

A Call To Duty

Romans 13:11-14

Several years ago, while serving as pastor of a Baptist church near Oxford, NC, I was elected to serve as vice-president of the local pastor's conference. For one of the monthly meetings, I asked one of my seminary professors – Dr. John Wayland – to speak. The program proved to be a God-send for me. It happened to come at a time that I was beginning to feel overwhelmed because of all the work that I knew needed to be done. I hope I never forget how Dr. Wayland started his message that day. He said: “This is a great time to be alive! As I see it, there are more opportunities for service now than ever before.”

This is a message for Christian people. This message is a call to duty for God's people today. Opportunities for Christian service are before us perhaps as never before. This fact reminds me of Paul's advice to the church members at Rome in Romans 13:11-14. Paul issues a strong call to duty to Christians in the church at Rome. His call to duty contains three demands which apply to us today.

- I. Paul demands that we as Christian people “awake from spiritual sleep.” He writes: “It is high time to awake out of sleep.” The forces of sin and evil which are at work in our world today are strong and effective with their message and in the use of their methods. In face of these challenges, we need to understand that Christian duty demands wide awake Christians. Yet, we spend too much time in spiritual slumber. The time has truly come when Christian people must let the Holy Spirit shake us loose from spiritual slumber and motivate us to be about the Father's business.
- II. Paul demands that we as Christian people turn from sin and evil and let God prepare us for service. He writes: “Let us cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armor of light.” In order to fulfill our responsibilities, we must be spiritually prepared. We cannot dispel darkness with darkness. Darkness is dispelled with light. Jesus Christ is the light of the world. It is our duty to share His light with a dark world.
- III. Paul says that being effective in rendering spiritual service demands that we be Christ-like. He writes: “Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.” In fulfilling our Christian duty, we have a perfect example – Jesus Christ. We are to be like Him. Like Christ, we are to love God with our total being. Like Him, we are to love our neighbors even as ourselves. Like Him, we are to fulfill the will of God. Like Him, we are to be spiritually minded as we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and trust God to supply our needs. Like Him, we must give ourselves without reservation to God and allow God to lead us out into the fields of service which are now ready for the harvest.

Several years ago – while attending a meeting of the N.C. Baptist State Convention – I was blessed to hear a message by Dr. Porter Routh, who served then as Secretary-Treasurer of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention. As a conclusion to his address, Dr. Routh told of serious floods in one location. He talked about the great damage done to churches in that area caused by the flood. Responding to a call for help, two hundred (200) from the Southern Baptist Convention volunteered to go and help meet some of the needs. One of the volunteers was a master plumber from Nashville, Tennessee. When he got to his place of service a man was helping this plumber survey the damage to a building when the plumber said: “Show me the furnace room. I want to get the furnace repaired so we can get some heat in here and dry out some of this moisture.” In response, the man handed the master plumber a shovel and said: “Man, before you can even get to the furnace we’ve got to shovel out the mud.” Sharing this experience with Dr. Routh after he returned home the man said: “Why here at home I would not shovel mud for \$500.00 a day. I am a master plumber. Somebody else does all the dirty work. But on that mission trip I took that shovel and began to scoop out that mud.” And then the man said: “You see, Mr. Routh, because I had given myself, I could forget myself.”

“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul.”

Let us give ourselves to God in complete surrender and then let us forget ourselves as we literally lose ourselves in fulfilling our great and demanding Christian duties.

Reverend Phillip R. Morrow Sr.