

Duty

David Flatt

By now, everyone has seen or read news coverage of the death of Queen Elizabeth. She served as Queen for seventy years. Throughout her reign, she often spoke of an abiding sense of duty and service. On her twenty-first birthday, she said, "I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family to which we all belong."

As the Queen grew older, some would speculate about her stepping down from the throne. However, this was never an option. English monarchs understand their roles differently than elected officials. They view their ascension to the throne as a divine appointment. When Elizabeth became Queen, she was anointed and took vows to God. Therefore, Queen Elizabeth ruled from a deep sense of duty to God and her nation until her death.

There is another means by which a monarch can leave power: abdication. However, do not confuse abdication with retirement. Abdication is a failure to fulfill one's duty or responsibility. The action is dishonorable and shameful. When Queen Elizabeth was a little girl, her uncle, King Edward VIII abdicated the throne. This was the scandal of the century in England. Upon choosing to forsake his duties, the king was stripped of all rights and privileges and became an outcast to his family and nation. He spent the rest of his life in France. Edward's abdication had a deep influence on Queen Elizabeth's keen awareness of duty.

Our lives as Christians must be understood in the sacred terms of honor, duty, and service. Our place in God's family is the result of divine ordination. Notice the language Paul used to describe the Christians in Corinth: "But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11). By faith in Christ, God cleanses and consecrates us to His service. We spend our lives doing His good work; offering spiritual service (Rom. 12:1).

Our Duties

There are many duties and responsibilities we are to fulfill as Christians. The execution of our duties requires love and sacrifice. We must have love for God and our fellow man in seeking their best interest. We must sacrificially serve by giving our time, energy, and resources. Consider the following duties of Christians.

1. We have a duty to worship. Worship is about praising our Creator for how he has blessed us. There are many blessings that God has brought into our lives. Most importantly, our worship is about praising God for our salvation in His Son. Paul praised God in response to sending the world Jesus, our Savior. He wrote, "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" "Or who has given a gift to him

that he might be repaid?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen" (Rom. 11:33-36).

2. We have a duty to the Church. The Church was purchased and made possible by the death of Jesus (Acts 20:28). This relationship has been provided for God's glory on the earth and for our encouragement. The Church is not a monolithic structure or shadowy institution of self-serving power. The Church is the body of Christ; the brotherhood of saints.

The Church is where we serve Christ and one another. We cannot have Christ without the Church. If we are not actively participating with the Church, we do not have Christ.

3. We have a duty to the Gospel. Fulfilling this duty begins by applying the Gospel to our lives, individually. The Gospel is about making that which is old, new: reversing the consequences of sin, decay, and death. Living the Gospel is about repenting of sin and embarking on godliness. Our transformation, our growth in the image of Christ, can only occur when we daily engage in repentance and renewal.

Also, our duty to the Gospel involves evangelism. The Gospel is intended to be both lived and proclaimed. Living the Gospel gives credibility to our proclamation of its truth. The apostles were the first charged to preach the Gospel. When people believed and obeyed the Gospel, the Church grew. Today, the growth of the Church correlates to the teaching and preaching of the Gospel.

Paul recognized his duty to preach the Gospel. He wrote, "...Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16). Paul had an inescapable sense of duty towards preaching the Gospel. Preaching the Gospel was a sacred stewardship entrusted by God to him (1 Cor. 9:17). This sacred trust has been committed to us. We must actively fulfill our responsibility to teach the Gospel.

Conclusion

Our lives as Christians must be understood through the framework of sacred duty. By faith in Christ, God has ordained us to His kingdom. We are part of a royal priesthood. Therefore, we must serve. We cannot lay aside our duties. We cannot neglect our duties. We cannot have someone else fulfill our duties. If we do, we abdicate our responsibilities.

Abdicating our responsibilities will result in God stripping us of all rights and privileges. We will become an outcast. In the Parable of the Talents, Jesus condemned the unprofitable servant. He said, "Cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 25:30).

In Paul's second letter to Timothy, he wrote, "...discharge all the duties of your ministry" (2 Tim. 4:5 NIV). One commentator wrote, "Let there be no stint of ministerial labor, but carry it out in its completeness, and to the end" (Pulpit Commentary). There is no break. There is no vacation. There is no substitute. There is no retirement. There is no resignation. There is only duty.

If we have neglected our duties to God, His Church, and His message, we must repent. If we have been out of service, we must be restored to faithfulness. We must be awakened to our sacred responsibilities. We must become diligent in discharging our duties as Christians, members of God's royal priesthood. We must obey the words of Jesus: "We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work" (John 9:4).