

Rom 244 - **Unity in Diversity Part Two - Rom 14:13-23**

We are **STILLLLL** flying out of the Launch Pad of **Rom 12:1-2**

I think **I've said it** every msg since our **Rom 12:1-2** msgs

Because Everything we've taught since those "**Be Transformed**"
msg's have been based on **Rom 12:1-2**

Which calls to:

- 1) Present **EVERY Part** of our Lives as *An Offering* to God
- 2) Be *Transformed* by the renewing of our minds

We've had **5 msgs** so far based on **Rom 12:1-2**

Including last wks msg - "**Unity in Diversity – Part 1**"
where we looked at the **1st half** of **Rom 14**

& **remember** from last week - **the context** of **Rom Ch 14** is
the *non-essentials* of the Christian life

& specifically – **how** we are to **treat one another**
in the *non-essential* areas

In Pt 1 of this msg - last week - we tried to make this **adaptation**
of that *old church saying* - very clear

In Essentials - UNITY

In Non-essentials - DIVERSITY

In All things - LOVE

& then we made it clear that in these msgs

we are ONLY talking about the **Non-Essentials**

Because it's almost always in the **non-essentials**
where most **church conflict** happens

& so in the **Non-essentials** - Paul taught us **3 Critical truths**
that are **mandatory**

if we are **to maintain** *unity in diversity*

#1) We must **genuinely accept** other believers
w/o disputing over the non-essentials

#2) Two Christians can disagree on **non-essential** issues
& still both be right w/ God

#3) The foundation for our Unity must be
the Lordship of Jesus Christ

& to put this all in perspective
Paul **closed last wk** - w/ the picture of the **BEMA SEAT**

Where **every Christian** will answer
for **our own actions only** – & no one else's

Now - **starting in v.13** Paul changes his *teaching focus* slightly

The **1st half** of Ch 14 - dealt w/ the **TRUTH** of unity in diversity

The **2nd half** of Ch 14 - deals w/ **how to APPLY** these truths

In other words - **How does it look**
when we are Living in - **Unity IN Diversity**

Let's Pray

Paul starts this section w/ a summary statement

Rom 14:13 - ESV

13 Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.

Man - The Holy Spirit starts out strong in this section

When this Vs starts - "THEREFORE" - it means;

Because of the truths in the 1st half of **Ch 14**

We **Must Not Judge** one another any longer

But **rather** – let this be your Commitment;
to **NEVER** put a **stumbling block**, or hindrance,
in the way of a brother (or sister)

Now - Paul's choice of words here are very revealing

The word for **stumbling block** means

***“something carelessly left about,
over which someone stumbles”***

He could have used a **different** word - for **OBSTACLE**
which means something **purposefully** placed in a person's way

But he used ***“stumbling block”*** - Because most often
we do this type of damage **CARELESSLY** - don't we?

Now - in the **next two vs's** - Paul explains what he means by putting a "**Stumbling Block**" (hindrance) in your brothers way

Rom 14:14 - ESV

14 I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.

Look carefully at the 1st half of this Vs.

I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself

We know - from last week - Paul is using **food** as an example of a non-essential

& we know that what we **do** or **don't eat** certainly **is not** what defiles us - *right ?*

In Mark 7:15 Jesus said - NLT

15 It's not what goes into your body that defiles you; you are defiled by what comes from your heart.

But now – let's RE-read the 2nd half of **Rom 14:14**
but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean

So **even though** a non-essential (like food) is not spiritually **clean** or **unclean** - in & of itself

HOWEVER - If a person **believes** that it is unclean then to that person - **it is unclean**

Which **MUST** dictate **OUR actions** regarding that non-essential when we are **with** that person

Watch - in V.15 – Paul is going to make this very clear

That ***OTHER*** *believers* feelings toward a **Non-Essential**
DICTATES how **WE** should act regarding that issue

Let's read - Just the FIRST HALF of Rom 14:15

Rom 14:15 (A) - ESV

15 For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. . .

Even tho the food *in & of itself* is neither GOOD nor BAD

IF your brother is grieved by **YOU** eating it
then you are ***no longer walking in love***

That **Non-Essential item** may actually be a "*Neutral!*" matter

But **suddenly** - You **exercising** your Liberty to eat it
has **caused you to sin** against your fellow believer

One of *my favorite sayings* to **my kids** growing up
was the same truth Paul is teaching here

So - here's the "**Dave Version**" of this truth

***"If a person feels offended by you
then you've offended them!"***

"If a person feels hurt by you – then you've hurt them!"

& our **kids learned** that real well
ESPECIALLY when **they** were the ones HURT
"Dad, remember if I FEEL hurt, then David hurt me!"

Rom 14:15 (A) - ESV

15 For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. . .

EVEN THO - What you eat is actually a **NON-ESSENTIAL** issue

As we **learn to WALK** in the *Agape love* of Christ,

Then in the area of the **Non-Essentials**
it's **how** we effect the *other person* that matters

Because God is calling us to **NEVER** put a *Stumbling Block*,
or *Hindrance*, in the way of another believer - ***AMEN ?***

So the question ***is NOT***
do I have **the Liberty** to do this certain thing

The **question** is – am I **offending my brother** by doing this

& **if I am** – then **V.15** says ***I am no longer walking in love***

The **absolute key** to handling the *non-essential* issues
is **walking** in the **love of Christ** toward others

God's agape love is **the filter** that
we must **pour** each of our actions **through**

Like a **water filter** that only allows **pure water** to flow thru it
Our agape **LOVE FILTER** should only allow what is **EDIFYING**
(or building up) to flow thru it

If we will **COMMIT** to do that
then we will not **DAMAGE** or even **Spiritually DESTROY**
the one for whom Christ died

Does that sound a bit - over-dramatic - - ??

Well - let's just read the 2nd half of v.15

Rom 14:15b - ESV

. . . By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died.

This word **DESTROY** is a Dramatic Word isn't it ?

It means **LIT** - '***the loss of spiritual well-being***
or to be "***spiritually destitute***"

You **wouldn't want** to make another believer
SPIRITUALLY DESTITUTE - would you ?

We've **got to resolve** before God

to **never destroy** another believer's 'spiritual well being
or **damage** them spiritually

by **exercising** our liberty in some non-essential area

In all that we do

we must be bound to one another - by our LOVE
which brings - Perfect Harmony !

Col 3:14 says - ESV

14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Our LOVE is to BIND us together in UNITY - AMEN?

& as a final HAMMER on this point

Vs.16 really drives it home

Rom 14:16 - ESV

16 So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil.

Paul says look - Don't let your FAITH (*what you regard as good*)
be spoken of AS EVIL

Meaning - if you're "Strong in Faith"

& have Liberty in the Non-Essentials

But your actions *IF* the Non-Essentials
are causing another believer to STUMBLE

Then what you regard as GOOD (*your strong faith*)
is going to be spoken of - as EVIL - - See it ?

SO - Let's REVIEW

1) - We are not to carelessly put a **Stumbling Block**
in another believer's path - causing them to stumble

2) - We are not to **Destroy** someone's Spiritual Well-Being
by our actions in the Non-Essentials

& now # 3) We are to live **Focused**
on the eternal things of the Kingdom of God

Rom 14:17 - ESV

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.

The **Christian life** is really not about the non-essential things
it's about the essential things of the **Kingdom of God**

We're prone to think that the **Kingdom of God**
is about a list of Do's & Don'ts

Which is what the **Pharisees** believed
& they made **MAJOR** deals - out of **MINOR** things

& all of the things - they made **MAJOR**
were external & temporal things

But the **Kingdom of God** is not mainly about
the External & Temporal things

The **Kingdom of God** is mainly about
the Internal & Eternal things

As Paul says in v.17;

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking

[Externals & Temporals],

but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

[Internals & Eternals]

Let's look at these 3 Internals & Eternals

The **1st INTERNAL** of the Kingdom of God that Paul lists
is Righteousness

God's righteousness is what radically transforms our lives

We receive God's righteousness thru **FAITH** in Jesus Christ

& then - **as we allow** God's righteousness to **RULE** in our lives,

It produces in us

A desire to **Know Jesus** better & better

A desire to **Live** for the things of God

A desire to **Be Transformed** into the image of Christ

Jesus said in the Beatitudes in Mat 5:6

***6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for
righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.***

"Keeping Score" in the Non-Essentials

will **NEVER** Satisfy us

But a Genuine **Hunger & Thirst** for the **Righteousness** of God

THAT really will satisfy us

Psa 42:1-2 says - NLT → →

Psa 42:1-2 says - NLT

1 As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God.

2 I thirst for God, the living God. When can I go and stand before him?

THAT is what we need to be worried about

& as that **Hunger & Thirst** for Righteousness becomes a **real part** of our lives

THEN - His PEACE also becomes a **real part** of our lives

Again – Rom 14:17 says;

17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace . . .

This is the **Supernatural Peace** that comes from Jesus Christ alone

In John 14:27 - Jesus said - ESV

27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

This is **the Peace** that comes from the **Holy Spirit** Living & Ruling in your life

Phil 4:7 says - ESV

7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

I promise you - If you will **Hunger & Thirst**
for the **Righteousness** of God

Then the **Peace** of God will **become part** of our life

& then - You will have **the Joy of God - in the Holy Spirit**

One more time - Rom 14:17 - ESV

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.

in Jn 15:11 Jesus said (speaking of Abiding in Him) - ESV

11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

The natural outcome of

Living **IN** the Righteousness of God - &

Living **IN** the Peace of God,

Is being filled **WITH** the Joy of God - in the Holy Spirit

We have got to **stop** focusing on the Temporal & Non-Essential

We have got to **focus** on the Eternal & Essential things

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

AND . . . IF we will:

Focus on Living in the **Righteousness** of God

Focus on Living in the **Peace** of God

Focus on Living in the **Joy** of God

Then **watch** what happens

Rom 14:18 - ESV

18 Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.

If we will truly **seek after** the Essential & Eternal things of God

THEN - Our lives will be "**Acceptable to God**"
& "**Approved by those around us**"

Now that's a **GOOD way** to live - *isn't it ?*

Just like Mat 6:33 says - ESV

33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

So 1st – Paul told us - not to put a **stumbling block**
in the way of another believer

2nd - We're must not **Spiritually DAMAGE** another believer
by our **actions** in the Non-Essential areas

3rd – We are to live focused on
the **eternal things** of the Kingdom of God

Now 4th – We are to pursue the things
that bring **peace** & **edification**

Rom 14:19

19 So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding [edification].

***Think about it . . .* What are you focused on when you're dealing w/ other believers?**

Are you focused on being right ?

Are you focused on making your point getting your opinion across

We naturally focus on these things – ***Don't we ?***

But - as usual, God's ways are Exactly OPPOSITE of Our ways

God says - lay ALL THAT aside & focus on what will make peace instead

We naturally focus on what BUILDS US UP

God says focus on what BUILDS THEM UP

& really - The Transformation Moment occurs in our lives

The moment we truly ACCEPT & BELIEVE that God's ways are Truly Better than Our ways

Guys - God TRULY KNOWS how we should live

& He says; → →

& He says;

“Don’t worry about being right”

“Worry about seeking peace instead”

& He’s says;

“Don’t worry about yourself”

“Worry about seeking what’s best for the other person”

& I promise you

there’s one thing absolutely constant w/ God

That is - When God tells us what is best for us

If we will obey Him

Our lives will grow by leaps & bounds – for the good

& if we disobey Him - We will continue

to reap the consequences of doing things our own way !

Now – in vs’s 20-21 Paul RESTATES his whole point again !

Rom 14:20-21 - ESV

20 Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats.

21 It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.

These Vs's are SO CLEAR, *aren't they* ?

If we are doing anything that is stumbling, or offending,
or hurting another believer

We have got to REPENT of that - quick fast & in a hurry

We need to ask God to *forgive* us
& then ask that brother or sister to *forgive* us

& if we will obey God in this – I promise, we will grow
In God's Righteousness
In God's Peace - &
In God's Joy

Don't destroy the work of God over some Non-Essential !
Don't make your brother stumble over some Non-Essential !

In closing, Paul counsels to two types of believers
regarding these non-essential issues

He goes back to the "Strong in Faith" & the "Weak in Faith"
that we saw last msg

In v.22 he addresses the believer who is "Strong in faith"

Rom 14:22 - ESV

22 The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves.

Paul's certainly NOT suggesting we keep
our faith in God to ourselves

He's saying → →

He's saying - if you are **Strong in Faith**
in these **non-essential** issues

Keep it between **Yourself & God** - & be blessed

Why? – Because your **Commitment** - is to **not be divisive**
on these matters - but to bring **peace** & **edification** instead

Then in v.23 he addresses the one he calls "**Weak in Faith**"

Rom 14:23 - ESV

23 But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

The NLT translates v.23 this way;

23 But if you have doubts about whether or not you should eat something, you are sinning if you go ahead and do it. For you are not following your convictions. If you do anything you believe is not right, you are sinning.

Remember – the context here is
the **non-essentials** in the Christian life

Paul's saying - if **you believe** a **non-essential** issue is **wrong**
& you **do it** anyway

Then to you that action is a sin

Even tho for someone else
that same action may **not** be a sin

Guys - we have **got to take**
these non-essential matters before **God**

& **we have** got to be **thoroughly convinced** before God
of what we should **do**

& **then** we have got to **do that** out of faith
as a **commitment** between **you & God**

& **THEN** - whatever your commitment is
on that **Non-Essential** matter

We **MUST NOT Look Down** on - or **Judge** - another believer
who **doesn't hold** the same conviction as we do
on those **NON-ESSENTIAL** issues

FOUR big lessons today

- 1) *Do not* be a **Stumbling Block** to those around us
- 2) *Do not* **Spiritually Damage** another believer by your actions
- 3) *Live focused* on the **Eternal Things** of the Kingdom of God
- 4) *Pursue* **Peace & Edification** of the brethren

This is what **UNITY in DIVERSITY** - Looks like

Let's Pray