

On Christ Salvation Rests Secure

Samuel Medley (1738–1799)

On Christ salvation rests secure;
the Rock of Ages must endure;
nor can that faith be overthrown
which rests upon the "Living Stone."

No other hope shall intervene;
to Him we look, on Him we lean;
other foundations we disown
and build on Christ the "Living Stone."

In Him, it is ordained to raise
a temple to Jehovah's praise
composed of all the saints, who own
no Savior but the "Living Stone."

View the vast building, see it rise;
the work how great! the plan how wise!
O wondrous fabric, pow'r unknown
that rests it on the "Living Stone."

But most adore His precious name;
His glory and His grace proclaim;
for us, condemned, despised, undone,
He gave Himself, the "Living Stone."

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

In the Nick of Time

Knowing God's Will: Part Three

Kevin T. Bauder

John Buck is a manager for a national corporation where he has been advancing through the ranks. One day his boss stops by to offer John a new position as manager of a plant in a distant part of the country. The job comes with a pay increase of \$15,000 per year. John has one week to give his boss an answer.

Both John and his wife, Anne, believe that he is ready to take on the responsibility. If he rejects the promotion he might not be given another chance. They are concerned, however, about their three teenage children, all of whom would be pulled out of their schools in the middle of the year. Their concerns increase when, after investigating the city where they would be living, they cannot find a rightly-ordered New Testament church with a pastor who actually preaches the Bible.

Their present church is small, but its members are committed to the Lord and its pastor expounds the Scriptures accurately, applies them well, and is deeply interested in the congregation's lives. John has served this church as a deacon for ten years. Anne is the church's only accompanist. Many of the other members are retirees. They support the church, but the Bucks' giving makes a significant difference.

John and Anne believe that God has a specific direction for them in this choice. They genuinely want to follow the Lord's leading. They are already trying to obey as much of the Bible's teaching as they understand. What considerations will help them to determine how God might direct in their present circumstances?

One question they might ask is this: "What are my duties?" Every duty is an obligation, a responsibility that people owe to themselves or others. All people have duties. They owe responsibilities to God, nation, family, church, and calling. Some duties are intrinsic and inescapable. Others are freely assumed but binding once accepted. For example, vows are not normally obligatory, but once sworn become compulsory (Num. 30).

What duties do the Bucks owe? How should those duties affect John's choice about the new job?



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Clearly John and Anne owe a duty to their three teenage children. As parents they are responsible to rear their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). While the text of Scripture does not specify every method by which that is done, John and Anne can easily foresee the disruption that will follow if they pull their children away from their school and established home in the middle of the school year.

Furthermore, the responsibility to make disciples does not belong to parents alone (Mt. 28:19-20). Making disciples is the business of local churches, and without a good church discipleship almost always suffers. If John and Anne cannot find (or plant) a good church, then they and their children will lose an important center of spiritual nourishment, encouragement, warning, instruction, shared labor, and corporate worship. This deficiency will certainly affect the entire family.

The Bucks also owe something to their present congregation. Joining a church is not like joining a club. One becomes a member of a New Testament church by covenant. A covenant is an oath or vow that the members swear to one another. It affirms their intention together to be a church and defines what their relationship as members will look like. While a church covenant is not a lifelong obligation, it is not a casual obligation and it should not be easily abandoned. If John and Anne move away, they will leave a void that cannot be easily filled.

On the other hand, John does not have a duty to make more money or to advance in the company. Of course, he does owe some level of loyalty and cooperation to his employers. Unless he is bound in some way (such as a contract), this obligation is lesser and more relative than the others. Sometimes, however, a duty to an employer may become completely inflexible, such as when the National Guard deploys its soldiers. Those circumstances eliminate the dilemma because they eliminate the choice. As the quip goes, "No choice, no problem."

Sometimes circumstances simply do away with all choices. When that happens, believers can be sure that God is providentially directing their lives, even if the circumstances are terrible. Now they are no longer seeking God's direction, but seeking ways to glorify Him under the circumstances into which He has directed them. They must do the best they can with a bad situation for as long as they have to, but when they are once again free to choose for themselves they should make the choice that enables them to fulfill the greatest number of duties in the best way possible.

Occasionally the difficult circumstances may be the result of previous bad choices. For example, a seminarian who goes into debt will be less free to follow the Lord's leading into a small pastorate or onto the mission field. Borrowers are enslaved to lenders (Prov. 22:7). A person who owes money will be working for the creditor until the debt is paid. God's will for an

indebted person is to repay all that is owed as quickly as possible. Until that step has been taken, debtors lack freedom to choose. Their duty is to pay what they owe.

Any effort to discern God's leading for particular choices should begin with the question, "What are my duties?" God does not lead His people to neglect their duties, and duties are manifold. Christians cannot rightly plead God's will as an excuse to escape from the obligations that they owe.

Everyone has duties. Finding God's direction must begin by acknowledging those duties and seeking to fulfill them. Christians who develop a keen sense of duty and a determination to fulfill all duties often find that many seemingly-difficult choices are simply eliminated. Discovering God's leading will become a much simpler process.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
