

In step with Jesus 188

1/3/26

Key Text: I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, 21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. (John 17:20-21)

Introduction

We praise God for giving us the opportunity to read the book of Romans. In this book we have learnt more about God's justice, grace, and love for humanity. We have also learnt about the helplessness of the human nature without the help of God. Our study has revealed that there is no place for religious pride and self-exaltation with God. At the feet of Jesus Christ where we found salvation, the ground is equal and salvation is open and free. We all are saved by grace through faith. Salvation is not by works, it is the gift of God, therefore no man/woman should boast.

The book of Romans is also special in the sense that it stands out as the book of Christian conduct. In it, Paul has given us clear instructions on how to live and relate with enemies, rulers, and members of the household of faith. In the past two weeks, the emphasis of our reading has been on how to live lovingly and peaceably with members of the household of faith, and this is not without reason. Sometimes it is easier to relate with and tolerate outsiders than members of our family. We tend to notice and even exaggerate flaws in our family members that we might ignore in other people. But this should not be the case. Our family, which is the household of faith, should be a place of safety for all. In today's reading, Paul continues to emphasize the importance of having safe families of faith and he provides us with a key to achieving safe faith families. The key is forbearance, seeking the good of others and focusing on the bigger picture. Let us read Romans 15:1-13 and see what more we can learn about creating safe families of faith.

Romans 15:1-13

15 We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Let each of us please his neighbour for his good, to build him up. 3 For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me." 4 For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. 5 May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, 6 that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 7 Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

8 For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, 9 and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name."

10 And again it says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." 11 And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him." 12 And again Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope." 13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Reflections

Today's reading is directly connected to the prayer Jesus said before leaving His disciples. Of all things He could pray for, Jesus repeatedly prayed for the oneness of His disciples and all those who would believe in Him through the work of the disciples. Division among God's people is a serious matter because it does not only destroy the peace and happiness of the individuals involved, but it also sends a negative message about Jesus Christ and the work He came to do for humanity. Both Jesus and Paul knew that what Satan could not accomplish with the obvious sins such as adultery, stealing and lying, he tries to accomplish by division among God's people. Most often than not, the root cause of division is religious pride, holier than thou attitudes, and the spirit of competition. But here, Apostle Paul gave us the secret to overcoming these ungodly traits and the secret is bearing one another's burdens or weaknesses, not pleasing ourselves and focusing on the bigger picture or the purpose of our salvation.

Compassion produces forbearance and service for others, but service produces increased compassion. Jesus loved us and bore our weaknesses but his death and sacrifice for us further endears us to Him. His love and compassion for us is like the love of a mother for her child, especially a child with special need. We can describe sinners like us and the weak in faith as God's children with special needs. Our heavenly Father is deeply in love with sinners and the weak, and He is highly protective of them. To despise the weak in faith is to despise God because He identifies with them in their infirmities. As members of God's household, we must remember that we are saved to serve. God has saved us, not to serve ourselves, but to join Him in serving others but the big picture is important. Jesus served the Jews to open the door of salvation for the Gentiles, so He has saved us that we might be able to forbear with and strengthen the weak among us, even our brothers and sisters with special needs.