

That Your Days May Be Long Upon the Land

James Smyda

Recorded on July 16, 2022

I'm sure most all of you, particularly those in the U.S. are aware that in the last couple of months we have celebrated a couple of holidays, specifically with the purpose of honoring our parents. It's a tradition that comes in Judeo-Christian cultures specifically geared from the fifth commandment. In May we had Mother's Day and in June we had Father's Day. Both of these are geared specifically to following the command to honor our fathers and mothers and we have these holidays for that purpose—to encourage that very behavior. I'm sure other countries have similar traditions, just not necessarily at the exact same time. These traditions are very much based upon the fifth commandment which tells us we need to honor our fathers and mothers.

You have probably heard over the years, which is a true statement, that this is the first commandment that comes with a promise. That's true—it is the first commandment with a promise—but often times the promise that comes with this commandment is misunderstood. What you will hear said is that as long as you honor your father and mother, God guarantees that you are going to live a long life on this earth. This is not only in church of God circles, it's in Bible commentaries and other writings. Lots of other Protestant and Catholic groups also promote this same idea. It's the idea that the promise associated with this commandment is a promise that as long as you honor your father and mother, God guarantees you're going to live a long life on this earth.

I know I myself can look back at my life and easily come up with a couple names that challenge that very idea. Individuals I have known personally who, from my experience, were very respectful and honoring of their parents, yet they happened to die very tragically when young, either through illness or accident or other things of that nature. I've also known many other people in my life who would also make the same claim; that they know one or more individuals who, they would attest to the fact that these people honored their parents very much and yet died very young.

Today we are going to look at that particular commandment and that promise to see what this promise is actually saying. I think what we are going to discover is that this common idea of what the promise is, is actually flawed and misunderstands what God was saying when He made this promise. Otherwise, we have a logical problem of how we reconcile the numerous examples we can all think of that violate this idea. If you would like a title for this sermon it's:

That Your Days May Be Long Upon the Land

This quote is taken directly from Exodus 20 and speaks exactly to what the promise is. To start off, we're going to read what this promise is and notice the wording of it. The common idea about this promise is about a misunderstanding of what God was actually saying in the first place.

Exodus 20:12 *"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you. (NKJV)*

Notice what the promise was. It's specifically tied to *how long you are in the land*. It's your days in the land that is being referenced. It does not specifically say, as long as you honor your father and mother and are respectful of that, then you're guaranteed a long life. Anybody who does that, will never die young, they will always live a long life. If you're like myself, I remember growing up in the church of God since birth and in my younger years I have even heard it dogmatically said in sermons that if you honor your father and mother, you're always going to live a long life. I've even heard the statement made that if somebody died tragically young, you know they didn't really honor their parents because if they did, they would have lived a long life. I myself, and many of you hearing this, could say that you specifically know of individuals and know how respectful of their parents they were, yet that long life was just simply not the case.

If we pay attention to the wording, we can see what the promise is. It's tied directly to their time in the land. I'll explain this statement later in this sermon. We're going to see if this is much more a promise tied to what I'm going to call *a national security to the nation of Israel*. That it is not an individual promise to individual longevity.

The commandments are also covered in Deuteronomy 5 and the wording there, particularly in the New King James, can suggest that it is talking about a promise for long life. But if we go to Deuteronomy 5, we can take a closer look at this. It's from the New King James and you'll see why I'm specifying that.

Deuteronomy 5:16 *Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may be well with you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you. (NKJV)*

The way it's worded, particularly where the New King James places the comma makes it sound like there are two different thoughts. One being that if you honor your parents, you're going to have a long life and also you will enjoy your time in the land. In reality both of these are tied to the longevity in the land. Let me share with you a different translation that makes it clearer. This is the same verse out of the Complete Jewish Bible. But before I do that let me explain one other unique thing about the Complete Jewish Bible's translation and you'll understand what I'm reading. We have covered a number of times in the last few years the Jewish tradition of how, whenever they would see Yehovah—the name of God the Father—they would often substitute it with Adonai. This tradition got carried over into most English translations of the Bible and that's why you see LORD in all caps whenever the name of the Father is there You see big LORD and little Lord and it all sounds the same in English. Where this came from is from the Jewish tradition of substituting Adonai whenever they saw Yehovah written out. I mention this as I'm going to read the Complete Jewish Bible translation verbatim and you're going to see Adonai. This verse is from the Complete Jewish Bible:

Deuteronomy 5:16 *Honor your father and mother, as Adonai your God ordered you to do, so that you will live long and have things go well with you in the land Adonai your God is giving you. (CJB)*

You can see the way this is worded ties a little more clearly together and reveals that we are basically talking about two concepts. One, enjoying the time you have in the land, and two, extending the amount of time that you are in the land. Think of it like this. They received the Promised Land as a part of the Mount Sinai covenant and the deal was that Israel had to faithfully obey God—it was:

Obey the letter of the law to receive physical promises.

So as long as they faithfully obeyed God, His part of the agreement was:

“I’ll bless you; life will go well with you. You’ll constantly be physically blessed and you will be given this wonderful Promised Land to live in” —as a result of this obedience.

So basically, what this is getting at is, if you are consistently obeying God, two things are going to happen. You will see later, as we get into this sermon, why I’m laying these out separately.

One is enjoying your time in the land and the other is extending your days in the land. But you can still be in the land and not have a good time while you’re there. You can be there but life’s not going well for you. We will see that as Israel lost the land, what would happen first was that things didn’t go so well in the land—they were in the land but things weren’t going well, they weren’t enjoying it. Then two, what would happen next is they eventually lost the land.

As we go through a number of verses, we see this concept of having your days in the land extended as a result of obedience. This is a promise that is talked about again and again and not just specific to the fifth commandment. We’re going to see later why it’s specifically in the Ten Commandments and tied to the fifth commandment. But this is a promise tied to obedience in general and stated numerous times in the book of Deuteronomy. A number of scriptures get a little repetitive because they say the same thing, but I want you to see this trend that is stated again and again. When you consider that trend you see the overall context this is placed in. It’s also interesting this is in the book of Deuteronomy. Historically the book of Deuteronomy is written right before Israel was going into the Promised Land. They are the second generation—the first generation all died off during the forty years in the wilderness because they wouldn’t go into the Promised Land. Now the younger generation who were born during the wandering in the wilderness are the ones who actually enter the land. Deuteronomy is written more to focus on that second generation before they go into the land.

Notice the trend of how this same concept of, “if you obey God, you are going to enjoy your time in the land and are going to extend your days in the land”, just keeps getting mentioned again and again throughout the book of Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 4:33 *Did any people ever hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and live?*

34) Or did God ever try to go and take for Himself a nation from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?

35) To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD Himself is God; there is none other besides Him.

36) Out of heaven He let you hear His voice, that He might instruct you; on earth He showed you His great fire, and you heard His words out of the midst of the fire.

37) And because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them; and He brought you out of Egypt with His Presence, with His mighty power,

38) driving out from before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in, to give you their land as an inheritance, as it is this day. (NKJV)

Notice in particular the next two verses.

39) Therefore know this day, and consider it in your heart, that the LORD Himself is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.

40) You shall therefore keep His statutes and His commandments which I command you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time.” (NKJV)

We are tying “obedience to God” and what that obedience is going to do? Things are going to go well for you, you’re going to receive the physical blessings and enjoy life and extend your time in the land. We’re going to see a number of scriptures where this same concept keeps being repeated again and again, as we go through the book of Deuteronomy. Notice Deuteronomy 5:31.

Deuteronomy 5:31 *But as for you, stand here by Me, and I will speak to you all the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments which you shall teach them, that they may observe them in the land which I am giving them to possess.’*

32) Therefore you shall be careful to do as the LORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.

33) You shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you shall possess. (NKJV)

In other words, here we are again with things *will go well for you and you will extend your days in the land*. We're going to see the concept repeated again and again. Deuteronomy 11:16.

Deuteronomy 11:16 *Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them,*
17) *lest the LORD's anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you.*
18) *"Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.*
19) *You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.*
20) *And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates,*
21) *that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth. (NKJV)*

This same concept is repeated in Deuteronomy 25.

Deuteronomy 25:13 *You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a heavy and a light.*
14) *You shall not have in your house differing measures, a large and a small.*
15) *You shall have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure, that your days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD your God is giving you.*
16) *For all who do such things, all who behave unrighteously, are an abomination to the LORD your God. (NKJV)*

Also notice over in Deuteronomy 32, we see this same concept.

Deuteronomy 32:44 *So Moses came with Joshua the son of Nun and spoke all the words of this song in the hearing of the people.*
45) *Moses finished speaking all these words to all Israel,*
46) *and he said to them: "Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you today, which you shall command your children to be careful to observe—all the words of this law.*
47) *For it is not a futile thing for you, because it is your life, and by this word you shall prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess." (NKJV)*

Again, we see this same concept again and again. It's not a unique promise solely attached to the fifth commandment, it's a promise tied to just obeying God and following His instructions. It's really a promise about "national security" and the survival of the nation and prolonging their time in the land. It's really not a promise that as long as you

obey your parents, you are guaranteed to live a long life and you'll never die tragically young if you obey your parents—that's simply not what it's saying. Unfortunately, that is one of the ideas that is often promoted with this. In the past I've even seen that misunderstanding become literally a source of disillusionment with God; where this idea is pushed that it's a dogmatic promise that you'll always live long. Then someone has a child or a close loved one—someone they really care about—who tragically dies young. If they have internalized this idea that this is a dogmatic promise, that anyone who honors their parents will live long, then in their grief looking at this and saying God lied. He promised that as long as we are obedient and honor our parents, they are always going to live a long life. I know my loved ones honored their parents but they tragically, died young. This can become a source of disillusionment. The key to this is understanding that this is not what the promise is saying at all.

We've looked at a number of verses about prolonging your days, but there are also a number of verses that look at it from the opposite perspective, that if Israel was disobedient and disregarded God's laws, that they would shorten their time in the land and wouldn't have a good time in their land. Let's look at a couple of these.

Deuteronomy 4:23 *Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the LORD your God has forbidden you.*
24) *For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.*
25) *When you beget children and grandchildren and have grown old in the land, and act corruptly and make a carved image in the form of anything, and do evil in the sight of the LORD your God to provoke Him to anger,*
26) *I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you will soon utterly perish from the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess; you will not prolong your days in it, but will be utterly destroyed.*
27) *And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD will drive you. (NKJV)*

What He is specifically saying is, you consistently disobeyed, so two things are going to happen. First, you are not going to be enjoying your time in the land because you're going to stop being blessed. Things aren't going to go well and you are eventually going to get kicked out of the land and scattered. I refer to this because this is a promise that is relevant to "national security". In fact, He specifically said that disobedience would result in being "*vomited out of the land*". He even stated that the nations which had lived there previously He had thrust out of the Promised Land to allow the Israelites to walk in and take over a land that was already developed with intact cities and infrastructure that was already developed.

The reason He drove out the nations that were already there and they were blessed with all of this, was because of how evil and how disobedient those nations were. He refers to it as being, "*vomited out of the land*". Leviticus 18:24 is the chapter leading up to this and is talking about the laws of sexual immorality. It covers it from numerous angles—from incest to bestiality to all manner of perversions. It even says that the

people from whom you are coming to take this land from, committed all of these atrocities. As you read through all the different things that are described you can really see how evil the people in the land were. These people are guilty of committing all of this. Let's see what happened to them as a result.

Leviticus 18:24 *Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you.*

[In other words, the Canaanites, the people who were living there before, were guilty of all of these sins that were mentioned prior to this chapter, including child molesting, bestiality and all sorts of perversions.]

25) *For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants.*

26) *You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations, either any of your own nation or any stranger who dwells among you*

27) *(for all these abominations the men of the land have done, who were before you, and thus the land is defiled),*

28) *lest the land vomit you out also when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that were before you.*

29) *For whoever commits any of these abominations, the persons who commit them shall be cut off from among their people.*

30) *Therefore you shall keep My ordinance, so that you do not commit any of these abominable customs which were committed before you, and that you do not defile yourselves by them: I am the LORD your God.*” (NKJV)

We see a similar comment made in Leviticus 20. The context of this chapter goes to, not only sexual sin, but a variety of perversions one of them even being the sacrificing of children to Molech. It's easy for us to see that and say,

“How barbaric—they threw their children in the fire”

But it's not a whole lot different than our modern-day practice of abortion. Fortunately, we've seen some progress today in the U.S in that regard. But there are still plenty of people who claim that this is somehow a constitutional right, to murder your children. So you can see that the society we have today is just as evil as the Canaanites. Pick up in verse 22.

Leviticus 20:22 *You shall therefore keep all My statutes and all My judgments, and perform them, that the land where I am bringing you to dwell may not vomit you out.*

23) *And you shall not walk in the statutes of the nation which I am casting out before you; for they commit all these things, and therefore I abhor them.*

24) *But I have said to you, "You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey." I am the LORD your God, who has separated you from the peoples. (NKJV)*

He mentions how He is going to bless them with this wonderful land, but says that if they consistently start disobeying, what will happen is they are going to be thrust out of it; the land is going to *vomit you out*. As I mentioned before, this really isn't the promise attached to the fifth commandment—a promise of longevity. That a person who honors their father and mother is guaranteed to never die young and will always live a long life. It is really more a promise about "national security". Why do I say it's a promise of "national security"? Think about this when you hear that term; when you hear the comment, this is a matter of "national security". What is typically being referred to? It is saying, this is an issue that could threaten the security and survival of a nation. This is a matter of some evil power maybe trying to undermine the nation or attack it and it's about our security and survival. For Ancient Israel, obedience to God and following His commandments was literally a matter of "*national security*". They were promised if they disobeyed God and did so for any length of time, it was going to result in their destruction as a nation—that's how it worked. In Deuteronomy 8, we see that He directly warns the Israelites, right before they go into the Promised Land, that faithfully obeying God was literally a matter of "national security". If they didn't do that, it would be their destruction and they would be destroyed.

Deuteronomy 8:11 *Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today,*

12) *lest—when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them;*

13) *and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied;*

14) *when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;*

15) *who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, in which were fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the flinty rock;*

16) *who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end—*

17) *then you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.'*

18) *And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.*

19) *Then it shall be, if you by any means forget the LORD your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish.*

20) As the nations which the LORD destroys before you, so you shall perish, because you would not be obedient to the voice of the LORD your God. (NKJV)

He is directly telling them; this is a matter of “national security”. If you don’t consistently obey, it is going to be your doom—your destruction. There are two different concepts that we notice throughout this series of scriptures we are reading. That was the promise of:

*It will go well for you in the land
and
It will extend your days in the land.*

In other words, enjoying the experience and having an extended amount of time in the land and all of this hinged upon obedience. The fact is, you can be in the land but not having a good time and be enjoying it. As we know from history, both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah, over time, were consistently disobedient with God and they both wound up going into captivity. The way the process would play out was typically, First, it would turn out that they weren’t enjoying their time in the land. They were still in the land but life wasn’t going so well. Then they would get conquered and carried off into captivity. You can see the examples of how this played out. First it was Israel who went into captivity and then later Judah. The account of the northern kingdom of Israel we can see in 2 Kings 17:1.

2 Kings 17:1 *In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea the son of Elah became king of Israel in Samaria, and he reigned nine years.*

2) And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, but not as the kings of Israel who were before him.

3) Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against him; and Hoshea became his vassal, and paid him tribute money.

4) And the king of Assyria uncovered a conspiracy by Hoshea; for he had sent messengers to So, king of Egypt, and brought no tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year. Therefore, the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison.

5) Now the king of Assyria went throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria and besieged it for three years. (NKJV)

To help understand some of the historical context—oftentimes a tactic that was used at that time and is even used today in warfare, when a city was besieged, you made a perimeter around it and cut off the supply lines. What they could do in besieging a city was surround it and cut off the supply lines and just sit and wait. You would know that over time they were going to run out of supplies and anything they can’t produce within the city itself, eventually they are going to run out. If you cut off the supply lines, all you have to do is wait and then the people are going to be hurting. you just wait and give it time and now you have your enemy hurting before you ever have to go in and attack. We’re going to see this is what happened with both Israel and Judah. What that results in—just think about this—if you are besieged and they cut off the supply lines, you’re

still in the land but give it some time and things aren't going well. You're not enjoying the experience. Then the city eventually gets completely taken and the people are taken off into captivity. Pick up now in verse 6.

6) In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away to Assyria, and placed them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

7) For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and they had feared other gods,

8) and had walked in the statutes of the nations whom the LORD had cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made. (NKJV)

Skip over to verse 18.

18) Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone.

19) Also Judah did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made.

20) And the LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel, afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them from His sight.

21) For He tore Israel from the house of David, and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. Then Jeroboam drove Israel from following the LORD, and made them commit a great sin.

22) For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them,

23) until the LORD removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria, as it is to this day. (NKJV)

Notice what happened to them. They established a history of continually disobeying God and He was patient through all of this. He finally says, "I've had enough", and what happens? They wind up not enjoying their experience in the land. They are besieged and life is not going well and then they are eventually taken into captivity and removed from the land—they are *vomited out of the land*. It really is an issue of "national security". This happened first to the northern kingdom of Israel, then later the same type of thing played out in Judah as well. That is recorded in Jeremiah 52:1.

Jeremiah 52:1 *Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.*

2) He also did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done.

3) *For because of the anger of the LORD this happened in Jerusalem and Judah, till He finally cast them out from His presence. Then Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.*

4) *Now it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army came against Jerusalem and encamped against it; and they built a siege wall against it all around. (NKJV)*

They make a perimeter around it, cut off the supply lines.

5) *So the city was besieged until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah.*

6) *By the fourth month, on the ninth day of the month, the famine had become so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land. (NKJV)*

Just think about it, if you depend upon the supply lines of food coming from outside the city and you make a perimeter and cut it off—you just wait and what's going to happen? The people are going to be starving.

7) *Then the city wall was broken through, and all the men of war fled and went out of the city at night by way of the gate between the two walls, which was by the king's garden, even though the Chaldeans were near the city all around. And they went by way of the plain.*

8) *But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king, and they overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho. All his army was scattered from him.*

9) *So they took the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath, and he pronounced judgment on him.*

10) *Then the king of Babylon killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes. And he killed all the princes of Judah in Riblah.*

11) *He also put out the eyes of Zedekiah; and the king of Babylon bound him in bronze fetters, took him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death.*

12) *Now in the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month (which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, who served the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem.*

13) *He burned the house of the LORD and the king's house; all the houses of Jerusalem, that is, all the houses of the great, he burned with fire.*

14) *And all the army of the Chaldeans who were with the captain of the guard broke down all the walls of Jerusalem all around.*

15) *Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive some of the poor people, the rest of the people who remained in the city, the defectors who had deserted to the king of Babylon, and the rest of the craftsmen.*

16) *But Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard left some of the poor of the land as vinedressers and farmers. (NKJV)*

You can see that a majority of the people were carried off into captivity and it's a very ugly process of how this played out. You can see why I refer to this as a matter of "national security". Their refusal to obey God eventually resulted in the destruction of

the nation. They first wound up not enjoying their time in the land and eventually were vomited out of it and were carried off into captivity.

To give credit where credit is due, I have to acknowledge who pointed out this whole concept to me. I have to give credit to my friend Glen Springfield for framing this in terms of “national security”. To give you a little context, Glen and I became friends about ten years ago. I would periodically visit a congregation that he regularly attended and he befriended me within a few weeks of me coming there. He used to love starting conversations by saying, “What have you been studying this week?”. He loved to discuss the Bible and get into conversations about it. This resulted in us building a friendship that has now been for about ten years. Glen still does that. He comes over to my house for services now, neither one of us go to the congregation that I referred to but he will still come in and ask, what have you been studying this week? A few weeks ago, he did the same thing and mentioned he had been reading the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 and saw the promise there and said to himself:

“You know that’s really about a promise of “national security” and I never thought about it in those terms.”

Years ago, I had noticed that the idea it was a promise of everyone having a long life was obviously not the case, because I knew too many people who had nullified that idea. I noticed it talking about the land, but I had never thought of phrasing it as “national security”. As Glen mentioned this, my eyes popped open and my mind started racing because it all started connecting for me. Glen even looked at me and said, “You’re already writing a sermon in the back of your mind, aren’t you?”. I agreed—but then I stopped and thought that he speaks too and I didn’t want to steal his thunder so I immediately said if you want to take the idea and run with it, I don’t want to step on your toes. He said that no he didn’t want to do it, and so I said I would. But I have to give him credit for his idea as I did steal that.

As I mentioned this is a promise more of “national security” than it is of longevity, but now let’s ask the question, *why is it specifically tied to the fifth commandment?* As we can see, the general principle of obeying God’s commandments as a whole is tied to these concepts of living a long time in the land, enjoying your time in the land; that’s tied to the concept of obeying God. Why when He listed out the Ten Commandments did God specifically tie this concept to the fifth commandment? To understand that we have to understand the relationship of what the family structure does to a nation in general over time. It’s not just about learning to honor your father and mother, typically as children, but how we learned that discipline in our lives—not to just respect our parents—but how it taught us to be good citizens. To respect our fellow man, to respect authority in general. That typically gets tied to being taught as a young child how to learn to respect authority and how to behave. If we don’t do that what you find is people who never learn that basic respect when they are young, grow up to be delinquents or criminals because they don’t respect authority in general. They don’t respect law enforcement, they don’t respect government, they don’t respect their fellow man. To see this turn to Proverbs 30:11.

Proverbs 30:11 *There is a generation that curses its father, And does not bless its mother. (NKJV)*

Let's notice what else it ties with this.

12) There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes, Yet is not washed from its filthiness.

13) There is a generation—oh, how lofty are their eyes! And their eyelids are lifted up.

14) There is a generation whose teeth are like swords, And whose fangs are like knives, To devour the poor from off the earth, And the needy from among men. (NKJV)

Notice it's tying in with the concept of not honoring your parents, and so to becoming predators and criminals who prey upon the innocent, who prey upon the poor and needy. There is a direct correlation of the family structure of not just honoring your parents but all that tends to come with that. If you have an intact family structure and learn to respect not only your parents but authority, respect your fellow man, of how to conduct yourself as a human being and as a good citizen—if you don't learn that as a child, that typically has long lasting effects. As we're going to see a little later in this sermon, the destruction of the family structure has a very direct correlation with crime and all manner of other social problems that comes as a result of it. You tear apart the family structure, you destroy a society and culture—this can destroy nations just from the natural effect that comes from this. The key to realizing this, is in Proverbs 22 and we'll see the long-lasting effect that our childhood can have upon an individual.

Proverbs 22:6 *Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it. (NKJV)*

For this to be true, the opposite must also be true. If you train up a child and teach them well when they are young, then that will affect them the rest of their lives and they will be better citizens and better people and just have better behavior. If you train them up in the wrong way and don't show them discipline, don't show them love and they are not shown how to respect anybody else, that's going to stay with them for the rest of their lives as well. This is going to have multigenerational effects. This can affect an entire culture and society, over time. To see that we will go to Exodus 34. The context is after the golden calf event when Moses comes down with the Ten Commandment tablets and breaks them because of what he is seeing Israel doing and goes back up to get some new ones because he broke the first ones. The context is right after this.

Exodus 34:5 *Now the LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.*

6) And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth,

7) keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation.” (NKJV)

There is a multigenerational effect that we are talking about. You can read in Ezekiel 18, which we won't take the time to look at, that God is very clear that we all pay for our own sins, that we all have personal accountability and it's not a matter of the children getting blamed for their father's sins or vice versa. The concept here is raising up a child in the way they should go and if you do that the wrong way you oftentimes get a multigenerational effect. If someone is raised up and they don't know how to respect or how to treat their fellow citizens or how to conduct themselves and have a proper family or relationships, they will raise their children the same way. This can go down multiple generations and affect an entire society if this just keeps going on from generation to generation. If you look at the greater effects of how this can affect an entire society, you can see why He would specifically attach this whole concept to the fifth commandment. If you don't learn to honor your father and mother, you're going to wind up shortening your days in the land and not enjoying your time because it's going to erode your whole society. They're not going to be consistently obeying and will wind up getting thrown out of the land. It's that powerful effect that it has and the multigenerational effect that can take place.

To illustrate this, I would like to share some excerpts from a couple of articles that address this very concept. I pulled both of these from a similar website; they are both from the website of the Heritage Foundation which you can find at heritage.org. If you aren't familiar with the Heritage Foundation, it's a conservative oriented think tank you might say, which addresses social policy issues and things of that nature. I'm just going to read some excerpts from a couple of articles, these are not the entire articles. This first one is a little older, but I think you're going to see as I read this, the content is very valid. This is again from the Heritage Foundation website and posted March 17, 1995 when it was written. It's an article by Patrick Fagan and the title is [The Real Root Cause of Violent Crime: The Breakdown of Marriage, Family and Community](#).

Policymakers at last are coming to recognize the connection of the breakdown of American families and various social problems. The unfolding debate over welfare reform for instance has been shaped by the wide acceptance in recent years that children born into single parent families are much more likely than children of intact families to fall into poverty and welfare dependence themselves in later years. These children in fact, face a daunting array of problems.

While this link between illegitimacy and chronic welfare dependency now is better understood, policymakers also need to appreciate another strong and disturbing pattern evident in scholarly studies: the link between illegitimacy and violent crime and between the lack of parental attachment in violent crime. Without an understanding of criminal behavior—how criminals are formed—members of Congress state legislators cannot understand why whole sectors of society, particularly in urban areas, are being torn apart by crime. And without that knowledge, sound policymaking is impossible.

A review of the empirical evidence in the professional literature of the social sciences gives policymakers an insight into the root cause of crime. Consider for instance:

- *Over the past thirty years, the rise in violent crime parallels the rise in families abandoned by fathers.*
- *High-crime neighborhoods are characterized by high concentrations of families abandoned by fathers.*
- *State-by-state analysis by Heritage scholars indicates that a 10 percent increase in the percentage of children living in single-parent homes leads typically to a 17 percent increase in juvenile crime.*
- *The rate of violent teenage crime corresponds with the number of families abandoned by fathers.*
- *The type of aggression and hostility demonstrated by a future criminal often is foreshadowed in unusual aggressiveness as early as age five or six.*
- *The future criminal tends to be an individual rejected by other children as early as the first grade who goes on to form his own group of friends, often the future delinquent gang.*

On the other hand:

- *Neighborhoods with a high degree of religious practice are not high-crime neighborhoods.*
- *Even in high-crime inner-city neighborhoods, well over 90 percent of children from safe, stable homes do not become delinquents. By contrast only 10 percent of children from unsafe, unstable homes in these neighborhoods avoid crime.*
- *Criminals capable of sustaining marriage gradually move away from a life of crime after they get married.*
- *The mother's strong affectionate attachment to her child is the child's best buffer against a life of crime.*
- *The father's authority and involvement in raising his children are also a great buffer against a life of crime.*

There's also another article I would like to share a good section of with you. This one addresses specifically the issue that we often see in the news these days and that's the issue of mass shootings. You often see active shooters going into schools and other areas, particularly when it's children, just shooting up and violently acting out. Often what you'll see in these cases are calls that we have to ban all the guns. The guns are

the problem and we have to get all the guns out of society. When I look back to my childhood, I see how ridiculous that very idea is. The reason I say that is because, I grew up in a rural farming community in southern Alabama where deer hunting was something almost everybody did. If you went to most houses, there was probably a gun in it. There were multiple guns in the house I grew up in. It was also a neighborhood you could leave your doors unlocked and not have to worry about crime. It was not unusual in my High School to look out into the parking lot and see the pickup trucks parked out there and see shotguns and rifles hanging in the gun racks. Don't get me wrong, if someone had taken a gun out and carried it into the school and waved it around that would have caused a big problem. We would have been upset about that. But the concern would have been more that someone would accidentally, carelessly shoot somebody rather than they were going to come in with ammo and try to shoot everyone in sight—that really wasn't a big concern. Today, the very existence of seeing a gun in a gun rack in a school would have everybody panicking. Even though there were guns all over the place there wasn't a murder rate in this town; no one was shooting anybody and that's because it was a conservative community of mostly professing Christians. They weren't church of God but various forms of Protestantism typically. But there were the fundamental Judeo-Christian values that people believed in and there just wasn't a murder rate.

Let me share with you an article that addresses this and shows the strong correlation between these active shooters and the breakdown of the family structure. The very breakdown of Judeo-Christian values. This article also comes from the Heritage Foundation website, it's from March 14, 2018. It's authored by Emilie Kao and the title of the article is [The Crisis of Fatherless Shooters](#).

In the wake of the Parkland massacre, an age-old question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" has a newfound relevance. As another mass school shooting stuns Americans, it is time to talk about not just how to protect students from shooters, but also about what must happen so that fewer students become shooters in the first place. It is crucial to talk about how more American children can grow up with the emotional, psychological and spiritual security that comes from relationships where one is deeply cared for, connected, and known. For what lies inside so many school shooters is a deep void of identity relationship that they tragically seek to fill through nihilistic violence. There is a sobering theme repeated over and over in the biographies of school shooters—the fatherlessness of a broken or never formed family.

Among the 25 most-cited school shooters since Columbine, 75 percent were reared in broken homes. Psychologist Dr. Peter Langman, a pre-eminent expert on school shooters, found that most came from incredibly broken homes of not just divorce and separation, but also infidelity, substance abuse, criminal behavior, domestic violence, and child abuse.

After the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre, scholar Brad Wilcox called attention to the work of criminologists Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi, which found the absence of fathers to be one of the "most powerful predictors of crimes." He

explained that fathers are role models for their sons who maintain authority and discipline, thereby helping them develop self-control and empathy toward others, key character traits lacking in violent youth.

The late rapper Tupac Shakur said, "I know for a fact that had I had a father, I would have had some discipline. I'd have more confidence. Your mother can't calm you down the way a man can. You need a man to teach you how to be a man." Shakur, who was murdered in 1996, started hanging out with gangs because he wanted to belong to a family.

In addition to structure and discipline, a boy's relationship with his father can be a profound source of identity—or not. Dr. Warren Farrell, author of the "The Boy Crisis," says that when a boy asks "Who am I?" the answer is that his identity is comprised of half his dad and half his mom. Boys who do not have a strong relationship with their fathers may lack a model of healthy masculinity. Many of the school shooters struggled with a sense of "damaged masculinity" and sought to become "ultramasculine." Langman says that at the end of this spectrum is "getting a gun to suddenly have power."

In fact, the fathers of three of the most infamous school shooters were absent from their sons' lives. The father of Adam Lanza, the Sandy Hook shooter, had not seen his son in two years and later told reporters he wished his son had never been born. The adoptive father of Nikolas Cruz died when Cruz was 5 years old. And the father of 6-year-old Dedrick Owens, the country's youngest school shooter, was in jail when his son killed his first-grade classmate. Dedrick Owens' father has said that he suspects his son's crime was a reaction to his absence.

Since the 1965 Moynihan report, the breakdown of the American family has been hotly debated. Democratic Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan's finding that fatherlessness would lead to poorer outcomes for African-American children was published at a time when only 25 percent of African-American households were led by a single parent. Today, 24 percent of white non-Hispanic families are headed by a single parent and the rate has reached 66 percent among African-Americans. If we don't reverse current trends on marriage, the number of fatherless children will only grow.

As you can see here, having an intact family and all that this produces in rearing a child: to respect their parents, to respect society, to know how to function and have an intact family themselves and to pass that down to generations, is enormous. The correlation between the breakdown of the family and the breakdown of society, of crime and all manner of social problems there is a huge correlation. When you take that into consideration you can then see why you can tie honoring your father and mother, directly to the "national security" of Israel. If you don't get this right, if you don't have the family structure and don't have the proper roles in place it's eventually going to destroy your society. You're going to wind up with delinquent children and again, generational problems, visiting the sins of the father on the third and fourth generation and this is

going to eventually destroy your society and you are going to get thrown out of the land. That's what the promise of the fifth commandment is talking about.

If we look at this, we can understand that it's not a promise that if someone obeys their parents and is faithful and respectful, they are guaranteed to have a long life and they won't tragically die, at a young age; that is simply not what God was saying at all. That's a complete misunderstanding of what the promise of the commandment is. What it's telling us is just how important the family structure is. How important it is that we not only honor our father and mother, but that we teach each generation to do the same. That we retain these Judeo-Christian values in our life and how we live because it is important to the "national security" of a nation. It is for our survival as a nation today. So, as we look at this, we can now appreciate the traditions we have in our country of Mother's Day and Father's Day and honoring our parents and realize that what God is telling us with this. He is not just telling us how to have a more productive family relationship, He's telling you how to preserve the "national security" of an entire society.