

## Family Duty by John Bunyan

### A FATHER'S DUTY TO THE FAMILY IN GENERAL.

He that is the master of a family, he has, as under that relation, a work to do for God; the right governing of his own family. And his work is twofold. *First*, Touching the *spiritual state of it*. *Second*, Touching the *outward state of it*.

*First*, As touching the *spiritual state of his family*; he should be very diligent and circumspect, doing his utmost endeavor both to increase faith where it is begun, and to begin it where it is not. For this reason, he should diligently and frequently lay before his household such things of God, out of his word, as are suitable for each particular. And let no man question his rule in the word of God for such a practice; for if the thing itself were but of good report, and a thing tending to civil honesty, it is within the compass and bounds even of nature itself, and should be done; much more things of a higher nature; besides, the apostle exhorts us to '*Whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, pure, lovely, and of good report, to think of them,*' that is, to be mindful to do them (Phil 4:8). But to be conversant in this godly exercise in our family, is very worthy of praise, and is very fitting to all Christians. This is one of the things for which God so highly commended his servant Abraham, and that with which his heart was so much affected by. I know Abraham, says God, 'I know him' to be a good man indeed, for 'he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord' (Gen 18:19). This was a thing also which good Joshua designed should be his practice as long as he had a breathing time in this world. 'As for me,' says he, I 'and my household, we will serve the Lord' (Josh 24:15).

Further, we find also in the New Testament, that they are looked upon as Christians of an inferior rank that have not a due regard to this duty; yes, so inferior as not fit to be chosen to any office in the church of God. A [bishop or] pastor must be one that rules well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God? 'The deacon' also, says he, must 'be the husband of one wife, ruling their children, and their own house well' (1 Tim 3). Notice, the apostle seems to lay down this much, that a man that governs his family well, has one qualification belonging to a pastor or deacon in the house of God, for he that knows not how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God? This, considered, gives us light into the work of the master of a family, touching the governing of his house.

1. A pastor must be sound and uncorrupt in his doctrine; and indeed so must the master of a family (Titus 1:9; Eph 6:4).

2. A pastor should be apt to teach, to reprove, and to exhort; and so should the master of a family (1 Tim 3:2; Deut 6:7).

3. A pastor must himself be exemplary in faith and holiness; and so also should the master of a family (1 Tim 3:2-4; 4:12). 'I,' says David, 'will behave myself in a perfect way; I will walk in,' or before, 'my house with a perfect heart' (Psa 101:2).

4. The pastor is for getting the church together; and when they are so come together, then to pray among them, and to preach unto them. This is also commendable in Christian masters of families.

*Objection:* But my family is ungodly and unruly, touching all that is good. What should I do?

*Answer:* 1. Though this be true, yet you must rule them, and not them you! You are set over them of God, and you are to use the authority which God has given you, both to rebuke their vice, and to show them the evil of their rebelling against the Lord. Eli did this, though not enough; and so did David (1 Sam 2:24, 25; 1 Chron 28:9). Also, you must tell them how sad your state was when you were in their condition, and so labor to recover them out of the snare of the devil (Mark 5:19).

2. You should also labor to draw them out to God's public worship, if perhaps God may convert their souls. Said Jacob to his household, and to all that were about him, 'Let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress' (Gen 35:3). Hannah would carry Samuel to

Shiloh, that he might abide with God for ever (1 Sam 1:22). Indeed a soul rightly touched, will labor to draw, not only their families, but a whole city after Jesus Christ (John 4:28-30).

3. If they are obstinate, and will not go with you, then bring godly and sound men to your house, and there let the word of God be preached, when you have, as Cornelius, gathered your family and friends together (Acts 10).

You know that the jailor, Lydia, Crispus, Gaius, Stephanus, and others, had not only themselves, but their families, made gracious by the word preached, and that some of them, if not all, by the word preached in their houses (Acts 16:14-34; 18:7, 8; 1 Cor 1:16). And this, for all I know, might be one reason among many, why the apostles taught in their day, not only publicly, but from house to house; I say, that they might, if possible, bring in those in some family, which yet remained unconverted, and in their sins (Acts 10:24; 20:20, 21). For some, you know how usual it was in the day of Christ, to invite him to their houses, if they had any afflicted, that either would not or could not come unto him (Luke 7:2, 3; 8:41). If this be the way with those that have outward diseases in their families, how much more then, where there are souls that have need of Christ, to save them from death and eternal damnation!

4. Take heed that you do not neglect family duties among them yourself; as, reading the word and prayer; if you have one in your family that is gracious, take encouragement. If you are alone, yet know that you have both liberty to go to God through Christ, and also are at that time in a capacity of having the universal church join with you for the whole number of those that shall be saved.

5. Do not allow any ungodly, profane, or heretical books, or discourse in your house. 'Evil communications corrupt good manners' (1 Cor 15:33). I mean such profane or heretical books, etc., as either tend to provoke to looseness of life, or such as do oppose the fundamentals of the gospel. I know that Christians must be allowed their liberty as to things indifferent; but for those things that strike either at faith or holiness, they should be abandoned by all Christians, and especially by the pastors of churches, and masters of families; which practice was shown by Jacob's commanding his house, and all that were with him, to put away the strange gods from among them, and to change their garments (Gen 35:2). All those in the Acts set a good example for this, who took their curious books and burned them before all men, though they were worth fifty thousand pieces of silver (Acts 19:18, 19). The neglect of this fourth particular has occasioned ruin in many families, both among children and servants. It is easier for vain talkers, and their deceivable works, to subvert whole households, than many are aware of (Titus 1:10, 11). We have touched the spiritual state of your household. And now to its outward state.

*Second, Touching the outward state of your family, you are to consider these three things.*

1. That it lies upon you to care for them that they have a convenient livelihood. 'If any man provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel' (1 Tim 5:8). But notice, when the Word says, you are to provide for your house, it gives you no license to distracting carefulness; neither does it allow you to strive to grasp the world in your heart, or bank account, nor to take care for years or days to come, but so to provide for them, that they may have food and raiment; and if either they or you are not content with that, you launch out beyond the rule of God (1 Tim 6:8; Matt 6:34). This is to labor, that you may have the means 'to maintain good works for necessary uses' (Titus 3:14). And never object, that unless you reach farther, it will never do; for that is but unbelief. The word says, 'That God feedeth ravens, careth for sparrows, and clotheth the grass;' in which three, to feed, clothe, and care for, is as much as heart can wish (Luke 12:6-28).

2. Therefore though you should provide for your family; yet let all your labor be mixed with moderation; 'Let your moderation be known unto all men' (Phil 4:5). Take heed 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; as private prayer, reading the scriptures, and Christian conference. It is a base thing for men so to spend themselves and families after this world, as that they disengage their heart to God's worship.

Christians, 'The time is short: it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away' (1 Cor 7:29-31). Many Christians live and do in this world, as if religion were but a by-business, and this world the one thing necessary; when indeed all the things of this world are but things by the by; and religion only the one thing needful (Luke 10:40-42).

3. If you would be such a master of a family as is fitting for you, you must see that there is that Christian harmony among those under you, as is fitting for a house where one rules that fears God.

(1.) You must see that your children and servants are under subjection to the word of God; for though it is of God only to rule the heart, yet he expects that you should rule their outward man; which if you do not, he may in a short time cut off all your stock, [even every male] (1 Sam 3:11-14). See therefore that you keep them temperate in all things, in apparel, in language, that they be not gluttons, nor drunkards; not suffering either your children vainly to domineer over your servants, nor they again to carry themselves foolishly towards each other.

(2.) Learn to distinguish between that injury that in your family is done to you, and that which is done to God; and though you should be very zealous for the Lord, and to bear nothing that is open transgression to him; yet here will be your wisdom, to pass by personal injuries, and to bury them in oblivion: 'Love covereth a multitude of sins.' Be not then like those that will rage and stare like madmen, when they are injured; and yet either laugh, or at least not soberly rebuke, and warn, when God is dishonored.

'Rule thy own house well, having thy children—with others in thy family—in subjection, with all gravity' (1 Tim 3:4). Solomon was so excellent sometimes this way, that he made the eyes of his beholders to dazzle (2 Chron 9:3, 4). But to break off from this general, and to come to particulars.

Do you have a wife? You must consider how you should behave yourself in that relation: and to do this right, you must consider the condition of your wife, whether she is one that indeed believes or not. *First*, If she believes, then,

1. You are engaged to bless God for her: 'For her price is far above rubies, and she is the gift of God unto thee, and is for thy adorning and glory' (Prov 12:4; 31:10; 1 Cor 11:7). 'Favor *is* deceitful, and beauty *is* vain: *but* a woman *that* feareth the Lord, she shall be praised' (Prov 31:30).

2. You should love her, under a double consideration: (1.) As she is your flesh and your bone: 'For no man ever yet hated his own flesh' (Eph 5:29). (2.) As she is together with you an heir of the grace of life (1 Peter 3:7). This, I say, should engage you to love her with Christian love; to love her, as believing you both are dearly beloved of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and as those that must be together with him in eternal happiness.

3. You should carry yourself to and before her, as does Christ to and before his church; as says the apostle: So should men love their wives, 'even as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it' (Eph 5:25). When husbands behave themselves like husbands indeed, then will they be not only husbands, but such an ordinance of God to the wife, as will preach to her the carriage of Christ to his spouse. There is a sweet scent wrapped up in the relations of husbands and wives, that believe (Eph 4:32); the wife, I say, signifying the church, and the husband the head and savior thereof, 'For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church' (Eph 5:23) and he is the Savior of the body.

This is one of God's chief ends in instituting marriage, that Christ and his church, under a figure, might be wherever there is a couple that believe through grace. Therefore that husband that carries himself indiscreetly towards his wife, he does not only behave himself contrary to the rule, but also makes his wife lose the benefit of such an ordinance, and crosses the mystery of his relation.

Therefore, I say, 'So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:' (Eph 5:8, 29). Christ laid out his life for his church, covers her infirmities, communicates to her his wisdom, protects her, and helps her in her employments in this world; and so should men do for their wives. Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter had the art of thus doing, as you may see in the book of The Song of Solomon. Therefore bear with their weaknesses, help their infirmities, and honor them as the weaker vessels, and as being of a frailer constitution (1 Peter 3:7).

In a word, be such a husband to your believing wife, that she may say, God has not only given me a husband, but such a husband as preaches to me everyday the behavior of Christ to his church.

*Second*, If your wife be unbelieving or carnal, then you have also a duty lying before you, which you are engaged to perform under a double engagement: 1. For that she lies liable every moment to eternal damnation. 2. That she is your wife that is in this evil case.

Oh! how little sense of the worth of souls is there in the heart of some husbands; as is manifest by their unchristian behavior toward and before their wives! Now, to qualify you for a behavior suitable,

1. Labor seriously after a sense of her miserable state, that your heart may yearn towards her soul.
2. Beware that she take no occasion from any unseemly behavior of yours, to proceed in evil. And here you have need to double your diligence, for she lies in your bosom, and therefore is capable of spying the least miscarriage in you.
3. If she behaves herself unseemly and unruly, as she is subject to do, being Christless and graceless, then labor to overcome her evil with your goodness, her adversity with your patience and meekness. It is a shame for you, who have another principle, to do as she.
4. Take fit opportunities to convince her. Observe her disposition, and when she is most likely to bear, then speak to her very heart.
5. When you speak, speak to purpose. It is not necessary for many words, provided they be pertinent. Job in a few words answers his wife, and takes her off from her foolish talking: 'Thou speakest,' saith he, 'as one of the foolish women. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?' (Job 2:10).
6. Let all be done without bitterness, or the least appearance of anger: 'In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if—peradventure they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will' (2 Tim 2:25, 26). 'And how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife' (1 Cor 7:16).

### **THE DUTY OF WIVES.**

But passing the master of the family, I will speak a word or two to those that are under him.

And, first, to the wife: The wife is bound by the law to her husband, so long as her husband lives (Rom 7:2). Therefore she also has her work and place in the family, as well as the rest.

Now there are these things considered in the carriage of a wife toward her husband, which she should conscientiously observe.

*First*, That she look upon him as her head and lord. 'The head of the woman is the man' (1 Cor 11:3). And so Sarah called Abraham lord (1 Peter 3:6).

*Second*, She should therefore be subject to him, as is fit in the Lord. The apostle says, 'That the wife should submit herself to her husband, as to the Lord' (1 Peter 3:1; Col 3:18; Eph 5:22). I told you before, that if the husband does walk towards his wife as is fitting to him, he will therein be such an ordinance of God to her, besides the relation of a husband, that will preach to her the behavior of Christ to his church. And now I say also, that the wife, if she walk with her husband as is fitting to her, she shall preach the obedience of the church to her husband. 'Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in everything' (Eph 5:24). Now for your performing of this work, you must first shun these evils.

1. The evil of a wandering and a gossiping spirit; this is evil in the church, and is evil also in a wife, who is the figure of a church. Christ loves to have his spouse keep at home; that is, to be with him in the faith and practice of his things, not ranging and meddling with the things of Satan; no more should wives be given to wander and gossip abroad. You know that Proverbs 7:11 says, 'She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house.' Wives should be about their own husbands' business at home; as the apostle says, Let them 'be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands.' And why? Because otherwise 'the word of God will be blasphemed' (Titus 2:5).

2. Take heed of an idle, talking, or contentious tongue. This also is odious, either in maids or wives, to be like parrots, not bridling their tongue; whereas the wife should know, 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 seemly for the church to *parrot* it against her husband? Is she not to be silent before him, and to look to his laws, rather than her own fictions? Why so, says the apostle, should the wife so carry it towards her husband? 'Let the woman,' says Paul, 'learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence' (1 Tim 2:11, 12). It is an unseemly thing to see a woman so much as once in all her lifetime to offer to overtop her husband; she should in everything be in subjection to him, and to do all she does, as having her warrant, license,

and authority from him. And indeed here is her glory, even to be under him, as the church is under Christ: Now 'she openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue *is* the law of kindness' (Prov 31:26).

**3. Do not wear immodest apparel, or walk in a seductive way; this will be evil both abroad and at home; abroad, it will not only give ill example, but also tend to tempt to lust and lasciviousness; and at home it will give an offence to a godly husband, and be infecting to ungodly children, etc. Therefore, as says the apostle, Let women's apparel be modest, as becomes women professing godliness, with good works, 'not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array' (1 Tim 2:9, 10). And as it is said again, 'Whose adorning, let it not be that outward *adorning* of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel: But *let it be* the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands'* (1 Peter 3:3-5).**

But yet, do not think that by the subjection I have here mentioned, that I do intend women should be their husbands' slaves. Women are their husbands' yoke-fellows, their flesh and their bones; and he is not a man that hates his own flesh, or that is bitter against it (Eph 5:29). Wherefore, let every man 'love his wife even as himself; and the wife *see* that she reverence her husband' (Eph 5:33). The wife is master next her husband, and is to rule all in his absence; yes, in his presence she is to guide the house, to bring up the children, provided she does it, as the adversary has no occasion to speak reproachfully (1 Tim 5:10, 13). 'Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. A gracious woman retaineth honour:' and guides her affairs with discretion (Prov 31:10; 11:16; 12:4).

*Objection:* But my husband is an unbeliever; what shall I do?

*Answer:* If so, then what I have said before lies upon you with an engagement so much the stronger. For, 1. Your husband being in this condition, he will be watchful to take your slips and infirmities, to throw them as dirt in the face of God and your Savior. 2. He will be apt to make the worst of every one of your words, actions, and gestures. 3. And all this does tend to the possessing his heart with more hardness, prejudice, and opposition to his own salvation; therefore, as Peter says, 'ye wives, *be* in subjection to your husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they may also without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation, coupled with fear' (1 Peter 3:1, 2). Your husband's salvation or damnation lies much in your good behavior before him; therefore, if there is in you any fear of God, or love to your husband, seek, by behavior full of meekness, modesty, and holiness, and a humbleness before him, to win him to the love of his own salvation; and by doing this, how 'knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save *thy* husband?' (1 Cor 7:16).

*Objection:* But my husband is not only an unbeliever, but one very contentious, peevish, and testy, yes, so contentious, etc., that I know not how to speak to him, or behave myself before him.

*Answer:* Indeed there are some wives in great slavery by reason of their ungodly husbands; and as such should be pitied, and prayed for; so they should be so much the more watchful and circumspect in all their ways.

1. Therefore 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; you are principled with grace, he with sin. Now, then, seeing grace is stronger than sin, and virtue than vice; be not overcome with his vileness, but overcome that with your virtues (Rom 12:21). It is a shame for those that are gracious to be as lavishing in their words, etc., as those that are graceless: They that are 'slow to wrath are of great understanding; but *they that are* hasty of spirit, exalteth folly' (Prov 14:29).

3. Your wisdom, therefore, if at any time you have a desire to speak to your husband for his conviction, concerning anything, either good or evil, it is to observe convenient times and seasons: There is 'a time to keep silence, and a time to speak' (Eccl 3:7). Now for the right timing of your intentions,

(1.) Consider his disposition; and take him when he is farthest off of those filthy passions that are your afflictions. Abigail would not speak a word to her churlish husband till his wine was gone from him, and he in a sober temper (1 Sam 25:36, 37). Not heeding this observation is the cause why so much is spoken, and so little effected.

(2.) Take him at those times when he has his heart taken with you, and when he shows tokens of love and delight in you. Thus did Esther with the king her husband, and prevailed (Ester 5:3, 6; 7:1, 2).

(3.) Observe when convictions seize his conscience, and then follow them with sound and grave sayings of the Scriptures. Somewhat like to this dealt Manoah's wife with her husband (Judg 13:22, 23). Yet then,

(a) Let your words be few.

(b) And none of them savoring of a lording it over him; but speak still as to your head and lord, by way of entreaty and beseeching.

(c) And that in such a spirit of sympathy, and a heart of affection after his good, that the manner of your speech and behavior in speaking may be to him an argument that you speak in love, as being sensible of his misery, and inflamed in your soul with desire after his conversion.

(d) And follow your words and behavior with prayers to God for his soul.

(e) Still keeping yourself in a holy, chaste, and modest behavior before him.

*Objection:* But my husband is stupid, a fool, and one that has not wit enough to follow his outward employment in the world.

*Answer.* 1. Though all this be true, yet you must know he is your head, your lord, and your husband.

2. Therefore you must take heed of desiring to usurp authority over him. 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 (1 Tim 2:12; 1 Cor 11:3, 8).

3. Therefore, though in truth you may have more discretion than he, yet you should know that you, and all that is yours, is to be used as under your husband; even 'every thing' (Eph 5:24).

Take heed therefore, that what you do goes not in your name, but his; not to your exaltation, but his; doing all things so that by your dexterity and prudence, not one of your husband's weaknesses is discovered to others by you: 'A virtuous woman *is* a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed, *is* as rottenness in his bones.' For then, as the wise man says, 'she will do him good and not evil, all the days of her life' (Prov 12:4; 31:12).

4. Therefore act, and do still, as being under the power and authority of your husband.

Now touching your behavior toward your children and servants. You are a parent, and a mistress, and so you should demean yourself. And besides, seeing the believing woman is a figure of the church, she should, as the church, nourish and instruct her children, and servants, as the church, that she may answer in that particular also; and truly, the wife being always at home, she has great advantage that way; therefore do it, and the Lord prosper your proceeding.

### **DUTY OF PARENTS TO CHILDREN**

If you are a parent, a father, or a mother, then you are to consider your calling under this relation.

Your children have souls, and they must be born of God as well as of you, or they perish. And know also, that unless you be very circumspect in your behavior to and before them, they may perish through you: the thoughts of which should provoke you, both to *instruct*, and also to *correct* them.

*First,* To *instruct* them as the scripture says, and to 'bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord'; and to do this diligently, 'when thou sittest in thine house—when thou liest down, and when thou risest up' (Eph 6:4; Deu 6:7).

Now to do this to purpose:

1. Do it in terms and words easy to be understood: do not use high expressions, they will drown your children. Thus God spoke to his children (Hosea 12:10), and Paul to his (1 Cor 3:2).

2. Take heed of filling their heads with whimsies, and unprofitable notions, for this will sooner teach them to be bold and proud, than sober and humble. Open therefore to them the state of man by nature; discourse with them of sin, of death, and hell; of a crucified Savior, and the promise of life through faith: 'Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it' (Prov 22:6).

3. There must be much gentleness and patience in all your instructions, 'lest they be discouraged' (Col. 3:21). And,

4. Labor to convince them by a conversation answerable, that the things of which you instruct them are not fables, but realities; yes, and realities so far above what can be here enjoyed, that all things, were they a thousand times better than they are, are not worthy to be compared with the glory and worthiness of these things.

Isaac was so holy before his children, that when Jacob remembered God, he remembered that he was 'the Fear of his father Isaac' (Gen 31:53).

Ah! when children can think of their parents, and bless God for that instruction and good they have received from them, this is not only profitable for children, but honorable, and comfortable to parents: 'The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise *child* shall have joy of him' (Prov 23:24, 25).

*Second, The duty of correction.*

1. See if fair words will win them from evil. This is God's way with his children (Jer 25:4, 5).

2. Let those words you speak to them in your reproof, be both sober, few, and pertinent, adding always some suitable sentence of the scripture therewith; as, if they lie, then such as (Rev 21:8, 27). If they refuse to hear the word, such as (2 Chron 25:14-16).

3. Look to them, that they be not companions with those that are rude and ungodly; showing with soberness a continual dislike of their naughtiness; often crying out to them, as God did of old unto his, 'Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate' (Jer 44:4).

4. Let all this be mixed with such love, pity, and compunction of spirit, that if possible they may be convinced you dislike not their persons, but their sins. This is God's way (Psa 99:8).

5. Be often endeavoring to fasten on their consciences the day of their death, and judgment to come. Thus also God deals with his (Deu 32:29).

6. If you are driven to the rod, then strike advisedly in cool blood, and soberly show them, (1.) their fault; (2.) how much it is against your heart to deal with them in this way; (3.) and that what you do, you do in conscience to God, and love to their souls; (4.) and tell them, that if fair means would have done, none of this severity should have been. This, I have proved it, will be a means to afflict their hearts as well as their bodies; and it being the way that God deals with his, it is the most likely to accomplish its end.

7. Follow all this with prayer to God for them, and leave the issue to him: 'Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him' (Prov 22:15).

Lastly, Observe these *cautions*,

1. Take heed that the misdeeds for which you correct your children be not learned by them from you. Many children learn that wickedness of their parents for which they beat and chastise them.

2. Take heed that you smile not upon them, to encourage them in small faults, for your behavior toward them will be an encouragement to them to commit greater.

3. Take heed that you use not unsavory and unseemly words in your chastising of them, as insulting, name calling, and the like: this is devilish.

4. Take heed that you do not accustom them to many chiding words and threatenings, mixed with lightness and laughter; this will harden. Speak not much, nor often, but pertinent to them with all sobriety.

## **DUTIES OF CHILDREN TO PARENTS.**

There lies also a duty upon children to their parents, which they are bound both by the law of God and nature conscientiously to observe: 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.' And again, 'Children, obey *your* parents in all things; for this is well pleasing unto the Lord' (Eph 6:1; Col 3:20).

There are these general things in which children should show forth that honor that is due to their parents from them.

*First,* They should always count them better than themselves. I observe a vile spirit among some children, and that is, they are apt to look down upon their parents, and to have slighting and scornful thoughts of them. This is worse than heathenish; such an one has got just the heart of a dog or a beast, that will bite those that produced them, and her that brought them forth.

*Objection:* But my father, etc., is now poor, and I am rich, and it will be a disparagement, or at least a hinderance to me, to show that respect to him as otherwise I might.

*Answer:* I tell you, you argue like an atheist and a beast, and stand in this full flat against the Son of God (Mark 7:9-13). Must a gift, and a little of the glory of the butterfly, make you that you should not do for, and give honor to, your father and mother? 'A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother' (Prov 15:20). Though your parents be never so low, and you yourself never so high, yet he is your father, and she your mother, and they must be in your eye in great esteem: 'The eye *that* mocketh at *his* father, and despiseth to obey *his* mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it' (Prov 30:17).

*Second,* You should show honor to your parents, by a willingness to help them with such necessaries and accommodations which they need. 'If any—have children or nephews, let them learn to show piety at home, and to requite their parents:' says Paul, 'for that is good and acceptable before God' (1 Tim 5:4). And this rule Joseph observed to his poor father, though he himself was next the king in Egypt (Gen 47:12; 41:39-44).

But notice, let them 'requite their parents.' There are three things for which, as long as you live, you will be a debtor to your parents.

1. For your being in this world. They are they from whom, immediately under God, you did receive it.
2. For their care to preserve you when you were helpless, and could neither care for, nor regard yourself.
3. For the pains they have taken with you to bring you up. Until you have children of your own, you will not be sensible of the pains, watchings, fears, sorrow, and affliction, that they have gone under to bring you up; and when you know it, you will not easily yield that you have recompensed them for their favor to you. How often have they sustained you in your hunger, clothed your nakedness? What care have they taken that you might have the means to live and do well when they were dead and gone? They possibly have spared it from their own belly and back for you, and have also impoverished themselves, that you might live like a man. All these things should duly, and like a man, to be considered by you; and care should be taken on your part to repay them. The Scripture says so, reason says so, and there be none but dogs and beasts that deny it. It is the duty of parents to lay up for their children; and the duty of children to repay their parents.

*Third,* Therefore show, by all humble and son-like behavior, that you do to this day, with your heart, remember the love of your parents. Thus much for obedience to parents in general.

Again, if your parents be godly, and you wicked, as you are, if you have not a second work or birth from God upon you, then you are to consider, that you are more strongly engaged to respect and honor your parents, not now only as a father in the flesh, but as godly parents; your father and mother are now made of God your teachers and instructors in the way of righteousness. Therefore, to allude to that of Solomon, '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' (Prov 6:20, 21).

Now, to provoke you to consider this,

1. That this has been the practice always of those that are and have been obedient children; yes, of Christ himself to Joseph and Mary, though he himself was God blessed for ever (Luke 2:51).
2. You have also the severe judgments of God upon those that have been disobedient, to awe you. As, (1.) Ishmael, for but mocking at one good act of his father and mother, was both thrust out of his father's inheritance and the kingdom of heaven, and that with God's approbation (Gen 21:9-14; Gal 4:30). (2.) Hophni and Phinehas, for refusing the good counsel of their father, provoked the great God to be their enemy: 'They hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them' (1 Sam 2:23-25). (3.) Absalom was hanged, as I may say, by God himself, for rebelling against his father (2 Sam 18:9).

Besides, little do you know how heart-aching a consideration it is to your parents, when they do but *suppose* you may be damned! How many prayers, sighs, and tears, are there wrung from their hearts upon this account? Every misdeed of yours goes to their heart, for fear God should take an occasion by it to shut you up in hardness for ever. How did Abraham groan for Ishmael? 'O,' said he, to God, 'that Ishmael might live before thee!' (Gen 17:18). How was Isaac and Rebecca grieved for the misbehavior of Esau? (Gen 26:34, 35). And how bitterly did David mourn for his son, who died in his wickedness? (2 Sam 18:32, 33).



*Lastly*, And can any imagine, but that all these prayers, sighs, etc., of your godly parents, will be to you the increase of your torments in hell, if you die in your sins notwithstanding?

*Again*, if your parents, and you also, be godly, how happy a thing is this? How should you rejoice, that the same faith should dwell both in your parents and you? Your conversion, possibly, is the fruit of your parents' groans and prayers for your soul; and they cannot choose but rejoice; rejoice with them. It is true, in the salvation of a natural son, which is mentioned in the parable: 'This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry' (Luke 15:24). Let therefore the consideration of this, that your parents have grace, as well as you, engage your heart so much the more to honor, reverence, and obey them.

You are better able now to consider the pains and care that your friends have been at, both for your body and soul; therefore strive to repay them. You have strength to answer in some measure the command: 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 (Eph 6:1, 2). Take heed of giving your sweet parents one snappish word, or behaving in any way unseemly towards them. Love them because they are your parents, because they are godly, and because you must be in glory with them.

Again, if you be godly, and your parents wicked, as often it sadly falls out; then,

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

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

(Taken from the Booklet "Christian Behavior.")  
*This text has been modernized for easier reading.*