

Authority # 4

THE PROBLEM OF "UNWORTHY" AUTHORITIES.

Remember the story in the last article by Dr. Laura.

If you don't feel like honoring your father and mother for their sake – do it for God's sake -- do it for your children's sake – and for your own.

Now, what kind of father was that old man when he was raising his son? Was he a model father? Was he a loving, patient, kind, wise, self-controlled man? Was he a godly man of faith and integrity? Or was he impatient? Did he frequently lose control of his temper? Did he have a foul mouth? Was he an alcoholic? Was he critical and judgmental and harsh and punitive? Was he unfaithful to his wife? Was he hostile toward God, the Bible and church? Was he a workaholic who never spent much time with his kids?

What kind of father was that old man when he was raising his son?

I don't know – but it doesn't matter – because the 5th commandment does not say:

-- Honor your father and mother to the degree that you think they were good parents.

- What if your father was an alcoholic and a workaholic who divorced your mother in order to marry a woman with whom he was having an affair...

-- Are you off the hook for keeping the 5th commandment?

-- What if he was worse than that? What if he was all that plus abusive and cruel?

-- Then are you off the hook for keeping the 5th commandment?

** I Peter 2:13-23: "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king. Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he*

suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly."

- When Peter wrote these words, the King was the Roman Emperor Nero - a godless and brutal man --and many Christians were not merely underpaid workers with bad bosses but actually unpaid slaves with cruel masters.

-- Yet the command is: *"Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men."*

-- The government does not need to be godly, moral or in agreement with your political convictions / the boss does not need to be kind, considerate, and competent / and the parent does not need to be worthy of high regard.

-- The command remains: Honor God-given authority.

- Now, honor doesn't always mean obey // and submit doesn't always mean putting up with abuse or putting dependent children at risk of abuse.

-- And there are some biblical examples in both the OT and NT of disobeying an earthly authority in order to obey God.

-- But the principle is clear: When we submit to the authority of a godless government or a bad boss or a mean parent - we are submitting to the authority of God Himself by acknowledging His sovereignty.

-- For God will use even the mistakes and weaknesses of those in authority over us to achieve His character in us.

-- God Himself will hold accountable those in authority over us for their actions - but He holds us accountable for our humble and submissive spirit.

- In my own case, my father would never win model father-of-the-year awards.

-- His sins contributed to much pain in our family, with negative consequences continuing to this day.

-- I acknowledged my father as a sinner -- but I also acknowledged him as my father.

-- And the command is clear: Honor your father.

-- And so, by the grace of God - I forgave him and sought to honor him by visiting him and calling him and remembering his birthday and Father's Day and expressing appreciation to him for his strengths and good qualities he had as a father even in the midst of his shortcomings.

IV. THE BLESSINGS OF HONORING GOD-GIVEN AUTHORITY.

- This is the first commandment with a promise -- that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.

-- God's blessings flow most freely and fully to us when we are lined up under His chain of authority.

-- Even when some of the links in that chain are not particularly godly or worthy of respect.

-- The important thing is that we position ourselves under the umbrella of God's authority -- because that is where we experience His guidance, His provision and His protection.

- Do you want it to go well with you and with your children?
- Do you want to know the will of God for your life?
- Do you want to experience the fullness of God's blessings and provision and power?
- Do you want to experience God's spiritual protection – and the ability to exercise His authority against all the power of the enemy?
- Then you need to honor the God-given authority that God has set over you, beginning with the command to honor your father and your mother, and extending to government authorities and the elders of the church.