

Sunday, September 8, 2013

Remember (7)

Fourth Verse: “Remember my chains” (Colossians 4:18)

This verse is the conclusion of the epistle of St Paul to the Colossians which is one of the four epistles- Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon- that he sent from his first imprisonment in Rome. Why does St. Paul want us to remember the chains that bind him? Perhaps he had many thoughts on his mind that drove him to say this phrase. Let’s discover them together with the help of the Holy Spirit.

1- **We must be mindful of the suffering of the ministers** so as to not add to their burden but rather help them as much as we can.

2- **It is essential to recognize the cost that the ministers and shepherds had to pay so that we have the upright faith, their sacrifice, giving up oneself and their hard labor** in every church they start and every ministry that they establish. Truly as Jesus said that *others have labored, and you have entered into their labors* (John 4). This makes us more keen on the gift that was handed down to us and to hold firmly to the upright faith to the last breath. We must also strive to hand on the torch of the faith to the next generation regardless of labor or sacrifice

3- **We must participate in carrying the cross not to be just spectators**, we ought to help with prayer, giving of all things, or taking on responsibilities in the ministry.

4- **If there are ministers or servants that are in chains or any binding, we should do our best in serving Christ so we can make up for their circumstances.** That is to say we will always encounter effective and faithful servants but unfortunately they may be bound with chains... Chains of poor health, chains of lack of time or resources, chains of limited freedom and mobility, or chains of oppression of governments. This should be a motive for us, as long as we are not chained ourselves, to participate in ministries and missions as much as we can. Thus we make up for the lack of servants because of the chains that they are in.

5- **When we remember the love of our Fathers, shepherds, and our mentors and see the great sacrifices they made, we become convicted and moved to help in serving the holy church of God.** If they gave up themselves in the ministry and accepted the labor, afflictions, and chains for the sake of serving Christ and the church, what have we offered ourselves?

6- **When man sees major sacrifices by others, his troubles seem to him too little**, even if he labors in the ministry, he has not reached to the level of imprisonment, chains, or shedding of blood. Where are we then, from the troubles of the Apostle, or the torments of the martyrs? Even if we face some tribulations in serving Christ or if we sacrifices, we should not boast in doing so. We must rather remember the wisdom in the words that Jesus taught us, *“When you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do’* (Luke 17:10).

7- In saying *“Remember my chains”*, St. Paul probably wants us to behold the Cross which is the sign of love. The chains that he was bounded with are an aspect of the cross that he had to bear; it is a true indication to his love towards Christ. The truth is: **Beholding the Cross of Christ, and the servants who are crucified with Him, such as St Paul, ignites the heart with the divine love and moves it towards sacrifice and giving up oneself. It also heals the soul from many spiritual diseases** such as vainglory, fighting for status, divisions and bigotry. If the chains of St Paul are wounds in the body of Christ (The church), how could we dare to add insult to injury by engaging in internal conflicts? Ought we not to mend these wounds by loving one another and to be united in one heart and one soul to build the kingdom of God? (To be continued)

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