



SHIELD OF FAITH

"Take Up the Shield of Faith" - Paul

Tuesday, November 12, 2019

So with you: when you have done all you have been told to do, say, "We are useless servants: we have done no more than our duty." — Luke 17:10

A Father's Love

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Theodore Roosevelt said, "In any moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right thing. The worst thing you can do is nothing." In my younger days my father would remind me of a maxim he picked up along the way, "Today is the first day of the rest of your life."

My dad is in his mid eighties. He has survived and seen much in his eight decades. I loathe to think that I added to his burden. I know that I did more than once. He gave me life, and has cared deeply for me in the nearly six decades that I've done my duty.

As often as we can we reach out to one another in the mornings on Google chat. It is meaningful to me that he has initiated that faithfully for so many years.

Flaws and weaknesses loom largest in those closest to us. It's helpful to be mindful of the counter-intuitive advice of Jesus Christ above when we are tempted to think less of others, "We are useless servants." I fell into the trap of some as I "matured." Knowing him best I developed the bad habit of thinking less of my Father than he deserved.

He is a wise and loving man. He worked faithfully for a lifetime. He stayed close to my mom, who is also in her eighth decade. Their marriage is something to which I aspire with my whole heart. Over five decades of being together, loving one another.

I will never know the shattering consequence of divorce, something God says that He hates. Having witnessed those consequences in people close to me I am thankful. I'm sure that my parents, if asked, would say of their marriage, "We have done no more than our duty." They are not proud people.

They raised me in the United Methodist Church down the road from our house in Maryland. They volunteered there providing a living example of today's central idea in the words of Jesus Christ, "When you have done all you have been told to do say, 'We are useless servants: we have done no more than our duty.'"

They never bragged about their work or service. They always did their religious duty without complaint. They do so today, attending a local church faithfully. Dad often mentions the fact that he prays for me.

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My dad's childhood was shattered by divorce. His parents abandoned him at a young age. He lived with his grandparents for years as a child, and then pretty much raised himself and his sister as he reached his majority. When he became a father he dedicated himself to being present and stable for my brother and me. He has always done so with the attitude recommended here by Jesus Christ. He views himself as a useless servant, doing no more than his duty.

After failures and disappointments ... and we all experience those regularly ... he would follow his own advice to me. He picks himself up, dusts himself off, and reminds himself that today is the first day of the rest of his life. He gets on with it.

Later in life God has allowed him to carry quite a cross. Cancer and crones disease wreaked havoc on his body. He suffers daily without complaint doing the next right thing. He faithfully performs his duties in his marriage to mom, and in the various church and community functions in which he participates.

When he was a teenager living in Florida another young man became a confidant and friend ... something he needed at that time in his life. They drifted apart. Time and distance caused them to lose touch. Not long after my parents retired to a home in Florida their paths crossed once again. Their absence from one another spanned fifty years.

They've spent the last decade reconnecting as friends. Both men built marriages that lasted over a half century. The wives became close. My Dad's friend has failing health. His wife passed on to her reward a couple of weeks ago.

It takes courage to live into old age.

My Father is showing me the way to do it with grace and strength, as he always has. I love him. Truly He has served in so many ways as an image of my heavenly Father. Thank you Jesus.

Amen.

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