

In step with Jesus 185

7/2/26

Key Text: Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. (Romans 13:8)

Introduction

Our reflections last week focused on the importance of giving our lives wholly to God, which implies having an unbroken connection and communion with Him. Our text, Romans 12:9-21, reveals that our lives shall be characterized by love when we are connected to God. We learnt that true, pure and selfless love is not natural to us as human beings. It is only God who loves truly and has no hate in Him. Fallen human beings without the grace of God may manifest what appears to be love, but that love will always be tainted with selfishness. Sometimes, what appears to be love, is truly hatred or selfishness in disguise. For example, when we 'love' people so much that we are not willing to tell them the truth, less we offend them, we are not loving like God. God's love is based on truth and compassion, always looking for the best interest of others, whether they be friends or foes.

Romans chapter 13 continues with the theme of love and also reveals another dimension of love that involves respect and obedience to constituted authorities and obedience to the laws of the land. Let us read Romans 13 and see how we can represent Jesus Christ by respecting constituted authorities.

Romans 13

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, 4 for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. 7 Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed,

revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honour to whom honour is owed.

8 Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9 For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." 10 Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

11 Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. 12 The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light. 13 Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarrelling and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Reflections

In the text we read, Paul counsels us to be subject to authorities, to respect them and obey the laws. We are to pay our taxes, give tributes, and honour our leaders as servants of God. Note that the leaders that Paul was referring to were not the leaders of the church but Roman authorities. How could Paul, who knew how brutal the Roman authorities were, ever imagine that such brutal authorities were set up by a God of love, and that they were God's servants for the good of His children? Such attitude could only be as a result of a deep connection with God and the knowledge of the ways of God. If you read that text carefully, you will notice that Paul was simply asking us to also apply the love principle in our relationship with leaders and constituted authorities. Paul understood the sovereignty of God and His power to use all things, including bad leaders, to work out His good purpose for His children. He also knew that people in authority are also God's children in need of God's love. When we apply the love principle in our relationship with constituted authorities, we will love them enough to abhor the evil they do and tell them the truth as God inspires us, but we will never do or say anything to harm or demean them. We will not steal from the government, we will not assassinate the character of our leaders by speaking evil of things we know very little about, rather we will pray for God's guidance for them, knowing that they too are God's children and objects of His love.