**Lessons from a Lockdown**

Rommel J. Casis

**Day 37**

**Ephesians 2:14-18**

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

***Questions for Personal Reflection:***

1. What does it mean that Jesus is my peace?
2. Before I became a Christian, was I prejudiced against those different from me? Was there a group of people or a type of person I did not want to be with? Do I still struggle with the same feelings now?
3. What unites me with the brothers and sisters in church? What causes me to be disunited with them? What should I do?
4. Am I careful to maintain the unity in the church? What can I do more?
5. Is there anyone in the church I am not at peace with? What should I do?

***Insight:***

The relationship between the Jews and the Gentiles was hostile. There was hatred on both sides because of suffering caused by both sides. They had a long history of conflict. But Jesus tore down that wall dividing them by dying on the cross. If the Jews and Gentiles can be reconciled through the cross, anyone can be reconciled. Because of Jesus there should be no walls dividing people anymore. But we live in a world divided into factions suspicious and biased against each other. This is the world we were born into and grew up in. All of us experienced divisions either because of race, nationality, tribe, dialect, religious beliefs, political affiliations or socio-economic status. We lived in a world with an “us versus them” mindset.

But when we became Christians these walls came crashing down. We became part of the church where all of us are the same. We hugged, worshipped with and listened to people we might not have wanted to be with before we became Christians. There is no difference or distinction. No one is better than anyone because all of us were reconciled to God through the cross. The cross put to death whatever hostility, prejudice or bias we might had had in the past. We have different backgrounds but we became one church, one family. Because of this we have equal concern for one another. We want to make sure every voice is heard and every need is met. The stronger takes care of the weaker. Those who have more shares with those who have less. We strive to excel not to compete but to inspire. The success of one is the success of all.

However, we still live in a world that is divided. So the church must not mirror what is happening outside of the church. We must watch out as worldly influences of hatred, prejudice and bias may make its way into the church through various form of media. We must resist these temptations that threaten to infect the body of Christ. We must guard against anything that may threaten our unity. We must act the moment we notice any of our members speak (whether in the real or virtual world) in a way that even hints of prejudice or hatred against persons or groups. Even if what is shared is meant to be funny, we must not tolerate such jokes, memes, texts or posts as these can drive a wedge between us and our brothers and sisters. If a brother or sister says or does something that offends you, speak the truth in love to him or her. As far as it depends on us, let us maintain the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. Let us remember that Jesus sacrificed himself and died on the cross so that we can be united. Because Jesus paid the ultimate price for our unity, we must protect it with all our heart.

If we are in conflict with any Christian, it is the cross of Christ that will unify us. The cross resolves all conflicts. Jesus died for that Christian you are in conflict with, how can you not love him or her as well? Jesus died for all your sins on the cross, how can you not be merciful? You need as much forgiveness from God as the person you are in conflict with, how can you not forgive? The cross represents God’s grace, mercy and forgiveness for us, so it should inspire us to display the same to others.

Because we cannot have our usual church gatherings because of the pandemic, maintaining unity has become more challenging. But we must still not give up meeting together. Let us still encourage one another daily. We must remain devoted to the fellowship. Because our times together are limited, we must maximize each opportunity. Let us not waste the time and opportunity given to us by technology.

Finally, let us not forget that it is the cross of Jesus that unites us. We build unity by remembering the cross and what it means for us. All the time we spend online would not build unity unless we remember the cross. Jesus is not just the peacemaker, he himself is our peace. Without Jesus we have no peace. Jesus is the source of our unity and peace with each other.

We must learn to be united and fight for peace in our hearts during this lockdown.