

they watched him. And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy. And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day? And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go; and answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day? And they could not answer him again to these things."

(5) The Fifth Commandment

Exodus 20:12 -- "Honor your father and your mother in order that your days may be lengthened upon the land that the Lord your God is giving you."

This commandment marks the transition from the first to the second table of the Decalogue. The first table contains comprehensive principles summarizing our duties to God; the second table contains comprehensive principles summarizing our duties to our fellow human beings. Both tables set forth obligations to God, since He has commanded them. Thus we are obligated by God's commandments to fulfill our duties to God and our duties to our fellow human beings. The first four Commandments speak of duties in our vertical relationship to God; the last six speak of duties in our horizontal relationships to our fellow human beings.

The Fifth Commandment is wholly positive in its statement -- "Honor your father and your mother" -- and wholly positive in its promise -- "that your days may be lengthened upon the land that the Lord your God is giving you." Of course, the negative sides of both command and promise are implied -- "Do not dishonor your father or your mother lest your days not be prolonged in the land."

(a) What is the meaning of "honor" in the Commandment?

The word translated "honor" is כָּבֵד, which (in the Piel) means to honor or to show honor to. In English, "to honor" means "to regard or treat with esteem or respect, as by due obedience or courtesy."

In Deuteronomy 5:16 the same word is used in this recounting of the Decalogue. In Leviticus 19:3 the Lord commands His people: "Every one of you shall reverence his mother and his father." The word used here (יָרֵא) means "to fear, revere, show reverence to." In Deuteronomy 27:16 we find God's curse on those who dishonor their parents: "Cursed is he who dishonors his father or mother." The word used here (קָלַף) means "to treat with contempt, to lightly esteem, to hold of little account, to dishonor." In Ephesians 6:1-3 Paul commands the believers in Ephesus: "Obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), that it may be well with you, and that you may live long upon the earth." The word here translated "obey" (ὑπακούω) means "to obey, be subject to, listen submissively to." The word here translated "honor" (τιμώω) means "to show honor to, honor, revere." In Colossians 3:20 Paul commands: "Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord." The word translated "be obedient" is the same as that used in Ephesians 6:1.