LD 39; Gen. 9:20-28; Eph. 6:1-4; The 5th Commandment I. The Closest Authority II. The Realms of Authority III. The Limit on Authority

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, why has God given you parents? Why is the family structure and the nurturing home so different from many broods of frogs and fish that simply abandon their young? Have you ever wondered why God gave you parents- and that children are to be raised in the home? Well, as we will see today, there is good reason to be sure! Perhaps you remember the book “Lord of the Flies” where a group of British boys were stranded on an island. As you will remember from this book- children who grow up without the tutelage of adults become wild and immoral! So today we come to the 2nd table of the Law- having learned to love God above all we now come to love our neighbor as ourselves. And the closest neighbor is that of your own family. But in our world today, we see an authority conflict- a crisis of authority. Starting at home, the question is asked- who wears the pants here? Who is the head and leader of this house? And all the way to the conflict on the national stage- who has the authority to make these rulings- whose agenda will hold- the state or the federal government. This is because no one likes the idea of submitting to others. Even if submitting will be for your good and the benefit of all those involved- we would rather do what is right in our own eyes. And this rebellion starts already in the home. So today we see this theme: Jesus Christ teaches us to submit to our God-given leaders by raising us in home.

**I. The Closest Authority**

In our first point, we will start with the closest of the realms of authority. We start at home. Children, obey your parents as we read in Eph. 6. Honor your father and your mother as our commandment reads. So what does this look like? Well, our reading from Gen. 9 gives us both a positive and a negative example of how this commandment works its way out. After the flood, Noah became a man of the earth, and he succeeded in growing grapes. However, Noah also became drunk on the wine he fermented and passed out drunk and naked in his tent. Not a great way to start. But the focus of our reading in Gen. 9 is the response of his sons. Now remember that Noah had 3 sons and they were all over 100 years old and married. They were not young kids. But upon seeing his drunk father lying naked in his tent, the youngest son Ham makes fun of or mocked his father and invites his brothers to laugh at their aged father as well. But his brothers, Shem and Japheth take a different approach. Instead of poking fun of their father, they seek to cover their father’s nakedness and remove the shame in this situation. So Ham did not honor his father- but Shem and Japheth showed love and respect to their father even though Noah was not acting honorable. So the challenge to honor your parents- even though your parents are sinful- is one that is not new! But our command reads- honor your father and your mother. So God’s people are called to honor their parents- both of them- at all times. Honoring includes respecting and revering- showing deference and seeking to uphold their good name. Even more than that- we are to obey our parents in all things lawful. As we read from Eph. 6- children, obey your parents. As a command given, we are to listen to their instruction and follow in the way they set before us. This starts by simply doing what they ask of us without complaining. But our obedience is said to be “in the Lord.” Covenant children are to obey their parents as part of their obedience to the Lord. This commandment is not just dealing with family dynamics- it is a spiritual issue! As a part of your Christian duty- it is spiritually important that children obey mom and dad as to the Lord. If you want to obey God- you have to obey your parents! You cannot obey God and dishonor, rebel and ignore your parents’ commands. But our obedience “in the Lord” also places a specific limit on this command. If a parent would ever give a command that contradicts God’s Word, we must obey God before man. For example, if a parent would forbid their children from going to church- we must obey God before man. Of if a parent encouraged their child to commit some fraud or scheme- we must obey God before man. But this conflict will not normally be found in a Christian home- as Christian parents will seek to instruct their children in the way of the Lord. And this is one of the reasons why Eph. 6 continues by saying- obey your parents in the Lord for this is right! When you have Christian parents, they will instruct you in the way of the Lord! So then, their instruction is right! They content of their instruction is not random but aligned with God’s Word. Not that our parents are perfect, but they seek to instruct us in the way of the Lord- to apply God’s Word to us! And this is right! This is good and desirable! For this instruction is good! This applies to two areas- creational and redemptive! It is right for children to obey- this is a creational order. It is good for a well-ordered society for children to learn to submit and obey in the home. But especially in the context of the covenantal home- instruction that conforms to God’s commands is right! It is good for you- and it leads to a way of blessing! As our text continues in Eph. 6:3- that it may go well with you! There is a promise affixed to this commandment! When children learn to obey their parents in the home, life just goes better! It is good for you- creational order is upheld. Society functions as it should- and children who obey those in authority enjoy a better life! They avoid run ins with the law- they have no fear of law enforcement- they avoid tickets and they enjoy the protection of those in authority. But not only creational- there is a redemptive good. That it may go well with you in this life and in the next! When you listen to your parents- when children submit- there life becomes the fertile ground upon which the seeds of the gospel may grow! Children who submit and obey Christian parents find themselves in the context of the means of grace- their own lives are being molded and conformed to the Law of God at a young age! For example, how many of our children here have not learned the Lord’s Prayer from their own parents! You see- children- that this is for your good! That it may go well with you- when you listen to your parents! Not that they are prefect- but it is their desire to raise you in the fear and knowledge of the Lord! As Prov. 1:8 puts it, my son, hear your father’s instruction and forsake not your mother’s teaching! You will be blessed in this life with a peace and tranquility that the rebellious do not know; and if you take to heart what your parents teach you about God and His word, you can look forward to a life of blessing in the world to come! So as QA 104 summarizes, children are to honor, love and be faithful to their father and mother.

**II. The Realms of Authority**

But QA 104 does not only speak to us as children in the home; we also find instructions that apply to all of life. As we have seen in the commandments thus far, there are various levels of application. What applies to the hand is also applied to the heart! And as we find now- what applies to the home also applies to the other realms of authority. So as QA 104 continues- that I am to show honor, love and faithfulness to my parents AND to all those in authority over me. As I said before, the home sets the stage for society! One of the reasons that our society is in such a state of ruin is because of parental neglect! Many children have been abandoned and society suffers for it. Rather, children are to learn at home the principles that will apply to all of life! As some of you have recently experienced, children grow up! They move out of the home and off into the wide world! But this does not mean that they no longer need to submit and obey! Even though these children are not under the watchful eye of their parents in the home, they still are not free to do and live as they please! They are still to submit and obey all those who are over them- those in positions of proper authority. So in the school setting, we are to submit to your teachers. Doing what they ask without complaining- and seeking to be a good disciple of their teaching. In the church setting, we are to submit to our elders. Respecting them, upholding them in our prayers, listening to their words and supporting them in their work. In the working world, we are to submit to our boss by doing what is required- working cheerfully as we seek to carry out the task laid before us each day. And also, in the realm of the state- we are to submit to our civil rulers by obeying the laws of the land, paying our taxes and by praying for those whom God has placed over us. All of these spheres or realms flow out of the home- the home remains the closest and most intimate- but we all have responsibilities in these other areas as well. This too is a proper application of this commandment. There is never a time when we do not have a due or responsibility to these other realms. Being in the world but not of the world does not mean that we do not have a responsibility to the church or state. The home comes first- of course. If we do not take care of and provide for our own families, we are worse than the unbelievers. To ignore or forsake your family is acting in unbelief as I Tim. 5:8 puts it. But that does not mean that our families are supreme either!

**III. The Limit on Authority**

For God has also given us limits on authority- or we are to look at authority in the proper context. Why then are we to respect those in authority- why do we need to honor our father and mother? Well, the foundation of this commandment comes from God! As the 10 Commandments open, I am the LORD your God who brought you out of slavery! Obedience to this command flows from a proper knowledge of who God is and what He has done! To rebel against authority is to rebel against Him! Listen to the way that Rom. 13:1-2 put it. No authority exists except from God- and God has instituted authority. So your parents are the exact parents that God wanted you to have. God also put you in this specific church, or in the specific classroom that He desires and designed for you! You are exactly where God wanted you to be- under the exact authority He sees fit to give! Your boss- is the exact boss that God wanted you to have at this point in your life! So all authority comes from God- and God rules over us by their hand! As QA 104 says- by their hand God wills to rule us! God makes His will and purpose know through the authority of these agents! So although you may not like your teacher- or you may really have a hard time submitting to your boss- the fact remains that God has placed them over you and He rules you by way of their presence. I can also say that God gave you the very parents and church that you needed! We can say this confidence because we know that our God is sovereign! At the end of the day, there is only one King of Kings and Lord of Lords! He alone submits to no man- every other creature submits to someone or something! But not God! And His perfect will has ordained the authority and rulers that we find surrounding us today. He alone is perfect- and makes no mistakes! Interestingly, our QA 104 exhorts us to be patient with the failings of those over us. This is because our parents are sinners- we are sinners- our elders are sinners- our rulers and teachers are sinners as well. We all fall short and make mistakes- and yet God calls us to be quick to forgive and patient with their failings. Noah’s son saw the failing of their father- one responded by mocking his father while the other two sought to cover his shame! We all fall short and need to be forgiven by the grace of Jesus Christ. So we can be patient with our rulers- knowing that they will have to give an account to our God one day! For He alone is perfect in all He does- and in how He rules over all!

To conclude, a world without authority is only anarchy. A home without authority delves into chaos! Authority in this world is for our good. Those in positions of power are used by God to restrain evil, punish law breakers and protect the innocent! Jesus Christ teaches us to submit to our God-given leaders by raising us in home. The home is where we learn to love, honor and submit. So may we as children honor and obey our parents- and learn to apply this rule of submission to all areas of life. Knowing that God seeks to rule over us by the hand of those in authority.