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DUTIES OF SONS AND DAUGHTERS

#208

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A PRAYER FOR READERS, ESPECIALLY SONS AND DAUGHTERS

J. G. Pike (1784-1854)

MY dear young friend, if a person could rise from the dead to speak to you, could come from the other world to tell you what he had seen there, how attentively would you listen to his discourse, and how much would you be affected by it! Yet a messenger from the dead could not tell you more important things than those to which I now beseech you to attend.

I come to entreat you to [believe in] GOD, to follow the divine REDEEMER now, and to walk in the pleasant path of early piety.¹ O that I could with all the fervor of a dying man beseech you to attend to your only great concerns! For of how little consequence is this poor transient² world to you who have an eternal world to mind!³ It is not to a trifle⁴ that I call your attention, but to your life, your all, your eternal all, your God, your Savior, your heaven, your everything that is worth a thought or a wish! Do not let a stranger be more anxious than yourself for your eternal welfare. If you have been thoughtless hitherto, be serious now. It is time you were so. You have wasted years enough.

Think of Sir Francis Walsingham's⁵ words: "While we laugh, all things are serious around us. *God* is serious, Who preserves us and has patience towards us. *Christ* is serious, Who shed His blood for us. The *Holy Spirit* is serious, when He strives with us. The *whole creation* is serious in serving God and us. *All* are serious in another world. How suitable then it is for man to be serious! And how can we be gay and trifling⁶?"

Do you smile at this grave address and say, "This is the cant of enthusiasm⁷"?...The friendly warning may be neglected and the truths of the Bible disbelieved, but death and eternity will soon force on the most careless heart a deep conviction that religion is the one thing needful. Yes, my young friend, one thing is needful. So said the Lord of life (Luk 10:42)—needful to you, to me, to all. The living neglect it, but the dead know its value. Every saint in heaven feels the worth of religion⁸ through partaking of the blessings to which it leads. And every soul in hell knows its value by its want.⁹ It is only on earth that triflers are to be found: will you be one of them? God forbid!

Read, I beseech you, this little [booklet] with serious prayer. Remember that it is your welfare that is sought. I wish you to be happy here and, when time is past, happy forever. Fain¹⁰ would I persuade you to seek a Refuge in the skies and friends that never fail. I plead with you a more important cause than was ever conducted before an earthly judge. Not one that concerns time only, but that concerns a long eternity. Not one on which a little wealth or reputation depends; but one on which your eternal riches or eternal poverty, eternal glory or eternal shame, a smiling or a frowning God, an eternal heaven or an eternal hell are all depending. It is *your* cause I plead and not my own: shall I plead your cause to you in vain? O my God, forbid that I should!

I know, my young friend, how apt we are to read the most serious calls as if they were mere formal things, of little more consequence to us than the trifles recorded in a newspaper; but do not thus read this little [booklet]. Believe me: I am in earnest with you. Read, I entreat you, what follows as a serious message...from God for you.

Consider what will be your thoughts of the advice here given you a hundred years hence. Long before that time, you will have done with this world forever. Then your now vigorous and youthful body will be turned to dust and your name probably forgotten upon earth. Yet your immortal soul will be living in another world and far more sensible of joy or grief than it can possibly be now. Then, my young friend, what will you think of this friendly

¹ **piety** – reverence and love for God.

² **transient** – lasting a very short time.

³ **to mind** – to think about.

⁴ **trifle** – something of little importance.

⁵ **Sir Francis Walsingham (c. 1532-1590)** – English statesman.

⁶ **gay and trifling** – light-hearted and foolish.

⁷ **cant of enthusiasm** – language of religious fanaticism.

⁸ **religion** – *religion* in the author's sense means Biblical Christianity.

⁹ **want** – lack.

¹⁰ **fain** – willingly.

warning? How happy will you be if you have followed the advice it contains! Fancy¹¹ not that it will be then forgotten. Calls and mercies forgotten here must be remembered there, when every sin is brought to the sinner's memory...but *now* is your day of grace; then, another generation will have theirs.

Think again—while you are reading this, thousands are rejoicing in heaven that they in past years attended to such earnest calls. Once they were as careless as you may have been, but divine grace disposed them to listen to the Word of life. They regarded the warnings addressed to them. They found salvation. They are gone to rest. *Now*, with what pleasure may they recollect the fervent sermon or the little book that under God first awakened their attention and first impressed their hearts...Yes, think that while you are reading ...millions of wretched souls in utter darkness and despair are cursing that desperate madness that led them to turn a deaf ear to such friendly warnings once addressed to them. O my young friend, I beseech you by the joys of saints in heaven and by the terrors of sinners in hell, trifle not with this affectionate call!

Consider further: If you were going [on] a journey, you would prepare for it. Would you not, if going to travel only one or two hundred miles? Were you thus far from home, would not your thoughts be often there? If obstructions lay in the way that threatened to prevent your ever returning, would you not exert all your skill and power to remove them? Are you indeed only a stranger and traveler upon earth? Are you only going forwards through a little span of time to an eternal world, and there to find an endless abode amidst the deepest sorrow or the most perfect joy? Do many things unite to hinder you from reaching the kingdom of heaven? Is this the case? Indeed it is. Will you go forward, thoughtless [of where] you are going? Thoughtless of what awaits you on your entrance [into] that unseen world—that unseen, unknown, endless world of joy unspeakable or of grief beyond expression?...It is *impossible* to be earnest enough with you. If you ever know the worth of true piety, you will be convinced that it is. [If we saw] thousands asleep on the brink of a precipice and some falling and dying every moment, could we too passionately endeavor to awaken those not yet undone?

O my young friend, if you have been a careless trifler with the Gospel of Christ, danger infinitely worse—*eternal* danger—threatens you! Awake! Awake! I beseech you [to] awake! Awake, before it is too late! Before eternity seals your doom!...Awake! I beseech you, and begin to mind that one thing that is so needful to you—food is not half so needful to the poor wretch perishing of hunger, nor help to him that is sinking in the sea or scorching in the flames!

Perhaps all [that] I urge to gain your attention is urged in vain. Shall it be so? Will you slight your God and make your own destruction sure? Will you be a crueller enemy to yourself than even devils themselves could possibly be to you? Alas! If you will, what must be your condition soon? But let me hope better of you and offer you one request: Look up to God...with me in the prayer that follows. Then beg His mercy on yourself:

A PRAYER FOR THE DIVINE BLESSING ON THIS [BOOKLET]: Ever blessed and most gracious God, Thy smile is life; Thy frown is death. Thou hast access to every heart and knowest every thought of every creature in Thy wide dominions. Look down from Thine eternal throne and teach one of the meanest¹² of Thy creatures to supplicate¹³ Thy mercies. Without Thy love, we must be poor in the midst of plenty and wretched in the midst of worldly joy. In Thy love is pleasure though in the midst of pain and wealth in the midst of worldly poverty. He that knows Thee and loves Thee, though he die of want and hunger, is infinitely richer and happier than the king who rules the widest empire, but knows Thee not. Thou art our only happiness, yet we have not sought good in Thee. Thou art our bliss, yet have we bid Thee depart. Thou hast the first and most reasonable claim upon our hearts; yet by nature, those hearts are shut against Thee. But if Thou hast blessed him that indites¹⁴ this prayer with the knowledge of Thyself, bless those who may read or utter it with the same heavenly knowledge.

Great God, Thou only knowest what is man—a fallen, miserable wretch, a willful child and slave of sin, a deserving heir of wrath and woe. Thy heavenly pity has opened for him [the] way of life, but how few are they who find it! And, ah! No hand but Thine can guide the sinner into that peaceful path. Hard is the heart Thy goodness does not melt—no rock so hard. Cold is the heart Thy kindness does not warm—no ice so cold. Yet, alas! Great God, such is naturally every human heart...But Thou hast power to soften the rock, melt the ice, and change the

¹¹ **fancy** – imagine.

¹² **meanest** – lowest.

¹³ **supplicate** – ask humbly in prayer.

¹⁴ **indites** – puts into words.

heart! And hast Thou not the desire? Merciful Maker... Thou hast said, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth” (Isa 45:22). Thousands now in glory have experienced Thy saving power. The feeblest instruments can in Thy hand perform the mightiest works. A pebble and a sling can bring down to the dust Thy proudest foe. Now then, compassionate God, display Thy power to save. Grant that some who read this [booklet] may yield to its persuasions and earnestly regard their best concerns. By feeble instruments, Thou hast awakened many a thoughtless heart. If this be the feeblest of the feeble, yet magnify Thy power and mercy by making it to one soul (O, might it be to many!) *a solemn and awakening call*. Let some of its readers learn the end for which life was given. O let them not sleep the sleep of sin and death until awakened by judgment and destruction!

Gracious God, teach them that life is not given to be trifled and sinned away. By the power of the Gospel, *subdue* the stony heart and *break* the rock of ice. With a voice effectual as that which shall wake the dead, bid the dead in sin arise and live. Bid the young sinner that may read this volume [to] flee from the wrath to come... God of mercy, by Thy conquering Spirit make this little [booklet], which in itself is feeble as a reed, powerful to lead to penitence, prayer, and conversion some youthful wanderer from the paths of peace. O Thou Who pitiest wretched men, teach the young readers... to pity themselves! Let them not by sin and folly make even immortality a curse. Let them not despise Thy gracious calls, nor trample on Thy dying love. Over them let not hell rejoice and heaven mourn; but let the angels that dwell in Thy presence and the saints that surround Thy throne exult over some penitent awakened by this feeble instrument—some youth embracing the Gospel of Thy Son and finding every good in Him.

Great God, grant this request! O let the sorrows of the Savior urge it! O let the intercession of the Savior obtain it! O let the influences of the Spirit accomplish what is thus desired!... Bestow Thy Spirit, O God of love! Bestow those blessed influences, O Thou Savior of mankind, Who hast received gifts for men! Bestow them, O Father and Lord of all, and bring some youthful sinner to the feet of Thy crucified Son! Though it be but one, grant that one may go to Him for life... Now, O God of grace, hear this supplication and teach the young reader with sincerity of heart to join in that which follows. Grant this, great God, for His sake Who died on Calvary below, Who lives, reigns, and pleads for man above, and Whose is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and forever. AMEN.

From *Persuasives to Early Piety*, reprinted by Soli Deo Gloria, a ministry of Reformation Heritage Books, www.heritagebooks.org.

J. G. Pike (1784-1854): Baptist minister; born in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER

Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686)

“Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.”—Exodus 20:12

CHILDREN are to show honor to their parents by a reverential¹⁵ esteem of their persons. They must “give them a civil veneration.”¹⁶ Therefore, when the Apostle speaks of fathers of our bodies, he speaks also of giving them reverence (Heb 12:9). This ven-eration or reverence must be shown:

(1) **Inwardly, by fear¹⁷ mixed with love.** “Ye shall fear every man his mother and his father” (Lev 19:3). In the commandment, the father is named first; here the mother is first named, partly to put honor upon the mother

¹⁵ **reverential** – respectful.

¹⁶ **civil veneration** – polite and profound respect.

¹⁷ **fear** – respect and reverence.

because, by reason of many weaknesses incident to her sex, she is apt to be more slighted by children. And partly because the mother endures more for the child.

(2) Reverence must be shown to parents outwardly in both word and gesture. Reverence to parents in word relates to speaking directly *to* them or speaking *about* them to others. “Ask on, my mother,” said King Solomon to his mother Bathsheba (1Ki 2:20). In speaking of parents, children must speak honorably. They ought to speak well of them, if they deserve well. “Her children arise up, and call her blessed” (Pro 31:28). And, in case a parent betrays weakness and in-discretion, the child should make the best of it and by wise apologies cover his parent’s nakedness.¹⁸

[1] Children are to show reverence to their parents by submissive behavior... Joseph, though [he was] a great prince and his father had grown poor, bowed to him and behaved himself as humbly as if his *father* had been the prince and *he* the poor man (Gen 46:29). King Solomon, when his mother came to him, “rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her” (1Ki 2:19)...Oh, how many children are far from thus giving reverence to their parents! They despise their parents. They carry themselves with such pride and neglect towards them that they are a shame to religion and bring their parents’ gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. “Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother” (Deu 27:16). If all that set light by their parents are cursed, how many children in our age are under a curse! If such as are disrespectful to parents live to have children, their own children will be thorns in their sides; and God will make them read their sins in their punishment.

[2] The second way of showing honor to parents is by careful obedience. “Children, obey your parents in all things” (Col 3:20). Our Lord Christ herein set a pattern to children. He was subject to His parents (Luk 2:51). He, to whom angels were subject, was subject to His parents. This obedience to parents is shown three ways:

(1) *In hearkening to their counsel:* “My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother” (Pro 1:8). Parents are, as it were, in the place of God. If they would teach you the fear of the Lord, you must listen to their words as oracles and not be as the deaf adder to stop your ears. Eli’s sons hearkened not to the voice of their father but were called “sons of Belial”¹⁹ (1Sa 2:12, 25). And as children must hearken to the counsel of their parents in spiritual matters, so in affairs that relate to this life as in the choice of a calling and in case of entering into marriage. Jacob would not dispose of himself in marriage—though he was forty years old—without the advice and consent of his parents (Gen 28:1-2)...If [Protestant] parents should indeed counsel a child to match with one that is irreligious or Roman Catholic, I think the case is plain—and many of the learned are of opinion—that here the child may have a negative voice and is not obliged to be ruled by the parent. Children are to “marry in the Lord,” not therefore with persons irreligious; for that is not to marry in the Lord (1Co 7:39).

(2) *Obedience to parents is shown in complying with their commands.* A child should be the parents’ echo: when the father speaks, the child should echo back obedience. The Rechabites were forbidden by their father to drink wine. They obeyed him and were commended for it (Jer 35:14). Children must obey their parents in all things (Col 3:20). In things against the grain, to which they have most reluctance, they must obey their parents. Esau would obey his father when he commanded him to fetch him venison because it is probable he took pleasure in hunting. But [he] refused to obey him in a matter of greater concern: the choice of a wife. But though children must obey their parents “in all things,” yet, “It is with the limitation of things just and honest.” “Obey in the Lord,” that is, so far as the commands of parents agree with God’s commands (Eph 6:1). If they command against God, they lose their right of being obeyed. In this case, we must unchild ourselves.

(3) *Honor is to be shown to parents in relieving their wants.* Joseph cherished his father in his old age (Gen 47:12). It is but paying a just debt. Parents raise children when they are young, and children ought to nourish their parents when they are old...Such children, or monsters shall I say, are to blame who are ashamed of their parents when they are old and fallen into decay and [who] give them a stone when they ask for bread. When houses are shut up, we say the plague is there; when children’s hearts are shut up against their parents, the plague is there. Our blessed Savior took great care for His mother. When on the cross, He charged His disciple John to take her home to him as his mother and see that she wanted nothing (Joh 19:26-27).

The reasons why children should honor their parents are [these]:

¹⁸ **cover...nakedness** – not literal nakedness as in Gen 9:23, but covering his parent’s faults.

¹⁹ **Belial** – “sons of wickedness” or “of Satan”; hence, wicked, worthless fellows; scoundrels.

[1] *It is a solemn command of God.* “Honour thy father”—as God’s Word is the rule, so His will must be the reason of our obedience.

[2] *They deserve honor in respect of the great love and affection that they bear to their children.* The evidence of that love [is] both in their care and in cost. Their care in bringing up their children is a sign their hearts are full of love to them. Parents often take more care of their children than for themselves. They take care of them when they are tender, lest, like wall fruit,²⁰ they should be nipped in the bud. As children grow older, the care of parents grows greater. They are afraid of their children falling when young and of worse than falls when they are older. Their love is evidenced by their cost (2Co 12:14). They lay up and they lay out for their children. [They] are not like the raven or ostrich that are cruel to their young (Job 39:16). Parents sometimes impoverish themselves to enrich their children. Children never can equal a parent’s love, for parents are the instruments of life to their children, and children cannot be so to their parents.

[3] *To honor parents is well-pleasing to the Lord* (Col 3:20). As it is joyful to parents, so it is pleasing to the Lord. Children! *Is it not your duty to please God?* In honoring and obeying your parents, you please God as well as when you repent and believe. That you may see how well it pleases God, He bestows a reward upon it: “That thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.” Jacob would not let the angel go until he had blessed him; and God would not part with this commandment until He had blessed it. Paul calls this “the first commandment with promise” (Eph 6:2)...Long life is mentioned as a blessing. “Thou shalt see thy children’s children” (Psa 128:6). It was a great favor of God to Moses that, though he was a hundred and twenty years old, he needed no spectacles: “His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated” (Deu 34:7). God threatened as a curse to Eli that there should not be an old man in his family (1Sa 2:31). Since the flood, life is much abbreviated and cut short: to some the womb is their tomb. Others exchange their cradle for their grave. Others die in the flower of their age. Death serves its warrant every day upon one or other. Now, when death lies in ambush continually for us, if God satisfies us with long life, saying (as in Psa 91:16), “With long life will I satisfy him,” it is to be esteemed a blessing. It is a blessing when God gives a long time to repent, a long time to do service, and a long time to enjoy the comforts of relations.

Upon whom is this blessing of long life entailed but obedient children? “Honour thy father, that thy days may be long.” Nothing sooner shortens life than disobedience to parents. Absalom was a disobedient son who sought to deprive his father of his life and crown. He did not live out half his days. The mule he rode upon, being weary of such a burden, left him hanging in the oak betwixt heaven and earth, so as not fit to tread upon the one or to enter into the other. Obedience to parents spins out the life. Nor does obedience to parents lengthen life only, but sweetens it. To live long and not to have a foot of land is a misery; but obedience to parents settles land of inheritance upon the child. “Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father,” said Esau (Gen 27:38). Behold, God has more blessings for an obedient child than one. Not only shall he have a long life, but a fruitful land: and not only shall he have land, but land given in love—“the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” You shall have the land not only with God’s leave, but with His love. All these are powerful arguments to make children honor and obey their parents...

From *The Ten Commandments*, reprinted by The Banner of Truth Trust, www.banneroftruth.org.

Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686): Nonconformist Puritan preacher and prolific author; actual place and date of birth unknown.

²⁰ **wall fruit** – fruit grown on trees trained against a wall for shelter and warmth.

THE DUTIES OF SONS AND DAUGHTERS TO THEIR PARENTS

John Angell James (1785-1859)

“The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him. Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice.”—Proverbs 23:24-25

CONSIDER well the relation you sustain to your parents. There is a natural connection between you, inasmuch as they are the instruments of your very existence: a circumstance which of itself seems to invest them...with an almost absolute authority over you. The commonness, the universality of the tie, takes off the mind from contemplating its closeness, its tenderness, its sanctity.²¹ You are literally parts of them and cannot dwell for a moment upon your de-scent without being struck, one should think, with the amazing and solemn weight of obligation that rests upon you towards a father and a mother. But consider, there is not only a natural, but in reference to duty, an *instituted* connection between you. Jehovah Himself has interposed and—uniting the language of revelation with the dictates of reason [and] the force of authority to the impulse of nature—has called you to filial piety,²² not only as a matter of feeling, but of principle. Study then the relationship: *look narrowly and seriously at the connection subsisting between you*. Weigh well the import of the word *parent*. Think how much is employed in it towards its appropriate object, how many offices it contains in itself—guardian, rider, teacher, guide, benefactor, provider. What then must be the obligations of a child! The following is a brief *summary* of filial duties:

1. YOU OUGHT TO LOVE YOUR PARENTS. *Love is the only state of mind from which all the other duties that you owe them can arise.* By love, we mean complacency.²³ Surely, this is due to a father and mother. The very relation in which you stand to them demands this. If you are destitute of this, if you are without any propensity of heart towards them, you are in a strange and guilty state of mind. Until you are married or are in prospect of it, they ought in most cases to be the supreme objects of your earthly affections. It is not enough for you to be respectful and obedient and even kind; but, where there exist no [biblical] reasons for alienating your heart, you should be fond of them. It is of infinite importance that you should watch over the internal state of your mind and not suffer dislike, alienation, or indifference, to extinguish your regards. Do not take up a prejudice against them nor allow an unfavorable impression to be made upon your mind. Respect and obedience, if they do not spring from love, are...very precarious²⁴ in their existence.

If you love them, you will delight to be in their company and take pleasure in being at home with them. It is painful to them to see that you are happier anywhere than at home and fonder of any other society than theirs. No companion should be so valued by you as a kind father or mother.

If you love them, you will strive in all things to please them. We are always anxious to please those whom we regard and to avoid whatever would give them pain. If we are careless whether we please or displease anyone, it is obviously impossible that we can have any affection for him or her. The essence of piety towards God is a deep solicitude²⁵ to please Him; and the essence of filial piety is a solicitude to please your parents. Young people, dwell upon this single, simple thought: *a child's pleasure should be to please his parents*. This is love and the sum of all your duty. If you would adopt this rule, if you would write this upon your heart, if you would make this the standard of your conduct, I might lay down my pen: for it includes everything in itself. O that you could be brought to reason and to resolve thus: “I am bound by every tie of God and man, of reason and revelation, of honor and gratitude to do all I can to make my parents happy by doing whatever will give them pleasure and by avoiding whatever will give them pain. By God's help, I will from this hour study and do whatever will promote their comfort. I will make my will to consist in doing theirs and my earthly happiness to arise from making them happy. I will sacrifice my

²¹ **sanctity** – sacred, and therefore entitled to respect and reverence.

²² **filial piety** – a child's loyalty to parents and family.

²³ **complacency** – (nowadays *complaisance*) the desire to please or comply with the wishes of.

²⁴ **precarious** – dangerously lacking in stability.

²⁵ **solicitude** – concern.

own predilections²⁶ and be satisfied with their choice.” Noble resolution, and just and proper! Adopt it, act upon it, and you will never repent of it. Do not have any earthly happiness that is enjoyed at the expense of theirs.

If you love them, you will desire their good opinion. We naturally value the esteem of those to whom we are attached: we wish to be thought highly of by them. If we are quite careless about their respect for us, it is a sure sign we have no regard for them. Children should be desirous and even anxious to stand high in the opinion of their parents. Nothing can be a more decisive proof of a bad disposition in a son or a daughter than their being quite indifferent what their parents think of them. All love must be gone in such a case as this, and the youth is in the road to rebellion and destruction...

2. REVERENCE IS THE NEXT DUTY. “Honor,” saith the commandment, “thy father and mother.” This reverence has respect to your feelings, your words, and your actions. It consists in part of an inward consciousness of their superiority²⁷ and an endeavor to cherish a reverential frame of mind towards them as placed by God over you. There must be...a submission of the heart to their authority in a way of sincere and profound respect...If there be no reverence of the heart, it cannot be expected in the conduct. In all virtue, whether it be that higher kind that has respect to God or that secondary kind that relates to our fellow creatures, we must have a right state of heart: without this, virtue does not exist.

Your words should correspond with the reverential feelings of the heart. When speaking to them, your address, both in language and in tones, should be modest, submissive, and respectful, not loud, boisterous, impertinent, or even familiar.²⁸ For they are not your equals, but your superiors. If at any time you differ from them in opinion, your views should be expressed not with the flippancy and pertinaciousness²⁹ of disputants, but with the meek inquisitiveness of pupils. Should they reprove and even more sharply than you think is due, you must lay your hand upon your mouth and neither answer them again³⁰ nor show resentment. Your reverence for them should be so great as to impose a considerable restraint upon your speech in their company, for much is due to the presence of a parent. It is exceedingly offensive to hear a pert,³¹ clamorous, talkative young person unchecked by the countenance of a father or mother and engaging much of the conversation of a party to himself. Young persons should always be modest and retiring in company, but more especially when their parents are there. You should also be careful about the manner of speaking of them to others. You should never talk of their faults... nor say anything that would lead others to think lightly or to suppose that *you* thought lightly of them. If they are attacked in their reputation, you are with promptitude³² and firmness, though with meekness, to defend them as far as truth will allow; and even if the charge be true, to make all the excuses that veracity will permit and protest against the cruelty of degrading your parents in your presence.

Reverence should extend to all your behavior towards your parents. In all your conduct towards them, give them the greatest honor. Let it be observed by others that you pay them all possible respect, and let it also be seen by them when there is no spectator near. Your conduct should always be under restraint when they are within sight—not the restraint of dread, but of *esteem*...

3. THE NEXT DUTY IS OBEDIENCE. “Children obey your parents,” says the Apostle in his epistle to the Colossians. This is one of the most obvious dictates of nature. Even the irrational creatures are obedient by instinct and follow the signs of the parent beast, bird, or reptile. Perhaps there is no duty more generally acknowledged than this. Your obedience should begin early: the younger you are, the more you need a guide and a ruler. It should be *universal*: “Children obey your parents,” said the Apostle, “in all things.”

The only exception to this is when their commands are, in the letter or spirit of them, opposed to the commands of God. In this case, as well as in every other, we must obey God rather than man. But even here your refusal to comply with the sinful injunction³³ of a parent, must be uttered in a meek and respectful manner, so that it shall be manifest [that] you are actuated³⁴ by pure, conscientious motives and not by a mere rebellious resistance of

²⁶ **predilections** – preferences.

²⁷ **superiority** – position of authority.

²⁸ **familiar** – taking liberties with someone too freely because of constant association.

²⁹ **pertinaciousness** – unyielding determination.

³⁰ **answer...again** – talk back.

³¹ **pert** – disrespectful; sassy; too ready to express an opinion boldly.

³² **promptitude** – the characteristic of doing things without delay.

³³ **injunction** – command; directive.

³⁴ **actuated** – motivated.

parental authority. Your obedience should have no other exception than that which is made by conscience: if your situation, inclination, and taste are out of the question, [these must be] set aside when opposed to parental authority.

Obedience should be prompt. As soon as the command is uttered, it should be complied with. It is a disgrace to any child that it should be necessary for a father or a mother to repeat a command. You should even anticipate, if possible, their injunctions and not wait until their will is announced in words. A tardy obedience loses all its glory.

It should be cheerful. A reluctant virtue is no virtue at all. Constrained and unwilling obedience is rebellion in principle: it is vice clothed in the garment of holiness. God loveth a cheerful giver, and so does man. A child retiring from a parent's presence muttering, sullen, and murmuring is one of the ugliest spectacles in creation: of what value is anything he does in such a temper as this?

It should be self-denying. You must give up your own wills, sacrifice your own predilections, and perform the things that are difficult as well as those that are easy. When a soldier receives a command, although he may be at home in comfort and he is required at once to go into the field of danger, he hesitates not. He considers [that] he has no option. A child has no more room for the gratification of self-will than the soldier has: he must obey. It should be uniform. Filial obedience is generally rendered without much difficulty when the parents are present, but not always with the same unreservedness when they are absent.

Young people, you should despise the meanness and abhor the wickedness of consulting the wishes and obeying the injunctions of your parents only when they are there to witness your conduct. Such hypocrisy is *detestable*. Act upon nobler principles. Let it be enough for you to know what the will of a parent is—to ensure obedience even though continents laid and oceans rolled between you and your father. Carry this injunction with you everywhere: let the voice of conscience be to you instead of his voice, and the consciousness that God sees you be enough to ensure your immediate compliance. How sublimely simple and striking was the reply of the child who, upon being pressed in company to take something that his absent parents had forbidden him to touch, and who, upon being reminded that they were not there to witness him, replied, “Very true, but God and my conscience are here.” Be it your determination to imitate this beautiful example...and obey in all things even your absent parents.

4. SUBMISSION TO THE FAMILY DISCIPLINE AND RULE IS NO LESS YOUR DUTY THAN OBEDIENCE TO COMMANDS. In every well-ordered family, there is a rule of government: there is subordination, system, discipline, reward, and punishment. To these, *all* the children must be in subjection. Submission requires that if at any time you have behaved so as to render parental chastisement necessary, you should take it patiently and not be infuriated by passion or excited to resistance. Remember that your parents are commanded by God to correct your faults, that they are actuated by love in performing this self-denying duty...Ingenuously³⁵ confess your faults and submit to whatever punishment their authority and wisdom may appoint. One of the loveliest sights in the domestic economy, next to that of a uniformly obedient child, is a disobedient one brought to a right sense of his misconduct and quietly submitting to the penalty he has incurred. It is a proof both of strength of mind and of good disposition of heart to say, “I have done wrong, and it is [fitting that] I should bear chastisement.”

In the case of elder children...it is exceedingly painful when a parent, in addition to the extreme pain that it costs him to administer reproof to such children, has to endure the anguish produced by their utter indifference, smiling contempt, sullen murmuring, or insolent replies. This conduct is the more guilty because the authors of it [have] arrived at an age when they may be supposed to have advanced so far in the growth of their understanding as to perceive how deeply laid are the foundations of the parental authority—in nature, reason, and revelation—and how necessary it is that the reins of parental discipline should not be relaxed. If then you have committed one error in deserving reproof, do not commit another in resenting it. Keep all still within, let not your passions rebel against your judgment, but suppress in a moment the rising tumult of the soul.

The conduct of some children after reproof is a deeper wound on the heart of a parent than that which preceded and deserved the reproof. On the other hand, I know not a greater mark of nobleness of mind, nor anything that tends to raise a young person higher in the esteem of a parent or to endear him more to a father's heart, than a humble submission to reproof and an ingenuous confession of his fault. A friend of mine had a son, long since gone to join the immortals, who, having one day displeased his father before his younger brothers and sisters, not

³⁵ **ingenuously** – honestly and straightforwardly.

only meekly submitted to parental rebuke, but when the family were assembled at the dinner table, rose before them all. After having confessed his fault and craved his father's forgiveness, [he] admonished the junior branches of the family to take warning by his example and be cautious never to distress their parents, whom they were under such obligations to love and respect. Nothing could be lovelier or more impressive than this noble act. He rose, by his apology, to a higher place in the regard and esteem of his parents and the family than he occupied even before his fault. Sullenness, impertinence, and obstinate resistance are meanness, cow-ardice, littleness compared with such an action as this, which combines a heroic magnanimity³⁶ with the profoundest humility.

Subjection also requires a due observance of the rules laid down for the maintenance of family order. In every well-ordered family, things are not left to chance, but regulated by fixed laws. There is a time for everything and everything in its time...Meals, prayer, going to bed, and rising in the morning are all in their appointed season. To these rules, it is the obvious duty of every branch of the family to submit. The sons and daughters may be growing up or arrived at full age; this matters not. They must submit to the law of the house; and their age is an additional reason for their submission, as it supposes a maturity of judgment that enables them to perceive more clearly the grounds of all moral obligation. They may think the rules too strict; but if the parent has enacted them, they should be in subjection, and that, as long as they continue members of the little community, though it be almost to old age. It is also for the parent to decide what visitors shall be brought to the house: and it is in the highest degree unbecoming for a child to introduce, or even wish to attempt to introduce, any companion contrary to the known will of a parent. The same remark will apply to recreations: parents must determine this point; and no child that has the proper feelings of a child would desire to set up any amusements that the taste, and especially that the *conscience*, of a father or mother forbids. Instances have occurred of young people inviting such friends and joining with them in such diversions in the absence of their parents, as they know to be decidedly contrary to the law of the house. This is such an act of base and wicked rebellion against parental authority, and such an unprincipled disregard to parental comfort as language is too weak to characterize. Even the books that are brought into the house must be in accordance with the domestic rule. If the parent forbids the introduction of novels, romances, or any other books, a child in most cases should forego his own predilections and yield to an authority that he cannot resist without opposing the institute of nature and religion.

5. IT IS THE DUTY OF CHILDREN TO CONSULT THEIR PARENTS: They are the guides of your youth, your natural counselors, [and] the family oracle that you are ever to consult and the responses of which are to be received with pious reverence. Even if you have just reason to suspect the solidity and penetration of their judgment, it is due to the relation in which you stand to them to undertake nothing without laying the matter before them and obtaining their opinion. How much more ready should you be to do this where you have every reason to confide in their wisdom. You are young and *inexperienced*: the path of life is in a considerable degree untrodden by you, and contingencies are perpetually arising that you have yet acquired no experience to understand...They have travelled the road and know its turnings, its dangers, and its difficulties. Go to your parents then with every affair: consult them on the subject of companions, books, recreations. Let a father's or a mother's ear be the receptacle of all your cares. Have no secrets that you conceal from them. Especially consult with them on the subjects of trade and marriage. On the former, you perhaps need their [financial] assistance, and how can you expect this if you take not their advice as to the best way of employing their property? As to marriage...the Scripture has furnished us with many fine instances of the deference paid in patriarchal times by children to their parents. Isaac and Jacob both appear to have left the selection of their wives to their parents. Ruth, though a daughter-in-law, was willing to be guided entirely by Naomi. Ishmael asked his mother's advice. Sampson sought for his parents' consent. The simplicity of that age has departed; and in the advance of society, more of the power of selection now vests in the children. But it should not be exercised independently of parental advice. An old divine said thus to his sons: "When you are youths, choose your callings; when men, choose your wives, only take me along with you. It may be old men see farther than you"...With all this, you must take especial pains that your [faith in Christ] may be consistent and practical; visible in all your conduct and more particularly conspicuous in the kind, tender, and dutiful manner in which you discharge your obligations to them.

³⁶ **magnanimity** – courageous nobility in mind and heart.

Such is the compendium³⁷ of filial duties. Let [sons and daughters] read them, study them, sincerely desire to perform them, and pray to Almighty God for the grace that is in Christ Jesus to assist them in discharging their obligations.

From *A Help to Domestic Happiness*, reprinted by Soli Deo Gloria, a ministry of Reformation Heritage Books, www.heritagebooks.org.

John Angell James (1785-1859): English Congregationalist preacher and author; born at Blandford, Dorsetshire, England.

CHILDREN, AUTHORITY, AND SOCIETY

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981)

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”—Ephesians 6:1-3

WE are living in a world that is witnessing an alarming breakdown in the matter of discipline. Lawlessness is rampant. There is a breakdown in discipline in all these fundamental units of life—in marriage and in home relationships. A spirit of lawlessness is abroad, and things that were once more or less taken for granted are not only being queried³⁸ and questioned but are being ridiculed and dismissed. There is no question but that we are living in an age when there is a ferment of evil working actively in the whole of society. We can go further—and I am simply saying something that all observers of life are agreed about, whether they are Christians or not—and say that in many ways we are face to face with a total collapse and breakdown of what is called “civilization” and society. And there is no respect in which this is more evident and obvious than in this matter of the relationship of parents and children.

I know that much of what we are witnessing is probably a reaction from something that was far too common, unfortunately, at the end of the Victorian era and in the early years of this present century. I shall have more to say about that later, but I mention it now in passing in order to set out this problem clearly. There is no doubt a reaction against the stern, legalistic, and almost cruel Victorian type of father. I am not excusing the present position, but it is important that we understand it and try to trace its origin. But whatever the cause, there is no doubt that it is part and parcel of this collapse in the whole matter of discipline and law and order.

The Bible in its teaching and in its history tells us that this is something that always happens at a time of irreligion, at a time of godlessness. For instance, we have a notable example in what the Apostle Paul says about the world in the Epistle to the Romans in the second half of the first chapter from verse 18 to the end. There he gives an appalling description of the state of the world at the time when our Lord came into it. It was a state of sheer lawlessness. And in the various manifestations of that lawlessness which he lists, he includes this very matter we are now considering.

First, he says, “God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient³⁹” (1:28). Then follows the description: “Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate,⁴⁰ deceit, malignity;⁴¹ whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, *disobedient to parents*, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without

³⁷ **compendium** – a short, but comprehensive summary of a larger subject.

³⁸ **queried** – doubted.

³⁹ **are not convenient** – not proper; should not be done.

⁴⁰ **debate** – quarreling; strife.

⁴¹ **malignity** – mean-spiritedness; evil done for the sake of evil.

natural affection,⁴² implacable,⁴³ unmerciful...” In that horrible list, Paul includes this idea of being disobedient to parents.

Again, in the Second Epistle to Timothy, probably the last letter he ever wrote, we find him saying in the third chapter, verse 1, “In the last days perilous times shall come.” Then he states the characteristics of such times: “For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, *disobedient to parents*, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection”—that has gone—“trucebreakers,⁴⁴ false accusers, incontinent,⁴⁵ fierce,⁴⁶ despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady,⁴⁷ highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2Ti 3:2-3).

In both instances, the Apostle reminds us that at a time of apostasy, at a time of gross godlessness and irreligion, when the very foundations are shaking, one of the most striking manifestations of the lawlessness is “disobedient to parents.” So it is not at all surprising that he should call attention to it here, as he gives us illustrations of how the life that is “filled with the Spirit” of God manifests itself (Eph 5:18). When will the civil authorities learn and realize that there is an indissoluble connection between godlessness and a lack of morality and decent behavior? There is an order in these matters. “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven,” says the Apostle in Romans 1:18, “against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.” If you have ungodliness, you will always have unrighteousness. But the tragedy is that the civil authorities—irrespective of which political party is in power—all seem to be governed by modern psychology rather than by the Scriptures. They all are convinced that they can deal with unrighteousness directly, in and by itself. But that is *impos-sible*. Unrighteousness is always the result of ungodliness. The only hope of getting back any measure of righteousness into life is to have a revival of godliness. That is precisely what the Apostle is saying to the Ephesians and to us...

Present conditions therefore demand that we should look at the Apostle’s statement. I believe that Christian parents and children, Christian families, have a unique opportunity of witnessing to the world at this present time by just being different. We can be true evangelists by showing this discipline, this law and order, this true relationship between parents and children. We may be the means under God’s hand of bringing many to a knowledge of the Truth. Let us therefore think of it in that way.

But there is a second reason why we all need this teaching. According to the Scriptures, it is not only needed by those who are not Christians in the way I have been indicating, but Christian people also need this exhortation because the devil often comes in at this point in a most subtle manner and tries to sidetrack us. In the fifteenth chapter of Matthew’s Gospel, our Lord takes up this point with the religious people of His day because they were in a very subtle way evading one of the plain injunctions of the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments told them to honor their parents, to respect them, and to care for them; but what was happening was that some of those people, who claimed to be ultra-religious, instead of doing what the Commandment told them to do, said in effect, “Ah, I have dedicated this money that I have to the Lord. I therefore cannot look after you, my parents.” This is how He puts it: “But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free” (Mat 15:5-6). They were saying, “This is Corban,⁴⁸ this is dedicated to the Lord. Of course, I would like to look after you and help you, and so on; but this has been dedicated to the Lord.” In this way, they were neglecting their parents and their duties towards them...

Let us, then, in the light of these things notice how the Apostle states the matter. He starts—using the same principle as he used in the case of the married relationship—with the children. That is to say, he starts with those who are under obedience, those who are to be subject. He started with the wives and then went on to the husbands. Here he starts with the children and then goes on to the parents. He does so because he is illustrating this fundamental point: “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God” (Eph 5:21). The injunction is, “Children, obey your parents.” Then he reminds them of the Commandment, “Honour thy father and mother.”

⁴² **without natural affection** – hardhearted; without regard for others.

⁴³ **implacable** – unwilling to negotiate the resolution of a problem; irreconcilable.

⁴⁴ **trucebreakers** – *see* implacable.

⁴⁵ **incontinent** – without self-control.

⁴⁶ **fierce** – brutal; savage.

⁴⁷ **heady** – reckless; thoughtless.

⁴⁸ **Corban** – among the ancient Hebrews, an offering given to God in performance of a vow.

In passing, we note the interesting point that here, once again, we have something that differentiates Christianity from paganism. The pagans in these matters did not link the mother with the father, but spoke of the father only. But the Christian position, as indeed the Jewish position as given by God to Moses, puts the mother *with* the father. The injunction is that children are to obey their parents; and the word *obey* means not only to listen to, but to listen as realizing that you are under authority...You not only listen, but you recognize your position of subservience;⁴⁹ and you proceed to put it into practice.

But it is most important that this should be governed and controlled by the accompanying idea—that of “honoring.” “Honour thy father and mother.” That means “respect,” “reverence.” This is an *essential* part of the Commandment. Children are not to give a mechanical and a grudging obedience. That is quite wrong. That is to observe the letter but not the spirit. That is what our Lord condemned so strongly in the Pharisees. No, they are to observe the spirit as well as the letter of the Law. Children are to reverence and to respect their parents, they are to realize the position as it obtains between them, and they are to rejoice in it. They are to regard it as a great privilege, and therefore they must go out of their way *always* to show this reverence and respect in their every action.

The Apostle’s appeal implies that Christian children should be an entire contrast to godless children⁵⁰ who generally show lack of reverence for parents and ask, “Who are they?” “Why should I listen?” They regard their parents as “back numbers”⁵¹ and speak of them disrespectfully. They assert themselves and their own rights and their “modernism” in this whole matter of conduct. That was happening in the pagan society out of which these Ephesians had come, as it is happening in the pagan society that is round and about us at this present time. We read constantly in the newspapers of how this lawlessness is coming in, and how children, so it is worded, “are maturing at an earlier age.” There is no such thing, of course. Physiology does not change. What is changing is the mentality and the outlook leading to aggressiveness and a failure to be governed by biblical principles and biblical teaching. One hears of this on all hands—young people speaking disrespectfully to their parents, looking disrespectfully at them, flouting⁵² everything that they tell them, and asserting themselves and their own rights. *It is one of the ugliest manifestations of the sinfulness and the lawlessness of this present age.* Now, over and against all such behavior, the Apostle says, “Children, obey your parents; honor your father and mother, treat them with respect and reverence, show that you realize your position and what it means.”

Let us look at the Apostle’s reasons for giving the injunction. The first is—and I am taking them in this particular order for a reason that will emerge later—“For this is right.” By this he means, “It is righteous”...What Paul means by “right,” in other words, is this: he is going back to the whole order of creation laid down at the very beginning, away back in the Book of Genesis...He tells us that, with regard to this question of children, the principle is there at the beginning. It has always been so, it is a part of the order of nature, it is a part of the basic rule of life. This is something you find not only among human beings, it operates even among the animals. In the animal world, the mother cares for the young offspring that has just been born, looks after it, feeds it, and protects it...This is the order of nature. The young creature in its weakness and ignorance needs the protection, the guidance, the help, and the instruction that is given by the parent. So, says the Apostle, “Obey your parents...for this is right.” Christians are not divorced from a natural order found everywhere in creation.

It is a regrettable thing that this needs to be said to Christians at all. How does it become possible that people can deviate at any point from something that is so patently obvious and belongs to the very order and course of nature? Even the wisdom of the world recognizes this. There are people around us who are not Christians at all, but they are firm believers in discipline and order. Why? *Because the whole of life and the whole of nature indicate this.* For an offspring to be rebellious against the parents and to refuse to listen and to obey is something ridiculous and foolish...It is *unnatural* for children not to obey their parents. They are violating something that is clearly a part of the whole warp and woof⁵³ of human nature, seen everywhere, from top to bottom. Life has been planned on this basis. If it were not, of course, life would soon become chaotic; and it would end its own existence.

⁴⁹ **subservience** – obedience to authority.

⁵⁰ This is a reference to Western culture, not to various Eastern cultures in which children are still expected to respect their parents.

⁵¹ **back numbers** – the numbers of a magazine, periodical, etc., earlier than the current one; hence, one who is behind the times, out of date, or useless.

⁵² **flouting** – expressing contempt and scorn; laughing at with derision.

⁵³ **warp and woof** – the underlying structure on which something is built.

“This is right!” There is something about this aspect of the teaching of the New Testament that seems to me to be very wonderful. It shows that you must not divide the Old Testament from the New Testament. There is nothing that displays more ignorance than for a Christian to say, “Of course, being a Christian now, I am not interested in the Old Testament.” That is entirely wrong because, as the Apostle reminds us here, it is the God Who created at the beginning Who is the God Who saves. It is one God from beginning to end. God made male and female, parents and children, right through the whole of nature. He did it in that way, and life is to work along these principles. So the Apostle starts his exhortation by virtually saying: “This is right, this is basic, this is fundamental, this is part of the order of nature! Do not go back on that! If you do, you are denying your Christianity; you are denying the God who established life after this fashion and made it work according to these principles. Obedience is *right*.”

But having spoken thus, the Apostle proceeds to his second point. This is not only right, he says, this is also “the first commandment with promise.” “Honour thy father and thy mother; which is the first commandment with promise.” He means that the honoring of parents is not only essentially right, but that it is actually one of the things that God pinpointed in the Ten Commandments. This is the Fifth Commandment: “Honour thy father and thy mother” (Exo 20:12)...

What does the Apostle mean by the expression “First commandment with promise?” This is a difficult point, and we cannot be quite final in our answer. It obviously does not mean that this is the first commandment that has a promise attached to it, for it will be noticed that *none* of the other commandments have a promise attached to them at all. If it were true to say that commandments 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 had promises attached to them, then it could be said, “Paul means of course that this is the ‘first’ of the commandments to which he attaches a promise.” But there is not a promise attached to the others, so it cannot bear that meaning.

What then does it mean? It may mean that here in this fifth commandment we begin to have instruction with respect to our relationships to one another. Until then it has been our relationship to God, His Name, His Day, and so on. But here He turns to our relationships with one another, so it may be the first in that sense. Over and above that, however, it may mean that it is the first commandment, not so much in *order* as in *rank*, [and] that God was anxious to impress this upon the minds of the children of Israel to such an extent that He added this promise in order to enforce it. First, as it were, in *rank*, first in *importance*! Not that ultimately any one of these is more important than the others, for they are all important. Nevertheless, there is a relative importance.

I would therefore view it like this: this is one of those laws that, when neglected, *leads to the collapse of society*. Whether we like it or not, a breakdown in homelife will eventually lead to a breakdown everywhere. This is, surely, the most menacing and dangerous aspect of the state of society at this present time. Once the family idea, the family unit, the family life is broken up—once that goes, soon you will have no other allegiance. It is the most serious thing of all. And that is perhaps the reason why God attached this promise to it.

But I believe that there is even a further suggestion here. There is something about this relationship of children to parents that is unique in this sense: it points to a yet higher relationship. After all, God is our Father. That is the term He Himself uses; that is the term our Lord uses in His model prayer—“Our Father, which art in heav-en.” The earthly father therefore is, as it were, a reminder of that other Father, the heavenly Father. In the relationship of children to parents, we have a picture of the relationship of all mankind originally to God. We are all “children” face to face with God. He is our Father, “For we are also his offspring” (Act 17:28). So in a very wonderful way the relationship between the parent and the child is a replica and a picture, a portrayal, a preaching of this whole relationship that subsists especially between those who are Christian and God Himself...The whole relationship of father and child should always remind us of our relationship to God. In that sense, this particular relationship is unique...This relationship reminds us of God Himself as Father and ourselves as children. There is something very sacred about the family, about this relationship between parents and chil-dren. God, as it were, has told us so in the Ten Commandments. When He came to lay down this commandment, “Honour thy father and mother,” He attached a promise to it.

What promise? “That it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth.” There can be no doubt that, as the promise was originally given to the children of Israel, it meant the following: “If you want to go on living in this land of promise to which I am leading you, observe these commandments, this one in particular. If you want to have a time of blessedness and happiness in that Promised Land, if you want to go on living there

under My blessing, observe these commandments, *especially* this one.” There is no doubt that that was the original promise.

But now the Apostle generalizes the promise because he is dealing here with Gentiles as well as Jews who had become Christians. So he says in effect, “Now if you want everything to be well with you, and if you want to live a long and a full life on the earth, honor your father and mother.” Does that mean that if I am a dutiful son or daughter I am of necessity going to live to great age? No, that does not follow. But the promise certainly means this: if you want to live a blessed life, a full life under the benediction of God, observe this commandment. He may choose to keep you for a long time on this earth as an example and illustration. But however old you may be when you leave this world, you will know that you are under the blessing and the good hand of God...

That brings us to the third and last point. You notice how the Apostle puts it: “Children, obey your parents. Honour thy father and mother.” Nature dictates it, but not only nature: the Law dictates it. But we must go beyond that to—*Grace!* This is the order—Nature, Law, Grace. “Children, obey your parents *in the Lord.*” It is important that we should attach that phrase “in the Lord” to the right word. It does not mean “Children, obey your *parents in the Lord.*” It is, rather, “*Children, obey in the Lord* your parents.” In other words, the Apostle is repeating the very thing he said in the case of husbands and wives. “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord.” “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church.” When we come to his words about servants we shall find him saying, “Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh as unto Christ.” That is what “in the Lord” means. In other words, *this is the supreme reason.* We are to obey our parents and honor them and respect them because it is a part of our obedience to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Ultimately, that is why we are to do it...Do it “as unto the Lord.” Obey your father and mother “in the Lord.” That is the finest and greatest inducement of all. It gives Him pleasure; it is a proof of what He said; we are substantiating His teaching. He said He had come into the world to redeem us, to wash away our sins, to give us a new nature, to make us new men and women. “Well,” says the Apostle, “prove it, show it in practice.” Children, *show it* by obeying your parents: you will be unlike all other children! You will be unlike those arrogant, aggressive, proud, boastful, evil-speaking children that are round about you at the present time! *Show* that you are different, *show* that the Spirit of God is in you, *show* that you belong to Christ! You have a wonderful opportunity; and it will give Him great joy and great pleasure.

But let us go even further. “Children, obey your parents,” for this reason also: when He was in this world, He did so. This is what I find in Luke 2:51: “And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.” The words refer to the Lord Jesus at the age of twelve. He had been up to Jerusalem with Joseph and Mary. They were making their return journey, and they had travelled for a day before they discovered that He was not in the company. They went back and found Him in the Temple reasoning and debating and arguing with the doctors of the Law, and confuting and confounding them. They were staggered and amazed. And He said, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luk 2:49). He had this dawning realization at the age of twelve. But then we are told that He went back with them to Nazareth: “He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.” The Son of God incarnate *submitting* Himself to Joseph and Mary! Though He had this consciousness within Him that He was in this world about His Father’s business, He humbled Himself and was obedient unto His parents. Let us look at Him: let us realize that He was doing it primarily to please His Father in heaven, that He might fulfill His Law in every respect and leave us an example that we might follow in His steps.

From “Submissive Children” in *Life in the Spirit in Marriage, Home, & Work:*
An Exposition of Ephesians 5:18 to 6:9, published by The Banner of
Truth Trust. Used by permission. www.banneroftruth.org.

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981): Perhaps the greatest expository preacher of the 20th century; Westminster Chapel, London, 1938-68; born in Wales.

SINS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

J. G. Pike (1784-1854)

“Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness’ sake, O LORD.”—Psalm 25:7

MY young friend, I entreat you to follow me while I point out to you some of those sins that undo multitudes. Among these evils, a thoughtless, inconsiderate spirit is in young persons, one of the most common and one of the most fatal. While open impiety⁵⁴ slays its thousands, this sinks its ten thousands to perdition.⁵⁵ A time is coming when you must consider your ways. From the bed of death or from the eternal world, you must take a review of life. But as you love your soul, defer not until that solemn period, which shall fix your eternal state, the momentous question, “How has my life been spent?” Look back on your past years. They are gone forever. But what report have they borne to heaven? What is the record made respecting them in the book of God? Will they rise up in the judgment against you? Possibly, you may not see many instances of flagrant⁵⁶ crime. But do you see nothing that conscience must condemn? Nothing that would fill you with alarm, if going this moment to the bar of your Maker? Perhaps you reply, “It is true, I cannot justify all the actions of my youthful years. Yet the worst that I see were but the frolics⁵⁷ of youth.”

My friend, do they bear that name in heaven? Does your Judge view them in no worse a light? It has ever been the custom of this world to whitewash sin and hide its hideous deformity. But, know that what you pass over so lightly, your God abhors as sins—sins, the least of which, if not forgiven, would sink your soul to utter, endless woe. “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness” (Rom 1:18). He abhors the iniquities of youth, as well as of riper years. The sins of youth were the bitter things that holy Job lamented. “For thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth” (Job 13:26). And for deliverance from which David devoutly prayed, “Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness’ sake, O LORD” (Psa 25:7).

Take then another review of life. Begin with childhood. In that early period, so often falsely represented as a state of innocence, the corruptions of a fallen nature begin to appear. The early years of life are stained with falsehood, disobedience, cruelty, vanity, and pride. Can you recollect no instances in which your earlier years were thus polluted with actual sin? Can you bring to remembrance no occasion on which falsehood came from your lips? Or vanity, pride, or obstinacy was cherished in your heart? Or when cruelty to the meaner creatures⁵⁸ was your sport? Shrink not from the review: though painful, it is useful. It is far better to see and abhor your youthful sins in this world, where mercy may be found, than to have them brought to your remembrance when mercy is no more.

But you have passed the years of childhood. You have advanced one stage [further] in your journey to an endless world. Has sin weak-ened as your years increased? Have not some sinful dispositions rip-ened into greater vigor? Have not others that you knew not in your earlier years begun to appear? And does not increasing knowledge add new guilt to all your sins?

Among the prevailing iniquities of youth may be mentioned *pride*. This is a sin common to all ages, but it often peculiarly infects the young. God abhors it. “But the proud he knoweth afar off” (Psa 138:6). “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (Jam 4:6). “Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD” (Pro 16:5). He hateth “a proud look” (Pro 6:16-17). “An high look, and a proud heart...is sin” (Pro 21:4). The proud are “cursed” (Psa 119:21). Pride is the parent of many other vices. It puts on a thousand forms; yet

⁵⁴ **impiety** – lack of reverence for God; wickedness.

⁵⁵ **perdition** – eternal damnation; hell.

⁵⁶ **flagrant** – outrageously bad.

⁵⁷ **frolics** – light-hearted activities; pranks.

⁵⁸ **meaner creatures** – lowly animals.

unless subdued by religion, [it] is found in the palace and the cottage. You may see it displayed in the character of the young prodigal (Luk 15:19).

Has not this sin, which God so much abhors, crept into your heart? Perhaps it has made you haughty, when you should have been humble; obstinate, when you should have been yielding; revengeful, when you should have been forgiving. You thought it showed spirit to resent an injury or insult, instead of patiently bearing it like Him you call your Lord. Perhaps it has filled you with dissatisfaction, when you should have been all submission. You have thought it hard in the day of affliction that you should be so tried; and even if you stayed the murmur against God from passing your lips, have you not felt it in your heart?

Pride has probably led you to neglect the counsels of wisdom—to turn a deaf ear to those who wished you well forever. Vain of the ornaments of apparel—have you not bestowed more thought on the dress you should wear than on the salvation of your immortal soul? [Have you not] been more concerned about the shape of a coat or the fashion of a gown or a bonnet than about life or death eternal? Perhaps you have been one of those who spend more time in surveying their own image in a glass⁵⁹ than in seeking the favor of their God. Ah! Did pride never lead you to this self-idolatry? Did it never, never fill you with vanity from the fancy of your possessing a pleasing face, or a lovely form, or manly vigor? Ah, foolish vanity! When you must so soon say to corruption, “Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister” (Job 17:14). Yet, foolish as it is, was it never yours? “Where is there a face so disagreeable, that never was the object of self-worship in a glass? And where a body, however deformed, that never was set up as a favorite idol by the fallen spirit that inhabits it?”⁶⁰

One of the most prevalent and most baneful⁶¹ kinds of pride is that which I may term the pride of self-righteousness. Our Lord, in the parable of the Pharisee and Publican, gives a most striking description of this sin. The Pharisee boasts that he was not like others; that he had not committed such flagrant crimes as they; and that he practiced duties that they omitted. On this sandy foundation, his hope for eternity appears to have rested. Nothing like humility entered his heart; but in all the pride of fancied⁶² virtue, he approached his God. This is the exact spirit of multitudes in the present day. And where young persons have been restrained from open immoralities, how commonly does it exist among them! It is pleaded, respecting them, “They are not like many profligate⁶³ youth around them! They have not given way to profaneness and lying, to drunkenness or dishonesty; but they have been kind and dutiful, tender and obliging, have good hearts, and are good young people.” They may have lived all their lives careless of God and their souls, but this is not taken into account. Others commend them, and they are willing to believe these commendations. They please themselves with their fancied virtue [and] think themselves very good young persons. [They are] proud of this goodness [and] go forward to meet that God Who sees in them ten thousand crimes and Who abhors nothing more than the pride of *self-righteousness* in a creature polluted by daily iniquities.

Another common sin of the young is disobedience to parents. “Honour thy father and mother...That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth” (Eph 6:2-3). This is the divine commandment. There is, it is true, one case in which even parents should not be obeyed: when their directions and wishes are opposed to those of God. “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Act 5:29), and to love the Redeemer more than parents themselves. Parents are commonly the tenderest of friends, and pious parents among the surest guides that the young and inexperienced can have to lead them to the footstool of God. Your interests are theirs. Your welfare *their* happiness. But ah! Has their kindness met with the return it demanded? Who, my young friend, so much deserve your obedience and affection as those who gave you being and who watched over your helpless infancy? The father, whose years have been spent in care for you; the mother, who tended you at her breast and led you through the days of childhood—*have they received this obedience and affection from you?*

Perhaps I address one whose disobedience and unkindness have wrung with grief the hearts of fond and pious parents and filled them with sorrow instead of gladness. Their desire has been to see you walking in the ways of God. For this, they have led you to His house. For this, their prayers have ascended in public and in private. This,

⁵⁹ **glass** – mirror.

⁶⁰ John Fletcher, “An Appeal to Matter of Fact and Common Sense” in *The Whole Works of the Rev. John Fletcher*, Vol. 1 (Devon: S. Thorne, 1835), 264.

⁶¹ **baneful** – exceedingly harmful.

⁶² **fancied** – imagined.

⁶³ **profligate** – unrestrained by morality.

by their early instructions and later admonitions, they have warned you to regard as the chief end of life, as that only concern that beyond all others should interest your attention and engage all your hearts. And now they see you negligent of God and religion. [They] mourn in secret that the child they love is still a child of Satan. Ah! Young man or young woman, if this be your case, God will bring you into judgment for all your abuse of precious privileges and all your neglect of parental instructions. The prayers, the tears, and the admonitions of your parents will awfully witness against you. Think not that if affectionate and kind to them you will much mitigate⁶⁴ the sorrows of truly pious parents. No. They will still mourn at the thought that the affectionate child they fondly love is not a child of God. It will grieve them to the heart to consider how near you are to endless destruction and how soon they must bid you an eternal farewell, when they go to that rest in which they have no hope of meeting you.

Ah! My young friend, if you slight religion, pious parents may leave you, mournfully saying in their dying hour, “Alas! Our beloved child, we shall see you no more. For our God you have not [trusted] as your God; our Savior you have not sought as your Savior. The heav-en to which we go is a rest to which you have no title and which, dying as you are, *you cannot enter!*” Yes, bitterly will they mourn to think that with so much that is lovely in *their* view, there is nothing in you that is lovely in the sight of God. All that they esteem so pleasing in you must soon be buried in the deeps of hell.

Another sin, not peculiar to the young, but awfully prevalent among them, is the waste of precious time. The Word of God reminds us that “time is short” (1Co 7:29) and commands us to redeem the time (Eph 5:16; Col 4:5). The value of time is beyond our comprehension or expression...Time is given us to prepare for eternity. But, alas, how are its golden hours sinned and trifled away! Many young persons act as if they thought they had so much time before them that they may afford to squander some, when perhaps their wasted youth is their *all*—all in which they will ever have an opportunity of preparing for eternity, all in which they can “escape from hell, and fly to heaven.”⁶⁵

One of the most common ways in which time is worse than wasted is employing it on romances, plays, and novels. Novels are the poison of the age. The best of them tend to produce a baneful effeminacy⁶⁶ of mind. Many of them are calculated to advance the base designs of the licentious and abandoned on the young and unsuspecting. But, were they free from every other charge of evil, it is a most heavy one that they occasion a dreadful waste of that time that must be accounted for before the God of heaven. Let their deluded admirers plead the advantages of novel reading, if they will venture to plead the same before the worthy Judge eternal. If you are a novel reader, think the next time you take a novel into your hands, “How shall I answer to my tremendous Judge for the time occupied by this? When He shall say to me, ‘I gave you so many years in yonder world to fit you for eternity. Did you converse with your God in devotion? Did you study His Word? Did you attend to the duties of life and strive to improve to some good end even your leisure hours?’ Then, then shall I be willing to reply, ‘Lord, my time was otherwise employed! Novels and romances occupied the leisure of my days, when—alas!—my Bible, my God, and my soul were neglected!’” In this way and many others is time—that most precious blessing—squandered away. Does not conscience remind you of many leisure hours? Hours that, though thoughtlessly thrown away, would soon to you be worth more than mountains of gold or of pearl?

Willful neglect of the soul and eternity is another common sin of youth. Young persons presume on future life and grieve the Holy Spir-it by delaying to regard the one thing needful (Luk 10:42). *They trust in their youth.* God reproves the folly and says, “Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth” (Pro 27:1). Few will listen to the warning. Instead of doing so, they flatter themselves that they shall live for many years and think sickness, death, and judgment far from them. Hence, they neglect the soul and seem to imagine religion unsuitable or at least not needful for them. The blessed God calls on them in His Word. The crucified Savior bids them come to Himself, “I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me” (Pro 8:17). The ministers of the Gospel urge the advice upon them. Prayers are offered, tears shed for them—yet many persist in their own ways; and whatever they do, [they] will not remember their Creator in the days of their youth (Ecc 12:1). My young friend, has this been your sin and folly? O, if it has, remember how many ways there are out of the world! How many diseases to cut short your days! God gives you time enough to secure salvation, but think not that He gives you any to spare.

⁶⁴ mitigate – make less severe.

⁶⁵ Isaac Watts, *The Psalms of David*, Book 1, Hymn 88.

⁶⁶ baneful effeminacy – ruinous, unmanly weakness.

An inordinate love of sensual pleasure and worldly gaieties is another most prevalent sin of youth. The Word of God describes those who live in pleasure as “dead while they live” (1Ti 5:6) and classes with the most abominably wicked those who are “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2Ti 3:4). Though such are the declarations of the Lord, yet pleasure, *pleasure* is the chief object of thousands of the young. Some pursue it in the gross and brutish paths of rioting⁶⁷ and drunkenness, of chambering and wantonness;⁶⁸ others [pursue it] in less profligate ways, but with hearts not less intent upon it. The card table, the dance, the horse race, the playhouse, the fair, the wake⁶⁹ are the scenes of their highest felicity.⁷⁰ My young men, has not this love of worldly pleasure dwelt in your heart? Perhaps you have not run into scandalous and disgraceful excesses; but have you not had a greater love to worldly pleasures than to God and religion? If you have, you but too surely bear that awful mark of being a child of destruction: you are a lover of pleasures more than a lover of God. Have not you been present at scenes of sinful amusement and guilty festivity? Have not you been as anxious as others have for those sensual delights that were most suited to your taste? And, while thus loving this world, have not you forgotten that which is to come? Have not you been more pleased with some shining bauble or glittering toy than with the blessings displayed in the Gospel? And been more earnest about a day of promised pleasure than about securing an eternity of pure celestial joy?

Think not that I mean to insinuate that the Christian should be the slave of melancholy. Far from it! None has so much reason to be cheerful as he who reads his title clear to heaven. But wide is the difference between the innocent cheerfulness and humble joy of the Christian and the vain pleasures of a foolish world. The truly religious have their delights, though they know that there is no room for mirthful trifling here.

Let conscience now answer, as in the sight of God: Has the love of worldly and sensual pleasure been cherished in your heart? If your situation has prevented your freely following the delights of sense, has the love of them dwelt within? If it has, though you should not have had the opportunity of indulging your worldly taste once in a month or a year, you are still in God’s sight as much a lover of pleasures as if these had occupied every moment of your time...

The Apostle Paul, when enumerating some of the sins of mankind, concludes the dreadful list with that of *their taking pleasure in the sins of others* (Rom 1:28). This, though one of the most awful, is one of the most common of human iniquities and abounds among none *more* than among the young. Young persons are often each other’s tempters and destroyers. The lewd and profane tempt others to lewdness and profaneness. The thoughtless and [those addicted to social life] persuade others to imitate their levity and folly. As if it were not sufficient to have their own sins to account for, many thus make themselves partakers in the sins of others! And, as if it were not enough to ruin their *own* souls, many thus contract the guilt of assisting to destroy those of their companions and friends.

Have you never thus led others into sin? Perhaps some, who are now lost forever, may be lamenting in utter darkness and despair the fatal hour when they became acquainted with *you*. Have any learned of you to trifle with religion? To squander away their golden day of grace? To slight their God and choose perdition? If not by words, yet perhaps by a careless and irreligious example, you have taught them these dreadful lessons.

I have now named a few youthful iniquities, but think not that these things are all. No. Every sin to which our fallen nature is prone has been found not merely in those who, by years, were ripened in guilt; but in those also who were beginning the journey of life. And not to enumerate the darker crimes of the multitude who drink in iniquity like water, where, my young friend, is the youthful heart that never felt the rising emotions of those infernal passions: pride, envy, malice, or revenge? Where is the youthful tongue that never uttered a profane, wanton, or at least an unkind or slanderous word? Where is the youth, possessed of the forms of piety, that never mocked God, “With solemn sounds upon a thoughtless tongue”? Where is the youthful ear that was never open to drink in with pleasure the conversation of the trifling and the foolish? And where the youthful eye that never cast a haughty, an angry, a wanton, or insulting glance? *Are you the person?* Can you appeal to the Searcher of hearts and

⁶⁷ **rioting** – drunken merrymaking.

⁶⁸ **chambering...wantonness** – sexual immorality and unbridled lust.

⁶⁹ **wake** – the eve of a festival: in this use, *wake* primarily refers to the rule of the early church that certain feast-days should be preceded by services lasting through the night. When this rule had ceased to exist, the vigil continued to be an excuse for nighttime festivity. The word *wake* was extended to refer not only to the *eve* but also to the feast-day itself and the duration of the festivities.

⁷⁰ **felicity** – happiness.

rest your eternal hopes on the success of the appeal that love—unmingled love to God and man—has always dwelt in your bosom? That no resentful, envious, or unkind emotion, was ever for a moment harbored there? That a law of constant kindness has ever dwelt upon your lips? That only meekness, tenderness, and goodness have glanced from your eye? That your ear was never opened to hear with pleasure of a brother's shame? *Can you make the appeal?*

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Nowadays, there are some children who seem to be at the head of the family, and the parents obey them in all things. This is very foolish and wrong; and when their children grow up and become their plague and curse, they will bitterly lament their folly in putting things out of joint and not keeping the house as God would have it kept: the children in *their* place and the father in *his*.—*Charles Spurgeon*

CHILDREN, SEEK THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Robert Murray M'Cheyne (1813-1843)

“He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.”—Isaiah 40:11

BELOVED children, Jesus is the Good Shepherd. His arm was stretched out on the cross, and His bosom was pierced with the spear. That arm is able to gather you, and that bosom is open to receive you. I pray for you every day that Christ may save you. He said to me, “Feed My lambs”; and I daily return the words to Him, “Lord, feed my lambs.” In the bowels of Jesus Christ, I long after you all. I believe Christ has gathered some of you. But are no more to be gathered? Are no more green brands to be plucked from the burning? Will no more of you hide beneath the white robe of Jesus? Oh, come! For “yet there is room” (Luk 14:22). Lift up your hearts to God while I tell you something more of the Good Shepherd.

1. JESUS HAS A FLOCK: Every shepherd must have a flock, and so has Christ. I once saw a flock in a valley near Jerusalem. The shepherd went before them and called the sheep, and they knew his voice and followed him. I said, “This is the way Jesus leads His sheep!” Oh, that I may be one of them!

(1) Christ's flock is a little flock. Hear what Jesus says: “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luk 12:32). *Pray* to be among the little flock. Look at the world—[billions of] men, women, and children of different countries, color, and language all journeying to the Judgment Seat! Is this Christ's flock? Ah, no! [Untold] millions never heard the sweet name of Jesus; and of the rest, the most see no beauty in the Rose of Sharon. Christ's is a little flock. Look at this town. What crowds press along the streets on a market-day! What a large flock is here! Is this the flock of Christ? No. It is to be feared that most of these are not the brothers and sisters of Christ. They do not bear His likeness. They do not follow the Lamb now and will not follow Him in eternity. Look round the Sabbath schools. What a number of young faces are there! How many beaming eyes! How many precious souls! Is this the flock of Christ? No, no. Most of you have hard and stony hearts. Most of you love pleasure more than [you love] God. Most of you love sin and lightly esteem Christ...I could weep when I think how many of you will live lives of sin, die deaths of horror, and spend an eternity in hell. Beloved children, pray that you may be like the one lily among many thorns—that you may be the few lambs in the midst of a world of wolves.

(2) Christ's sheep are marked sheep. In almost every flock, the sheep are all marked in order that the shepherd may know them. The mark is often made with tar on the woolly back of the sheep. Sometimes it is the first letter of the owner's name. The use of the mark is that they may not be lost when they wander among other sheep. So it is with the flock of Jesus. Every sheep of His has two marks:

One mark is made with the blood of Jesus. Every sheep and lamb in Christ's flock was once guilty and defiled with sin, altogether become filthy. But every one of them has been drawn to the blood of Jesus and washed there. They are all like sheep that "came up from the washing" (Song 4:2). They can all say, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Rev 1:5). Have you this mark? Look and see. You can never be in heaven unless you have it. Every one there has washed his robes and "made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev 7:14).

Another mark is made by the Holy Spirit. This is not a mark that you can see outside, like the mark on the white wool of the sheep. It is deep, deep in the bosom, where the eye of man cannot look. It is a new heart. "A new heart also will I give you" (Eze 36:26). This is the seal of the Holy Spirit that He gives to all them that believe. With infinite power, He puts forth His unseen hand and silently changes the heart of all that are truly Christ's. Do you have the new heart? You never will go to heaven without it. "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom 8:9). Beloved children, pray for these two marks of the sheep of Jesus—forgiveness through blood and a new heart. Oh, be in earnest to get them and to get them now. Soon the Chief Shepherd will come, and set the sheep on His right hand, and the goats on His left. Where will you be in that day?

(3) Christ's sheep all flock together. Sheep love to go together. A sheep never goes with a wolf or with a dog, but always with the flock. Especially when a storm is coming down, they keep near one another. When the sky turns dark with clouds and the first drops of a thundershower are coming on, the shepherds say that you will see the sheep flocking down from the hills and all meeting together in some sheltered valley. They love to keep together. So it is with the flock of Jesus. They do not love to go with the world, but always one with another. Christian loves Christian. They have the same peace, the same Spirit, the same Shepherd, the same fold on the hills of immortality. Especially in the dark and cloudy day—such as our day is likely to be—the sheep of Christ are driven together to weep together. They love to pray together, to sing praise together, and to hide in Christ together... Little children, "love one another" (1Jo 4:7). Make companions of those that fear God. Flee from all others. Who can take fire into [his] bosom and not be burned?...

2. WHAT JESUS DOES FOR HIS FLOCK:

(1) He died for them. "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (Joh 10:11). This is the chief beauty in Christ. The wounds that marred His fair body make Him altogether lovely in a needy sinner's eye. All that are now and ever shall be the sheep of Christ were once condemned to die. The wrath of God abode upon them. They were ready to drop into the burning lake. Jesus had compassion upon them, left His Father's bosom, emptied Himself, became a worm and no man, and died under the sins of many. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). This is the grace of the Lord Jesus. Everyone in the flock can say, "[He] loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20).

(2) He seeks and finds them. We would never seek Christ, if He did not seek us first. We would never find Christ, if He did not find us. "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luk 19:10). I once asked a shepherd, "How do you find sheep that are lost in the snow?" "Oh," he said, "we go down into the deep ravines, where the sheep go in storms. There we find the sheep huddled together beneath the snow." "And are they able to come out when you take away the snow?" "Oh, no. If they had to take a single step to save their lives, they could not do it. So we just go in and carry them out." Ah, this is the very way Jesus saves lost sheep. He finds us in the deep pit of sin, frozen and dead. If we had to take a single step to save our souls, we could not do it. But He reaches down His arm and carries us out. This He does for every sheep He saves. Glory, glory, glory be to Jesus, the Shepherd of our souls!...

(3) He feeds them. "By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture" (Joh 10:9). If Jesus has saved you, He will feed you. He will feed your *body*. "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Psa 37:25)... He will feed your *soul*. He that feeds the little flower in the cleft of the craggy precipice, where no hand of man can reach it, will feed your soul with silent drops of heavenly dew.

I shall never forget the story of a little girl in Belfast, Ireland. She was at a Sabbath school and gained a Bible as a prize for her good conduct. It became to her a treasure indeed. She was fed out of it. Her parents were wicked. She often read to them, but they became worse and worse. This broke Eliza's heart. She took to her bed and never

rose again. She desired to see her teacher. When he came, he said, “You are not without a companion, my dear child,” taking up her Bible. “No,” she replied,

“Precious Bible? What a treasure, Does the Word of God afford!
All I want for life or pleasure, Food and med’cine, shield and sword.
Let the world account me poor, Having this, I ask no more.”⁷¹

She had scarcely repeated the lines when she hung back her head and died. Beloved children, this is the way Jesus feeds His flock. He is a tender, constant, almighty Shepherd. If you become His flock, He will feed you all the way to glory.

3. JESUS CARES FOR [HIS] LAMBS. Every careful shepherd deals gently with the lambs of the flock. When the flocks are travelling, the lambs are not able to go far: they often grow weary and lie down. Now, a kind shepherd stoops down, puts his gentle arm beneath them, and lays them in his bosom. Such a shepherd is the Lord Jesus, and saved children are His lambs. He gathers them with His arm and carries them in His bosom. Many a guilty lamb He has gathered and carried to His Father’s house. Some He has gathered out of this place that you and I once knew well.

Before He came into the world, Jesus cared for lambs. Samuel was a very little child, no bigger than the least of you when he was converted. He was girded with a linen ephod. His mother made him a little coat and brought it to him every year. One night as he slept in the holy place, near where the Ark of God was kept, he heard a voice cry, “Samuel!” He started up and ran to old Eli, whose eyes were dim, and said, “Here am I; for thou didst call me.” And Eli said, “I called not; lie down again.” He went and lay down, but a second time the voice cried, “Samuel!” He rose and went to Eli, saying, “Here am I; for thou didst call me.” And Eli said, “I called not, my son; lie down again.” A third time the holy voice cried, “Samuel!” He arose and went to Eli with the same words. Then Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child. Therefore, Eli said, “Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth.” So he went and lay down. A fourth time—how often Christ will call on little children!—the voice cried, “Samuel! Samuel!” Then Samuel answered, “Speak; for thy servant heareth.” Thus did Jesus gather this lamb with His arm and carried him in His bosom. For “And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him...for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh” (1Sa 3:5-10; 19, 21).

Little children, of whom I travail in birth until Christ be formed in you, pray that the same Lord would reveal Himself to you. Some people say [that] you are too young to be converted and saved. But Samuel was not too young. Christ can open the eyes of a child as easily as of an old man. Yea, youth is the best time to be saved in. You are not too young to die, not too young to be judged, and therefore not too young to be brought to Christ. Do not be contented to hear about Christ from your teachers. Pray that He would reveal Himself to you. God grant there may be many little Samuels amongst you.

Jesus cares for lambs still. The late Duke of Hamilton had two sons. The eldest [became sick with tuberculosis] when a boy, which ended in his death. Two ministers went to see him at the family seat near Glasgow, where he lay. After prayer, the youth took his Bible from under his pillow and turned to 2 Timothy 4:7-8: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.” [He] added, “This, sirs, is all my comfort!” When his death approached, he called his younger brother to his bed and spoke to him with great affection. He ended with these remarkable words: “And now, Douglas, in a little time you will be a duke, but I shall be a king”...

Would you wish to be gathered thus? Go now to some lonely place—kneel down and call upon the Lord Jesus. Do not leave your knees until you find Him. Pray to be gathered with His arm and carried in His bosom. Take hold of the hem of His garment and say, “I must—I dare not—I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me.”

From “To the Lambs of the Flock” in *Memoir and Remains of Robert Murray M’Cheyne*,
reprinted by The Banner of Truth Trust, www.banneroftruth.org.

Robert Murray M’Cheyne (1813-1843): Scottish Presbyterian minister of St. Peter’s Church, Dundee, whose ministry was marked by deep personal holiness, prayer, and powerful evangelical preaching; born in Edinburgh, Scotland.

⁷¹ John Newton, “Precious Bible! What a Treasure,” *Olney Hymns* (1779).

WHY SONS AND DAUGHTERS NEED FAITH IN CHRIST

Charles Walker (1791-1870)

MY young reader...the writer speaks to you as a friend. Will you listen to what he says? Will you give your own mind to the study of this important subject? If you will do so earnestly, you may become wise unto salvation. Of persons of your age, God says in the Scriptures, “Those that seek me early shall find me” (Pro 8:17).

You know that there is much said in the Bible about faith. You know that every person must have faith [in Christ], or he cannot be good and happy. The Bible says, “But without faith it is impossible to please him” (Heb 11:6). If then you hope to please God, to have His blessing, and to dwell in His presence when you leave this world, you must have faith. So you see it is of the utmost importance that you should know what faith is...

You know that the Holy Bible is the Word of God. You know that in the Bible God speaks to us and tells us about many things that we should never have known if they had not been told us in that Holy Book. You know that God speaks to us in the Bible about Himself. He tells us who He is, where He dwells, what He has done, and what He will do. God tells us also what we are ourselves, what we have done, and what we must do if we would please Him. He tells us too about another world, a state of being beyond the grave—a place of happiness for the righteous and a place of misery for the wicked. God tells us further about Jesus Christ Who came into the world and died to save sinners, that they who believe in Christ shall be saved, and that they who believe not shall be damned. All this and very much more God makes known to us in the Bible.

Now I am ready to tell you what faith is: It is so believing what God has said as to do what He has commanded. Do you understand this? I want you [to] understand it. [I] will therefore express it in a little different language. *Faith is believing what God has said.* [It is believing] in such a manner as will lead you to do what He has bidden. This is a definition in general terms. And faith in this sense is applicable to all things that God has said in the Bible. It regards all that He has said of Himself, of His government, and of His Son Jesus Christ. It has respect to whatever God has commanded and whatever He has forbidden. But more particularly, Christian faith, or that faith by which a sinner is saved, may be explained in this manner: *It is that belief or trust in Jesus Christ that will lead us to rely on Him alone for salvation.* [This faith will lead us] to commit our souls, ourselves, our all to Him as the only Savior and to obey His commandments.

It is not enough to say that you believe the Bible or to think that you believe it if you do not obey it. It is not faith to have a kind of general belief that the Bible is the Word of God and that it is all true. Many have this kind of belief who have no true faith. If a man has true faith, he will not only believe what God has said in the Bible, but he will act as if he believed it. Nor is it enough to say that you believe Christ to be the only Savior if you do not follow Him. It is not faith in Christ merely to acknowledge Him as the only Redeemer. Thousands have this kind of belief who are utterly destitute of true faith. You will *obey* the Savior if you have true faith in Him. In the language of Jesus Himself, you will deny yourself and take up the cross and follow Him...The great object of the Christian’s faith is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the *only* Savior. And the only way in which we can be saved is by faith in Him. The Bible says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house” (Act 16:31). It says also, “He that believeth not shall be damned” (Mar 16:16). It is plain, therefore, that our salvation depends on our having true faith in the Savior.

Now, you know what God has told us in the Holy Scriptures about His Son. You remember what the Bible says about the birth, life, and death of Jesus. Though He dwelt in heaven and was with God and was God (Joh 1:1), yet He...became a man. He was born of the Virgin Mary. He grew up like other children. “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luk 2:52). When He was thirty years old, He began His ministry. He preached that all men must repent and believe in Him (Mar 1:15), or they can never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. He performed a great many wonderful miracles that proved that God was with Him and that He worked the works of God. His life was entirely holy, free from all manner of sin. His example was perfectly good...His

teaching was wise and good. Even His enemies said, “Never man spake like this man” (Joh 7:46). He told all about the duties that mankind owe to each other and to God...At last, He permitted Himself to be taken and crucified by wicked men that, by His death, He might make an atonement for the sins of the world⁷² (1Jo 2:2) and prepare [the] way that all sinners who repent and believe in Him might be saved and be happy in heaven forever. After His death, He arose from the grave, appeared alive to His disciples, told them to “go...into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mar 16:15). Then He ascended into heaven in the sight of many of His friends, and there “he ever liveth to make intercession” (Heb 7:25).

This is a short account of what the Bible informs us concerning the Savior. Now God requires that we should believe this, and so believe it that it will rule our conduct and make us the followers and disciples of Jesus Christ...It is not enough for you to say that you do not dispute or deny what God says concerning His Son. It is not enough for you to *say* that you believe the Scriptural account of the Savior. If your belief is not of that kind that will govern your actions, if it does not lead you to do as the Savior bids you, if it does not make you His friend and disciple, it is not true faith in Him.

Now, my young reader, if you have read attentively and understood what you have read, you see that when you have true faith in Christ, you will trust yourself [into] His hands. You will look to Him alone for salvation. You will obey His commands and strive to be like Him...This is the faith that God speaks of in the Bible...Consider, my young friend, why you yourself need faith. It is because you are a sinner. Did you ever seriously think of this? You *are* a sinner. You have naturally a wicked heart, have disobeyed God, and [have] come into condemnation. The Bible says, “He that believeth not is condemned already” (Joh 3:18). The only way to escape this condemnation is by faith in Christ. He came to save *sinners*. He says, “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luk 19:10). *You* are a lost one. You have wandered away from duty and from God; and you will perish forever if you are not saved by Jesus Christ. And this is the reason why you need faith in Him.

From *Repentance and Faith Explained to the Understanding of the Young*, reprinted by Solid Ground Christian Books, www.solid-ground-books.com.

Charles Walker (1791-1870): Congregational minister, burdened to teach God’s truth to the young; born in Woodstock, Connecticut.

CHILDREN WALKING IN TRUTH

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

“I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.”—2 John 4

WHAT does “walking” mean here? You must not think it means walking on your feet...It means, rather, our way of behaving ourselves—our way of living and going on. And shall I tell you why the Bible calls this “walking”? It calls it so because a man’s life is just like a journey. From the time of our birth to the time of our death, we are always traveling and moving on. Life is a journey from the cradle to the grave, and a person’s manner of living is on that account often called his “walk.”

But what does “walking in truth” mean? It means walking in the ways of true Bible religion,⁷³ and not in the bad ways of this evil world. The world, I am sorry to tell you, is full of false notions and untruths, and especially full of untruths about religion. They all come from our great enemy, the devil. The devil deceived Adam and Eve in Eden and [caused] them [to] sin by telling them an untruth. He told them they would not die if they ate the forbidden

⁷² The world, that is, His people (Joh 1:21): Christ redeemed His people to God by His blood out of every kindred, tongue, people, and nation (Rev 5:9).

⁷³ **religion** – Biblical Christianity.

fruit, and that was untrue. The devil is *always* at the same work now. He is *always* trying to make men, women, and children have false notions about God and about religion. He persuades them to believe that what is really evil is good, and what is really good is evil—that God’s service is not pleasant, and that sin will do them no great harm. And, I grieve to say, vast numbers of people are deceived by him and believe these untruths.

But those persons who walk in truth are very different! They pay no attention to the false notions there are in the world about religion. They follow the true way that God shows us in the Bible. Whatever others may do, their chief desire is to please God and be His true servants. Now this was the character of the children spoken of in the text. John writes home to their mother and says, “I found them walking in truth.”

Dear children, would you not like to know whether you are walking in truth yourselves? Would you like to know the marks by which you may find it out? Listen, every one of you, while I try to set these marks before you in order. Let every boy and girl come and hear what I am going to say.

1. I tell you, then, for one thing, that children who walk in truth know the truth about sin. What is sin? To break any command of God is sin. To do anything that God says ought not to be done is sin. God is very holy and very pure, and every sin that is sinned displeases Him exceedingly. But, in spite of all this, most people in the world, both old and young, think very little about sin. Some try to make out that they are not great sinners and do not often break God’s commandments. Others say that sin is not so terrible a thing after all and that God is not so particular and strict as ministers say He is. These are two great and dangerous mistakes.

Children who walk in truth think very differently. They have no such proud and high feelings. They feel themselves full of sin, and it grieves and humbles them. They believe that sin is the abominable thing that God hates. They look upon sin as their greatest enemy and plague. They hate it more than anything on earth! There is *nothing* they so heartily desire to be free from as sin.

Dear children, there is the first mark of walking in truth. Look at it. Think of it. *Do you hate sin?*

2. I tell you for another thing that children who walk in truth love the true Savior of sinners and follow Him. There are few men and women who do not feel they need in some way to be saved. They feel that after death comes the judgment; and from that awful judgment they would like to be saved.

But, alas! Few of them will see that the Bible says there is only one Savior, even Jesus Christ. And few go to Jesus Christ and ask Him to save them. They trust rather in their own prayers, their own repentance, their own church going, their own regular attendance at sac-rament, their own goodness, or something of the kind. But these things, although useful in their place, cannot save any one soul from hell. These are false ways of salvation. They cannot put away sin. They are not Christ. Nothing can save you or me but Jesus Christ Who died for sinners on the cross. Those only who trust entirely in Him have their sins forgiven and will go to heaven. These alone will find they have an Almighty Friend in the Day of Judgment. This is the true way to be saved.

Children who walk in truth have learned all this. If you ask them what they put their trust in, they will answer, “Nothing but Christ.” They remember His gracious words: “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not” (Mar 10:4). They try to follow Jesus as the lambs follow the good shepherd. And they love Him because they read in the Bible that He loved them and gave Himself for them. Little children, there is the second mark of walking in truth. Look at it. Think of it. *Do you love Christ?*

3. I tell you that children who walk in truth serve God with a true heart. I dare say you know it is very possible to serve God with outward service only. Many do so. They will put on a grave face and pretend to be serious while they do not feel it. They will say beautiful prayers with their lips and yet not mean what they say. They will sit in their places at church every Sunday and yet be thinking of other things all the time—and such service is outward service and very wrong.

Bad children, I am sorry to say, are often guilty of this sin. They will say their prayers regularly when their parents make them, but not otherwise. They will seem to pay attention in church when the master’s eye is upon them, but not at other times. Their hearts are far away.

Children who walk in truth are not so. They have another spirit in them. Their desire is to be honest in all they do with God and to worship Him in spirit and in truth. When they pray, they try to be in earnest and mean all the

words they say. When they go to church, they try to be serious and to give their minds to what they hear. And it is one of their chief troubles that they cannot serve God more heart-ily than they do.

Little children, there is the third mark of walking in truth. Look at it. Think of it. *Is your heart false or true?*

4. I tell you, for a last thing, that children who walk in truth really try to do things that are right and true in the sight of God. God has told us very plainly what He thinks is right. Nobody can mistake this who reads the Bible with an honest heart. But it is sad to see how few men and women care for pleasing God. Many break His commandments continually and seem to think nothing of it. Some will tell lies, swear, quarrel, cheat, and steal. Others use bad words, break the Sabbath, never pray to God at all, and never read their Bibles. Others are unkind to their relations or idle or gluttonous or bad-tempered or selfish. *All* these things, whatever people may choose to think, are very wicked and displeasing to a holy God.

Children who walk in truth are always trying to keep clear of bad ways. They take no pleasure in sinful things of any kind, and they dislike the company of those who do them. Their great wish is to be like Jesus: holy, harmless, and separate from [sinful ways]. They endeavor to be kind, gentle, obliging, obedient, honest, truthful, and good in all their ways. It grieves them that they are not more holy than they are.

Little children, this is the last mark I shall give you of walking in truth. Look at it. Think of it. *Are your doings right or wrong?*

Children, you have now heard some marks of walking in truth. I have tried to set them plainly before you. I hope you have understood them. Knowing the truth about sin; loving the true Savior, Jesus Christ; serving God with a true heart; doing the things that are true and right in the sight of God—there they are, all four together. Think about them, I entreat you, and each ask yourself this question: “What am I doing at this very time? *Am I walking in truth?*”...

Trust all to Christ, and He will undertake to manage all that concerns your soul. Trust in Him at all times. Trust in Him in every condition—in sickness and in health, in youth and in age, in poverty and in plenty, in sorrow and in joy. Trust in Him, and He will be a Shepherd to watch over you, a Guide to lead you, a King to protect you, a Friend to help you in time of need. Trust in Him, and He says Himself, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee” (Heb 13:5). He will put His Spirit into you and give you a new heart. He will give you power to become a true child of God. He will give you grace to keep down bad tempers, to no longer be selfish, to love others as yourself. He will make your cares more light and your work easier. He will comfort you in time of trouble. Christ can make those happy who trust in Him...Dear children, John was well aware of these things. He had learned them by experience. He saw this lady’s children likely to be happy in this world, and no wonder he rejoiced!

From *Boys and Girls Playing*, reprinted by Soli Deo Gloria, a ministry of Reformation Heritage Books, www.heritagebooks.org.

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900): Bishop of the Anglican Church; revered author of *Holiness, Knots Untied, Old Paths, Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, and many others; born at Macclesfield, Cheshire County, England.

Let us learn to behold the goodness of God in all who have authority over us in order to submit ourselves to their obedience.—*John Calvin*

TO THE CHILDREN OF GODLY PARENTS

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

“My son, keep thy father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck.”—Proverbs 6:20-21

I think that to any young man or any young woman either, who has had a godly father and mother, the best way of life that they can mark out for themselves is to follow the road in which their father's and mother's principle would conduct them. Of course, we make great advances on the old folks, do we not? The young men are wonderfully bright and intelligent, and the old people are a good deal behind them. Yes, yes—that is the way we talk before our beards have grown. Possibly, when we have more sense, we shall not be quite so conceited of it. At any rate, I, who am not very old and who dare not any longer call myself *young*, venture to say that, for myself, I desire nothing so much as to continue the traditions of my household. I wish to find no course but that which shall run parallel with that of those who have gone before me. And I think, dear friends, that you who have seen the holy and happy lives of Christian ancestors will be wise to pause a good deal before you begin to make a deviation, either to the right or to the left, from the course of those godly ones. I do not believe that he begins life in a way that God is likely to bless, and which he himself will in the long run judge to be wise, who begins with the notion that he shall upset everything—that all that belonged to his godly family shall be cast to the winds.

I do not seek to have heirlooms of gold or silver: but, though I die a thousand deaths, I can never give up my father's God, my grandsire's⁷⁴ God, and his father's God, and his father's God. I must hold this to be the chief possession that I have. I pray young men and women to think the same. Do not stain the glorious traditions of noble lives that have been handed down to you. Do not disgrace your father's shield; bespatter not the escutcheons⁷⁵ of your honored predecessors by any sins and transgressions on your part. God help you to [believe] that the best way of leading a noble life will be to do as they did who trained you in God's fear!

Solomon tells us to do two things with the teachings that we have learned of our parents. First, he says, "Bind them continually upon thine heart," for they are worthy of loving adherence. Show that you love these things by binding them upon your heart. The heart is the vital point! Let godliness lie there. Love the things of God. If we could take young men and women and make them professedly religious without their truly loving godliness, that would be simply to make them hypocrites, which is not what we desire. We do not want you to *say* that you believe what you do not believe or that you rejoice in what you do not rejoice in. But our prayer—and, oh, that it might be your prayer, too!—is that you may be helped to bind these things about your heart. They are worth *living* for, they are worth *dying* for, and they are worth more than all the world besides—the immortal principles of the divine life that comes from the death of Christ. "Bind them continually upon thine heart."

Then Solomon, because he would not have us keep these things secret as if we were ashamed of them, adds, "And tie them about thy neck," for they are worthy of boldest display. Did you ever see my Lord Mayor wearing his chain of office? He is not at all ashamed to wear it. And the sheriffs with their brooches: I have a lively recollection of the enormous size to which those ornaments attain; and they take care to wear them, too. Now then, you who have any love to God, *tie your religion about your neck*. Do not be ashamed of it! Put it on as an ornament. Wear it as the mayor does his chain. When you go into company, *never* be ashamed to say that you are a Christian. And if there is any company where you cannot go as a Christian, well, do not go there at all. Say to yourself, "I will not be where I could not introduce my Master. I will not go where He could not go with me." You will find that resolve to be a great help to you in the choice of where you will go and where you will not go. Therefore, bind it upon your heart; tie it about your neck. God help you to do this, and so to follow those godly ones who have gone before you!...

But *first*, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! Trust yourselves wholly to Him, and He will give you grace to stand fast even to the end.

Delivered at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, on Lord's Day evening, March 27, 1887, reprinted by Pilgrim Publishers.

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892): English Baptist and history's most widely read preacher, apart from those found in Scripture; born at Kelvedon, Essex, England.



⁷⁴ **grandsire's** – grandfather's.

⁷⁵ **escutcheons** – shields displaying the family coat of arms.