

In step with Jesus 187

22/2/26

Key Text: For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love. (Galatians 5:6)

Introduction

Last week we started reading Romans chapter 14. We read the first twelve verses where Paul addressed the issue of individual choices, and personal convictions with respect to what to eat, and observance of special days. Paul highlights the fact that people's choices of what to eat and not to eat reflects their level of faith, but he also emphasized that judgement belongs to God. As followers of Jesus Christ, we must be aware that the people we meet on our journey of faith do not always have the same level of faith as we do. The things that are acceptable to us may not be acceptable to others and the things we find easy to adapt to may be difficult for others, hence God calls us to love rather than being judgemental or forcing others to conform to our ideas of godly living.

Today's reading is a continuation of Paul's discussion on how to relate with fellow believers, but it presents another interesting twist to the concept of faith and love in the household of God. Let us read Romans 14:13-23 and see what we can learn for ourselves.

Romans 14: 13- 23

¹³ Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. ¹⁴ I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. ¹⁵ For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. ¹⁶ So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. ¹⁷ For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. ¹⁹ So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

²⁰ Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. ²¹ It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble. ²² The faith that you have, keep between yourself and

God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves. ²³ But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin. ^[d]

Reflections

In verses one to twelve of Romans chapter fourteen, Paul focused on what we must not do as God's people, that is, we must not pass judgement on others. But from verse thirteen, he turns the conversation towards what we must do, and the crux of the message is that we have personal responsibilities for the salvation of others. While we must not judge others for what they eat or drink nor allow others to judge us for what we eat or drink, we must not also eat or drink anything that will constitute a hindrance or an obstacle to our brothers and sisters' faith journey. In other words, while we have liberty in Christ to live free of human judgement, we are to lovingly consider other people's feelings in whatever we do. We cannot use our freedom or faith as an occasion to make others fall. Paul concludes by stating that while eating and drinking are important parts of life, the main focus of the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. The good news here is that if we serve God in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost we shall be acceptable to both God and man.

Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost are simply the manifestations of love. Love, therefore, is the essence of the kingdom of God, and love is the mechanism through which we demonstrate faith in the grace we have received from God. Having established, in previous chapters, that we are saved by grace through faith and not by the works of the law, Paul again, places faith and love at the centre of all we do, but in the text, we read, he clarifies how true faith works. According to Paul, our faith should be personal but not necessarily hidden. We show our faith, not by words, not by what we eat or drink, but by acts of love. In fact, faith works by love. It is not faith unless the motive behind it is love and it produces loving actions. In other words, faith does not work unless love is present, and when love is present, faith transforms us into loving, lovable saints of God.

Friends there is so much pain and sadness in the world we live in today. We need loving and lovable saints of God, and I want to be one of them. I hope and pray you will also choose to be one of them as we jointly pray that God will enable us to be the people He wants us to be.