, because she and I are one. The Bible says we're one flesh, and the Bible also says that Christ and the church are one. And therefore, the church, the bride of Christ, is a power to be reckoned with.

Now, you might say, well, the church seems pretty weak today. I agree. So it seems.

And perhaps the reason is that there's need for another great revival, or maybe it's that there is a need in some cases, maybe, for there to be a change in an individual congregation, a radical change, or maybe even if a congregation is going too far astray for some to come out, and then, you know, be part of another congregation that isn't going astray. But the point is, the church is not going to fail. The Apostle Paul said that unto God is going to be glory in the church, both now and evermore.

Some people have the view of the church as that it was just another bad idea that God had. He tried with Noah's family, or he tried with Adam and Eve, and that turned out to be a bad deal. So he wiped them out in the flood and tried using Noah's family to start a new race.

That didn't work out. So he called Abraham and tried to use his family. They corrupted themselves.

Then he started the church, and by the reckoning of some, well, they failed too. Now what's he going to do? Well, zap the church out and try some other plan. Nope, that's not how he's going to do it.

The church is God's final plan. Ephesians tells us the church is God's eternal purpose. All the other things only pointed forward and looked forward to the coming of the church.

The church is here. The church needs some change. The church needs some purifying.

It needs to exercise its authority over erring members, over rebellious members. But that

doesn't mean it's not the church anymore. And it doesn't mean that we can dishonor it.

And it grieves me and irks me a bit when I hear the church being criticized, especially by her own children. Because God purchased the church with his own blood, and we don't dishonor that which God places so high an honor upon. The church is described as a treasure hidden afield, which Jesus found.

He had to buy the whole field to get the church. He had to buy the whole field to get the treasure. Jesus died for the sins of the whole world so that he could extract those few who would be his church.

But he compared it to a treasure. He compared it to a pearl of great price for which he lost everything. He gave everything he had to purchase that pearl.

The kingdom of God is like that, he said. And so we see that in this command to honor father and mother, you might say, well, Moses didn't know about the church and Christ and stuff. He didn't mean that when he said that.

But Moses didn't write the Ten Commandments. God wrote them with his finger in stone. And certainly he knew about Christ and he certainly knew about the church.

That was his eternal purpose. He had it in mind all the way back then. And when he was talking about honoring father and mother, it's clear that he didn't limit it to earthly father and mother.

Because he said, if I'm a father, where's my honor? It's clear this command extends to the spiritual parents that we have as Christians. Certainly we need to honor God. We need to take a stand for him publicly and honor him.

We need to obey him. We need to give him the honor for what we do. We need to honor Jesus.

But we also need to honor his body, the church, which is the fullness of him which filleth all in all. And you need to be in a church. We're not starting a church here at this community.

And I know a lot of people have decided to come here instead of going to church. And we don't approve of that. We don't call ourselves a church here.

We all go to church somewhere else. But you must go to church. You must be in the church.

Because when Jesus comes, he's going to take a bride. He's not going to take a dismembered corpse. And if you happen to be a finger off by yourself somewhere, when he takes the bride, if you're not in the bride, if you're not in the church, what can be said for you? And I hope if you still wonder about the whole validity of speaking of the church

this way, I hope that you'll search the scriptures.

And if you have a notebook, I can give you real quickly some references that we don't have time to look up tonight that will help you to understand how that God spoke of Israel, his wife, in the Old Testament, as the mother of the Jews. And he speaks of the church, which is his New Testament wife, as the mother of the Christian. I'll show you the Old Testament passages first.

Let me just give you a list, and then we'll close with that, because some of you may want to research this out a little further. I'd recommend that you look at Isaiah 66, verses 7 through 12. Also at Isaiah 50 and verse 1. And Hosea chapter 2 and verse 2. Now those places, all three of them talk about Israel, God's Old Testament wife, as the mother of his individual sons, or his individual people.

Then in the New Testament, we have Galatians 4.26, which we mentioned. You could compare that with Hebrews chapter 12 verses 22 and 23, where the heavenly Jerusalem is equated with the general assembly and church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. And also the passages in Revelation that we mentioned.

Revelation 21, verse 2, and Revelation 21, verses 9 and 10. And finally, in Revelation chapter 12, verses 1 and 2, where the people of God are depicted as a pregnant woman, about to bear a man-child. And I believe that serious study will bear out that this woman is the church.

The Old Testament church. But the church was begun in the Old Testament, but became redeemed and born again in the New. And has certainly a new character now.

That's distinctly part of the New Covenant. Now I'd like, as we pray for the band to come back up, we're going to sing a few more songs before we depart. And why don't we stand together, even now, in prayer.