

WITH ONE VOICE GLORIFY GOD

Romans 15:1-13

Key Verses: 15:6

so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our prayer for this weekend's bible academy was for God to give us, as a ministry, clear direction for 2023. So yesterday, we in detailed studied Romans 15:1-13. Every fellowship then had a discussion session followed by each of you writing and sharing your personal bible testimonies. So what direction did God give us for 2023? It is **to.....with one voice..... glorify God!** At first, we may wonder, but isn't that what we do every Sunday? When we come and with one voice praise and worship God? Not all! **To with one voice glorify God.....** goes much deeper than this.

In our ministry we have people from different cultures, different ages, different backgrounds and maturity levels. Right? Some of us are sePedi speaking people, others Sesotho.....we have one South Korean, I am Afrikaans.....isiZulu.....seTswana..... what other languages? With each different language comes a different culture, right? Also, we differ in age and life experience. Some of us are already in the thirties, and forties..... while others are still in the early twenties. Some have children while the most of you are still dreaming of getting married. Some are working while others are studying. To complicate things even further, we are all individualseach with our own struggles, our own plans, our own personalities, our own weak and strong points. When considering all these differences, we begin to understand.....that humanly speaking it is not possible for us to be of one mind and one voice. We are all so different!

Then how can we, who are so diverse in our humanity, become one and have one mind? We need Christ's mindset towards each other. Christ's mindset towards people is the exact opposite to our fallen mindset. For example, in our diverse humanity we may disagree about secondary matters in our church. In Rome the believers disagree about dietary restrictions and keeping special days. We on the other hand may disagree about how to do things in the church. When this happens, conflict arise among us. Then we react in one of two ways. We either vigorously fight to prove that we are right and the other person is wrong...or in our pride we simply walk away without resolving the issue. Either way, the conflict ends in a strained if not a broken relationship. But why do we behave in this manner? It is because our sinful minds are full of selfish ambition and the desire to exalt ourselves. With this mindset, we can never be one. Moreover, we can never glorify God. We need Christ's mindset.

Christ's mindset is the exact opposite to ours. Instead of seeking to glorify Himself, Christ sought to glorify God. Moreover, instead of exalting Himself, Christ humbled Himself .That is why, instead of fighting with people or simply ignoring them, (look at verse 1) Christ who was strong bore with the failings of weak people, like us. We need to do the same!

But what does it mean to bear with the failings of the weak? Simply put, it means to accept the person we have conflict with as they are. In the world, people do not do this! Instead, they reject those who disagree with them. In fact, they cancel them on social media!! It is known as Cancel Culture. But this must never happen in our church. For it will surely bring disgrace to God. Instead, we must have the mindset of Jesus, and bear with the failings of those around us. We can do this by not arguing or cancelling them but accept and love them like Jesus!

Look at verse 2. (Read) This is another example of Christ's mindset. Generally, people in the world do not want to please their neighbour but only please themselves. They do not want to do what is

good for others nor do they want to build them up. Instead, they do only what is good for themselves. We can say they are selfish, right? If we are honest with ourselves, the same thing happens in our church. Though we believe in Jesus.....and though we know we should not be selfish.....we still do not care about what is good for our fellow brothers and sisters. Instead we only care about what is good for us personally. With this mindset we can never be one. With this mindset we can never glorify God. Christ's mindset is the exact opposite. Instead of valuing himself over others, Christ always valued others above Himself. Instead of thinking only about what is good Himself, Christ only thought about what was good for sinners like us, and how to build us up. Look at verse 3. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me."

When we think about this, we realise just how profoundly different Christ's mindset is to ours. Isn't it? It truly is the exact opposite to ours. **Jesus was not selfish. Instead, He deeply thought about what is good for you and me. Moreover, He was so committed to our wellbeing..... that He not only accepted the insults meant for us on Himself.....but He even laid down His life for us on the cross. This reveals the core of Jesus' mindset. This mindset.....is key to obeying God's direction for 2023.....to with one voice glorify God!** It is key, because without Christ's mindset we can never become one. Instead, we will remain..... divided in our diversity..... and spiritually isolated from one another.....even though we see each other every Sunday.

Considering all this, what then should be our prayer topics for 2023 be? Look at verse 5. We should pray for the God who gives endurance and encouragement to give us the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had. Humanly speaking, it is impossible for you and me to have the same mindset of Christ Jesus. That is why, we easily get discouraged and give up when we try on our own strength to bear with the failings of the weak or try to please others and build them up. That is why, our firm prayer topics for 2023 should be

1. for God to firstly give us the same attitude of mind towards each other that Christ Jesus had.
2. And secondly, that through His word and Spirit God may give us endurance and encouragement to keep on bearing with one another.....to keep on pleasing one another for good and to keep on building each other up.

Look at verse 6. Can we please read today's key verse together? so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we sincerely pray with those two prayer topics, something amazing will happen among us. God will give us the mindset of Christ. He will also unite us by giving us the mindset of Christ so with one voice we can glorify Him. Our focus should not be on glorifying God.....that is God's focus for us. Rather, our focus in 2023 should be to have the mindset of Christ Jesus by practically bearing with the failings of one another.....pleasing one another for our good.....and building each other up! Then God will automatically be glorified through us. Can you see God's vision for our ministry this year? Can you see His direction for 2023!

I am always moved by our brothers and sisters in Lesotho. Without anyone there from our ministry to fellowship with them.....without anyone there to share God's word.....and with them suffering so much because of losing loved ones.....they still remain faithful to God. They still participate in online morning devotion sharing.....bible reading. Palesa, Mpolokeng, Lebo and Retha even came all the way here from Lesotho on Monday while yesterday Tsibela took his first Gautrain from Pretoria.....even though he only arrived in Pretoria on Wednesday.....they sacrificed so much to participate in our opening academy. How precious are these brothers and sisters from Lesotho! Through this passage, I deeply repent for not having Christ's mindset towards each one of you. Many times I see your morning devotion messages come through on Whatsapp. Yet, I hardly read them. For

I am selfish. I apologise to you and repent before God. May God give me Christ's mindset so I can deeply think about you and pray for you!

The same goes for many of you whom I see every Sunday. Surely, you have many struggles. Yet, I do not do enough to reach out to you and support you. For I am selfish. I repent before God and pray He may give me the mindset of Christ Jesus. And not only me, but also I pray the Lord may give each one of you the mindset of Christ Jesus! Just imagine what a loving community we can foster among each other if we have Christ's mindset towards each other! To truly please others for good and build them up! Let's sincerely pray for this to happen in 2023.

In conclusion. In our fallen nature, we tend to think of ourselves as better than others, so we easily end up in arguments. Also, we are by nature selfish and only do things to please ourselves for our good. Consequently, though it looks like we are one.....the truth is.....before God we are as divided and scattered as we can be! Yet, through this passage, God has given us clear direction for 2023. God want is to with one voice glorify Him! For this to happen, we need to become one by all having the same mindset.....the mindset of Christ! Then we will bear with the failings of the weak, please others for their good and build them up.

May God help us in 2023 to with one voice glorify Him!