

ACCEPTING THE UNACCEPTABLE

'Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. For I tell you that Christ has become a servant on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs.' (Romans 15:7-8)

As He left heaven where He was with the Father and came to earth, He did not choose to dwell in big houses or palaces. He did not choose to belong to a famous family. He did not choose to be born in a famous hospital, but rather on a manger, and warmed by the breadth of the animals. This Jesus, the Son of God, had selected this way to invade the earth. He accepted poverty, simple and undistinguished living. **'For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.'** (2 Corinthians 8:9)

As He continued on His mission, Jesus visited all the groups of people preaching to them the kingdom of God. He sat down with the unlovable and least honourable people in the society. He mingled and accepted all kinds of people around Him although He was misunderstood by some. In many passages of the Gospel we found Jesus accused: **'Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering round to hear Him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law muttered, 'This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.'** (Luke 15:1-2)

Jesus is the Son of God. He is the King of kings and the Lord of Lords. **'Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness.'** (Philippians 2:6-7) He was without sin but counted among the sinners. **'The son of man came eating and drinking and you say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.'** (Luke 7:34) Yet, Jesus accepted even His reputation to be jeopardized for the sake of those people who are away from God to be given to come back to the Father. He, being the Shepherd who lost one sheep would leave the others and go after the lost one until He finds it. And by all means He fulfilled His mission to save the humankind.

Isaiah, the prophet, a mighty man and a servant of God started his book with this: **'Ah sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evil doers, children given to corruption! They have spurned the Holy One and turned their backs to Him.'** (Isaiah 1:4) He was describing the chosen people of God as harlots to denote their unfaithfulness. **'See how the faithful city has become a harlot! She once was full of justice; righteousness used to dwell in her-but now murderers!'** (Isaiah 1:21) He described them as fruitless vineyard to denote their futility. Isaiah was right and freely He went on outlining the sinful nations who were worshipping idols and who were doing immoral things. But when he saw God, the Lord seated on a throne, he was convicted and pronounced judgement to himself: **'Woe to me!' I cried. 'For I am a man of unclean lips'.** Isaiah when confronted by God face to face did not declare himself righteous but a sinner. He realized that although by details he did not do as others did still he was unclean, similar to the people around him.

Isaiah's attitude is sometimes same as ours. Oftentimes, we see ourselves better than others until the time that we are confronted by God. **'Pride comes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.'** (Proverbs 16:18) The attitude of belief that we are better is a big barrier between us and others. As a result, we do not easily accept them. Today's God's word says: **'Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you.'** We should accept people as Jesus accepted us and

welcomed us in His kingdom. We are righteous but sinners and unclean but the Holy Son of God received us not because we are good but because He is good.

The attitude of accepting one another should not only be among brothers and sisters inside the church but more so outside. Accepting one another includes:

1) Respect and honour one another: To accept somebody means to give him honour and respect. Jesus showed respect even to those who opposed Him. Although in many occasions His answers to the Pharisees were hard and heavy rebuke, He never failed to give them honour. We should respect people's background and give them the word of God and the message of Salvation in the way they can understand and suitable to them. We should honour people with their professions, positions and authorities, culture traditions, fashion or life style. We should speak the word of God in a method that they understand. Jesus was attending the people's feasts, weddings, and other unbeliever celebrations not to enjoy but to find an opportunity to preach them the kingdom of God.

2) Tolerate and love one another: Jesus went down to the level of the people who are sinners. He lived with them, eat and drink with them but He did not do their sins. He visited drunkard, prostitutes, thieves, gamblers, etc. But He maintained to be pure without sin. He accepted all kinds of people in order to bring them back and make them reconciled with God. Just imagine how much Jesus tolerated and bore when He sat with them. Many people around us what they do is undesirable, but before we knew God we were the same. But God loved us that He sent Jesus and through Him He accepted us and changed us. Fish from the water is dirty and smelly but all of us know it is delicious after being washed, cleaned, scales and fins removed, marinated and cooked. We must love and tolerate people with all their habits and attitudes until God would cleanse them with His words.

3) Share and sacrifice for one another: Jesus accepted us and loved us not by words only but by true sacrifices as He offered His life. His death on the cross was for our sins, and to give everyone who believes in Him eternal life. We should accept one another not by words only but by expressions and action. **'This is how we know what love is: 'Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees His brother in need but have no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him ?Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth,'** (1 John 3: 16-18)

My dear beloved: There are many people who are away from God and are separated from Him by many barriers. For these people to pass the barriers to reach God we ought to be the first one to break the barriers in front of us to reach them, taking out pride and self righteousness away from our heart. **'Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the Gospel, that I may share in its blessing.'** (1 Corinthians 9: 19,22,23) Let us go forward that we can hold hands of people to bring them back to the Father to honour and praise as we agree to pray

My Prayer: Father God I come before you in the name of Jesus who died on the cross for my sins to give me eternal life. Lord I commit myself to obey your commands to go to the lost souls. Lord gives me a compassionate, humility, forgiving and loving heart to go and bring the lost back to you. This is my prayer in Jesus name, Amen.