Exodus 20 gives us the Ten Commandments God gave to the people of Israel. The fifth (Exodus 20:12) is about parents:

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.”

God commanded the people of Israel to HONOR their father and mother. What does “honor your father and mother” mean? Here is how one commentator defines it:

“This was a plain command of God, written with his own hand, and delivered by Moses to them; it was of a moral nature, and of eternal obligation: and to be understood, not merely of that high esteem parents are to be had in by their children, and of the respectful language and gesture to be used towards them, and of the cheerful obedience to be yielded to them; but also of honoring them with their substance, feeding, clothing, and supplying them with the necessaries of life, when they stand in need thereof; which is but their reasonable service, for all the care, expense,
and trouble they have been at, in bringing them up in the world” (John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible, Dr. John Gill 1690-1771)

Honoring the parents involves high esteem, reverence and support. It means that you are there for them and you care for them with your service, support, money, visits etc.

**Honoring your parents and promises associated with it**

In contrast to the other commandments, where no specific promise is attached directly to them, God, in giving this command He also added a specific promise. As He said, “honor your father and mother that your days may be long in the land that God gives you”. But He didn’t stop there. Deuteronomy 5:16 states the same commandment but with one additional promise attached to it:

**Deuteronomy 5:16**

“Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you; that your days may be prolonged [promise 1], and that it may be well with you, in the land which the LORD your God is giving you [promise 2].”

Paul is repeating this commandment in Ephesians 6:2-3:
"Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."

Paul says that this is the “first commandment with promise”. The first commandment God gave and which contained a promise was the commandment of honoring our parents! And really what a promise! You will live long on the earth and it will be well with you! Do you want to live long on the earth? Do you want to be well with you? Well here it is for you: honor your parents and that’s what is going to happen!

_Honoring the parents: the view of Jesus_

As in the case of other commandments, so also with honoring the parents, God says what would happen if somebody did not keep this commandment. Jesus summarized in Mark 7 both the commandment and what, according to this commandment, would happen if it was not kept:

**Mark 7:10**

"For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.'

The verb “curse” here is the Greek verb “kakologeo” which means
“speak evil”. Whoever spoke evil against his father or mother was to be put to death.

To see an example of not honoring the parents, let’s continue in the above passage of Mark:

Mark 7:11-13
"But you say, `If a man says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban"- (that is, a gift to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do."

The word “Corban” is a Hebrew word that means a “gift offered to God”. It is this word that is used in Leviticus 1:2 for example, where it says:

Leviticus 1:2
“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: `When any one of you brings an offering [Korban] to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of the livestock-of the herd and of the flock."

The word “offering” here is the word Korban that the Lord also used speaking of those Jews that didn’t honor their parents. In essence what these Jews were saying to their parents was “whatever you could benefit
from me, my property, my income, is Corban i.e. dedicated to God and I cannot give it to you”. This was a vow they used to do to avoid giving to their parents. They made a vow dedicating everything to God, and therefore they could claim that they had nothing to support and therefore no obligation for such support towards their parents. As Barnes explains:

“If he had once devoted his property once said it was “Corban,” or a gift to God - it could not be appropriated even to the support of a parent. If a parent was needy and poor, and if he should apply to a son for assistance, and the son should reply, though in anger, “It is devoted to God; this property which you need, and by which you might be profited by me, is “Corban” - I have given it to God;” the Jews said the property could not be recalled, and the son was not under obligation to aid a parent with it. He had done a more important thing in giving it to God. The son was free. He could not be required to do anything for his father after that. Thus, he might, in a moment, free himself from the obligation to obey his father or mother» (Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible, Albert Barnes (1798-1870))

Our Lord Jesus Christ condemned the use of the excuse of “Corban” – offering to God - to avoid helping the parents. Obviously for him honoring the parents was something very important, as important as it was for God when it listed it in the 10 commandments.
Honoring your father and mother: Conclusion

It is God’s command to honor our parents with all that this honor may include. The commandment of honoring our parents is the first commandment with promise and really what a promise: Live long on earth and be well with you! Most of the people wouldn’t want something more than this! Well, this is the promise. It is not unconditional though! It is conditional and it will be bestowed to those that honor their parents. The commandment of honoring our parents was so important that the one that would speak evil of his parents would die. Yes, today we live under the age of grace but the commandment of the Lord and His promise is there. And the challenge is there for us as well:

Ephesians 6:2-3

“Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”

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