

The 5th Commandment & Natural Law

Let us listen attentively to the Word of God, 1 Timothy 5.8, middle of these verses. It has a beginning there, and a middle, and the end, in which he says in three different ways that you ought to take care of your family. But if anyone does not provide for his own, we read, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever.

Let us pray. Spirit of truth and life, we come this morning asking for further illumination upon us, God, if some things are obscure or confusing, and God, that you would also strengthen our will and resolve to follow you and to fulfill these commands for us, Lord, as best we are able in our situation. But God, especially here this morning, to see and understand the fifth commandment and its relation to unbelievers and believers, that it's part of natural law, it is understandable and perceived by those even without the Word of God, and the ramifications of this truth, Lord, and the importance, of course, of the Word of God to make such things even more clear.

Gracious God and Savior, help us, we pray, to focus upon you and your will for us. By the power of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Our Lord's will for our life, as you know, is summarized in the Ten Commandments. These commandments are quoted as well as other laws elsewhere in the Bible, in the New Testament and the Old Testament, other commandments besides the Ten Commandments in particular, like thou shall not cheat. You shouldn't cheat, but there is no thou shall not cheat in the Ten Commandments.

How is this possible? Because the Ten Commandments are a summary of God's law. There are a bunch of laws. I think the Jews count up to 636 laws that you can get from the Bible, and they fit somewhere or multiple places within the Ten Commandments, which is a rubric of understanding the moral law of God for our lives.

There's more to the story of God's revealed will for us. It's not only found in the Ten Commandments, that is, in the Bible in particular, but outside of the Bible, what we call natural revelation, in particular the natural law that the Ten Commandments is not a contradiction of, but a clearer exposition therein. Specifically, this natural law here, its connection to the Fifth Commandment and how it applies to Christian living is the point of the sermon, because it is here in this text.

You may not recognize it, but it's here by negation at the latter part of verse 8, and it is worse. He, this one who professes to be a Christian, won't take care of his family, won't help those in need among their own kin. He says it's worse than an unbeliever, and how can that be unless what? An unbeliever knows he's supposed to do these things, and in fact, he does these things.

You're acting worse than what they actually do, and they know it without the word of God. That's the point.

The Fifth Commandment and Natural Law

So the first one here, Fifth Commandment and natural law, so we have to back up a bit, as we do in systematic theology.

This is more topical, but I think I showed already how it's tied to this text, in verse 8. There's a knowledge of God and his law outside the Bible. We must not forget this, especially in a society that we find ourselves in, where there's a growing number of atheists, that there's still a super minority in America, but they have a lot of influence in many ways, or practical atheism. People talk about being religious of some sort, but they don't really take God seriously.

And they tell you, I don't take God seriously, or by their practice, and certainly the atheist says God doesn't exist, but he does, and they know he does. Sometimes we believe them, take them at their word, when we shouldn't. We should take what the word of God tells us, and not what they're telling us.

God tells us in his word, and we know as well, I believe otherwise, that they know he exists. Romans 1.18 is a great passage about that. But here, supernatural revelation, of course, is the Bible.

That's the knowledge of God, as we find here, and thus the importance of the word of God, the Bible before us, written here, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, our confessions, and our preaching, and our expectations as believers, of course, is based upon the Bible. But the Lord God has given us another book as well, that's sometimes forgotten. Not just the book of his word, but the book of his works.

Not just the book of the supernatural, and what it means to be redeemed, by the power of the Holy Spirit, but also the book of the natural, of creation, of the things around us, of general revelation, it's called. Or you can say natural revelation as well. And this text assumes it by negative example.

The unbelievers did not have the word of God written before them. Books weren't common back then, the way they are today. And he says, these pagans, these Romans, these Egyptians, they take care of their family.

They know these things, and you're not doing it, that's worse than being them. Because, of course, you have greater knowledge. Which is a double problem.

One, you have Christ, on top of the commandment, that everyone knows, even unbelievers. They don't know about Christ, but they know about taking care, and honoring their family. They may honor it too much, as you know in the oriental religions, they worship their ancestors.

They literally have shrines there in Japan, for example. Right? They still go there. I've seen a video of that, and it's like, wow, I know it's cultural at the time, but the roots of it, of course, are religious.

They go too far to be sure, but they still acknowledge it. And Christians, who won't take seriously, the command of God, to watch over your own, Paul is very clear here, you're worse than an unbeliever. That's astounding.

Because the unbeliever knows, brothers and sisters. He's made in the image of God, it's a fallen image of God, that's true. Sin is still within him, that's true.

But it hasn't completely eradicated, destroyed it. That's why he's still what? Morally culpable before God. Because that knowledge is there, of right and wrong.

And one of the basic things, of creation, is you have a mother and a father. And what do you have to do? You have to honor them, and take care of them. So they knew enough of God's moral will, to take care of their own family.

Natural revelation is God's truth, found outside the Bible. That's a simple way of putting it. It's necessary knowledge.

You have to have it. We're humans, we're made in God's universe. This is the way he designed these things.

And so we, as his people, must take it seriously, what we call general, or natural revelation. And from this general revelation, comes natural law as well. And of course, it's written on the hearts of every man, young and old, non-Christian and the like.

And it's also, especially and more clearly, expounded and found in the word of God. The knowledge for the truth then, some application here, in two-fold manner. What does this mean, for us as Christians in the church? And what does this mean, for us as Christians in society? Remember, the church, the spiritual institution, that we are all a part of, by baptism, is super added, or put upon, that which already exists, naturally.

And it doesn't destroy him. You still have a family, you still have a business, you still have a nation. But it's added upon, and on top of it.

It's an additional responsibility, as it were. So we use both books of God, his word, and his works. The first example is, women cannot rule, or teach, as a public office.

In particular here, in the church situation. And how does Paul argue this? Do you remember this? Well of course, you may remember it, if you go through your notes. Or you can flip back to chapter two, verses eleven and following, of first Timothy.

Where we read, an explicit black letter commands, let a woman learn in silence, with all submission, I do not permit a woman, to teach, or to have rule over a man, but to be in silence. Why? Because Paul says so, he just feels like being mean, or something. For Adam was first formed, then Eve.

He goes to the creation account, and argues from that stance. He doesn't quote the Psalms, he doesn't quote Jesus, he goes back to a known fact, he goes back to his audience, and says we all know, who was created first. This is significant.

Nature is significant. He continues on here, Adam wasn't deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. And of course, we fell in Adam, and she was part of this, but it's in Adam that he is, as the head of the human race.

But Eve was deceived, she was caught off guard, and fell down this path. And so, Paul is arguing from this event, and from the fall itself, that you know, look, this has significations, in the church of God. Because remember, 1 Timothy tells us, in 3.15, that I write these things, that you may what, learn how to live, in the house of God.

Which is the pillar, and foundation of the truth. It is relevant, in other words, to the Christian life. And specifically here, the formal structure, of the church itself.

And we continue on here, in 1 Corinthians 11, is another example, that in public assemblies, we ought to be careful, with respect to the differences, between men and women. He says, in 1 Corinthians 11, does not even nature itself, teach you. And goes on, to continue to argue, that the women, prophesying, and publicly praying, with the supernatural power, of the Holy Spirit, ought to still, represent somehow, to show that they're not, trying to lead men, but rather are led, by the Spirit of God, being prophetesses, I argue.

And show some sign, naturally, some way, that they are still, in submission to men. Hence the head covering. But, we don't have to worry about, supernatural miracles, that way anymore.

Now, the knowledge for society, we have to live, in the world around us, we have to deal with, social issues, political issues, economical issues. This is where we live, brothers and sisters, which is a lot of details. A lot of matters, not explicitly covered, in the Word of God, although you could probably, find another verses, that talk about it in general, about being, you know, caring for the poor, about being fair, in your economic exchanges, especially the Book of Proverbs.

But what's fascinating, about the Book of Proverbs, is this. You could find, many, many of those, Proverbs, in the surrounding, cultures, around them, that never had access, to the Word of God. They're just there, because a lot of it is, again, built into how God, made this world, so that they can continue, even after the fall, to maintain, some semblance of order, and a civilization, around us.

And so, the light of nature, helps us live, in society, and covers a lot of details, you don't get, in the Word of God. The first example, here, more broadly, is that, humans are individuals, in community. I think you, already know, the significance of this, and, members of Providence, as I mentioned this before, in Sunday School class, that we're not just, our own person. We're not just, our own island. But with respect, to social matters, we are dependent, upon one another. Hence, the whole point here, that the widows, are dependent upon, their family, or their grandchildren, even, to the second generation, and that we need help.

We gather together, multiple families, and you get enough, families together, you get a town, you get enough towns together, you get a community, or a small nation state, and

that's how, these things have grown, as you see the history of it, in the Old Testament. Because we know, we need each other, we know we need help, we have to have, a division of labor, we have to support, one another, and that's how it's done. Humans are not just, individuals only, but individuals, in community, so neither the one, or the other, should swallow up, the one, or the other, and secondly, the male female differences, is also known, from general revelation, and has therefore, effects, and impacts, our daily living, as I pointed out, in Sunday school class, as I'm going through, the doctrine of sanctification, that there is, a gender sanctification, in so far as, women are women, and men are men, and there are differences. In that regard, and being born again, doesn't change those differences, and so, you give birth to kids, we don't, you take care of the kids, in the way we can't, and so, your sanctification, to that extent, of the differences, between men and women, is different, and we know this, unbelievers see this, and act this out, throughout thousands of years, of earth's history, the practices they're in. The differences are real, the differences, of course, are enacted, differently, in different societies, to some extent, but they still, recognize, such things, around them, and even, as different jobs, fit different sexes, of the genders, differently, as well, muscle matters, muscle jobs.

It's still, after, I don't know, since the 60s, and even before then, you had multiple waves, of feminism, they call it, 98% of those, dangerous jobs, of those hard, upper body strength jobs, right, all the blue collar work, is still men, and that's not an accident, the women don't want to work, in those fields, they're ugly, they're messy, they're hard, hard work, they're dangerous work, often, working in mines, for example, and they're like, I don't want that, I don't blame them, I don't want them there, either, I don't want them hurt, that's still there, you still can't get around it, no matter how much rhetoric, we use in America. Don't forget that, because it's built in, to how God made this world, that's the point, Christians should know, these differences, and accept these differences, and live our churches, according to those differences.

The Fifth Commandment and Ordered Loves

Second point, the fifth commandment, in ordered loves. The fifth commandment, in ordered love, this is also implied, in the text here, by ordered loves, I mean, we have a priority, of who we love first, and most, and how much energy, we put into them, and I already talked about that, when I went over, the whole passages here, verses one through 16, in which the family, is supposed to love the family, more than other people, and you show that love, by your actions. What, you take care, of your poor widow, you take care, of your handicapped, members of your family, you take care, of the poor in your family, before the church even does it. It's very clear, in verse 16, and maybe even harsh to our ears, let not the church, be burdened by them, someone else, has got to take care, of them, except under those, specific conditions, in which the widow, is allowed to be brought, into the number, and therefore, some kind of support, of the church of God, and so that love, those loves.

There are three types, of love, the language, of ordered love, comes out of a long tradition, of Christian ethics. Augustine talks about it, and three in particular, stand out, so the fifth commandment, we're still talking, about the fifth commandment, because love is involved

in that, I hope you know, when he says, honor your parents, he means more, than just, yeah I obey them, but he wants your heart. The kids should have a heart, towards their parents.

That's what we're talking, about here, so the fifth commandment, is based upon the family, it's not individual, but the individual, and community, the first community, he was raised with, is the family community, where the love is there. Under God, of course, the first love, is always God, but under God, the first love, is one spouse, and then the children, and grandparents, and the like, and the circle, as you know, gets broader and broader, and the broader the circle is, in general, the less you're able, to do with them. You're not going to spend, as much time with them, that's just the nature, of the case, but even in the same family, there's different kinds, of love.

Agape love, is that first one, the love of preciousness. I'm using, B.B. Warfield's, excellent, in-depth research, on four different words, for love, love concepts, in the Greek, there in the New Testament. I'm talking about three of them, agape, being the one, we have all heard, and grown up with, probably heard that word, at least once, in your Christian life. You've been around a while, the most used word of love, in the New Testament, we are to love, in the sense of preciousness, God, and his church, love, one another, we are precious, and there's a difference now, there's a radical change, being born again, and being baptized, into his church, and so that, this is a new family, not one that replaces, the biological family, but one that's, in addition to our, biological family. So the emphasis there, for agape is, look beyond, the natural relationship, you may have with them. They certainly had a, very tight knit relationship, because early on, most of the churches, were what, a hundred percent of them, were Jewish, so they have that, common Jewish culture, and upbringing, and thinking, in the Old Testament, right, and the apostles, and them are saying, you want something more, than this natural love, you want the supernatural, love of agape, that is the object, is now, beyond the natural, and towards God, in us.

Next the other love, is the love of pleasantness. There's a nice simple way, of describing it, a phileo love, you've heard this before, Philadelphia, the city of brotherly, love, often associated, with friendship, because we get along, with the friends, because we have a pleasant, time with them. We're not on edge, we're not uncomfortable, around them, that's the kind of love here, and it's often, shared interests. Sometimes you hit them off, just like that, you get along pretty well, but often it takes, a little more development, more time, and you meld together, a little better, that's the kind of pleasant, love this speaks of.

So those are the first, two kinds of love, this is the second most used, word for love, in the New Testament, sometimes it's translated, friendliness or friendship, the third one, is the love of preference, I wanted another P word, preciousness, pleasantness, preference, in the sense that, you prefer your family, in many ways, even if you're not very, thoughtful about, why that preference is, you're comfortable there, it's what's natural to you, even if it's been decades. You're like, I want to be with my family, again sometime, I've got to spend some, vacation time with them, so you prefer them, intuitively, even if you're not, the best friends with them, you don't have a lot of, pleasantness with them. Like I mentioned before, your crazy uncle, but you still, will take care of him, you still prefer him, in the sense here, maybe you don't like the widow, maybe she's a, kind of a mean widow. It's alluded to here, isn't it, it talks about the bad widows, who are running around, fulfilling their, fleshly desires, he

says, something awful, a little bit about them, but they still need, to be taken care of, by their family, don't they? We still take care of them, although the church, cannot in that case, you're still what, preferring them, that's the idea, what I'm getting at here, and it's a natural preference, the love of nature. Natural love is called, storgie. It's an old English word, you can look it up, it's instinctive, it's intuitive, affection, towards those close to us, especially our family. Like gravity, we are built, to be attracted to others, first and foremost, our family, and our kinsfolk, and those around us. Infants, of course, show this immediately, when mom is taken away, they're like, "What, this is crazy stuff." She's comforting, she's recognizable, and she's what, safe. In our later years, of course, we continue to hold affection, for our parents, as we grow up as adults, and we ought to.

C.S. Lewis, has a nice little summary here, of storgie, it's the first love. He talks about in his book, the four loves, he writes, affection, almost slinks, or seeps, through our lives, this natural, love, it lives with humble, private things, soft slippers, old clothes, old jokes, the thump of a sleepy dog's tail, on the kitchen floor, the sound of sewing machine, in the background. It's what we grew up with, and who is this for, of course, what kind of natural love, who's the object of natural love, of storgie, for those especially close to us, And this is practiced today, of course, thanks be to God, even among some believers, they still have some kind of guilt or want to do something to take care of their family, especially if they have been negligent for many, many years.

There's this inbred natural love and care that we have for those closest to us, and we ought to further strengthen that, and that's what we have here in this text, is, I would argue, storgie, is the assumption here, take care of your widows. What kind of a Christian are you that you don't have the natural affection that animals have for their own kind, for their own children? And that's how it's used, in fact, that word in Greek literature back then, it talks about the stork and the like taking care of their own children. And if you don't have that, what kind of a human are you? But it's broader than the immediate circle, or as I argued and we show here in the text here, does not provide for his own, that's the broad circle, especially for those of his household, that's the more immediate circle that we have in modern day families.

But it's even broader than the immediate kinsfolk, it can involve entire nations, this word of storgie, or one's own. And the third Maccabees book, chapter 5, so this was written, this book by the Jews, in the 200 year period of the Old Testament before the New Testament. And it covers Jewish history at the time, and the Jewish-Maccabean revolt.

And there in 532 we read of the native king and servant relationship, the king is reprimanding the servant, saying, I would really reprimand you, you'd probably kill him, if you weren't, to me, with storgie. If I didn't have this natural affection towards you because you are of my nation and you're a servant I've probably had for a long time, maybe even grew up with. So don't restrict the idea of natural affection to just me and my family, maybe some uncles and cousins, but as the circle grows broader, it includes the nation as well.

The other word for that in national politics is what? If you love your nation more than another nation, what do you call that historically? Patriotism! And now it's been attacked for the last 10 or 15 years in both parties, in both administrations, in both whatever, all over

this nation, even Christian circles, it's really weird. In the 90s and early 2000s you could easily talk about patriotism. And contradistinction to the wrong kind of patriotism, which we called, when I went to college, jingoism.

We're going to take over the whole world, you guys are hateful, you're subhuman. We call it jingoism, I remember that very clearly, I took poli sci in college. All that's lost now, now it's just simply, if you're a real Christian you're going to love everyone equally.

No, I mean, I don't want to go to war with other people, but I prefer, I'm comfortable with, my soft slippers are where? In the nation of America, or Colorado even in particular. That's how God has designed it. That's what I mean.

Lack of it is a sin. Romans 1.31 describes those without natural affection. Right out of the Greek is the word storge, with the word before it, ah.

Or without natural affection, a storge. As those in rebellion against God. Indifference or hatred towards your family or friends, or your nation, is a sin.

I don't think we hear that enough anymore. Loving someone better than someone else doesn't mean you hate them, just you love them better than you love someone else. We all know this.

I hope you love your spouse better than you love me. I don't want to hear anything else than that. But that's not where we are, and I'm trying to defend my flock and my churches against this kind of insidious way of thinking that's coming into the church.

It's wrong. All these loves, of course, are supposed to be ordered under Jesus Christ. He is the greatest source of our love, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in particular.

Romans reminds us as well as Paul elsewhere in the Bible. When there's a conflict between these loves and Christ, Christ comes first, of course. Always.

But by God's mercy upon us, we don't have those conflicts as much as perhaps we think we do. And we're blessed by God for that. The third point is the fifth commandment and the gospel.

The Fifth Commandment and the Gospel

The fifth commandment and the gospel. What do I mean by this? Well, in sum, the fifth commandment is in the Bible and in nature. It's implanted in all of us once we have parents, once we're born into a family.

And unbelievers practice these things without Christian influence, although they twist it, of course. And they exaggerate it one way or the other, unfortunately. And there's an abuse of this, again, in Christian circles at times.

For example, in Mark 3.33, where Jesus is talking to his Jewish audience, right? They have this long history together. They store gay love. Look, we're Jew.

We have all this commonality. We have this long history. We have a common nation, a common culture, a common way of speaking, a common king.

At least they had a king until the Romans came along. And he answered them and said to the Jews, Who is my mother or my brothers? And they looked around in a circle at those who sat about him and said, Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of God is my brother and my sister and mother.

So this is clearly rhetorical value to emphasize to the Jews something new is going on here. It's no longer about being Jew. It's about whoever follows the will of God and the implication being what? Even Gentiles can be my mother and my brother, he means in this moral sense.

And we know he's not saying forget the family. People read it this way. Even today, they'll read it and they'll use this verse and say, I'm going to take care of my family.

You're my family. Who cares about my biological family? What did Jesus do for his mother when he was on the cross? He asked for John to take care of her. Did he ask John to take care of other mothers? Did you ever ask yourself that? What about all those other mothers who need help? No, Jesus is like, as a man, I'm taking care of my mom, not yours.

My own, especially my household, is what he was doing by his practices. And so when I say the fifth commandment of the gospel, I don't mean you're saved by the fifth commandment. I mean Jesus, who was the heart of the gospel, practiced the law of God, the natural law of God.

Of course, it was supernatural. He was raised with the Bible as an example for us in our sanctification. Matthew 5.17 is another way of describing this.

Jesus says, Do not think I came to destroy the law or the prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. He obeyed the law and thought, word, and deed for us in our stead.

Because it was condemnation to us because we are sinners and we are rebels and we would not obey the Ten Commandments. And Christ did it for us. He did not destroy it.

He fulfilled it. So in his practice there, in his teachings, he shows us the fifth commandment is still part of the gospel age of the New Testament. The gospel is the good news that Jesus Christ saved sinners who broke the law of God and Christ fulfilled the law in our stead.

In Romans 3.31, Paul unpacks this idea more specifically where we read, Do we then make void the law through faith? We become a Christian, we don't care about God's holy law? No, certainly not. Or translated, because it's very emphatic, God forbid. On the contrary, we establish the law.

The law was so serious and so taken by God as his will that he would not break it and his son died for it instead. That's what he means by establishing it. Whereas, unfortunately, too

many Christians today make excuses and want to undermine the law of God when Christ did not.

He walked straight into it, obeyed it in our stead, and imputed that righteousness to us and showed that God would not bend his holy will and make exceptions for us. God did not annul or destroy, but rather reinforced it. As we see here in the book of Timothy, in chapter 2, and again here in chapter 5, he is reinforcing the law of God.

If anyone does not provide for his own, especially his household, he is denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. Denial against what the unbeliever does by nature is the connection here. So all this to say is to embrace common sense, brothers and sisters, in our Christian walk.

Live your life with the two books opened before you, the book of redemption, that is the word of God for salvation, but also much more law in there that helps greater illumination and understanding of the book of creation, that is the works of God for our sanctification. And close your ears to the naysayers who pit the word of God against the word of his works in and around us, brothers and sisters. And always turn your eyes upon Jesus, our Lord and Savior, for more grace and to follow him by the power of the Spirit.

And day by day we pray. Amen. Let us pray.

And so, Lord and Jesus, we see by the divine example of Paul here and elsewhere in the Bible the importance of the fifth commandment and its relation even to the unbeliever, that they know and do take care of their family in general. And often around us, God, to the shame of Christians who will not. And precious God, so from this truth may we be strengthened and encouraged, Lord, to have a proper understanding and a relationship between what you have given us, the two revelations, the supernatural and the natural revelation, and the two sweetly comply in your providence for our growth and our grace.

To your praise, your glorious grace, by Jesus Christ and his blood for us. Amen.