Apostolic prayers - *Paul's Prayer in Romans 15:5-6, 13*

1. Context

a. We will understand the focus on Paul's prayer in Romans 13 if we consider the context of Romans 14:1-15:13. In this section of Romans, Paul taught kingdom principles to help believers honour one another when holding different views and convictions on various issues. There are truths and commands that the Scripture emphasises and makes clear—these are of primary importance and must be honoured. Other issues are not directly commanded but implied and thus applied differently by believers.

Rom. 14:1-13 As *for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions.* ***2*** *One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables.* ***3*** *Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgement on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.* ***.....*** ***5*** *One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.* ***....10*** *Why do you pass judgement on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgement seat of God;* ***...12*** *So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.* ***13*** *Therefore let us not pass judgement on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.*

b. Paul highlighted two issues that the law of Moses commanded—to abstain from certain meats that were unclean and to observe special days faithfully. The ceremonial rituals that God established through Moses were no longer commanded, for Jesus is the fulfilment of them.

c. There were more Gentile believers than Jewish in the first century Church. Most were unfamiliar with the law of Moses—its rituals, animal sacrifices, unclean things, special days, etc. Many devout Jews who came to a saving knowledge of Jesus had deep convictions about keeping the laws of Moses. There was great conflict over these issues in the early Church (Acts 15).

d. The issue we see here is how we relate to people as we observe their wrong views, failures, and deficiencies. Paul exhorted them to accept those who were weak in faith without seeing it as an occasion to win an argument with them—that is, to "dispute over doubtful things" not clearly stated in Scripture. *Weak in faith* speaks of being imperfectly instructed in the real meaning of liberty in Christ.

e. There were rituals and practices commanded by the law of Moses that are no longer required.

Gal.5:1 *For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.*

Col. 2:16-21 ***16*** *Therefore let no one pass judgement on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.* ***17*** *These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. .....****20*** *If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—* ***21*** *"Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch"*

f. Today there are many examples of issues that some sincerely debate and break relationship with one another over. Varying political views, wearing of masks, use of vaccinations, the use of fire arms to protect life in the face of violence, civil disobedience, varying standards of entertainment (music, movies), use of tobacco, wine, or legal drugs, lifestyles (size of house, type of car, etc.), modesty, (clothing, makeup, jewellery etc.), domestic issues (home schooling, disciplining children, birth control), environmental concerns (fuel, recycling), various medical procedures, etc.

g. Paul's main point in his instruction and prayer is that we must speak to each other with humility, honour, and a spirit of patience to enlighten the other believer rather than win our argument.

h. The primary issues in God's kingdom are righteousness, peace, and joy. The gospel of the kingdom does not consist of making secondary issues primary, such as abstaining from meat and drink.

Rom.14:17-21 *[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. **….** [19] So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.. [21] It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.*

a. In this context Paul prays in Romans 15 that God would grant unity to the saints as they were filled with joy, peace, and hope. These are God's ideas for which He wants us to contend in prayer.

Rom. 15:5-6, 13 *[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….. [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.*

b. Paul mentions five elements that contribute to equipping believers to walk in love or unity or as those who are "in harmony" (15:5b) These five elements are insight into **God's patience**, receiving **God's comfort** (15:5a), and the Spirit's impartation of **joy, peace, and hope** (15:13).

c. Walking in mature love is synonymous with walking in mature unity. This is the greatest work of the Spirit in the human experience. It requires the transforming power of the Spirit. The end-time Church will experience this transforming miracle of family unity (John. 17:21-23). By walking in mature love, we become "trophies of the grace of God" that bring glory to God.

2. Paul's prayer in Romans 15:5-7

[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.

a. ***The God of endurance and encouragement (patience and comfort)***: We pray for revelation of God's heart of endurance/patience and a release of His encouragement/comfort. The Spirit imparts these in and through our lives as we personally experience the Lord's patience and comfort in our weakness. We give to others out of what we receive from Him.

2 Cor. 1:3-4 *[3] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, [4] who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God*

b. One way He comforts us is by helping us gain His perspective of the "big picture" both for our life and in difficult circumstances. By having this perspective in our life, we are able to see His perspective or big picture for others—empowering us to be patient with them and to comfort them.

c. ***Grant us to live in harmony***: This is a prayer that He grant us grace to reveal and express His patience and comfort that is stronger than all our disagreements and complaints against others.

   i We pray that the Spirit inspires us to see and feel how He sees and feels towards others by opening the eyes of our heart to see them through the lens of His patience and graciousness.

   ii The Spirit desires to empower His people to walk out kingdom community life as Jesus prayed in John 17:21-23. This is possible only by seeing people like He sees them.

John. 17:23 *[23]… that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me*

   iii The harmony here does not imply that everyone will agree on each issue but that we are of one mind in seeing the value and honour of one another through His eyes. New believers are not expected to have the same measure of light on spiritual things as mature Christians!

d. **That together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ:** In our mind, we are to see "the God narrative" or "His big picture" perspective of what He is doing in His Church and in individual people. With our mouth we are to say what He says about people without complaining or slandering them.

   i Ask the Holy Spirit to let us see, feel, and say what He sees, feels, and says about the people in our lives. We want to say what He says about one another.

e. ***In*** accord ***with Christ Jesus*** (15:5): We can only walk in this supernatural lifestyle because of Jesus.

   i We do this according to *Christ's death on the cross* which gives us free access to the Father and the empowering of the Spirit to walk this out.

   ii We do this according to *Christ's command*: He commanded us to love each one (John 13:35).

   iii We do this according to *Christ's example:* His response to disputes among His disciples when He washed their feet.

f. We do this by making Christ and His leadership the central focus of our unity. As we are captured by Him and the big things of His kingdom, our perspective is lifted "above the storms" of life.

g. **Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you**: We ask that He tenderise our hearts for others with the love and patience that He has for us (John 15:9) and impart to us the unity for which Jesus prayed. It requires the supernatural work of the Spirit to welcome one another in the generosity in which Jesus welcomes us. *Our challenge is in first learning to see that He really*

welcomes us with great generosity. As I see the "God narrative" of my life and how He views me, then I can see others in this way.

3. Paul's prayer in Romans 15:13

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.*

a. Paul prayed we would be filled with joy and peace and abound in hope in the face of difficulties. This prayer includes the Spirit empowering us to enjoy Jesus and His family, even in difficulties, by giving us more insight into the truth about Him and His leadership.

b. Our prayer is for an historic visitation of the Holy Spirit's impartation of **peace, joy, and hope** for the thousands of believers in our region and nation. That we would be a people who can enjoy and delight in Jesus with gratitude, even in the midst of difficulties and delays.

John 15:9-11[9] *"As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love …*[11] *These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full."*

c. We pray for the grace to enjoy interacting with Him even as we are faithful in small, mundane, and challenging ministry assignments and acts of service. That the Spirit would help us to enjoy Him in doing the work of the kingdom. By seeing His leadership we gain peace or a sense of security and well-being.

d. **In believing**: As our eyes are fixed on Jesus—His leadership and promises—and we understand that His eyes are on us, we grow in peace with confidence in Him, having a strong sense of security.

Rom. 12:2 [2] *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

e. **That we may abound in hope:** We ask for an impartation, by the power of the Spirit, of hope or certainty about the future. This includes grasping more clearly what His plans are and what He is saying about our personal life, family, marriage, children, parents, finances, ministry, city, nation, etc., even in the face of difficult circumstances. He is doing far better than we currently understand.

f. We may have 70/80 years on earth, but God's glorious plan for us continues for billions of years. We ask the Spirit to fill us with hope that He is watching us, that He will intervene, that victory is certain, and that He remembers all that we have done in seeking to obey Him.

2 Cor. 4:16-18 ***16*** *So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.* ***17*** *For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,* ***18*** *as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.*

g. **By the power of the Holy Spirit**: We do not have the strength to sustain a positive mind-set with confidence without the inspiration of the Spirit. He supernaturally gives us hope from the written Word and by prophetic dreams and visions directly and from others.

Romans 12:16 ***Live*** *in harmony with one another.*