

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

...So we have two kinds of fathers presented in this commandment: fathers in blood and fathers in office. Or, those who have the care of the family and those who have the care of the country. Besides these there are still spiritual fathers. They are not like those in the papacy, who have had themselves called fathers but have performed no function of the fatherly office [Matthew 23:9]. For the only ones called spiritual fathers are those who govern and guide us by God's Word. In this sense, St. Paul boasts his fatherhood in 1 Corinthians 4:15, where he says, "I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel." Now, since they are fathers, they are entitled to their honor, even above all others. But to spiritual fathers the least amount of honor is bestowed. The way the world knows for honoring them is to drive them out of the country and to begrudge them a piece of bread. In short, spiritual fathers must be (as says St. Paul [1 Corinthians 4:13]) like the filth of the world and everybody's refuse and footrag.

Yet there is need that this truth about spiritual fatherhood also be taught to the people. For those who want to be Christians are obliged in God's sight to think them worthy of double honor who minister to their souls [1 Timothy 5:17–18]. They are obligated to deal well with them and provide for them. For that reason, God is willing to bless you enough and will not let you run out. But in this matter everyone refuses to be generous and resists. All are afraid that they will perish from bodily needs and cannot now support one respectable preacher, where formerly they filled ten potbellies. Because of this, we also deserve for God to deprive us of His Word and blessing and to allow preachers of lies to arise again and lead us to the devil. In addition, they will drain our sweat and blood....

THE FIRST PETITION

...Here, now, learn what great need there is for such prayer. Because we see how full the world is of sects and false teachers, who all wear the holy name as a cover and sham for their doctrines of devils [1 Timothy 4:1], we should by all means pray without ceasing [1 Thessalonians 5:17] and cry out and call upon God against all people who preach and believe falsely. We should pray against whatever opposes and persecutes our Gospel and pure doctrine and would suppress it, as do the bishops, tyrants, enthusiasts, and such [2 Thessalonians 2:3–4]. Likewise, we should pray for ourselves who have God's Word but are not thankful for it, nor live like we ought according to the Word. If you pray for this with your heart, you can be sure that it pleases God. For He will not hear anything more dear to Him than that His honor and praise is exalted above everything else and that His Word is taught in its purity and is considered precious and dear.



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