

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

“... Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

Established 1953

April 2008

Vol. 42 / No. 4

MUST DUTY BE DREARY?

by Lee Moses

Any excuse one might attempt for forsaking his service to the Almighty God of heaven and earth could only be baffling. However, an especially perplexing excuse that resurfaces from time to time is “I felt like I was serving God out of duty.”

Somewhere along the line, people got the idea that duty is a bad thing; that duty is nothing but dreary drudgery. Modern society’s emphasis upon recreation and pleasure, almost making such activities the reason for living, contributes to such thinking regarding duty. But must assuming duties toward others, especially toward God, be dreary?

Duty Enables Purpose

Many people float through life with no real aim or purpose. Closely linked with a lack of purpose is a missing sense of duty. In his comic strip, Snuffy Smith’s wife Weezy regularly called him “you shif’less skonk”; describing a man with little drive or ambition, and apparently **no** sense of duty. Solomon called such a man the “*sluggard*” or “*slothful man*.” He pointed out the superiority of an **ant** to a sluggard:

Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy

poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man (Proverbs 6:6-11).

An ant does not need a guide, overseer, or ruler to force it to move. It knows what it needs to do, and does it.

The sluggard does not perceive that he has any duty; and thus, he has no purpose, no aim. Unfortunately many spiritual sluggards never embrace Christian duty, and thus never have any real spiritual aim or purpose. When one has duty, then one has goals. Once one has goals, then he can truly commit to them, thus providing aim in his life.

Duty Enables Dependability

It is a shame that there are so many intelligent and able-bodied individuals upon whom no one feels they can depend. No one can depend upon them because they refuse to accept duty.

When someone takes on duty, it gives him opportunity to prove himself dependable. Contrariwise, one who refuses to accept duty demonstrates immaturity. But as Paul said, “*When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things*” (1 Corinthians 13:11). Such childishness should not describe any adult, much less one who professes Christianity. “*But if any 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 Timothy 5:8; compare with 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12).

When a child of God says he is not going to perform his Christian duty because it is a duty, does he realize how

undependable he declares himself to be? One who fails to assemble with the saints fails to serve his brethren (Hebrews 10:24-25). One who fails to serve his brethren sins against God (Galatians 6:2; compare with 1 John 3:4). Neither his Father nor his brethren can count on him, and neither can the Lord Who died for even the undependable. Do you wish to be someone on whom others feel they can depend? Duty makes this possible.

Duty Enables Accomplishment

Before one can accomplish anything, he must **do** what it necessary to attain that accomplishment. There are times when we simply do not feel like doing what must be done. Does this mean that we should simply leave it alone? No, what must be done **must** be done.

Consider all that the apostle Paul accomplished, taking the Gospel throughout Asia Minor and southern Europe:

I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man’s foundation (Romans 15:17-20).

What if Paul would have said, “I really do not feel like going through all these

FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

USPS Publication #211780

... is a Periodical publication issued monthly by the Church of Christ at Third and Bethel (P.O. Box 251), Mammoth Spring, AR 72554-0251. **POSTMASTER: Please mail all changes of address to the above address.**

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FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

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places—it seems like too much of a duty.” Paul had a gargantuan duty entrusted to him, but his appreciation of that duty led him to accomplish great things through Christ that no man has excelled since. It is our duty and appreciation thereof which enables us to accomplish.

Duty Enables Reward

The Christian lives his life on earth with the confident expectation of a heavenly reward. And as is generally the case, duty must be performed before the reward can be received: *“Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour”* (1 Corinthians 3:8). In Christ’s Parable of the Talents, those to whom their lord entrusted his talents were rewarded based upon how they had performed their duty. The two faithful servants were told, *“Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord”* (Matthew 25:23; emphasis LM). Because they had

performed their duty, they were able to accomplish what their lord had in mind for them, they proved themselves dependable to their lord, and they were rewarded by their lord.

The apostle John wrote, *“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them”* (Revelation 14:13). Until the Christian dies, he is to toil on in the service of the Lord (compare with Hebrews 4:10-11). When John wrote, *“their works do follow them,”* he was not saying that Christians will resume these works after death. But the record and reward of their works in this life will follow Christians into the next life.

Christian Duty is a Delight

It is inexplicable that there are numerous children of God who have come to find Christian duty dreary. Imagine interviewing for a job; and when asking about the duties involved you are told, “You will be required to sing songs, to encourage others to do what is right, and to have constant fellowship with the only Perfect Being Who has ever existed.” Who in his right mind would describe such duties as “dreary”? While duty generally is a blessing, the simple fact is no duty on earth is remotely comparable to Christian duty.

Is every aspect of Christian duty **enjoyable**? Certainly not! It is not enjoyable to tell people that they are lost, or that they must give up some of the earthly ties they hold most dear to be saved. It is not enjoyable to be persecuted, yet Christians through the ages have suffered terribly for their faith. Persecution is as unpleasant a part of Christian duty as there is; yet there is immense joy in persecution, and in any other unpleasantness, when it comes as part of Christian duty (Matthew 5:10-12; Acts 5:41; Philippians 1:29; 1 Peter 4:12-14).

If Christian duty seems dreary, one can be assured that the duty itself is not dreary. It is all in the mind. As Solomon

observed, *“For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he”* (Proverbs 23:7). Sometimes people get a “thinking problem,” and when they do it affects all else (4:23). If Christian duty ever seems dreary, the answer is not to take some “time off” from serving the Lord, but to throw oneself more wholeheartedly than ever into his Christian duties. Arrive early for every service of the church; focus more attentively on every aspect of the worship; spend more time in God’s word; and privately pray more often, longer, and more thoughtfully. It has been well said, “If you act the way you wish you felt, eventually you will feel the way you act.”¹

Conclusion

Duty enables one to be blessed in numerous ways; as it enables purpose, dependability, accomplishment, and reward. Christian duty is in itself great delight. However, duty only enables these privileges **when duty is performed!** Every accountable man and woman has been given duty toward his Creator. Let each not look on this as dreariness, but let each attend to that duty with the joy and delight that God intends.

¹ William James; quoted by Felton Spraggins, “Let’s Hear it for Responsibility,” Church Bulletin, Curry Street church of Christ, West Plains, MO, January 27, 2008.

WHAT KIND OF MEMBER ARE YOU ?

by Mark Lance

Different members of the church have different characteristics that they are known for in the congregation. Let us not examine everybody else, but ourselves to see what kind of member we are: *“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”* (2 Corinthians 13:5).

A My Way or No Way Member

Some members are easy to get along with as long as everybody does things their way. They may even brag on you from time to time. But just wait until they want something they don't get and their attitude changes drastically. Now they refuse to cooperate. Now you are not as smart as you were before. They will often start picking at everything possible, and if they can't find something to pick at they will go as far as to invent something.

It is not unusual to see this kind of member to work behind the scenes and undermine the elders and other members, while acting innocent the whole time. The my way or no way member stands condemned by God's word: "*Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me to you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you*" (1 Corinthians 1:10-11).

The my way or no way member values his own opinion over everybody else's. He will often take matters of opinion and make them as though they were matters of doctrine. He will never understand why everybody else doesn't see things the same way he does, while never considering the point of view of others. While repentance is in order for himself, the my way or no way member thinks it is everybody else that needs to change. The Bible says: "*For I say, though the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith*" (Romans 12:3).

The my way or no way member can cause a lot of needless headaches for the church. While the spreading of the gospel should be taking place, special attention is required to take care of the fire the contentious has started.

The my way or no way member will usually leave a congregation and try and find one that will pacify him, rather than repent and work to get along with others where he already is.

A Lazy Member

The lazy member is one that you cannot give any responsibility to, since he will not take care of his responsibilities. He will look for excuses why something cannot be done, or why it can just wait for another day, a day that never comes. God said: "*Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?*" (Proverbs 6:6-9).

God's people should be characterized as diligent people, not lazy: "*Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*" (Titus 2:14). The lazy member can often talk a good game, but that is about as far as it goes. They are content to let everyone else carry the load, then wonder why the church isn't growing. The lazy member may on occasion have a good idea, but it never gets off the ground unless someone else does it. Lazy members are an embarrassment to the church. They can also frustrate the members that are working.

In the days of Nehemiah the work of rebuilding the walls of the city of Jerusalem were successful because of the vision of the leaders and the willingness of everybody to work: "*So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work*" (Nehemiah 4:6). The Lord deserves better than what the lazy member is willing to give. The fellow members deserves better than what the lazy member is willing to give. It is still true: if you want something done, give the job to someone who is already busy—not the lazy member.

A Dedicated Member

A dedicated member will not be stopped by the weather. A dedicated member will labor to make a work successful whether it was his idea or not. A dedicated member will work with the elders and other members, not against them. A dedicated member will not pout when he doesn't get his way. A dedicated member will repent when necessary in stead of being full of pride.

One of the things the church is plagued with in most places is a shortage of dedicated members. The apostle Paul had a strong bond with the church at Philippi because of their love for the Lord:

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God (Philippians 1:3-11).

The church at Philippi brought forth fruits of righteousness because of their love and dedication to the Lord.

They had problems, but they were dealt with and moved on instead of allowing discord to be sown: *“I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord”* (Philippians 4:2). Notice the following verses:

And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life. Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things (Philippians 4:3-8).

When they thought on those things that were righteous and put forth the needed effort, the church flourished. Today if we still dedicate our lives wholly to God the church will flourish where we are as well. I hope and pray that if any of us is a “my way or no way member” or “a lazy member” that we will each give our lives to God and become a dedicated member. *“Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen”* (Philippians 4:20).

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GOD'S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP - COLOSSIANS 3:17

1. **LORD'S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 11:23-34; 16: 1-2).
2. **PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; I Thessalonians 5:17-18).
3. **SINGING** - God's word authorizes only vocal music and specifically singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
4. **GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; I Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
5. **PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men's doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; I Corinthians 1:18-23).

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