

WITH ONE MIND GLORIFY GOD
(Have Christ's Mindset)

Romans 15:1-13

Key Verses: 15:5-6

“May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Happy New Year! 새해 복 많이 받으세요! (Sae Hae Bok Mani Baduseyo!) During 2022 God has done great work in the midst of many trials. Now 2023 is upon us. Yet, our trials have not disappeared. It is easy for us to be overwhelmed by these trials. That is why we need God's vision and direction as we begin this new year. Then we can expect great things from God and attempt great things for God. As I prayed about this, Romans 15:6 came to my heart—especially “...with one mind glorify God.” This was Apostle Paul's prayer for the church in Rome.

To grasp the deep meaning of this prayer, let's consider its context. In chapters 1-8 Paul proclaims the gospel and develops sound Christian doctrine: the gospel is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes; this salvation comes by faith in Jesus Christ alone, and is only by grace, not by works; in regard to this salvation, faith alone matters—not cultural or generational elements. This gospel truth is absolute, universal, everlasting, and unchanging. Based on this gospel truth, in chapters 9-16, Paul teaches Jews and Gentiles how to see each other within God's sovereign mercy and to form a healthy church for God's world mission purpose.

In a healthy church, people of different cultures, ages, and maturity levels must learn to live together in harmony. As they do, conflicts may arise—not about essentials of the faith, but about secondary matters. In Rome they were about dietary restrictions and keeping special days. To us, they may be over cultural and generational practices. It is not always easy to resolve them, for they may be rooted in deeply held values. Since they are secondary, we may think they can be dismissed or ignored. But if they are not resolved, divisiveness may arise, and the church may stagnate and become ineffective. So Paul dealt with this matter seriously (14:1-15:13).

University Bible Fellowship has been built on a solid foundation of gospel truth, and the outstanding examples of first generation leaders. They studied the Bible deeply, obeyed the word of God and experienced God's abundant blessing. Many heroes of faith were raised through them who went to many nations as missionaries. As the fruit of their ministries, national and new generation leaders have grown. Praise God for his great work!

At the same time, tensions have arisen as cultures and generations which are very different converge in the church. While conflicts may be inevitable, how we deal with them matters most. When we do so biblically, we can experience God's grace and grow as a healthy church. In today's passage Paul guides us in how to do so. Most of all he prays that we may have the same attitude of mind as Christ Jesus toward one another. In this way, we can glorify God with one voice. As we enter a new year of God's history, let's learn what Paul's teaching and prayer mean to us.

Verse 1 says, "We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves." Who are the strong? Here the strong are not those of great willpower, but of strong faith and conscience. They were sure that by faith in Jesus they were free from the ceremonial laws of the Jews. On the other hand, the weak had no such conviction and continued to follow the ceremonial laws. Likewise, in many churches today, some believers have deep convictions about non-essential truths, while those with weaker faith have no such conviction. There is a tendency for the strong to impose their convictions on the weak. However, the weak need to develop convictions that arise from their own faith. This is especially true for the new generation. They need space to learn and grow, and room to make mistakes.

What should the strong do? "...bear with the failings of the weak." To "bear with" means to persevere in upholding the weak. A church atmosphere must be different from the world. In the world, people dare not reveal their weak points for fear of exploitation; it is "the survival of the fittest." However, the church must be a place where weak people can live out their faith, going through ups and downs, failing and receiving help, until they grow strong. For this reason, the strong ought to deny themselves and be mindful of the weak (2). While teaching God's word, they should practice their faith and lead by example. They should provide positive encouragement and acceptance even when the weak fail. In verse 1, "failings" is plural; those with weak faith do not fail just once, but

continually. We may bear with the weak once or twice. Yet we need to bear with them continually. How can we?

We must look at Jesus. Verse 3 says, “For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: ‘The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.’” Quoting Psalm 69:9, Paul tells us how Jesus bore with weak sinners. Even though Jesus is the Son of God, he did not come to be served, but to serve others. In order to bear our sins in his own body, he was despised and rejected. While Jesus was hanging on the cross, people insulted him. Jesus bore this without retaliation (1Pe 2:23-24). We must become like Jesus. However, it is difficult. While bearing others’ weaknesses, we might expect gratitude. Instead, we are ignored or blamed. At such times, it is hard to endure. We may feel like giving up, or retaliating. It is at that moment that we must look at Jesus on the cross; Jesus enables us to endure. We also need to hold on to God’s word. As we trust and obey the Scriptures—which were written in the past—we find encouragement to endure at present, and we have hope for the future (4). With the word of God in our hearts, we have the strength to deny ourselves and please others to build them up.

When Dr. Samuel Lee pioneered American campuses, he spent a lot of time and energy to bear with weak people. One young man was very rebellious when a personal problem was exposed. So he assaulted Dr. Lee, causing great pain. But Dr. Lee did not retaliate; rather, he read the Bible and prayed until the word of God moved his heart. Then he responded with forgiveness and grace. The young man was moved by this grace and became more humble. Today he serves God as a missionary. As I shared in my life testimony in April, I was a proud and selfish young man. So I failed many times in various ways. However, Dr. Lee, P. Abraham Kim, and many missionaries bore with my failings, not just for one or two years, but for decades, until I could grow as a useful servant of God. There are many such stories from the mission fields. Let’s pray to bear with the failings of the weak until they become strong in faith, and able to carry out God’s great mission.

Paul had challenged the strong with a clear truth. He knew it would be hard for them to practice it; they needed God’s help. So he began to pray for them and for all the Roman believers. Let’s read verses 5-6: “May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is a profound prayer for all the believers to have the mindset of Christ

toward each other. When they do so, they can experience such unity that they glorify God together with one mind and voice.

How can we have Christ's mindset? Paul teaches us in his letter to the Philippians. Paul exhorts us in both negative and positive terms: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others" (Php 2:3-4). So often, when conflict arises, selfish ambition is at the root. Selfish ambition stems from self-glory seeking: the desire to exalt oneself, or one's group. Nationalism, tribalism, school and ministry pride, are all enemies of Christ-centered spiritual unity. It is the essence of sin to seek one's own honor and glory rather than God's (Ro 1:21). God will judge each person based on their purpose of life: those who glorified God will be blessed; those who sought their own glory will be condemned (Ro 2:6-8). If we are self-glory seeking, we must repent and pray to glorify God alone.

Paul's positive exhortation is to value others above ourselves and to look to their interests instead of just our own. This requires the renewal of our minds. In our fallen nature, we tend to think of ourselves as better than others; we see our own strong points and others' weak points. This thinking is prejudiced and partial; it diminishes others. But when we have the mind of Christ we can see the true value of other people and become genuinely interested in their wellbeing. A number of retired missionaries live around the Chicago center. Though they are grandparents and great grandparents, their concern extends beyond their own families to the entire church of God around the world. They meet together regularly, pray together for those in need, visit the sick, and find ways to help others. They practice the mindset of Christ in our midst and bless others.

The key to living in harmony is for each of us to learn Christ's mindset. Philippians 2:6-8 says: "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!" Christ's mindset is opposite that of worldly leaders. They exercise power for their own glory, and hurt others. But Jesus gave up his glory and privileges as God, and served others. The Eternal Being entered into time and space. The Almighty wore the body of a weak man. The Owner of creation had no place to lay his head. The most honorable God gave up the praises of angels to receive insults. Yet when he did, God raised him from the

dead, seated him at his right hand, and made him King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus showed us the way of humble service and obedience that leads to eternal glory.

As I traveled throughout Africa in the fall, I observed the mindset of Christ in many missionaries. They gave up promising careers in their youth, and left beautiful, prosperous Korea to live in most difficult places. They suffered from endless agonies to adapt to primitive conditions. How difficult it was to bear the suffering of their children! In trying circumstances, they loved, served and disciplined African people with the word of God. In this way they followed Jesus. After more than 30 years, we can now see the fruit of their lives: so many African house churches have grown up. National leaders are taking real stewardship of discipleship ministries. We can see the glory of God through African missionaries.

While in Uganda, my wife Dervilla and I stayed with Sh. Steven and Dr. Maggie Sebbale. As they talked, deep respect for all Korean missionaries was very evident. We found the same thing throughout Africa. Deep relationships of mutual love and trust have been built up. Missionaries truly recognize and support national leaders, and in response these leaders are growing and bearing fruit. Yet, in some other places in the world, this is not true. Rather, tensions exist which hinder growth. Especially the prevalence of nationalism hinders unity among God's people. For this reason, we need to cultivate trust and mutual respect in the mission fields. I pray to work together with missionaries, national leaders and the emerging generation to build up God's people all over the world so that each ministry may grow, become strong and carry out God's great mission. For this reason, I pray for myself and all of us to have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.

With Christ's mindset we become one. Becoming one is not uniformity in thought and action, but unity in character and purpose, while retaining our diversity. For this kind of unity, Christ must be at the center and our common purpose is to glorify God. Then we can be like an orchestra. As different musicians play their own instruments according to the score, they produce a beautiful harmony. However, if one musician plays in their own way to show off, it ruins everything. Among us are many different kinds of people from various countries, diverse backgrounds, and endowed with many kinds of gifts and talents. Yet it is the same God who has called us according to his own wisdom and purpose, and the same Lord Jesus Christ who has saved us. All of us are necessary. Everyone's presence is valuable; everyone's gift contributes; everyone's voice is needed. Then we can form God's orchestra, producing beautiful songs of praise to God. Can you see God's vision for us? Let's see God's great vision through the ISBC 2023.

Look at verse 6 again: “...so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul’s prayer is not just for individual believers, but for the church to glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This means to reveal Christ’s presence: his love, goodness, power, mercy, saving grace and more. Christ reveals his glory through us as we obey his words together. Christ commands us to love one another as he has loved us (Jn 13:34-35). He commands us to make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:18-20). When we obey his commands together, we can glorify God. This should be our spiritual direction. Though we have many prayer topics, our first one should be: with one mind glorify God!

Our prayer should also influence our practical faith. In verse 7, Paul said, “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.” In order to glorify God, we must accept one another. How can we do so? “Just as Christ accepted you.” Christ accepted us unconditionally while we were still powerless sinners and enemies of God. He understood us, forgave our sins, clothed us with his righteousness and filled us with his Spirit. When we remember Jesus’ grace, we can accept others too, with understanding, forgiveness and love. Without Christ, our hearts can be as small as the eye of a needle. But with Christ, our hearts open wide like a vast ocean and we can accept anyone.

In verses 8-12, Paul tells us another basis of unity. It is that we share the same hope in Jesus Christ. In this passage, Paul refers to “the God of hope,” and “the God of endurance and encouragement.” Our source of hope, endurance and encouragement is God himself. When we are discouraged, we should pray—God will encourage us. When we are weak, we should pray—God will strengthen us. When tempted to despair, we should pray—God will give us hope. The Holy Spirit will grant us joy and peace.

Through Paul’s prayer we have learned the secret of spiritual unity in the body of Christ. We need to have the same attitude as Christ Jesus toward one another. This comes from God; it is his gift to those who ask him. Let’s pray to have the mindset of Christ, to see God’s great vision for his church, and glorify him together with one voice in 2023!