

## Honor, Obedience, and Love

John 8:54, June 21, 2015

Trinity Sunday III

Beloved of the Lord..... How does a pastor teach a congregation to give him proper honor for the sake of his office? How does a mother teach her children to honor her as one of God's representatives? How is it that the older generation in a church teach the younger generation to respect their elders? How does a Christian husband teach his wife to honor and obey? Our first reaction in all of this is to use God's Word, and that is right and proper. What are those passages which teach us to give honor to whom honor is due? Let me quote just a few. Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I *am* the LORD. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

Of course all of these passages reveal to us the holy will of God which is commanded of us, and also the good path God would have us follow, but they do not provide the impulse of God's love. That alone the Gospel can do. Therefore when we teach the doctrine of honor in the proper spirit, the Gospel must be kept at the center for without Christ there can be no proper honor which comes from love. Thus when we teach honor, we want to show how Jesus Himself honored and obeyed His heavenly Father who sent the Son for our own salvation. Jesus didn't HAVE TO keep God's commandments in a slavish fashion, for any work done by force or compulsion in God's sight is not pleasing. All works should be done with love. And while it was indeed the will of God the Father that Jesus fulfill the Law in our stead, God the Father was not cracking the whip upon God the Son, forcing and compelling the Son to obey. All that Jesus did, He did willingly moved by grace in His heart. Jesus said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." To do the Father's will satisfied Jesus inwardly and brought happiness, just as it gives Jesus joy to forgive you and wash you clean.

As fathers, when we teach our children or wife the true meaning of godly honor, the Gospel and the willing heart of Christ must be at the center of our teaching. If we teach only the law, our wife or children might obey and outwardly honor, but it will come from fear or anger, not love. Do we really want to be honored by our children or wife because we are feared? Does God want us to honor Him because we fear He may strike us at any moment? I hope no one in this congregation lives in a constant fear of God's wrath and judgment for their sins. I hope I have preached and taught more than enough Gospel to cover all your sins with the righteousness of Christ so your heart finds peace. I also hope everyone at Good Shepherd knows Jesus has done all the good they wished they could do and there is nothing left to be done for salvation. For if you know Jesus has redeemed you from the curse of the law, and fulfilled the entire law for your sake, then you must also know there is no obedience or honor that you MUST GIVE, but by faith and love you are happy and thankful to honor and obey all whom God has placed over you. Being redeemed by Christ, thanks be to God, "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

I. The Holy Law of God declares that fathers must be honored, and those who don't honor their fathers will be cursed by God. We all know God commands us in the Bible to HONOR fathers and mothers. "that it may be well with thee and thou mayest live long on the earth." Likewise God's wrath falls upon all children who do not give full honor to both father and mother. For example in Deuteronomy 21:18-21 God told the Jews, "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 hearken unto them: Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; And they shall say unto 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. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear." This shows God's curse and hatred of rebellious children who do not honor but disobey father and mother. When our children then are troubled in conscience because they have disobeyed father or mother, we need to teach them about the Child Jesus who fulfilled the Law in their place. As a Child Jesus obeyed His step-father and mother. Jesus was "subject unto" them. Jesus knew He was under their authority and so He obeyed them, loving them sincerely with His heart. Let us comfort our children this say.

As for other authorities to whom God has given power, this includes teachers at school, or our bosses at work, or our elders in church, and pastors also. But this authority is limited to the proper realm. Our bosses have authority over us only so far as our contract with them at work. Pastors only have the authority of God's Word. Likewise a husband's authority over wife only extends as far as the conscience. If he wants her to do something against her conscience, she dare not obey for the sake of conscience. Let it also be said if fathers or husbands or pastors or presidents or police abuse their power, God will punish and curse them. Yet their sins do not give us permission to disobey or dishonor. Even if your parent, president or pastor were an unbeliever, you do not have the right to despise them in your heart or dishonor their high office. Likewise if all the policemen in Corcoran were homosexuals or women, it would still be true we must respect and obey them in their office. Pontius Pilate abused his office, but Jesus still respected and obeyed Pilate, even suffering a wrongful death. But it is also true if those in authority command us to go beyond what God's Word allows us to do, "we ought to obey God rather than man."

Godly honor however is not just a simple matter of obedience. With honor there must be love for without love there is no true honor. In marriage for example, though the wife is below the authority of husband, God commands husbands to honor their wives, and hold them in a high place. First Peter 3:7 says husbands are to live with their wives “according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered. Proverbs 11:16 says, “A gracious woman retaineth honour.” Proverbs 31 says of the Christian woman “Strength and honour *are* her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue *is* the law of kindness.” By her kind and gentle spirit fathers and children cannot but help to love and honor her, and verse 30 says, “Favour *is* deceitful, and beauty *is* vain: *but* a woman *that* feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.”

II. Fathers who seek their own honor dishonor God the Father and so will be condemned and cursed by God. Thus while the Bible teaches we should indeed praise our fathers and mothers when they serve the Lord with love, we ourselves as fathers or mothers should not desire to be praised. We know this because Jesus said, “If I honour myself, my honour is nothing.” Jesus did not sin by the honor of self. In like manner if Christian father’s like Father’s Day because they like to be honored, not only have they sinned, but they have coveted an honor which belongs only to God. Jesus taught the same in John 5:44, “How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that *cometh* from God only?” Honor of self is sin. For example, when King Herod (in Acts 12) delivered a fine speech to the people, they shouted saying, “*It is* the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.” God smote Herod because inwardly he accepted men’s praises rather than give glory to God alone. This sin is revealed in Psalm 4:2 where the Lord says, “O ye sons of men, how long *will ye turn* my glory into shame? *how long* will ye love vanity.” It is not a sin to say “Thank you” if someone praises you for doing good, but it is a sin if by way of vanity you soak it up in our heart. Jesus said “So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.”

III. As our Substitute, Jesus did not seek His own honor, but by His life and death Jesus gave all honor to God the Father. Returning now to our text one final time, Jesus said, “If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God.” Those who worship self, cannot worship either the Father or the Son. And though the Son cared not at all to honor Himself (as vain men do), Jesus did speak the truth when He stated “it is my Father that honoureth Me.” Why did the Father honor Jesus?...and why should we? If you listen closely to Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, you will understand. Jesus prayed “Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” By these words the entire mission of Christ is revealed. He came to do and fulfil the will of His Father...He came to glorify His Father and give all honor to the Father. When Jesus said, “I have glorified thee on the earth...and finished the work which Thou gavest me to do”, this means Jesus had obeyed and kept all of God’s commandments for us. Jesus fulfilled the entire Law of God, a feat we could not do. Moreover when Jesus prayed “Father the hour is come, glorify Thy Son”, this means “Father, give Me strength to lay down my life as a ransom, that all sinners may be saved by My sacrifice, for then they will know Thee the True God.”

When this Gospel is thus preached, Jesus comes to us with all His honor to cover up our dishonor. From Jesus we receive a garment of righteousness. All those times then where we dishonored our parents, or dishonored our spouse, or despised those powers that be...with His own high honor Jesus covers us, making us *honorable* in the sight of God! “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” When the Last Day comes,.....God will honor and hold up high every believer who honored His Son by faith. “Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” But all those who did not believe in His Son, God will dishonor with hell as the Bible says “they shall never see light”.

So we come now to our last point, namely since our works are dishonorable, and yet since Christ has covered and clothed us with His own honor, the only proper way we can honor Him is “by faith alone”. Therefore “All *men* should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.” When you honor God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in such a way, “by faith alone” you will easily understand the proper and godly way to teach honor in this world. Honor can only be achieved and fulfilled by love, and such a love Christ only could fulfill. Yet since Christ has fulfilled this high love for you, the only honorable thing to do is to teach His love to others, that they too may honor Him. Let us then no look down upon those below our authority, but to teach godly honor let us look up to God our heavenly Father who sent God the heavenly Son for our salvation. If our thoughts ascend upward so that we honor Jesus by faith, everything else will fall into place. You will not seek your own honor, but you will give all honor, glory, and praise to Christ. Therefore in all things “to God alone be glory.” Amen.