

The  
Path of Duty,  
Christian Homes,  
Family Worship and  
Christian Employees



A. W. Pink

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## **The Path of Duty**

### **Part A**

Occasionally we receive a letter from one of our readers who is confronted with what he regards as a perplexing situation, involving perhaps the stirring of his nest and a change of circumstances, expressing himself as very concerned to know what is “God’s will” for him. Our first reaction is to wonder how far the inquirer has been *accustomed* to make conscience of pleasing God. If the inquirer (or the reader) is only exercised about the Divine will when some pressing situation or emergency faces him, it is a bad sign, betraying a sad state of soul and making it doubtful whether such an one has been truly converted. Just as being very religious on the Sabbath but thoroughly worldly through the week is to have “a form of godliness” but “denying the power thereof” (2 Tim. 3:5), so for me to be very solicitous about ascertaining and performing the will of God when some crises arises but to have little regard what He has appointed during the general course of my life, is to place a big question-mark against the genuineness of my Christian profession.

The Most High is not at our beck and call, to be made use of only when we are in difficulty. Those who are indifferent to His honour and glory while things are going smoothly and pleasantly for them, are not likely to receive light and help from Him when they feel disposed to make an accommodation of Him in the evil day. Scripture is too plain upon this matter to be misunderstood: “he that turneth away his ear from hearing the Law, even his prayer shall be abomination” (Prov. 28:9). Of the hypocrite it is said “will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him” (Job 27:9). No, He certainly will not. “Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; but

ye have set at nought all My counsel...I also will laugh at your calamity...then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer... For that they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord...Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of [having] their own way” (Prov. 1:24-31). Compare Micah 3:4; Zechariah 7:13.

But in sharp contrast from the class mentioned above there are those who *have sought* to walk with God and avoid those things which are displeasing to Him, and when some difficulty arises, a parting of the ways suddenly confronts them, an important decision has to be made, they are anxious to know “what is God’s will” for them. It appears to us that frequently these souls needlessly perplex themselves by the way in which they frame their question. It has long seemed to us that confusion of thought is betrayed by those who inquire “How am I to ascertain God’s mind for me when I have to choose between two alternatives?” Yea, that something more than faulty terminology is involved, is evident from the sequel which immediately follows. So far as our own observation goes the questioner fails to arrive at any clear and decisive answer, being left in a state of doubt and distress, which is neither honouring to God nor comforting for His bewildered child.

Much confusion would be avoided and much uncertainty prevented by asking “Is this, or would that be, *according to the Scriptures?*” for God’s “will” or “mind” is made known in His Word. *That* is the Rule, the sure and sufficient Rule we are to walk by, and not inward impressions of His secret will. Perhaps the reader replies, “Yes, I know the will of God is revealed in His Word on all spiritual and eternal matters, but it is about temporal things, the affairs of this life, which I am exercised about and over which I often find myself at an uncertainty.” But that should not be, dear friend. God’s Word is given to us for the express purpose of being “a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path” (Psa. 119:105), that is, our path in and through this world, which, because of its separation and alienation from God, is “a dark place” (2 Peter 1:19). It is wrong, quite unwarrantable,

for us to mentally draw a line between spiritual and temporal matters as though they belonged to separate departments of our life.

The present spiritual life of the Christian is lived out in this world, and it is to actuate and regulate him in all his varied concerns: “whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). A spiritual life is very much more than elevated contemplations, ecstatic feelings, or being engaged only in distinctly devotional exercises—that is the erroneous view taken of it by those who shut themselves up in monasteries and convents. A spiritual life is not a nebulous and mystical thing, but something intensely practical. A spiritual life is to be maintained and exercised by the Christian in the Schoolroom, the home, the workshop, as well as in the House of prayer. It is to dominate him in all his relations, in every association with his fellows, setting before them an example of piety, honesty, unselfishness, helpfulness. In other words, the whole of his conduct is to be ordered by the precepts of Holy Writ, and not by the dictates of self-pleasing, nor by the customs of the world or the whims of “public opinion.”

In His Word God has given us rules which are pertinent to every aspect of our sojourn down here, which are to control every detail of our complex lives, so that there is no need for us to wonder “Is this right?” or “Is that wrong?” We are not left to our own erring judgment nor that of our fellows, for the Lord has supplied us with an unfailing chart and compass to direct us in our voyage to the better Land. The Scriptures not only announce explicit precepts enjoining obedience in detail but they also enunciate broad principles applicable to every sphere or situation in which Divine providence may place us. Therefore the one question for the saint to be constantly occupied about is, What does Holy Writ require of me? am I acting in accord with *its* teachings? Is my motive in harmony with what it demands? Would I be acting contrary to the Divine Rule if I entered upon such and such a course, adopted this or that fashion or followed a

certain policy because my competitors do so or because my employer insists I must. Thereby a multitude of considerations are reduced to a simple and single issue.

What has been pointed out above may be summed up thus: God's "mind" or "will" for me ever lies in my treading *the path of duty*. And that there may be no misunderstanding, let us here define our terms. What is *duty*? The word means "due to," that which I am required to render unto another. The performance of duty is to discharge my obligations Godwards and manwards: loving Him with all my heart and strength and my neighbour as myself. It is to render that service which I am naturally or morally bound to perform unto others. More particularly, it is the execution of my responsibilities in the place which I occupy, whether in the home, the church, or the world. The *ground* of our duty is the Divine command, which is the sole determiner of human responsibility. The *end* of our duty is the glory of God, the pleasing of Him in the task He has allotted. The *present reward* of duty is a good conscience, the peace and satisfaction of mind in knowing I have done what is right. The *path* of duty is the course which Divine providence brings me into and which the Divine precepts have marked out for me.

It is by the providence of God each of us is black or white, male or female, a man of one or of five talents. Yet it is our responsibility to trade with those talents, and if they be put to a good use, more will be entrusted to us. Yet while the providence of God is often an *index*, it is *not the rule* to walk by—for *that* we must turn to the Word. It is in the Scriptures, and there alone, the path of duty is defined for us. Therein it is termed "the path of Thy commandments" (Psa. 119:35), which we need to pray that God will "make us go in," for by nature we are not disposed thereto, being born "like a wild ass's colt" (Job 11:12). Thus the path of duty is that of full obedience to God. It is "The way of holiness" (Isa. 35:8) in contrast from "the course of this world" (Eph. 2:2), which is one of *expediency* or choosing what seems easiest and pleasantest. It is "the way of wisdom" (Prov.

4:11) in distinction for the by-ways of folly. May Divine grace cause us to persevere therein.

## Part B

In our last we pointed out (1) that God's will for us is revealed in His Word; (2) that His Word is to regulate all our ways and control all our conduct; (3) that no matter what situation we be in or what emergency may arise, God's Word is all-sufficient as a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path; (4) that it therefore follows, the path of duty is defined for us in the Divine commandments. Yet there are some who say that they find it more difficult to *discern* their duty than to actually *perform* it once their duty is clearly perceived. But this should not be. That is tantamount to saying they have no light on their path, that they are in darkness, and surely that is a sad acknowledgement from anyone who professes to be a "child of light" (Eph. 5:8). Did not the Saviour declare "he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). If then I find myself in darkness, must not the fault be entirely mine? Then should I not examine myself and seek to discover the reason of it?—"is there not a cause!" Was it because I yielded to the pleasing of self and ceased to "follow" Him who is the Light? If so, my duty is plain I must humbly and penitently confess my failure to God and have the wrong put right, or my darkness will deepen.

Perhaps some reader replies, What you have said above hardly covers my case. The perplexity which confronts me is this: I find myself at the parting of the ways, and I am not clear whether I should turn to the right hand or to the left. My situation has drastically changed: the death of a loved one, the calling-up of my employer, or some other war emergency, has suddenly altered my circumstances. I have to make a decision, and what is for the best I am at a loss to discover. What am I to do? "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall

direct thy paths” (Prov. 3:5, 6). Confer not with flesh and blood, for if you consult your Christian friends the probability is that no two will offer the same counsel, and you will be more perplexed than ever. Go to the Lord Himself, acknowledge His Proprietorship over you, mix faith with this promise of His, turn it into definite and earnest prayer and *expect* an answer of peace from Him, trusting Him for the same.

Consider the case of Eliezer in Genesis 24. His master bade him journey from Canaan to Mesopotamia in search for a wife for his son Isaac. If ever a man was assigned a difficult task it was this one. But his duty was clear, for obedience to his master required him to enter upon this quest. Accordingly we find him setting out on his mission. But observe how he acted. When he arrived at the outskirts of the city of Nahor, he made his camels to kneel down by the well, and then he said “O Lord God of my master Abraham, I beseech Thee send me good speed this day” (verse 12). It was the hour when the maidens came to draw water from the well, so Eliezer asked the Lord to give him a sign whereby he might “know” which of them was the appointed wife for Isaac (verse 14). And the Lord did not fail him, but honoured his faith. In the sequel we find Eliezer bowed in worship and saying, “Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of His mercy and His truth: I being *in the way* [of duty] the Lord *led* me” (verse 27). And that is recorded for our instruction and encouragement.

Do not act hastily or impulsively, for God says “He that believeth shall not make haste” (Isa. 28:16). But some reader may reply “I am obliged to make a prompt decision in the matter before me.” Even so, if you have been living as becometh a child of God, there ought to be no difficulty: “the light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light” (Matt. 6:22). That is a figurative way of saying, if you have an undivided heart, if your dominant aim be the pleasing of God, then your mind will be illumined and able to perceive clearly the path of duty. Perplexity is occasioned by

conflicting interests swaying me, when opposing motives seek to actuate me, when the pleasing of self comes into competition with the glorifying of God. Keep steadily in view that the thing you have to decide is not which is the easier or most congenial path—the right hand or the left—but which is my *duty*?

Perhaps you reply, but that is my difficulty: how am I to decide *what is* my duty? Well, ponder the *negative* side: it is never right to do wrong, and therefore it can never be the Christian's duty to do anything which God's Word forbids, nor can it ever be his duty to enter into any position which would prevent him doing what Scripture enjoins. For example, if one alternative be going into debt my duty is plain, for Scripture says "Owe no man anything" (Rom. 13:8); or if it be to enter into a partnership or any other union with an unbeliever, God's Word forbids it: "Be ye not unequally yoked together" (2 Cor. 6:14); or if a worldly employer requires me to do work on the Sabbath day, then he is asking me *to sin* by breaking the fourth commandment; or if a Christian mother be ordered to enter a position wherein she could no longer care for her little ones, her duty would be clear, for "train up a child in the way he should go" (Prov. 22:6) is a privilege and responsibility which she cannot delegate unto others.

But suppose the *Government* should demand from me what is against my conscience, as the performing of manual labour on the Sabbath, does not Scripture itself bid me "be subject unto the higher powers?" God's people most certainly ought to be models of law-abiding citizens: righteous and merciful in all dealings with their fellows, doing unto others as they would be done by. They are Divinely enjoined to "render tribute to whom tribute is due," and thus to pay their taxes promptly and uncomplainingly. Nevertheless they must ever remember *God's* claims upon them, and never allow the fear of man to prevent their meeting His claims. We are to submit unto the Government so long as its requirements do not clash with the demands of God, but no further. When the king of Babylon issued a decree that all in his



dominions should fall down and worship the golden image he had set up, the three Hebrews rightly refused to do so; and when a later king issued an idolatrous edict, Daniel disregarded it; and in each case God vindicated their fidelity to Him. It is never right to do wrong, no matter who commands it, or what may be the emergency.

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation” (Rom. 13:1, 2). Is that an exhortation which requires *unqualified* submission to the governing power of a country? Does it signify that it is not permissible for the Christian to make any resistance unto magistrates, no matter what may be the nature of the laws they enact? Some have insisted this inspired injunction is to be taken without any modification. They point out it was given to Christians in the days of Nero, requiring them to be fully obedient unto the Roman emperors even though their edicts were destructive of Christianity itself. But such an understanding of these verses is quite untenable, failing as it does to leave any place for the superior claims of *God*. Children are commanded “obey your parents in *all* things” (Col. 3:20), yet if they ordered to *steal* it would be the child’s duty to disobey them!

The duty of obedience to those in authority is enforced by Holy Writ: see 1 Peter 2:13, 14. The civil government (whatever its form) is a Divine institution, and therefore to resist magistrates in the exercise of their lawful authority is disobedience to God. Yet since their authority is only a delegated one, delegated by God Himself, then they *transcend* their rights if they require anything which is inconsistent with our obedience to God; and when such a case arises it becomes the Christian’s duty to disobey them. The “power” to which Christians are bidden to be subject is a righteous and benevolent one, and not an iniquitous and malevolent one: “he is the minister of God to

thee *for good*” (Rom. 13:4), but he ceases to be “the minister of God to thee” if he demands what is evil. Wives are Divinely ordered to be “subject to their own husbands in everything” (Eph. 5:24), yet if they forbade their wives to read the Scriptures it would be their duty to disobey them. Wherever human law conflicts with the Divine “we must obey *God* rather than men” clearly defines our duty.

## Part C

“And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein” (Isa. 35:8). This is a most blessed though little-understood prophecy and promise. The figure used in the first part of the verse is simple and should occasion no difficulty. It is that of a specially-made road through a wild country or trackless desert, provided for the use of pilgrims and travellers. The making known of the will of God unto us is here likened to the casting up of a clearly defined highway through a strange land. The reference is to the state of the Gentile world at the time the Israelitish seer made this prediction. During the days of the Jewish theocracy, the heathen nations were in spiritual darkness and ignorance, being without any written revelation from God. But the incarnation of Christ would entirely alter that awful state of affairs. The people which sat in darkness would see “great light” (Isa. 42:6, 7; Matt. 4:15, 16). The glorious Gospel would be preached to all nations and the Highway of salvation—the Way which leadeth unto Life, the “way of peace have they not known” (Rom. 3:17)—would be clearly revealed unto them.

This Divinely-provided highway through the world is here denominated “the way of holiness.” It is so designated because it is appointed by a holy God and brings us to a holy Heaven. It is so designated because it stands out in sharp contrast and separation from all the by-ways of sin. It is expressly said, “the unclean shall not pass over it” (Isa. 35:8): the unconverted, the impenitent, the unbelieving have no access to it. Only those who

have been cleansed by the atoning blood of Christ have any title to walk in this way, as they are the only ones with any desire to tread the same. Those who traverse this “way of holiness” are termed the “wayfaring men.” The Hebrew for this compound “wayfaring” is literally “to go on in the way,” which is more informative than the English rendition. It tells us that only those persons who are possessed with a true desire and firm determination will walk therein. The grand requirement for its treader, and that which ensures success therein, is a *heart* for this “way”—that is, the possession of a love of holiness.

The “wayfaring man” is here termed a “fool.” It is generally considered that two things are connoted thereby. First, what he is in himself naturally considered. We are expressly told that among those called of God, there are “not many wise men after the flesh,” and if it be inquired why this is so, the inspired answer is, “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise;” and His reason for that is, “that no flesh should glory in His presence” (1 Cor. 1:26, 27, 29). In order to magnify the riches of His sovereign grace, God has singled out from among men the weak, the base, mere “nonentities” or “nobodies” (as is the force of the Greek rendered “things which are not” in 1 Corinthians 1:28) to be the recipients of His highest favours. The great majority of His people are “the poor of this world” (James 2:5): poor in its material riches, poor in mental equipment, poor in what the world terms, “natural advantages.” Second, the term “fool” describes the wayfaring man as he appears unto the unregenerate, because of his spirituality: the one who seeks to please God rather than self, to live for eternity, rather than time, is a madman in their eyes.

“The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein” (Isa. 35:8). The two significations given above of the term, “fool,” do not in our judgment exhaust or reach its principal meaning here. There is many a natural dolt who deems himself very wise, many a man of one talent who considers himself fully qualified to hold a position which calls for a person of five talents. Ignorance by

no means excludes egotism. The “fool” in the verse before us is not necessarily one whose mentality is of poor quality, nor one who is crazy in the esteem of his fellows; rather, is it a person who has been made a fool in his *own eyes*. When a miracle of grace is wrought in the soul, that person is humbled into the dust, his self-complacency and self-sufficiency receives its death wound, he is stripped of his peacock feathers. Not only does he perceive that his righteousness or best performances are “filthy rags” in the sight of God, not only does he feel himself to be “without strength” when it comes to doing what God requires of him, but his wisdom appears folly, and all his education and erudition worthless—so far as obtaining a knowledge of Divine things is concerned.

While it be true that “not many wise men after the flesh” (1 Cor. 1:26) are called by God out of darkness into His marvellous light, yet it does not say “not *any*.” There are a few of great natural abilities, of eminent mental endowments, of keen intellectual acumen, who are snatched as brands from the burning. And the change produced in them by regeneration is as radical and marked as it is in the conversion of the most dissolute character. Such an one was Saul of Tarsus, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and blessed with most remarkable intellectuality. Yet, he became as “a little child,” acknowledging he was not sufficient of himself “to think any thing as of himself” (2 Cor. 3:5). In other words, he became a “fool” in his own estimation (1 Cor. 3:18), and therefore, one who deeply realised his need of being taught of God. And that is true in every case where regeneration takes place. Its subjects are made conscious of their ignorance. Concerning spiritual things, they feel themselves to be utter dunces, and therefore, their earnest cry to the Lord is, “That which I see not teach Thou me” (Job 34:32).

Here, then, is the Divinely-defined character of the man who treads “The way of holiness” (Isa. 35:8). He is a “wayfaring man,” one who has been given a *heart* for this way, who *desires* to tread it. And second, he is a “fool” in his own estimation and

valuation: who feels himself totally insufficient to make any progress in this way. Consequently, he is the one who instinctively and sincerely turns constantly to his Guidebook for instruction. He dare not move a pace until he has received directions therefrom. His daily prayer is, “Order my steps in Thy Word” and “make me to go in the path of Thy commandments; for therein do I delight” (Psa. 119:133, 35). So stupid does he feel himself to be, yes, even though he has a M.A. or D.D. degree—that he cries, “Teach me, O LORD, the way of Thy statutes” (Psa. 119:33). It is not light *on* the Word he needs, for God’s Word is itself light (Psa. 119:105), but light *from* the Word, and therefore, does he beg God, “Give me understanding” (Psa. 119:73) and illuminate my sin-darkened heart. Thus and thus only does he perceive and walk in the path of duty.

“The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err *therein*” (Isa. 35:8). Note well, it is something else and something better than “*need not* err therein” as so frequently misquoted: namely, “shall not.” Just so long as he remains a “fool” in his own esteem, and no longer, will he be kept from making mistakes or wandering off into the by-paths of folly. So long as he is conscious that he “lacks wisdom,” he will “ask of God” (James 1:5). So long as he is conscious of his ignorance, will he value his Guidebook and seek counsel therefrom. So long as he is kept aware of his stupidity, will he pray for enlightenment. And so long as *that* be the case, he *will* progress in the way of holiness. But as soon as pride is allowed to work, a spirit of independency and self-sufficiency will take possession of his heart, and though he may still “read the Bible” perfunctorily or as a duty, he will no longer consult it anxious for light on his path, and soon he *will* “err therein,” for “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (James 4:6).

## Part D

In our last we sought to show that in order to tread the path of

duty or “way of holiness” there must be, first, a desire for it: one must be a “wayfaring man”—that is, a man with a heart for that way, a love of holiness. Second, there must be a sense of our insufficiency: one must be a “fool” in his own estimation—that is, a person possessed of an humble spirit, conscious of his own stupidity. Third, there must be a turning to God’s Word for light on our path, for instruction therein, for that Word is the sole Rule of conduct, our Guidebook from earth to heaven. Obviously, the measure in which the first two things mentioned operate and are really dominant in me will determine the success I shall have in obtaining from the Scriptures the directions I so sorely need, and without which I am certain to “err” in the path of duty. If my desire for light from God wanes, or if I cherish confidence in my own wisdom or “common sense” then, though I may still read the Bible in a formal manner, yet I shall no longer “search the Scriptures daily” (Acts 17:11) in a spirit of earnest and prayerful inquiry.

“My son, if thou wilt receive My words, and hide My commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom [which you profess to feel the need of], *and* apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge [of God’s will], *and* liftest up thy voice for understanding [of thy duty]: If thou seekest her as silver and searchest [the Scriptures] for her as *for* hid treasures [sparing no pains]; *Then* shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord [which is ‘the beginning of knowledge:’ Prov. 1:7] and find the knowledge of God” (Prov. 2:1-5). It is not to the careless and halfhearted that the promise is made. It is not to the one who is content to please the Lord in merely a general way that “the secret of the Lord” is revealed. It is not to the prayerless that wisdom and spiritual discernment are vouchsafed. He who is largely indifferent to the holy claims of God upon him in times of prosperity, must not expect Him to show the way out of difficulty when a day of adversity overtakes him. It is those who are out and out for God and who walk by the precepts of His Word who have light on their path.

Let us call attention to one other spiritual grace, which is essential if we are to recognise the path of duty and then walk therein: “The *meek* will He guide in Judgment: and the *meek* will He teach His way” (Psa. 25:9). Meekness is not to be confounded with humility, for they are quite distinct qualities. This is clear from the words of the Saviour who said, “Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart:” (Matt. 11:29)—the Greek word here rendered “lowly” is translated “humble” in James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5. There should be no difficulty in discovering the force of this word. To go no further than the verse quoted (Psa. 25:9): the fact that “meekness” is required in order to our being “guided” and “taught” suggests that it signifies a pliant and receptive heart. As humility is the opposite of pride and self-sufficiency, so meekness is the opposite of self-will and stubbornness. It is not the natural virtue which we are here treating of, for *that* very often approximates closely to weakness, but the spiritual grace of meekness, which is bold as a lion before an enemy, is submissive and obedient before God.

This lovely grace, like all others, appears in its full perfection in the Lord Jesus. Seen in His readiness to be the Covenant-head of His people, in His willingness to assume our nature, in His being subject to His parents during the days of His childhood, in His submitting to the ordinance of baptism, in His entire subjection to the Father’s will, in the whole course of His obedience. Seen when He was “led [not ‘dragged’ ‘or driven,’ but ‘led’ unresistingly] as a lamb to the slaughter” (Isa. 53:7). Thus, it should be evident that there is a real difference between true humility and meekness. Not only are they distinct, but they are not always operative in the same person. One may be humble and yet far from being meek. One may have a real sense of his own ignorance and stupidity, pray to God for light and wisdom, search His Word for the needed direction, and then when those directions are received *disregard* them because unacceptable. Unless our wills be truly yielded to God’s, when His will crosses

ours, then we shall decline to heed the same.

It appears to the writer that what has just been pointed out serves to expose the sophistry of those who imagine that it is a more difficult matter to ascertain their duty, than to perform the same once it is perceived. Both experience and observation reveal the contrary. God's Word is not ambiguous, but written in simple language for simple souls. True, it treats of the profoundest mysteries, which transcend the grasp of every finite intelligence; nevertheless, where it describes the way of holiness and defines what God requires from us, it uses terms so plain that misunderstanding is excuseless. Nor is it because our Guidebook is inadequate: it furnishes full directions and presents a sufficient solution to every practical problem, which may occasion us difficulty. It is the *obedience* which is difficult to flesh and blood, because our Rule so often demands that which is contrary to our natural inclinations. It is because so many fear that to follow the right course would involve them in unpleasant consequences, that they so often turn from it. That is why the Saviour said, "If ye *know* these things, happy are ye if ye *do* them" (John 13:17). We all know various things, which should be done, but are slow to perform, because the flesh in us finds them distasteful.

"The way of the righteous *is made plain*" (Prov. 15:19). The "righteous" man is he whose heart is right with God and whose conduct is regulated by the "Word of Righteousness." And since his heart be right toward God, he heeds those rules given him for the ordering of his steps: see Proverbs 4:23, 27. Do not expect God to reveal to you the whole path of duty in a moment: rather does He make known one step at a time. As the first step is taken in obedience to His will, He indicates the next one, and the more we yield ourselves to His governance, the clearer light shall we have both within and without. "A good understanding have all they that *do His commandments*" (Psa. 111:10) because obedience to God delivers from the deceptions of the flesh and the delusions of Satan. That "good understanding" enables us to



apply the general rules of Scripture to the varied details of our complex lives. That “good understanding” preserves us from making foolish mistakes. Because that “good understanding” is formed by obedience to the Divine commandments, it keeps us from acting according to selfish, worldly and carnal motives. And thus, it is that He “*leads [us]* in the way of righteousness” (Prov. 8:20).

One question and we must conclude. Suppose I *failed* at a certain point to render obedience unto the clearly-revealed will of God, and instead in pursuing the path of duty, turned aside into the way of self-pleasing, and now I am eating the fruit of my own folly. Suppose I find that my way has become “hedge[d] up...with thorns” (Hos. 2:6), so that I know not how to extricate myself. What am I to do? What steps must the backslider take in order to recovery? Why, humbly *confess* the sin to God and go back to the very point where you forsook the path of obedience. Abraham was called to sojourn in the land of Canaan, but when a famine arose, he forsook it and “went down into Egypt to sojourn there” (Gen. 12:10)—where he got into serious trouble. But later, he went “unto the place where his tent had been at the *beginning*. . . Unto the place of the altar which he had made there at the first” (Gen. 13:3, 4). Do thou likewise: “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the *first works*” (Rev. 2:5).

## **Christian Homes**

Many of those who look no farther than the temporal happiness of individuals and the welfare of the State are not insensible of the importance and value of domestic relationships, realizing that the family is but the unit of the nation. No matter how excellent the constitution and laws of a country may be, or what its material resources, they are insufficient and ineffectual, unless a sure foundation for social order and public virtue be laid in the healthy regulation and wise discipline of its families. The nation is but the aggregate of individuals comprising it; and

unless there are good fathers and mothers, good sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, there will be no good citizens. It is because our home life has so sadly deteriorated that social decay is now so far advanced, nor can it be arrested until parents once again properly discharge their responsibility. We have no hesitation in saying that the future welfare of Britain (and the U.S.A. too) is more seriously menaced by the relaxation of family government and the breakdown of home life than by any governmental incompetence or foreign hostility.

Home! How much that one word used to convey! It is still one of the most precious in the English language unto some of us. Much more so when to all its natural attractions are added the hallowed associations which gather around a *Christian* home. Is not our favourite concept of heaven embodied in that blessed expression, “my Father’s House” (John 14:2). Because the Christian is not his own, but bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:19-20), he is to aim at glorifying God in every relation of life. No matter what station he occupies, or wherever he be, he is to serve as a witness for Christ. Next to the church of God, his own home should be the sphere of his most manifest devotedness unto Him. All its arrangements should bear the stamp of his heavenly calling. All its affairs should be so ordered that everyone entering it should feel, “God is here!” The supreme aim of family life should be *household piety*, everything else being subordinated thereto.

It is in the home our *real* characters are most manifested and best known. Out in the world, a certain measure of restraint is placed upon both our corruptions and our graces; but in the home, we are freer to act naturally, and it is there that our worst and best sides alike are exhibited the plainest. As a close observer and one of wide experience said, “I can never form a correct judgment of a man from seeing or hearing him in a religious meeting. He may seem a very spiritual person there, and say very beautiful things, but let me go home with him, and there I learn the actual state of the case.” He may indeed pray

like a saint in the church, but unless his home be governed according to the Word of God, and his own conduct be regulated by the spirit of Christ, he fails to witness for him in that most important and influential sphere.

The reality and extent of “a work of grace” in the soul are most clearly revealed amid the petty trials of home life. In the Scriptures, we find some of its most eminent characters subjected to that severe test. For example, the Lord gave as the reason for the intimate confidences He was about to make unto Abraham, “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD” (Gen. 18:19): thus his home life was as pleasing unto God as was his public. Nor are the Scriptures less explicit in showing us the disastrous consequences which attend a believer’s unfaithfulness in this relation. A notable case in point is the fearful ruin of Eli’s family: “I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not” (1 Sam. 3:13). The state of a *preacher’s home* is likewise made the test of his character: he is disqualified from the sacred office, unless he be “one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity,” adding, “For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?” (1 Tim. 3:4-5).

“What have they seen in *thine* house?” (2 Kings 20:15). Have you observed, my reader, how much in the Scriptures is in the interrogatory form? How frequently the Lord used that method of teaching, both with His disciples, the masses, and His enemies! It is a most definite and searching form of instruction. A considerable part of God’s Word is made up of questions; and it is our wisdom not only to thoughtfully and prayerfully ponder them, but to regard the same as being addressed *to us* individually—and thereby bare our hearts to their penetrating power. This we should do with the “Where art thou?” of Genesis 3:9, right through the Scriptures to the “wherefore didst thou

marvel” of Revelation 17:7. The one now before us was uttered by way of *rebuke* unto Hezekiah’s vanity, who—in a spirit of pride and ostentation—had shown the messengers from Babylon the treasures of his palace.

“What have they seen in *thine* house?” Let each of us take that inquiry home to himself and herself. What do visitors, especially those who spend a night under your roof, behold in thy home? Do they see a household which is well ordered, everything regulated according to God’s Word; or do they behold a scene of confusion and turmoil? Do the furnishings of your home bespeak a heart which is dead to the world? Is there a noticeable absence of that carnal luxury and fleshly display which mark those whose affections are set upon things below? On the other hand, is there that cleanliness and tidiness everywhere which honours the Lord? Nothing is more incongruous for one who professes to be a stranger and pilgrim (1 Pet. 2:11) here than to behold him or her endeavouring to outshine their godless neighbours in that which ministers to “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16). Equally so do neglect and dirt indicate that something is wrong with the heart, and mar a Christian’s testimony.

“What have they seen in *thine* house?” Do they behold a husband “under petticoat government,” or one who takes his proper place at the head of the home? The household must have a leader; and God has committed rule to the husband, and holds *him* responsible for its management. It is no valid excuse for him to say that he is the breadwinner, and therefore, he leaves the wife to run the house. Not that he is to be a tyrant, but firm, asserting his authority, ruling in holy love. Yet unless the wife fully co-operates, much of his effort will be unavailing. Not only does God require her to be subject unto her husband’s will (Eph. 5:22, 24), but to loyally support and further him—unless his requirements manifestly clash with the Bible. He is necessarily absent from the home most of the day, and therefore, it largely devolves upon her to “train up” their children “in the way [they]

should go” (Prov. 22:6).

“*What* have they seen in thine house?” Little or nothing to distinguish it from the worldlings?—or everything in it aiming at the glory of God? The husband and wife conducting themselves as “being heirs together of the grace of life” (1 Pet. 3:7)? The children brought up “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4) and “in subjection with all gravity” (1 Tim. 3:4)—or utterly spoiled, unruly, and a trial to those who have to endure their presence? Do visitors behold an example of parental piety, of salutary discipline maintained, evidences on every side that their hearts are set upon something higher than the baubles of earth? Do they see the family altar? Do they behold the Sabbath day—duly honoured—all unnecessary cooking avoided? If they do not, they will rightly suspect the genuineness of your Christian profession! If those things be absent, be not surprised if your children abandon religion as they grow older, having no confidence in what they were reared. God search every one of us with this important question.

## **Family Worship**

There are some very important outward ordinances and means of grace which are plainly implied in the Word of God, but for the exercise of which we have few, if any, plain and positive precepts; rather are we left to gather them from the example of holy men and from various incidental circumstances. An important end is answered by this arrangement: trial is thereby made of the state of our hearts. It serves to make evident whether, because an expressed command cannot be brought requiring its performance, professing Christians will neglect a duty plainly implied. Thus, more of the real state of our minds is discovered, and it is made manifest whether we have or have not an ardent love for God and His service. This holds good both of public and family worship. Nevertheless, It is not at all difficult to prove the obligation of domestic piety.

Consider first the example of Abraham. the father of the

faithful and the friend of God. It was for his domestic piety that he received blessing from Jehovah Himself, “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment” (Gen. 18:19). The patriarch is here commended for instructing his children and servants in the most important of all duties, “the way of the Lord”—the truth about His glorious person. His high claims upon us, His requirements from us. Note well the words “he will command” them; that is, he would use the authority God had given him as a father and head of his house, to enforce the duties of family godliness. Abraham also prayed with as well as instructed his family: wherever he pitched his tent, there he “built an altar to the Lord” (Gen. 12:7; 13:4). Now my readers, we may well ask ourselves, Are we “Abraham’s seed” (Gal. 3:29) if we “do not the works of Abraham” (John 8:39) and neglect the weighty duty of family worship?

The example of other holy men are similar to that of Abraham’s. Consider the pious determination of Joshua who declared to Israel, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (24:15). Neither the exalted station which he held, nor the pressing public duties which developed upon him, were allowed to crowd out his attention to the spiritual well-being of his family. Again, when David brought back the ark of God to Jerusalem with joy and thanksgiving, after discharging his public duties, he “returned to bless his household” (2 Sam. 6:20). In addition to these eminent examples we may cite the cases of Job (1:5) and Daniel (6:10). Limiting ourselves to only one in the New Testament we think of the history of Timothy, who was reared in a godly home. Paul called to remembrance the “unfeigned faith” which was in him, and added, “which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois and thy mother Eunice.” Is there any wonder then that the apostle could say “from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures” (2 Tim. 3:15)!

On the other hand, we may observe what fearful threatenings

are pronounced against those who disregard this duty. We wonder how many of our readers have seriously pondered those awe-inspiring words “Pour out Thy fury upon the heathen that know Thee not, and upon the families that call not on Thy name” (Jer. 10:25)! How unspeakably solemn to find that prayerless families are here coupled with the heathen that know not the Lord. Yet need that surprise us? Why there are many heathen families who unite together in worshiping their false gods. And do not they put thousands of professing Christians to shame? Observe too that Jeremiah 10:25 recorded a fearful imprecation upon both classes alike: “Pour out Thy fury upon . . .” How loudly should these words speak to us.

It is not enough that we pray as private individuals in our closets; we are required to honour God in our families as well. At least twice each day—in the morning and in the evening—the whole household should be gathered together to bow before the Lord—parents and children, master and servant—to confess their sins, to give thanks for God’s mercies, to seek His help and blessing. Nothing must be allowed to interfere with this duty: all other domestic arrangements are to bend to it. The head of the house is the one to lead the devotions. but if he be absent, or seriously ill, or an unbeliever, then the wife should take his place. Under no circumstances should family worship be omitted. If we would enjoy the blessing of God upon our family then let its members gather together daily for praise and prayer. “Them that honour Me I will honour” is His promise.

An old writer well said, “A family without prayer is like a house without a roof, open and exposed to all the storms of Heaven.” All our domestic comforts and temporal mercies issue from the loving-kindness of the Lord, and the best we can do in return is to gratefully acknowledge together, His goodness to us as a family. Excuses against the discharge of this sacred duty are idle and worthless. Of what avail will it be when we render an account to God for the stewardship of our families to say that we had no time available, working hard from morn till eve? The

more pressing be our temporal duties, the greater our need of seeking spiritual succour. Nor may any Christian plead that he is not qualified for such a work: gifts and talents are developed by use and not by neglect.

Family worship should be conducted reverently, earnestly and simply. It is then that the little ones will receive their first impressions and form their initial conceptions of the Lord God. Great care needs to be taken lest a false idea be given them of the Divine Character, and for this the balance must be preserved between dwelling upon His transcendency and imminency, His holiness and His mercy, His might and His tenderness. His justice and His grace. Worship should begin with a few words of prayer invoking God's presence and blessing. A short passage from His Word should follow, with brief comments thereon. Two or three verses of a Psalm may be sung. Close with a prayer of committal into the hands of God. Though we may not be able to pray eloquently, we should earnestly. Prevailing prayers are usually brief ones. Beware of wearying the young ones.

The advantages and blessings of family worship are incalculable. First, family worship will prevent much sin. It awes the soul, conveys a sense of God's majesty and authority, sets solemn truths before the mind, brings down benefits from God on the home. Personal piety in the home is a most influential means, under God, of conveying piety to the little ones. Children are largely creatures of imitation, loving to copy what they see in others. "He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel which He commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children: That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments" (Psa. 78:5, 7). How much of the dreadful moral and spiritual conditions of the masses today may be traced back to the neglect of their fathers in this duty? How can those who neglect the worship of God in



their families look for peace and comfort therein? Daily prayer in the home is a blessed means of grace for allaying those unhappy passions to which our common nature is subject.

Finally, family prayer gains for us the presence and blessing of the Lord. There is a promise of His presence which is peculiarly applicable to this duty: see Matthew 18:19, 20. Many have found in family worship that help and communion with God which they sought for with less effect in private prayer.

## **Christian Employees**

How intensely practical is the Bible! It not only reveals to us the way to Heaven, but it is also full of instruction concerning how we are to live here upon earth. God has given His Word unto us to be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path: that is, for the regulating of our *daily walk*. It makes known how God requires us to conduct ourselves in all the varied relations of life. Some of us are single, others married; some are children, others parents; some are masters, others servants. Scripture supplies definite precepts and rules, motives and encouragements for each alike. It not only teaches us how we are to behave in the church and in the home, but equally so in the workshop and in the kitchen, supplying necessary exhortations to both employers and employees—clear proof God has not designed that all men should be equal, and sure index that neither “Socialism” nor “Communism” will ever universally prevail. Since a considerable portion of most of our lives be spent in service, it is both for our good and God’s glory that we heed those exhortations.

A secular writer recently pointed out that “work has increasingly come to be regarded as a distasteful means to the achievement of leisure, instead of leisure as a recuperative measure to refit us for work.” That is a very mild way of saying that the present generation is pleasure mad and hates any kind of real work. Various explanations have been advanced to account for this: such as the ousting of craftsmanship by machinery, the

fear of unemployment discouraging zeal, the doles, allowances and relief's which are available for those who don't and won't work. Though each of those has been a contributing factor, yet there is a more fundamental and solemn cause of this social disease, namely, the loss of those moral convictions which formerly marked a large proportion of church-goers, who made conscience of serving the Lord while engaged in secular activities, and who were actuated by the principles of honesty and integrity, fidelity and loyalty.

Nowhere has the hollowness of professing Christians been more apparent, during the last two or three generations, than at this point. Nowhere has more reproach been brought upon the cause of Christ than by the majority of those employees who bore His name. Whether it be in the factory, the mine, the office, or in the fields, one who claims to be a follower of the Lord Jesus should stand out unmistakably from his fellow employees who make no profession. His punctuality, his truthfulness, his conscientiousness, the quality of his work, his devotion to his employer's interests, ought to be so apparent that there is no need for him to let others know by his *lips* that he is a disciple of Christ. There should be such a marked absence of that slackness, carelessness, selfishness, greed and insolence which mark the majority of the ungodly, that all may see he is motivated and regulated by higher principles than they are. But, if his conduct belies his profession, then his companions are confirmed in their opinion that "there is nothing in religion but talk."

Nor does the whole of the blame rest upon them: *the pulpit* is far from being guiltless in this matter. The Lord has expressly bidden His servants to preach thereon, as being a subject of great importance and an essential part of that doctrine which is according to godliness. "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather do them service, because they are believing

and beloved, partakers of the benefit: *these things teach and exhort*” (1 Tim. 6:1, 2). But where is the minister today who does so? Alas, how many have despised and neglected such practical yet unpopular teaching! Desirous of being regarded as “deep,” they have turned aside unto doctrinal disputes or prophetic speculations which profit no one. God says “If any man teach otherwise. . . he is a fool, knowing nothing” (1 Tim. 6:3, 4)!

Once again is the pastor Divinely ordered, “But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: that the aged men be sober . . . the aged women likewise . . . young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded. . . Servants to be obedient unto their own masters, to please them well in all things; not answering again, not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things” (Titus 2:1-9). Are you, fellow minister, speaking upon *these* things? Are you warning servants that all needless absenteeism is a sin? Are you informing those of your church members who are employees that God requires them to make it their constant endeavour to give full satisfaction unto their masters in every part of their conduct: that they are to be respectful and not saucy, industrious and not indolent, submissive and not challenging the orders they receive? Do you teach them that their conduct either *adorns* or *disgraces* the doctrine they profess? If not, you are sadly failing in carrying out your commission.

In view of the almost total silence of the pulpit thereon, it is striking to see how frequently the New Testament epistles inculcate and enlarge upon the duties of employees. In Ephesians 6 we find the apostle exhorting, “Servants be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as unto Christ. Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men” (verses 5-7). Christian servants are required to comply with the calls and commands of their

employers: to do so with respectful deference to their persons and authority, to be fearful of displeasing them. They are to be as diligent in their work and to discharge their duties with the same conscientious solicitude when their master is *absent* as when his eye is upon them. They are to perform their tasks “with good will,” not sullenly and reluctantly, but thankful for an honest means of livelihood. And all of this as “the servants of Christ,” careful not to dishonour Him by any improper behaviour, but seeking to glorify Him: working from such motives as will sanctify our labours and make them a “spiritual sacrifice” unto God.

In Colossians 3 the apostle also exhorted, “Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God. And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men” (verses 22, 23). Every lawful command he must obey, however distasteful, difficult or irksome. He is to be faithful in every trust committed to him. Whatsoever his hand findeth to do, he must do it with his might, putting his very best into it. He is to do it readily and cheerfully, taking pleasure in his work. All is to be done “as to the Lord,” which will transform the secular into the sacred. Then it is added, “Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ” (verse 24)—what encouragement to fidelity is that! “But he that doeth wrong, shall receive the wrong which he hath done” (verse 25) is a solemn warning to deter from failure in duty, for “either in this world or the other, God will avenge all such injury” (J. Gill).

“Servants be subject to your masters with all fear: not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience endure grief, suffering wrongfully” (1 Pet. 2:18, 19). This repeated insistence of the apostles for employees discharging their duties properly, indicates not only how much the glory of God is involved therein, but also that an *unwillingness* on their part makes such repetition necessary—evidenced by those who take two or three

days' extra holiday by running off to religious meetings, thereby putting their masters to inconvenience. Holiness is most visible in our daily conduct: performing our tasks in such a spirit and with such efficiency as will commend the Gospel unto those we serve. Let it be borne in mind that these instructions apply to *all* servants, male and female, in every station and condition. Let each reader of these pages who is an employee ask himself or herself, How far am I really making a genuine, prayerful and diligent endeavour to comply with God's requirements in the performance of my duties? Let no "rules of unions" nor "regulations of shop stewards" be allowed to set aside or modify these Divine commandments.

It is to be pointed out that the above precepts are enforced and exemplified in the Scriptures by many notable examples. See how the Spirit delighted to take notice of the devotion of Eliezer, even praying that the Lord God would "send me good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham" (Gen. 24:12), and note how faithfully he acquitted himself and how well he spake of his master. Jacob could say, "ye know that with all my power I have served" (Gen. 31:6): can *you* aver the same? Though a heathen "his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found grace in his sight" (Gen. 39:3, 4): what a testimony was that! Scripture also chronicles the unfaithfulness of Elisha's servant and the fearful judgement which came upon him (2 Kings 5:20-27). Finally, let all domestics and employees remember that the *servant place* has been honoured and adorned for ever by the willing and perfect obedience of the incarnate Son of God!

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do with thy might" (Eccl. 9:10)—put your very best into it.

