

“The Christian Family”¹

From the year 1674

By John Bunyan

[1628-1688]

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My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I urge you in the name of our Lord Jesus, that while you live here on this earth, that you be vessels of honor, and fit for the master's use, and prepared to do good works. Study, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ. Desire communion with God: “Eagerly desire the greater gifts” of service in the Church.

We that are redeemed from among men, and that rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, waiting for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, let us consider what kind of people we ought to be? We ought to live holy and godly lives.

I want you to take an honest and frank look at the overall duties and good works, to which God has commanded you in His word, according to your assigned places in life, your callings, and your relationships in this world.

First, let us take a look at the DUTIES OF THE HEAD OF A FAMILY

If you are the head of a family, then you are to consider the several relationships you have; and you should know, that in each one of them, God has a special work for you to do, and that He expects your faithful behavior.

DUTY TO THE FAMILY IN GENERAL

He that is the head of a family has a work to do for God, and that “work” is to rightly govern his own family. And this work is twofold; first, concerning the spiritual state of his family, and secondly, their outward state.

First, concerning the spiritual state of his family

The head of the family should be very diligent and cautious, doing his utmost both to increase faith where it is begun, and to begin faith where it is not. Therefore, he must diligently and frequently lay before his family the truths of God, from His Holy Word, in accordance with what is suitable for each person. And let no man question his authority from the Word of God for such a practice, for the Apostle Paul strongly commands us that, “whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things;” in other words, be sure to do them.

To be continually practicing this godly leadership and direction in our family is very worthy of praise, and very befitting for all Christians. This is one of the things for which God so highly commended his servant Abraham, saying, “I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household . . . to keep the way of the LORD. ” This was also Joshua’s practice in his life, as evidenced by his statement, “As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

Further, we find in the New Testament, that if any man was not faithful in leading his family in a godly walk, he was looked upon as a Christian of an inferior rank; yes, so inferior as not to be fit to be chosen for any position in the Church. The Word of God mandates that leaders of the Church “Must manage [their] own family well and see that [their] children obey [them] with proper respect. [For], (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?)” It continues by stating that a deacon must also, “. . . manage his children and his household well.”

Please note, that the apostle seems to make this point very clear, that a man that governs his family well, has met one of the qualifications for a pastor, elder, or deacon in the church, for he that does not know how to manage his own family cannot take care of God's church. These truths from God’s Word, about the qualifications of a pastor, gives us some insight into the responsibilities of the head of a family, as it relates to the governing of his house. Note, the following relationships:

1. A pastor must be sound and honest in his doctrine; and indeed so must the head of a family.
2. A pastor should be able to teach, to reprove, and to exhort; and so should the head of a family.
3. A pastor must be an example of faith and holiness; and so must the head of a family. David said, “I will be careful to lead a blameless life; I will walk in my house with a blameless heart.”
4. The pastor is responsible to gather the church together, and when they come together, he is to pray among them, and to preach to them. This is also commendable for a head of a family who is a Christian.

But someone may object, saying, “But my family is ungodly and unruly, opposing all that is good. What shall I do?”

To you, My Friend, I provide the following answers:

1. Though this may be true, yet you must rule them and not let them rule you!

You are set over them by God, and you are to use the authority which God has given you, both to rebuke their wickedness, and to show them the evil of their rebelling against the Lord. This is what Eli did, though not enough; and likewise what David did. Also, you must tell your family how sad your state was when you were in their condition, and so labor to rescue them out of the snare of the devil.

2. You must also work to encourage your family to go with you to God's public worship, so that, perhaps, God may convert their souls.

¹ C:\My Documents\bible\SchoolOfLocalChurch\Lessons\7FamilyMatters\Articles\TheChristianFamily.doc

Jacob said to his household, and to all that were around him, "Let us go up to Bethel, where I will build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress." Indeed, a soul being rightly lead by the Spirit, will labor to draw, not only their families, but a whole city after Jesus Christ.

3. If your family is obstinate, and will not go to church with you, then get godly and sound men to come to your house, and there let the Word of God be preached and taught.

This is what Cornelius did in Acts, chapter 10, where he gathered his family and friends together and invited the Apostle Peter to preach to them. We also read that Lydia, Crispus, Gaius, Stephanus, the jailer, and others, were themselves and their families, brought to grace by the Word preached, and that some of them, if not all, by the Word preached in their houses. And this might be one reason among many, why the apostles taught in their day, not only publicly, but from house to house.

It is possible that these godly men, who come to your home, might bring to salvation some members of your family, which were previously unconverted and living in their sins. Some of you know how common it was in the day of Christ, for people to invite Jesus to their houses, especially if they had any family members who were afflicted with serious illnesses that either would not or could not come to Jesus. If this was the case with those that have outward diseases in their families, how much more then, where there are souls that have a need of Christ, to save them from death and eternal damnation!

4. Be careful that you do not neglect family duties among them; such as, reading the Word of God and prayer.

If you have anyone in your family that is saved and gracious, be encouraged; but if you are all alone, then know that you have both the liberty to go to God through Christ for their souls, and also are able to have the whole church join with you in prayer for all those in your family that need to be saved.

5. Be careful that you do not allow any ungodly, blasphemous, or heretical books, or evil conversation in your house.

Remember, "Bad company corrupts good character." Blasphemous or heretical books, either tend to cause one to live a wicked life, or at least, to oppose the fundamentals of the gospel. I know that Christians must be allowed their liberty when it comes to things not defined in the Word, but for those things that strike either at faith or holiness, they ought to be abandoned by all Christians, and especially by the pastors of churches, and heads of families. We see examples of this in Jacob's commanding his household, and all that were with him, to get rid of their foreign gods, and to purify themselves. Likewise, those in the Book of Acts set a good example for this too, by taking their scrolls of sorcery and burning them publicly, though they were worth fifty thousand pieces of silver. Failure to rid houses of evil books and corrupt conversation has caused the ruin of many families, both among children and wives. It is easier for rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, to subvert whole households, than many of us are aware of, thus they are capable of destroying the spiritual state of your household.

Now, in regards to the "outward state" of your family, you are to consider these three things:

1. That it depends entirely on you to care for your family and see that they have a suitable living.

The Bible reminds us that, "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

But note this, when the Bible says, you are to provide for your relatives, it gives you no license to be ungracious in your provision, nor to sit back and ignore the needs of your family while you pursue the pleasures of the world for yourself. Rather, you are to provide for them, that they may have food and clothing; and if either they or you are not content with that, then you have failed to obey God commands. This is the work assigned to you, and failure to do this is unbelief in God's Word, which says, "God feeds ravens, cares for sparrows, and clothes the grass;" in which all three (to feed, clothe, and care for) is what the heart of a caring father and or husband must do for his family.

2. Though you should provide for your family, yet make sure that your efforts at this provision be done with gentleness and kindness; for the Bible says, "Let your gentleness be evident to all."

Be careful of driving so hard after this world, as to hinder yourself and family from those duties towards God, which you are by grace obliged to perform; such as private prayer, reading the Scriptures, and Christian conversations and discussions. It is a wicked thing for men to lead their families into worldly pursuits, thereby leading themselves and their wives and children away from the worship of God.

Christians, remember the words of the Apostle Paul, "The time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none; those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away."

Many Christians live and work in this world, acting as if their religion was a low priority in their lives, and this world and its pleasures were most important; when, indeed, the things of this world are fleeting; and true religion is the one thing we need most.

3. If you would be a godly head of your family, you must ensure that there is Christian harmony among those under you, appropriate for a house where the head fears God.

You must see that your children are subject to the Word of God; for though only can rule the heart, yet, He expects you to rule their outward behavior. If you do not, God may in a short time take their lives, as He did Eli's two sons because of their contemptible behavior, that their father knew about but failed to restrain.

Therefore, see that you keep them self-restrained in all things, in the way they dress, in the language they use, and that they are not gluttons, nor drunkards; nor are they to behave foolishly towards each other.

Learn to distinguish between those offenses, that in your family are done to you, and those which are done to God; and though you must be very zealous for the Lord, and bear nothing that is open sin against Him; yet have the wisdom, to ignore

personal injuries, and to bury them in oblivion, always remembering that, "Love covers over a multitude of sins." Do not be like those that will rage and stare like madmen, when they are injured; rather either laugh, or at least do not give a harsh rebuke, but by all means seriously warn them, when they dishonor God. Remember the words of 1st Timothy, "Manage your own family well and see that your children obey you with proper respect." [1 Timothy 3:4]

DUTY IN RELATION TO THE WIFE

Now, let us consider the duty the Husband has in relation to His wife.

Do you have a wife? You must consider how you ought to behave in that relationship: and to do this right, you must consider the condition of your wife, whether she is a believer or not.

If she is a believer in Jesus Christ, then,

1. You must thank and bless God for her: "For she is worth far more than rubies, and she is a gift from God to you." "Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised."

2. You ought to love her for two important reasons:

(1) Because she is your flesh and bone: "No one ever hated his own body."

) Because together you are both heirs of the gracious gift of life."

This should cause you to love her with Christian love; to love her, knowing and believing that you both are dearly loved of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and will assuredly be together with Him in eternal happiness.

3. You ought to so behave and act before her, as does Christ to and before His church; for the Bible says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her."

When husbands behave like Christ would, then they will not only be husbands, but a living sermon to the wife, preaching to her the attitude of Christ. There is a sweet aroma wrapped up in the relationship of husbands and wives, that are believers in Christ; the wife signifies the church, and the husband the head and Savior, "For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, His body, of which He is the Savior."

This is one of God's chief purposes in instituting marriage, that Christ and His church would be pictured, wherever there is a married couple that believe through grace. Therefore, that husband that behaves improperly towards his wife, does not only behave contrary to the law of God, but also causes his wife to lose the benefit of such a rule, and frustrates the intended beauty and joy of this relationship.

Therefore, I say, "Husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church." Christ laid down His life for His church, covered her sins, communicates to her His wisdom, protects her, and helps her in her endeavors in this world; and so men ought to do the same for their wives. Therefore, be patient with the weaknesses of your wife, help her overcome her sins, and honor her as the weaker partner, both spiritually and physically.

In short, be such a husband to your believing wife, that she may say, "God has not only given me a husband, but such a husband who preaches and witnesses to me every day the attitude of Christ to His church."

Now, if your wife is an unbeliever, then you also have a duty lying before you, which you are obligated to perform for two reasons:

Because she is under the continual judgment of eternal damnation.

(2) Because she is your wife and in an evil state.

Oh! how little some husbands understand in their hearts the value of a living soul; as is obvious by their unchristian attitude to and before their wives!

Now, to equip you with the right attitude towards you unbelieving wife, then do these things:

1. Work seriously to understand her miserable lost state, that your heart may long to help her soul.

2. Beware that you do not give her any reason to continue in sin, due to any improper conduct of yours. And here you have need to double your diligence, for she lives in such an intimate relationship with you, and therefore is capable of seeing your smallest fault.

3. If your unbelieving wife behaves in an unseemly and unruly manner, as she is subject to do, being without Christ and without saving grace, then work to overcome her evil with your goodness, her arrogance with your patience and meekness. It would be shameful for you, who is indwelt with the Holy Spirit, to respond with evil for evil.

4. Take appropriate opportunities to convince her of her lost condition. Observe her disposition, and when she is most likely to listen, then speak to her very heart.

5. When you speak, speak with a purpose. It does not matter the number of words, provided they are pertinent. Job, in a few words answers his wife, and stops her foolish talk: "You are talking," he said, "like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?"

6. Let everything be done without bitterness, or the least appearance of anger: doing exactly what the Scriptures say to do, "Those who oppose [you], [you] must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will." "How do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?"

THE DUTY OF WIVES

I will speak a word about the duty of the wife to the Husband:

The wife is bound by God's law to her husband, so long as her husband is alive. She has her own specific tasks and responsibilities in the family. Now there are certain attitudes the wife must have towards her husband, which she must faithfully abide by.

First, that she look upon him as her head and lord, for "The head of the woman is man." And she should be "like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master."

Secondly, she should therefore be subject to him, as is fitting in the Lord. The apostle said, "Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord." I told you before, that if the husband walks in a godly way before his wife, then he will preach to her the attitude of Christ to his church. And now I also say, that the wife, if she lives with her husband in a graceful and submissive manner, she will preach the obedience of the church to her husband, just as it is written in the Scriptures, "Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything."

Now, wives, in order for you to accomplish this, you must first shun the following evils from your lives:

1. The evil of a wandering and a gossiping spirit; this is evil in the church, and it is also evil in a wife, who is to be the living model of a church.

Christ loves to have His spouse stay at home; that is, to be with Him in the faith and practice of His things, not wandering and meddling with the things of Satan; wives should not be given to wander and gossip everywhere. The Bible says, in the Book of Proverbs, that the unfaithful wife, "Is loud and defiant, [and that] her feet never stay at home." Wives should be about their own husbands' business at home; as the apostle said, let them "to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God."

2. Be careful of a frivolous, quarrelsome, or talkative tongue.

This also is repulsive in wives, to be like parrots, not bridling their tongue. The wife should remember, as I said before, that her husband is her lord, and is over her, as Christ is over the church. Do you think it is appropriate for the church to rattle on with foolish talk against her husband? Is she not to be silent before him, and to study to be obedient to His laws, rather than her own fantasies? The apostle Paul said, "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent."

It is improper to see a woman trying to usurp her husband's authority; she must, in everything, be in subjection to him, and to do all she does, as having her justification, permission, and authority from him. And indeed here is her glory, even to be under him, as the church is under Christ, then she will be able to "speak with wisdom, and [have] faithful instruction on her tongue."

3. Be careful not to wear immodest clothes, or to walk in a lustful manner; this will be evil both outside and inside the home; outside, it will not only give a bad example, but also tend to tempt others to lust and immorality; and at home it will give an offense to a godly husband, and will infect and lead astray ungodly children.

Therefore, be obedient to the Word of God which says, "I want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes," and that, "Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands."

But yet, do not think that by the subjection I have here mentioned, that I intend that women should be their husbands' slaves. Women are their husbands' partners and companions, their flesh and bones; and there is not a man that hates his own body, or that is cruel to it. Therefore, let every man "love his wife as he loves himself, and [let every] wife respect her husband." The wife is the deputy head of the home, and is to rule everything in his absence; and when her husband is present then she is to manage the household, to bring up the children, and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander. Remember, "A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies." "A kindhearted woman gains respect," and conducts her matters with justice.

But someone may object, saying, "But my husband is an unbeliever; what will I do?"

I provide the following answers:

If your husband is not a believer in Christ, then the instructions that I have just given is absolutely necessary for your situation.

Because your husband is an unbeliever, he will be watchful to take your slips and weaknesses, and throw them as dirt in the face of God and your Savior. He will most likely make the worst of every one of your words, attitudes, and appearances. And all this does tend to make his heart filled with more hardness, prejudice, and opposition to his own salvation; therefore it is critical to obey the clear commands found in the Word of God, "Wives, be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the Word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives."

Your husband's salvation or damnation depends a lot on your conduct and behavior that you live before him; therefore, if you fear God, and love your husband, seek to have an attitude full of meekness, modesty, and holiness, and a humble behavior before him, and by doing this, you just might, "save your husband?"

But someone may further object, saying, "But my husband is not only an unbeliever, but one who is very arrogant, disagreeable, and irritable, and I do not know how to speak to him, or behave before him."

I provide the following answers:

Indeed there are some wives in great slavery because of their ungodly husbands; and as such should be pitied, and prayed for; so they will be more watchful and cautious in all their ways.

1. Therefore you must be very faithful to him in all the things of this life.

2. Bear with patience his unruly and unconverted behavior; you are alive, he is dead; your life is grounded in grace, his is grounded in sin.

Now, then, seeing that grace is stronger than sin, and virtue than vice; do not be overcome with his vileness, but overcome that with your virtues. It is a shameful thing for those that are gracious to speak as those that lack true grace, remember, "A patient [woman] has great understanding, but a quick-tempered [woman] displays folly."

3. If at any time you have a desire to speak to your husband for his conviction, concerning anything, either good or evil, then have the wisdom to observe the appropriate time, for there is "a time to be silent and a time to speak." Now for the right timing of your intentions, bear the following in mind:

(1) Consider his disposition; and talk to him when he is farthest away from those filthy passions that annoy you. Abigail would not speak a word to her rude husband till he was no longer drunk with wine, and he was sober. Many wives ignore this and rattle on and speak a lot of words, but see very little response.

(2) Speak with him at those times when he has his heart taken with you, and when he shows tokens of love and delight in you. This is what Esther did with her husband the king, and prevailed.

(3) Observe when convictions seize his conscience, and then follow them with sound and solemn Scripture verses.

Somewhat like the way Manoah's wife dwelt with her husband. Yet even then, let your words be few, and none of them with a hint of lording it over him; but speak as you would to your lord and master, by way of appeal and urging. And that in such a spirit of sympathy, and heartfelt affection seeking only his good, that your manner of speech and behavior may be to him an argument that you speak in love, as being aware of his misery, and inflamed in your soul with a desire for his conversion. Follow your words and behavior with prayers to God for his soul. Still keeping yourself in a holy, chaste, and humble behavior before him.

But someone may further object, saying, "But my husband is a drunkard, a fool, and one that does not have enough common sense and drive to even go to work.

Though all this is true, yet you must know that he is your head, your lord, and your husband. Therefore you must be careful of the temptation to usurp his authority. He was not made for you; that is, for you to have dominion over him, but to be your husband, and to rule over you. It may be a fact that you have more discretion than he, yet you ought to know that everything you have and are, is to be subject to your husband's lordship; yes, "everything." Therefore, be careful, that what you do is not done in your name, but his; not to your exaltation, but his; carrying on all things so, by your skill and prudence, that not one of your husband's weaknesses are discovered by others as a result of anything you do or not do. Remember, "A wife of noble character is her husband's crown, but a disgraceful wife is like decay in his bones. She [must] bring him good, not harm, all the days of her life." Therefore act, and live as being under the power and authority of your husband.

Now before we move on to our next subject, let me mention briefly to wives, their behavior to their children. You are a parent and so you ought to lower yourself to care for the children. And besides, seeing that the believing woman is a picture of the church, she ought, as the church, to nourish and instruct her children. The fact that the wife is always at home is a great advantage to accomplishing her assigned tasks, and the Lord will prosper all of her endeavors.

DUTY OF PARENTS TO CHILDREN

Now, our next area is that of the Duties of Parents to Children. If you are a parent, a father, or a mother, then you are to consider your calling in this relationship.

Your children have souls, and they must be born again by God, in addition to the physical birth from you, or they will perish. And also know, that unless you are very prudent in your behavior to and before them, they may perish because of you: the thoughts of which should provoke you, both to instruct, and also to correct them.

First, to instruct them as the Scripture says, by "bringing them up in the training and instruction of the Lord;"

"Impress [God's truths] to your children. Talk about His Word when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." Now in order to do this you must:

1. Do it, using terms and words that are easy to understand: do not use lofty expressions, as they will drown your children.

2. Be careful of filling their heads with odd or fanciful ideas, and idle notions, for this will soon teach them to be impudent and proud, rather than sober and humble. Therefore expose them to the state of man's true nature; talk with them about sin, death, and hell; talk with them about the crucified Savior, and the promise of life through faith: remember, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it."

3. Therefore, there must be much gentleness and patience in all your instructions, for the Bible commands us, "not [to] embitter our children, or they will become discouraged."

4. Work to convince your children, using honest conversation, that the heavenly things which you instruct them in are not fables, but realities; yes, and realities so far above what can be enjoyed here on earth, that if the earthly realities were a thousand times better than they are, they still would not be worthy in comparison to the glory and value of these divine things.

Isaac was so holy before his children, that when Jacob remembered God, he remembered that God was "the Fear of his father Isaac." My friends, when children can think of their parents, and bless God for the instruction and the good they have received from them, this is not only profitable for children, but honorable, and pleasing to parents. The Scriptures declare, "The

father of a righteous man has great joy; he who has a wise son delights in him. May your father and mother be glad; may she who gave you birth rejoice!”

Secondly, The parent’s duty of correction.

1. First, see if frank and honest words will win them from evil. This is God’s way of dealing with his children.

2. Let the words of reproof that you speak to your children, be both sober, few, and pertinent, always adding some appropriate verse from the Scriptures; for example, if they sin by lying, then remind them of the doom of all liars as recorded in the Book of Revelation. If they refuse to listen to the Bible, then remind them of the judgments of God on His people that refused His counsel.

3. See that your children are not companions with those that are rude and ungodly; show your children your serious and continual dislike of their misconduct; often crying out to them, as God did in the Old Testament to His children, saying, “Do not do this detestable thing that I hate!”

4. Let all this be mixed together with such love, pity, and sympathy of spirit, that if possible they may be convinced that you do not dislike them as persons, but only detest their sins. This is God’s way.

5. Often attempt to impress on your children’s consciences the day of their death, and of judgment to come. God reminds us of this need by stating, “If only they were wise and would understand this and discern what their end will be!”

6. If you need to use the rod of discipline, then be careful not to strike them in anger, but seriously show them their fault. Tell them how much it hurts your heart to have to deal with them in this manner, and that what you do, you do as a duty to God, and love to their souls. Tell them, that if they would have been obedient, none of this severity would have occurred.

It has been my experience that this will be a means to afflict their hearts as well as their bodies; and it is the way that God deals with His children, and it will most likely accomplish its purpose. Follow-up all these steps of corrections with prayer to God for them, and leave the issue with Him, for He declares: “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.”

Lastly, Observe these cautions, when correcting your children:

1. Be careful that the misbehavior, for which you correct your children for, was not learned by them from your bad examples. Many children learn their wickedness from their parents and then are spanked and disciplined by them.

2. Be careful that you do not smile and make a joke out of their small faults, because that joking attitude about their “little sins” could be an encouragement for them to commit greater ones.

3. Be watchful that you do not use offensive and improper words in your rebuking of them, because it is devilish to be bitter, and to call them names.

4. Be careful that you do not use scolding and threatening words, mixed with lightness and laughter, as this will harden their hearts. Do not speak too much, nor too often, but only words that are fitting to them with all seriousness.

As you can see parents have a grave responsibility to their children to raise them in a godly manner, even if they are not believers. Next, we need to see what responsibilities children have to parents in the family.

DUTIES OF CHILDREN TO PARENTS

The duty that children have to their parents, is clearly seen in both the law of God and in nature: The Bible says, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” And also, “Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.”

Now, I will list some general things which children ought to do, that would ensure that they show the honor that is due to their parents:

First, They should always consider their parents as being better than themselves.

I observe a vile spirit among some children, in that, they are apt to have contemptuous and scornful thoughts of their parents. This is worse than the unbelievers; such a person has got the heart of a dog or a beast, that will bite those that feeds them and who brought them into the world.

But someone may object, saying, “But my father, is now poor, and I am rich, and it would be degrading and hard for me to show respect to him.”

I tell you that you argue like an atheist and a beast, and stand in full opposition against the Son of God. Must the blessing of wealth, and a little of the glory of the butterfly, make you feel so important that you will not honor your father and mother? Remember God’s Word, “A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish man despises his mother.”

Though your parents are in abject poverty, and you yourself are extremely rich, yet he is your father, and she your mother, and you must hold them in the highest esteem: The Bible says, “The eye that mocks a father, that scorns obedience to a mother, will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley, [and] will be eaten by the vultures.

Secondly, children should show honor to their parents, by a willingness to help them with such necessities and accommodations which they might need.

The Apostle Paul said, “Children or grandchildren . . . should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God.” And this is exactly what Joseph did for his poor father, though Joseph himself was second only to the king of Egypt in a position of power. Note what the Bible reveals, “Joseph provided his father and his brothers and all his father’s household with food, according to the number of their children.”

But remembering what the Apostle Paul said in regards to “repaying your parents,” there are three things for which, as long as you live, you will be in debt to your parents:

1. For you being in this world. They are the ones from whom, by the sovereign will of God, you received your earthly physical life.

2. For their care to preserve you when you were helpless, and could not care for yourself.

3. For the pains they have taken with you to raise you. Until you have children of your own, you will not be aware of the pains, fears, sorrows, and hardships, that they have gone through to raise you; and when you do discover it, you will realize that you have not even come close to repaying them for their love and support to you. They fed you when you were hungry, and clothed your nakedness. They were careful to ensure that you might have resources to live and do well when they were dead and gone. They even may have given up their own food and needed clothes just for you, and have also made themselves poor, that you might live as a respectable person in the world, for “What is the child but a piece of the parents wrapped up in another skin.”

All these things ought to be carefully considered by you; and you ought to take special care of your parents to repay them. The Scripture says so, reason says so, and only those who think like dogs and beasts will deny it. It is the duty of parents to sacrifice for their children; and the duty of children to repay their parents.

Thirdly, show honor to your parents, with the humble heart of a grateful child, remembering the love of your parents, with all your heart. This can best be displayed by obedience to parents.

Again, if your parents are godly, and you are wicked, because you have not been born again by God, then you are to consider, that you need to, more than ever, show respect and honor to your parents, not only as a parents in the flesh, but also as godly parents. Your father and mother were given by God to be your teachers and instructors in the way of righteousness. And God commands you in His Word, “keep your father’s commands and do not forsake your mother’s teaching. To bind them upon your heart forever; to fasten them around your neck.”

Now, to help you be obedient, then you need to consider the following:

1. That even Christ Himself was an obedient child to Joseph and Mary, though He Himself was the eternal and almighty God in human flesh.

2. You also have the clear examples of the severe judgments of God upon those that have been disobedient to their parents, which should cause you to fear disobedience. For example, Ishmael, because of his mocking attitude towards his father and mother, was both thrust out of his father’s inheritance and the kingdom of heaven. Eli’s two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, for refusing to heed the rebuke of their father, provoked the great God to be their enemy. Eli’s sons did not listen to their father’s rebuke, and the Lord put them to death. Also, King David’s son Absalom was hanged, as one might say, by God himself, for rebelling against his father.

Besides, how little do you realize how heart wrenching it is to your parents, when they realize that you may very well be damned to Hell! How many prayers, sighs, and tears, are there wrung from their hearts because of this? Every sin of yours goes to their heart, for fear God should take the opportunity to forever harden your heart. How did Abraham groan for Ishmael? He said, to God, “If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!” How was Isaac and Rebecca grieved for the sins of Esau? And how bitterly did David mourn for his son, who died in his wickedness?

Lastly, can you imagine, how the remembrance of the loving concern of your godly parents for your soul, will only increase your torments in hell, if you die in your sins?

However, if you and your parents are godly, how joyful a thing this is. How you will rejoice, that the same faith should dwell both in your parents and you? Your conversion, possibly, is the fruits of your parents’ tears and prayers for your soul; and they cannot help but rejoice; be sure that you rejoice with them. The Bible says it best in the parable of the Prodigal Son, listen, “This son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is [now] found.’ So they began to celebrate.” Consider this, dear children, that your parents have received saving grace, as well as you, therefore purpose in your heart, all the more to honor, reverence, and obey them.

You are better able now to consider the pains and care that your parents have been through, both for your body and soul; therefore strive to repay them. You have strength and resources to answer in some measure the command of the Lord to care for you parents and grandparents, therefore do not neglect it. It is a double sin in a gracious son not to remember the commandment, yes, the first commandment with promise. Be careful of giving your sweet parents one cross word, or to display an inappropriate attitude towards them. Love them because they are your parents, because they are godly, and because you must glorify the Lord with them.

But, if you are a Christian, and your parents are wicked, as often is the case; then,

1. Let your heart ache for them; for it is your parents that are going to hell!

2. As I said before to the wife, in regards to her unbelieving husband, so now I say to you, be careful of a sinful tongue: speak to them wisely, meekly, and humbly; do everything for them faithfully without complaining; and bear, with all child-like modesty, their reproaches, their bitterness, and evil speaking. Watch for suitable opportunities to lay their lost condition before them. O! how happy a thing would it be, if God should use a child to bring his parents to the faith! Then indeed might the father say, With the fruit of my own body God has converted my soul. May the Lord, if it is His will, convert our poor parents, that they, with us, may become the children of God.

Thus I have, in a few words, written to you, before I die, a word to provoke you to faith and holiness, because I desire that you may have the life that is laid up for all them that believe in the Lord Jesus and love one another. After my death I will rest from my labors, and be in Paradise, because of the grace of God. However, I can do you no good from heaven, for it is only while

I am on earth that I can be of benefit to you. Therefore, not knowing how many days are left of my earthly life, nor of my abilities and opportunities, in the remaining time, to serve my God and you, I have taken this occasion to present these few lines to you for your edification. Consider carefully what has been said; and may the Lord give you understanding in all things. Farewell.

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