

## **Admonitions Addressed To Pastors And Their Assistants, And To Members Of Christian Congregations..**

Text: Rom 12:6-16  
Suggested Hymns:  
47, 134, 588, 383, 381

- 1) Admonitions Addressed To Pastors And Their Assistants
- 2) Admonitions Addressed To Members Of Christian Congregations

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 12:6–16, *<sup>6</sup> Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; <sup>7</sup> or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; <sup>8</sup> he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*

*<sup>9</sup> Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup> Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; <sup>11</sup> not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; <sup>12</sup> rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; <sup>13</sup> distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.*

*<sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup> Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. (NKJV)*

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

Dear friends in Christ,

Many admonitions are contained in this Epistle. To understand these admonitions we must look at the context. In the preceding verses, the latter part of last Sunday's Epistle, Paul says, *<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>1</sup> And our text continues today, <sup>6</sup> ***Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them.***

The Apostle pictures the Christian congregation as a human body. There are different members of the body, and each member has its own function, and serves the whole body in its own particular way. The eye sees, the ear hears, the hands grasp, the feet walk, the mouth speaks, and whatever a member of the body does, it is done not for the benefit of that member only, but for the benefit of the whole body.

Exactly the same thing you have in the Christian congregation, says the Apostle. The congregation is a body, a mystic body, whose head is Christ, and every one of you is a member of that body, and has his or her function to serve the whole body.

In a Christian congregation there are pastors, teachers, elders, and other officers. There are parents and children, husbands and wives, young people and old people. Every one has his or her particular station or sphere. Every one is endowed with some gift that may benefit the congregation.

And what use should the members make of these gifts? Every one should serve the congregation to the best of his ability, according to the grace that is given to him. Every one should contribute to the edifying of the Church.

To impress this on the minds of the Christians, the Apostle addresses a number of admonitions to those that constitute a Christian congregation, whether in office or out of office, to the pastor and his assistants and to the members.

Let us consider, then, *Paul's Admonitions Addressed To Pastors And Their Assistants, And To Members Of Christian Congregations*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. Admonitions Addressed To Pastors And Their Assistants.**

To whom does Paul address his admonitions in the first part of our Epistle? The very first verse tells us. He says, *if prophecy*, (that is, if any one has the gift of prophecy) *let us prophesy in proportion to our faith*.

Here prophesy does not mean to foretell the future, but to explain and apply the Holy Scripture, as the Apostle explains the word when in his First Epistle to the Corinthians he says,<sup>2</sup> *But he who prophesies speaks edification and*

**exhortation and comfort to men.** Who performs this function in the Church? Who holds this office, to speak to people for their edification, exhortation, and comfort, to explain to them the Holy Scriptures, and to preach the Word? The called ministers of Christ, the pastors.

To them and their assistants Paul addresses all those admonitions which we find in the first part of our Epistle. All these admonitions have reference to the ministerial office. For the ministerial office comprises of many functions.

The chief function is to teach, that is, to preach the Word of God, and to administer the holy Sacraments. But then there are many other functions that pertain to the ministry. The individual members must be looked after. Exhortation is often necessary. The poor and needy must be cared for. The sick and dying must be attended to. The finances of the church must be regulated. There must be a certain form of government that all things may be done decently and in order.

In the very beginning of the Christian Church the first pastors, the holy Apostles, performed all these functions. They preached, and exhorted, and managed the finances, and collected and provided for the poor, and attended to everything.

But when they had formed the first Christian congregation in the city of Jerusalem, they saw that it was neither possible nor proper for them to perform all these functions which pertain to the holy ministry. And what did they do? They called a congregational meeting and said, as we read in Acts 6:2-4, ***“It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. <sup>3</sup> Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; <sup>4</sup> but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”***

Hereupon the congregation chose assistants for the Apostles, and thus the different offices were created which to this day we have in the Church, the office of elders, teachers, and so forth. All these offices pertain to the holy ministry and are under the pastor’s supervision.

When, therefore, the Apostle says, ***if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith*** he is telling us, “Let those who are prophets, or ministers

of Christ, be careful that they are not false prophets. Let them prophesy according to the proportion of faith, that is, their explanation and application of the Scripture, their doctrine and preaching, should be in strict conformity with the Christian faith as it is set forth in the plain words of the Bible.”

When he says, *or ministry, let us use it in our ministering*” he is telling us, “Let those whom the congregation has chosen as the pastor’s assistants and helpers, the elders, faithfully attend to their duties with conscientiousness and not neglect their office to the detriment of the church.”

When he says, *he who teaches, in teaching*, he is telling us, “If any one has been chosen to teach in the Church, to instruct others in Christian doctrine, as we have teachers in schools and teachers in our Sunday-schools, let them wait on teaching, let them fulfil their office with diligence and faithfulness.”

When the Apostle says, <sup>8</sup> *he who exhorts, in exhortation* he is telling us, “If you have been chosen to exhort and admonish others, because they neglect their duty, or because they have given offence, or commit a great wrong, and thereby bring shame upon the congregation — if you hold such an office in the church, wait on exhortation, attend to your duty with fearlessness, and do not afraid be to speak to the wrong-doers.”

The Apostle continues, *he who gives, with liberality*. Here liberality means simplicity. It has nothing to do with the size or the value of the gift imparted but refers to the giver’s own motivation. That must be single, not double, not covertly seeking to secure credit, praise, honour, or reward for whatever he gives. If a congregation has a fund for the poor it is to be distributed, not showing favouritism and not exalting themselves above the poor.

When the Apostle says, *he who leads, with diligence*, he includes all those people who take part in the general management of the congregation, the chairman, the secretary, the treasurer, the Sunday-school teachers, the wardens, and the various committees chosen at different occasions and for different purposes. All these he instructs to perform their respective duties with diligence, with energy and zeal for the welfare of the church.

When, finally, the Apostle says, *he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness* he refers to those that were appointed, in the early Christian congregations, to look after the sick and to visit them. Formerly there were no special societies looking

after the sick, but the Christian congregations took this matter in hand, and to this day there are Christian congregations with a system of members to visit the sick.

The Apostle admonishes these to perform their duty with cheerfulness, and to remember that in showing mercy they minister to the Lord Himself who says in Matthew 25:36, *I was sick and you visited Me*; and in Matthew 25:40, *Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.*'

## **2. Admonitions Addressed To Members Of Christian Congregations.**

Having addressed the pastors and their assistants, the Apostle turns to the members in the second part of our Epistle, to all the members, whether they be in office or out of office, and addresses to them various admonitions as to brotherly love, general duties, and special duties.

Of brotherly love he says, <sup>9</sup> *Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.* <sup>10</sup> *Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.*

As members of a Christian congregation are bound together by the tie of a common faith, so they should be bound together by the tie of mutual love. They should be as one family. The Apostle therefore says, <sup>9</sup> *Let love be without hypocrisy*, that is, it should be sincere and real, as brothers and sisters should love one another in a family.

Such love will manifest itself in abhorring that which is evil, and clinging to that which is good. We do not love our brothers and sisters in the congregation if we do not warn them when we see them doing evil.

Sometimes a member of a Christian congregation is fully aware of an evil deed which a fellow-Christian committed. But he does not say a word to him about it. He is afraid to hurt his feelings, or afraid that he will be told to 'mind his own business' and to sweep away the dirt from his own door. And the evildoer may think that the fellow-Christian who says nothing to him is his true friend, and loves him and means well with him.

But that is not love. Brotherly love cannot see the brother continue in the course of sin. Brotherly love will restore him in the spirit of meekness. And not only to his special friends will a true Christian show brotherly love, but to all the

members of the congregation, being kindly affectionate to them, as the Apostle says, looking upon them as his dear brothers and sisters who are travelling with him the same way to eternal life, who eat with him of the same bread and drink of the same cup in the Lord's Supper, who are more intimately connected with him than others in the world.

There should be no divisions in a Christian congregation, no factions, no cliques separating themselves from the rest, but all should be as one family *in honor giving preference to one another*. In other words honour the other person more than yourself.

From brotherly love the Apostle turns to some general duties that devolve upon the Christians in life. He says, <sup>11</sup> *not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;* <sup>12</sup> *rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer.*

Members of the Christian congregation should not be slothful in business, that is, in their Christian calling they should be diligent and work for their Master while it is day, before the night comes when no man can work.

They should be fervent in spirit, that is, they should not be lazy, taking no interest in the church to which they belong, but let the Spirit of God fill them with zeal and take a lively interest in all the affairs of the congregation.

They should be serving the Lord, that is, worshipping Him both in the house of God by a regular attendance and in their own homes by family prayer.

They should be patient in tribulation, bearing with Christian fortitude all their crosses, and firmly believing that all things must work together for good to those who love God.

And they should continue steadfastly in prayer, praying daily, especially in the morning when they rise, and in the evening when they retire, and at their meals, and no less in the quiet place, confiding to their heavenly Father all their troubles and cares.

Finally, the Apostle mentions a few special duties that devolve upon the members. He says, <sup>13</sup> *distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.* <sup>14</sup> *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.* <sup>15</sup> *Rejoice with those*

*who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.* <sup>16</sup> *Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble.*

The members of a Christian congregation should distribute to the necessity of saints, and the saints are not the dead saints, but the living saints, the Christians who are sinners in themselves, but saints in the sight of God, because God does not lay their sins to their charge for His dear Son's sake in whom they believe.

They should distribute to the necessity of saints, that is, when any Christian is in trouble, in distress, in want and need, they should be quick to help and assist him. They should be given to hospitality, and gladly receive into their homes and shelter those who are homeless and friendless.

They should be kind and forgiving to their enemies, returning good for evil, blessing those who persecute them. They should be of the same mind one toward another, unanimous in matters of faith and doctrine, and yielding to the majority in temporal matters.

They should be filled with sympathy, and not be envious when others have joy, but rejoice with those who rejoice, nor be unfeeling when others have sorrow, but weep with those who weep. They should not be ambitious and high minded, with the aim and object to be great and high up in the world, putting themselves forward, but should condescend to men of low estate, and humble themselves, showing true humility to their brethren.

So today we have heard a number of admonitions addressed to, the pastors and their assistants, and to the members of Christian congregations. May the Lord grant us His grace to heed them with a sincere mind that we may daily improve in our Christian walk and conversation to the honour and glory of His holy name. 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> Romans 12:4-5

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:3