

## **The Christians' Duties As To God, The World, And Their Brethren.**

Text: Rom 12:1-6

Suggested Hymns:

39, 261, 377, 294, 344

1) To Present Their Bodies To God A Living Sacrifice

2) Do Not Be Conformed To The World

3) To Show Humility And Love

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Romans 12:1-6, *<sup>1</sup> I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. <sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

*<sup>3</sup> For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.*

*<sup>4</sup> For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. <sup>6</sup> Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

*<sup>1</sup> I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God.*

These words are the introduction to the second part of Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

There are two parts in this Epistle. In the first eleven chapters, the Christian doctrine of justification by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is set forth, and in the last five chapters Christians are reminded of their duties, and shown how they must conduct themselves in the world.

And how unassumingly the great Apostle addresses the Christians when he begins to exhort and admonish them! He says, *I beseech you therefore,*

*brethren*. He does not command as Moses did in the Law; he beseeches. He does not place himself above those whom he exhorts and admonishes, but calls them brethren, members of the same family with him, and places himself on the same level with them.

And why does he expect the Christians, the readers of his Epistle, to heed those exhortations and admonitions which he now begins to set forth in his Epistle? Not because he had authority over them, not because he is the greatest of the Apostles, whose words should not be cast into the winds, but taken heed of and followed. No; he says, *I beseech you ... by the mercies of God*.

The mercies of God which in glowing words he had set forth in the first part of his Epistle speak for themselves. They speak a language which cannot fail to touch the Christian's heart, and which must induce them to follow after holiness. Here we have the motive from which the performance of Christian duties should flow, the mercies of God. Many duties are placed upon Christians in this present world. But whatever we are exhorted and admonished to do in our Christian calling, nothing we should do for the sake of gain or reward.

Gratitude should prompt us. The mercies of God should induce us to do those things that are required of us. How merciful God has been to us! Daily He provides for all our bodily needs. And can any language in the world describe His mercy in the great work of our redemption? God's mercy and love has been so great that He gave us His only-begotten Son who bled and died on the cross for our sins and gained for us all, eternal life. How can we ever sufficiently thank God for that?

Let us perform our Christian duties, then, from thankfulness for the mercies of God which we have received. Let us consider *The Christians' Duties As To God, The World, And Their Brethren*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. The Christians' Duties As To God To Present Their Bodies Unto Him A Living Sacrifice.**

The Christians' duties as to God are set forth in this way, "*that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*"

The first duty of the Christians is, that they present their bodies to God as a living sacrifice. What does that mean? In the Old Testament the sacrifice was

the leading feature of the religious service. Daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly, on various, on ever-recurring occasions, the altar of the temple ran with blood from the dead bodies of slain beasts and birds. The temple was one vast slaughter-house.

But these sacrifices pointed to Christ. They prefigured and foreshadowed the great sacrifice which the Son of God was to offer. And when Christ had sacrificed His own body on the altar of the cross for the sins of the world, no more typical sacrifices, no more sacrifices of beasts, were to be brought.

What is wanted now, says the Apostle, are your bodies, not the bodies of beasts and birds, but your bodies living, not dead. This is the sacrificing which Christians must do in the time of the New Testament that you make a sacrifice of your own bodies and present them to God.

How can we do that? How can we present our bodies to God a living sacrifice? Are we to build altars for human sacrifices? Are we to have our own bodies burned to death to please God?

This is what the heathen actually do. The highest point in their religious service is the human sacrifice. When all other means to please their imaginary gods have been exhausted, when their prayers, and offerings, and self-inflicted punishments bring no good results, the last resort and the praise-worthiest deed is the human sacrifice.

In the wilds of Africa they sometimes slay many captives in their idolatrous services, and in India the holiest act which the Hindu can do is to be crushed to death under the wheels of the idol's wagon, or to drown himself in the holy river Ganges. But how can such an act of self-destruction please the great God in heaven?

This is surely not the living sacrifice of our bodies which we should present to God. It is a vain service, and a service suggested by superstition and religious frenzy.

But ours is to be a "*reasonable*," that is, a rational service, when we present our bodies a living sacrifice. We are not to destroy our bodies in sacrificing them, but to keep them alive. We are to dedicate our bodies with their members to the living God. We are to make of our bodies temples of God wherein He alone is served.

We are to give our hearts to God, that is, we are to give our love to Him and to worship Him not mechanically, but from the depth of our soul, as He Himself demands when He says in Proverbs 23:26, <sup>26</sup> *My son, give me your heart, And let your eyes observe my ways.*

Sacrifice the eyes to God, that is, *if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you*<sup>1</sup> which means, do not be misled by the lust of the eye, but use that member to read God's Word and to contemplate the Creator's great work.

Sacrifice the ears, that is, turn away the ear from temptation, and flattery, and blasphemy, and all that is harmful to your soul, and use that member to hear the Word of God and to receive instruction for eternal life.

Sacrifice the hands, that is, refrain from evil deeds. We read in Ephesians 4:28, <sup>28</sup> *Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.*

Sacrifice the feet, that is, Do not *walk in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stand in the path of sinners,*<sup>2</sup> but as we read in Ecclesiastes 5:1, <sup>1</sup> *Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear..*

Sacrifice the mouth, that is, <sup>29</sup> *Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.*<sup>3</sup>

In short, crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts, and render to God the service of your whole body. This is the living sacrifice you are to bring to God. This is your Christian duty as to God, which is, indeed, a holy sacrifice, a sacrifice opposed to sin in every form.

And it is acceptable to God, and pleasing to Him because in every detail it conforms to His will as expressed in the holy Ten Commandments. It is a reasonable service because it is entirely free from superstition and from all those eccentricities which characterise heathen worship.

## **2. The Christians' Duties As To The World Do Not Be Conformed To It.**

Christians also have duties as to the world. These duties are set forth in the second part of our Epistle.

The Apostle says, <sup>2</sup> *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

*Do not be conformed to this world!* How necessary this exhortation is for Christians in our day! The spirit of the world is the spirit of egotism, to render evil for evil, to fare sumptuously every day, to be proud and assuming in dress and manners, to chase after wealth, and to seek honour and glory before men.

The spirit of the world is to look upon the hereafter as something doubtful and uncertain at least, if not altogether fictitious and imaginary, and therefore to be indifferent and not to care for that life which is to come, but to be perfectly satisfied with this present life, and to make the best of it in the way of eating, drinking and being merry.

*Do not be conformed to this world.* How necessary is this exhortation! In former years, the Christians would flock to the churches, and keep to themselves, and associate with themselves, and separate themselves from the children of this world!

They would not miss a Divine Service, and would be in the house of God every time, if possible, and would shun those places where the children of this world seek their enjoyment in the lusts of the flesh. Why are the churches often so empty in our days? Why are so many people so irregular in their attendance, coming only now and then?

Why do they not hesitate a moment to go to places where the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life are the leading features? It is because the Christians in our days are so much filled with the spirit of this world, because more and more they are being conformed to this world, because they are ceasing more and more to be heavenly-minded and grow more and more worldly-minded.

And how necessary for us all to be on our guard and to heed the Word of God which says in 1 John 2:16-17, <sup>16</sup> *For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is*

*of the world. <sup>17</sup> And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.*

Our Christian duty, as to the world, is that we *be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

We Christians should show to the children of this world that we are being motivated by an altogether different spirit than theirs, that we are being governed, not by egotism and gratification of fleshly desires, but by the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God, that we do not seek the things on the earth, but those things that are above where Christ sits at the right hand of God.

We should not be conformed to the world and be drawn into the world, but make a firm stand for principle, and by our example of a truly Christian life draw as many as we can of the children of this world into our Christian ranks. This is our duty as to the world.

### **3. The Christians' Duties As To Their Brethren To Show Humility And Love.**

And Christians have duties as to their brethren. This is the third part of our consideration.

The Apostle says, <sup>3</sup> *For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.*

<sup>4</sup> *For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. <sup>6</sup> Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them.*

Here two things are pointed out constituting the Christians' duties as to their brethren, humility and love.

First humility. No Christian should think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but should think soberly. What is the cause of most of the disturbances in Christian congregations? Is it not pride and self-assertion?

A person may be ever so good and ever so sincere a Christian, but still he is not perfect in this life. He is in the flesh, and in his flesh *nothing good dwells.*<sup>4</sup>

How easily he is led to exalt himself above his brethren and to think himself better than others!

And when he is not honoured as he thinks he should be, he feels hurt and offended, and his wounded pride prompts him to words and acts which better had been unsaid and undone.

Especially in the case of Christian admonition, when a Christian must admonish a member who has committed a wrong, he should be very careful not to do that in an overbearing spirit, but let him feel that he is truly sorry for the offender, and that he desires to help and to save him.

The Apostle says in Galatians 6:1, ***<sup>1</sup> Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.***

What a nice thing if the spirit of meekness rests upon all the members of a Christian congregation so that no one thinks himself more than the other, and all serve one another in true humility! Humility is our Christian duty as to our brethren.

And love, love manifested in helping one another and doing good. The Apostle pictures the Christian congregation as a human body. There are different members of the body. Each member has its function and its special use. And how harmoniously these different members of the body work together! Eyes, ears, hands, and feet, continually help one another.

It should be like this in a Christian congregation. Every member has his or her place and sphere in the body, whether in office or out of office. If you do not hold a position to teach or are an office bearer in the church, you have been endowed with other gifts with which you can serve the congregation. You can pray. You can lead by a good example. You can speak for your church when an opportunity is presented. You can give for the support of the church.

And so we should all work together in love, one to another, as members of the same body. This, is what the Word of God demands of us; for it distinctly says in 1 Corinthians 12:25–26, ***<sup>25</sup> that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. <sup>26</sup> And if one***

*member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.*

And in Galatians 6:10 we are told, <sup>10</sup> *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.* This is our Christian duty as to our brethren.

May the Lord grant to us all, His grace that by a faithful performance of our Christian duties as to God, to the world, and to our brethren we show our thankfulness to Him whose mercy has saved us, and who of His free grace has given us life and salvation. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 18:9

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 1:1

<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 4:29

<sup>4</sup> Romans 7:18