

The Walk of Faith

Lesson 10: Walking in Duty, a Communion Experience

“It’s very hard to go on in a straight course and for any length of time. The hindrances are many. To understand the nature and obligation of duty, to enter upon it with right motives, to perform it in a proper temper, to go through it without backwardness or weariness, not by constraint, but willingly, and to find the true end of doing it answered, these are the great difficulties.

“It cannot be too often repeated that the true believer is no under the law as a covenant of works—bound to keep it for life, or liable to the penalty of death. He is not under the law in this respect, but under grace. He is one with Christ, who kept the precept for him and suffered the penalty for him, as his Surety and in his stead. He has put in his plea and taken the benefit of Christ’s suretyship. His plea has been admitted by God and therefore he is in a state of perfect acceptance with the Father. He stands in the liberty wherewith Christ has made him free—*free to strive for a perfect obedience (out of love and gratitude) without being driven by the need to earn anything, and free to be honest about sin without the fear of being condemned for it.* Grace reigns in him and over him and renders his obedience perfect freedom. He obeys, but it is all in faith. He works, but it is from a sense of the Father’s love to him in His Son. Gratitude taught by the Holy Spirit influences his heart and life. He serves God with a thankful mind and without fear, and cheerfully does all he can to man for God’s sake.

“The believer will never get on in the way of duty unless he learns to obi upon these gospel principles. He will stand in need of their assistance at every step, because he will meet with constant opposition to them. The flesh will not come under grace. The carnal mind is alway bent on legalism. The old man of sin knows nothing but working for life and will not submit to any other way. Our sinful nature is altogether for the covenant of works. Beg of God, then, that you may be cast into the mold of the gospel and may perform all your duties upon its gracious principles.”

- I. What is duty? It’s a debt owed to God—due from the creature to the Creator because of our acknowledged dependence upon Him for all things. This obligation rests on all men and is bound up in the Covenant of Works made with all men in the person and probation of Adam.
 - A. Every man in Adam is still under that covenant and still expected to render that (perfect) duty. Of course, God knows that, since the fall, man can no longer render the duty required. But the Law of God/God of the Law regards us as we were created in Adam, as we came from God’s hands—fully able to obey—regardless of our present self-inflicted ruin.
 - B. But the believer is called to rest in Christ’s righteousness and suffering (which fulfilled his debt), and this puts a whole new perspective on duty. God is now at peace with him. God loves him in His Son. And he’s privileged to walk with God as His adopted child.
 1. Here his duty becomes his privilege. He’s bound to duty, yes, but by the cords of love. The pleasing bonds of gratitude tie his heart to a free, holy, and gospel obedience. He obeys, not as a slave, but as a son; not for fear, but because Christ has set him free; not that God may accept, pardon, and justify him, but because God has already done all that for him; not that he may have heaven for his obedience, but because heaven is reserved for him and he for it.
 2. He therefore looks at duty through the lens of the gospel. Every act of it is done in faith. It’s an act of fellowship with the Father and the Son, and by the grace of the Spirit every act brings the Father’s love through the Son’s salvation into experience. He has communion with his God in all he does. This ennobles duty, raises it to a divine honor, making it the highest privilege he can have this side of heaven, because every duty is hereby a walking with God as Father, with Christ as Saviour and Mediator, and with the Spirit as Comforter and Sanctifier.

- II. When the Spirit writes the law upon our hearts, He teaches us the obedience of faith (Rom 1.6), the obedience that stands as the fruit of saving faith.
- A. He doesn't abolish duty, but enforces it upon right motives and directs it to a right end. Thus the same duties remain under grace as under law, but not upon the same obligation.
 - B. Since God has decreed that by the works of the law no human being will be justified (Gal 2.16), the law as a covenant of works never enters into the believer's obedience. He obeys because he's freed from this covenant—not freed from doing the same duties this covenant requires, but from doing them upon legal motives: neither expecting the promised life on account of keeping the precepts, nor fearing the threatened penalty on account of not keeping them.
 - C. It's his privilege to obey because he's saved. He works from a free spirit and with a thankful heart. He does all his duties in faith. He acts from the motive of God's love to him in Christ, he's fueled by gratitude for free grace, he hopes for the acceptance of all his works only through Christ's intercession, and after he's done them ever so well, he desires grace from Christ to return to Him all the glory for them.
 - D. Thus, in every duty he aims at fellowship with God in Christ through the Spirit and seeks to present a sacrifice acceptable and well pleasing to God.
- III. If these things are so, then...
- A. Let us see that we don't go to duty in bondage, with a sense of hoping to gain His love by the desert of you do, or fearing to be beaten with many stripes for not doing it well.
 - B. Let us remember that the God we serve is our most loving Friend and most tender Father. He loved us in Jesus freely by His grace, not by works done by us or to be done by us.
 - C. Let us see that we serve out of love for the Trinity, for love for the Persons will make the service pleasant.
 - D. Let us see that we look at all our duty in faith. It's the expression of our gratitude to our dearest Friend and it's the way to enjoy His divine friendship. He requires our duty out of love for us(?) and would have us do it out of love for Him.
 - E. How does it exalt our duty when it's seen as the means to carry on our communion with God! He would have us keep close to Him in order to maintain a sense of His gracious presence in our heart, and so to walk with Him as to have His love to us confirmed at every step; and therefore we should seek to preserve a constant nearness and holy fellowship with Him in everything we do. This is the will of God. May it be ours.
 - F. So let us study the way of gospel duty. Pray to be taught it better, and to go on it more spiritually every day. Bring it into all your affairs. In your calling as well as in the means of grace, in temporal as well as heavenly matters, set the Lord always before you and so live and act in everything as to keep up communion with your God and Father in Jesus by the grace of the Holy Spirit.