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Our Path of Duty

Duty does not require perfection, but it does require diligence. It is not simply what is legal; it is what is virtuous.

This is a troubled world. Discord and disaster are everywhere. It sometimes feels as though mankind itself may be hanging in the balance.

Foreshadowing our day, the Lord said, “The heavens shall shake, and also the earth; and great tribulations shall be among the children of men, *but my people will I preserve.*”¹ We should take great comfort in this promise.

Though disasters completely disrupt “the even tenor of [our ways],”² they do not have to leave our lives forever shattered. They can “stir [us] up in remembrance,”³ “awaken [us] to a sense of [our] duty to God,”⁴ and keep us “in the path of [our] duty.”⁵

In Holland during World War II, the Casper ten Boom family used their home as a hiding place for those hunted by the Nazis. This was their way of living out their Christian faith. Four members of the family lost their lives for providing this refuge. Corrie ten Boom and her sister Betsie spent horrific months in the infamous Ravensbrück concentration camp. Betsie died there—Corrie survived.

In Ravensbrück, Corrie and Betsie learned that God helps us to forgive. Following the war, Corrie was determined to share this message. On one occasion, she had just spoken to a

group of people in Germany suffering from the ravages of war. Her message was “God forgives.” It was then that Corrie ten Boom’s faithfulness brought forth its blessing.

A man approached her. She recognized him as one of the cruelest guards in the camp. “You mentioned Ravensbrück in your talk,” he said. “I was a guard there. . . . But since that time, . . . I have become a Christian.” He explained that he had sought God’s forgiveness for the cruel things he had done. He extended his hand and asked, “Will you forgive me?”

Corrie ten Boom then said:
“It could not have been many

seconds that he stood there—hand held out—but to me it seemed hours as I wrestled with the most difficult thing I had ever had to do.

“. . . The message that God forgives has a . . . condition: that we forgive those who have injured us. . . .

“. . . ‘Help me!’ I prayed silently. ‘I can lift my hand. I can do that much. You supply the feeling.’

“. . . Woodenly, mechanically, I thrust my hand into the one stretched out to me. As I did, an incredible thing took place. The current started in my shoulder, raced down my arm, sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes.

“‘I forgive you, brother!’ I cried. ‘With all my heart.’

“For a long moment we grasped each other’s hands, the former guard and the former prisoner. I had never known God’s love so intensely, as I did then.”⁶

For those who eschew evil and live good lives, who strive for a brighter day and keep the commandments of God, things can get better and better even in the face of tragedy. The Savior showed us the way. From Gethsemane, the cross, and the tomb, He rose triumphant, bringing life and hope to us all. He bids us, “Come, follow me.”⁷

President Thomas S. Monson has counseled: “If we are to walk with head held high, we must make our contribution to life. If we are to fulfill our destiny and return to live with our Father in Heaven, we must keep His commandments and pattern our lives after the Savior. By so doing, we will not only achieve our goal of eternal life, but we will also leave the world richer and better than it would have been had we not *lived and performed our duties.*”⁸





In the Holy Bible are these inspired words: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for *this is the whole duty of man.*”⁹

What Is This Thing Called Duty?

The *duty* of which I speak is what we are expected to do and to be. It is a moral imperative summoning forth from individuals and communities that which is right, true, and honorable. Duty does not require perfection, but it does require diligence. It is not simply what is legal; it is what is virtuous. It is not reserved to the mighty or high in station but instead rests on a foundation of personal responsibility, integrity, and courage. Doing one’s duty is a manifestation of one’s faith.

President Monson said of it: “I love and cherish the noble word *duty.*”¹⁰ For members of the Church of Jesus Christ, our path of duty is keeping our covenants in daily life.

To Whom and to What Are We Duty Bound?

First, our path of duty is to God, our Eternal Father. He is the author of the plan of salvation, “the framer of heaven and earth,” the creator of Adam and Eve.¹¹ He is the fountain of truth,¹² the embodiment of love,¹³ and the reason there is redemption through Christ.¹⁴

Said President Joseph F. Smith: “All that we have comes from [God]. . . . In and of ourselves we are but a lifeless lump of clay. Life, intelligence, wisdom, judgment, power to reason, all are the gifts of God to the children of men. He gives us our physical strength as well as our mental powers. . . . We should honor God with our intelligence, with our strength, with our understanding, with our wisdom, and with all the power that we possess. We should seek to do good in the world. *This is our duty.*”¹⁵

One cannot do his or her duty to God the Father without doing likewise

to the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. To revere one requires reverence for the other, for the Father has appointed that it is only in and through the name of Christ that one can completely fulfill this dutiful charge.¹⁶ He is our Exemplar, our Redeemer, and our King.

As men and women and boys and girls do their duty to God, they feel impelled to do their duty to one another, to their family, to their church and nation, to all things entrusted to their care. They are duty bound to magnify their talents and to be a law-abiding, good people. They become humble, submissive, and easily entreated. Temperance conquers indulgence; obedience guides their diligence. Peace distills upon them. Citizens become loyal, communities become benevolent, and neighbors become friends. The God of heaven is pleased, the earth is pacified, and this world becomes a better place.¹⁷

How Do We Know Our Path of Duty in the Midst of Crisis?

We pray! It is everyone's sure way to know; it is everyone's lifeline to heaven. Said the Apostle Peter, "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers."¹⁸

Humble, sincere, inspired prayer makes available to each of us the divine guidance we so desperately need. Brigham Young counseled, "At times, men are perplexed and full of care and trouble . . . ; yet our judgment teaches us that *it is our duty to pray*."¹⁹

Jesus taught:

"Ye must watch and pray always lest ye enter into temptation; . . .

"Therefore ye must always pray unto the Father in my name; . . .

"Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed."²⁰

For prayers to be efficacious, they

must be in harmony with the plan of heaven. The prayer of faith bears fruit when such harmony exists, and this harmony exists when prayers are inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit manifests what our petitions should be.²¹ Absent this inspired guidance, we are inclined to "ask amiss,"²² to seek only our will and not "Thy will."²³ It is as important to be guided by the Holy Spirit while praying as it is to be enlightened by that same Spirit while receiving an answer to prayer. Such prayer brings forth the blessings of heaven because our Father "knoweth what things [we] have need of, before [we] ask him,"²⁴ and He answers every sincere prayer. Ultimately, it is the Father and the Son who promise, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."²⁵

I bear my witness that our path of duty is clearly marked by an undivided faith and belief in God, the

Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the power of prayer. This path is to be traveled by all of God's children who love Him and desire to keep His commandments. For the young, it leads to personal achievement and preparation; for adults, it leads to renewed faith and resolve; for the older generation, it leads to perspective and endurance in righteousness to the end. It equips every faithful traveler with the strength of the Lord, protects him from the evils of the day, and endows him with the knowledge that "the conclusion of the whole matter [is to] Fear God, and keep his commandments: for *this is the whole duty of man*."²⁶ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Moses 7:61; emphasis added.
2. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 156.
3. Mosiah 1:17.
4. Alma 7:22.
5. Helaman 15:5.
6. Corrie ten Boom, *Tramp for the Lord* (1974), 54–55.
7. Luke 18:22.
8. Thomas S. Monson, used with permission.
9. Ecclesiastes 12:13; emphasis added.
10. Thomas S. Monson, "Duty Calls," *Ensign*, May 1996, 43.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:17–19.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:36.
13. See 1 John 4:8.
14. See John 3:16; Helaman 5:10–11.
15. Joseph F. Smith, in Conference Report, Oct. 1899, 70; emphasis added.
16. See Moroni 10:32–33; Doctrine and Covenants 59:5.
17. See Alma 7:23, 27.
18. 1 Peter 3:12.
19. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 45; emphasis added.
20. 3 Nephi 18:18–19, 21.
21. See Doctrine and Covenants 50:29–30.
22. James 4:3.
23. Matthew 6:10.
24. Matthew 6:8.
25. Matthew 7:7; see also Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 7:12–13, in Bible appendix.
26. Ecclesiastes 12:13; emphasis added.

