

ROM 243 - Unity in Diversity - Part One - Rom 14:1-12

We're **STILLLLL** flying out of the Launch Pad of **Rom 12:1-2**
where we turned the Christian TALK - into the Christian WALK

Last week Paul taught us to “***Put on Love, by putting on Christ***”-
& that message is an absolute prerequisite to this one

because without us **putting on** the *Agape love of God*
We'd have **no hope** of ever pulling off these **next 2 Msg's**

Psa 133:1 - NKJ

***1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
For brethren to dwell together in unity!***

& just *how* **good**, & *how* **pleasant** is it
for us to dwell together in **unity**?

Well - **Jesus** made it *basically* His FINAL request
in His High Priestly Prayer of **Jn 17**

RIGHT BEFORE his Betrayal & Arrest
Jesus prays to the Father

Jn 17:20-21 - ESV

***20 “I do not ask for these only [His disciples], but also for those
who will believe in me through their word,
21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in
you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe
that you have sent me.***

FIRST - Jesus prays that our Unity would be JUST AS
HIS Unity is with the Father (*which is mind-boggling enuf*)

But then Jesus directly ties our UNITY - to our ABILITY
to bring the Gospel to the world
(end V.21) so that the world may believe

SO - how do you think The Church is doing today
in this Critical Area of UNITY ?

Or do you think this little poem might sadly paint
a more accurate picture of the church today;

***Believe as I believe, No more, no less;
That I am right, And no one else, confess;
Feel as I feel, Think only as I think;
Eat what I eat, And drink what I drink;
Look as I look, Do always as I do;
Then, and only then, Will I fellowship with you.***

Why is it - that this Poem
seems to better describe the Church today
than the prayer of Jesus Himself?

Because in our natural (sinful) minds
we think UNITY can only come from UNIFORMITY

& so - DIVERSTIY (the opposite of UNIFORMITY)
In our natural (sinful) minds brings - Our JUDGMENT!

& THAT is the problem that "Sets the Stage"
for our 2 Part Msg - "Unity IN Diversity"

Let's Pray

I need to begin - by making **VERY CLEAR**
the **SUBJECT MATTER** - Paul is talking about here in **ROM 14**

In these matters

There are **ESSENTIALS**

There are **NON-ESSENTIALS**

There is **LOVE** (*which we saw last week*)

in Regard to the **ESSENTIALS** - Paul wrote to the Galatians
just prior to writing Romans

Gal 1:8-9 - ESV

8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.

9 As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

NOW **THAT** would fall under the **ESSENTIALS** !

In the **SAME WAY** - You can go today to our website
& read our "***What We Believe***" statement

We Believe . . .

That there is one living and true God, eternally existing in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, equal in power and glory; that this triune God created all, upholds all, and governs all.

That the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, without error in the original manuscripts, and the infallible rule of faith and practice.

That all people are sinners by nature and choice and, therefore, are under condemnation; that God regenerates by the Holy Spirit those who repent of their sins and confess Jesus Christ as Lord; that Jesus Christ

baptizes the seeking believer with the Holy Spirit and power for service, often subsequent to regeneration.

In the Universal Church , the living spiritual body, of which Christ is the Head and all regenerated persons are members.

THOSE - are the ESSENTIALS that we believe

HOWEVER - this text in Rom 14 is NOT talking about the Essentials
Rom 14 - is talking about the NON-ESSENTIALS

& so we need to HEAR THIS very clearly today

in Essentials - UNITY

in Non-Essentials - DIVERSITY

in All things - LOVE

REPEAT

Now the Church in ROME had some divisions starting over the NON-ESSENTIALS

& you know - the SAME Divisions that existed in ROME in 65 AD

Can exist in Nuevo Today - *Right?*

See - In Rome there were Christians from very different backgrounds

There were Previously Pagan Gentiles who came from an extremely WORLDLY background

& there were Previously Religious Jews who came from a legalistic RELIGIOUS background

& each of these New Christians brought some of their background into their new life w/ Christ - *just like you & I do today*

& it **caused** some **problems** back *then* - just like it does *today*

& so today - **God's Word** is going to begin to **TEACH US**

How we can *prevent* the enemy from using **our SELF-Nature** to start **discord** & **division** from *inside* the church

which is something that He is *very good* at

So **PLEASE** - Let's allow the Holy Spirit to reveal to EACH of us where we need to apply *this exact truth* to our lives

in Essentials - **UNITY**

in Non-Essentials - **DIVERSITY**

in All things - **LOVE**

Remember - we're coming out of the

"Put on Love by Putting on Christ" msg in **CH 13**

Rom 14:1 - ESV

1 As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions.

Paul begins this section on **NON-Essentials** - by telling us we are to Welcome one who is "*WEAK in Faith*"

BUT We are **NOT** - to welcome him in order to *quarrel over opinions*

As in - "***Sure, come on in "Brother", have we got a thing or two to straighten you out about"***"

NOT like **THAT** - But instead to truly welcome him

& notice right up front Paul **NAMES** this Christian
as one who is "***Weak in Faith***"

This **DOESN'T** mean - Weak in the Basic Christian Faith (*as in belief*)
but weak in the **assurance** of Faith (*re: Non-Essential things*)

& so - in **Vs2** Paul uses his first **Non-Essential EXAMPLE**
& he also defines this one who is "***Weak in Faith***"

Rom 14:2 - ESV

2 One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables.

Paul's first example is about "***Eating***" - but it's just an **EXAMPLE**
This text is **NOT** about "***Eating***"

in fact - to make it about "**Eating**" would be **Causing**
the exact **problem** - Paul is trying to correct

So he says - *For example, One person believes he may eat anything, while the WEAK person eats only veggies*

Isn't it **interesting** that Paul Implies
the person **with Liberty** to eat anything is **STRONG in Faith**

& the person who has **restrictions** on what they eat is **WEAK in Faith**

Don't we kind of assume it's the **other way** around

But **Paul says** - "NO, actually they're weak in Faith"

But **DON'T** worry about it - Truly **WELCOME THEM**

THEN - in **V.3** - the Holy Spirit **CONVICTS BOTH**
the **Strong in Faith** - **AND** - the **Weak in Faith**

Rom 14:3 - ESV

3 Let not the one who eats [strong] despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains [weak] pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.

So - the **FINAL ANSWER IS**

NO Judging each other on **Non-Essentials** like FOOD

STRONG - Do NOT **Despise** those **with** **Restriction**

WEAK - Do NOT **Pass Judgment** on those **w/o** **Restrictions**

See - the **Jewish Christians** in ROME

had a real problem with **meat** - (*just as an Example*)

Partly because of the O.T. **Dietary Laws**

Partly because the animals may've been **sacrificed to idols**
because that was the **cheapest** meat available

& so the **Jewish Christians**

began **JUDGING** the Gentile Christians for eating this meat

& the **Gentile Christians** began

DESPIISING the Jewish Christians for Judging them

& **THE FIGHT** IS ON - - *Not that different from today, is it?*

Leslie Flynn, Great Church Fights

A Christian from the South may be repelled by a swimming party for both men and women, then offend his Northern brother by lighting up a cigarette. At an international conclave for missionaries, a woman from the Orient could not wear sandals with a clear conscience. A Christian from western Canada thought it worldly for a Christian acquaintance to wear a wedding ring, and a woman from Europe thought it almost immoral for a wife not to wear a ring that signaled her status. A man from Denmark was pained to even watch British Bible school students play football, while the British students shrank from his pipe smoking.

Do you see it ??

Have you ever seen it in a church **you've been in** ??

In 1982 – My wife had just started attending a church a debate began over whether we should start singing some of these new “Calvary Chapel Style” songs along with the Hymnal Songs

That debate - ended with the church disbanding the pastor leaving the ministry - & the church building which had housed a Christian church for over 100 years being sold to the “Metropolitan Community Church” which is the openly homosexual church

& they really appreciated us destroying each other so they could have our church building

When *Non-Essentials* become *Essentials*
the enemy almost **ALWAYS WINS**

NOW - **back** to our text in **Rom 14**

Paul's talking about **eating Meat**
which is **not** really an **issue** in the Christian church **today**

However - allow me to "**Suggest**" some things that can
easily **Destroy** the **Unity of the church** that Jesus prayed for

How do you think other Christians should act toward;

- 1) Movies - or TV shows
- 2) Make-Up, especially on young girls
- 3) Playing Cards
- 4) Dancing
- 5) Types of Music
- 6) Sports
- 7) Tobacco
- 8) Alcohol (not to excess)
- 9) Bible Translation
- 10) Material Wealth

Now – **does** the Bible give us some **guidelines**
in each of these areas - - **YES!**

& **next week** - we'll be looking at some of those **guidelines**

but **the problem** is – the **church** has a tendency
to turn God's **guidelines** into **battle lines**

& that is a very, **very sad thing**

Paul's **1st thought** ends in **Rom 14:4**
& it ends with an **Exclamation Point**

Rom 14:4 - ESV

4 Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

Remember – we are talking about non-essential's here
& Paul says - **WHO made you GOD** ?

Why do we think that person should be accountable **to us**?

The **NLT** puts it so perfectly clear

Rom 14:4 - NLT

4 Who are you to condemn someone else's servants? They are responsible to the Lord, so let him judge whether they are right or wrong. And with the Lord's help, they will do what is right and will receive his approval.

On NON-Essentials - This is Incredibly **GOOD Counsel**

They are responsible to the Lord, so let him judge whether they are right or wrong.

We'll see more on this in a minute (*Paul's going to CLOSE with it*)

But 1st - **Paul wants** to put another example in
to make sure we don't think this is really about FOOD

Rom 14:5 - ESV → →

Rom 14:5 - ESV

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.

Again - let me refer to the **NLT**

Rom 14:5 - NLT

5 In the same way, some think one day is more holy than another day, while others think every day is alike. You should each be fully convinced that whichever day you choose is acceptable.

This controversy involves the **Sabbath day**

The **Jewish Christians** truly felt the Sabbath day was more holy than any other day of the week

The **Gentile Christians** believed that every day was equally holy

Paul's advice is very simple

Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind

Again - the "Sabbath Day" issue is an **EXAMPLE**
this teaching is not actually **ABOUT** the Sabbath

But **let me continue** with that Example

There is a **Christian Church** (big in a city near here)
who are **VERY SERIOUS** about the Sabbath Day

To find out **HOW Serious** - I went to their **official Website**
& looked up their **guidelines** on keeping the Sabbath

Their **OFFICIAL guidelines** on the Sabbath
instituted by the General Conference on July 9, 1990

Contain **6,269 WORDS** on HOW to keep the Sabbath
(*my computer counted them for me*)

6,200 Words on how to keep the Sabbath
which **Rom 14** uses as an Example of a **NON-ESSENTIAL**

But here's the deal - **IF** their 6,000 words
are causing them to **TRULY HONOR** the **LORD**

Then we have got to say
Praise God & Keep Honoring the Lord

& **according to** our text today;
If **WE** are Honoring the Lord by esteeming ***ALL days alike***

Then **they should** be saying - **to US**
Praise God & Keep Honoring the Lord

But WHETHER it's about Eating FOOD or Esteeming DAYS
The Holy Spirit's point here is very CLEAR

Lets Read Vs's 5-6 together - ESV

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.

6 The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.

On *non-essentials* – each believer must sincerely go before God to determine what position they should take

& then - the rest of us should allow them to take that stand

BUT - - What is the FOUNDATION

that we are called TO USE - to make these decisions ?

What is the BENCHMARK ?

The BENCHMARK for us making these decisions . . .

AND - the BENCHMARK we must use to allow others to make their own decisions

The BENCHMARK - is The Lordship of Jesus Christ

In the areas considered non-essentials - the Determining factor is the Lordship of Jesus Christ in your life

Are you DOING that, or NOT DOING THAT, BECAUSE Jesus Christ is your LORD

Are you Truly Honoring Jesus as your LORD by what you're doing or NOT Doing

If you are doing that thing in Honor of Jesus as your LORD
Then ROM 14:6 says (3 times) - That's GOOD

& Vs's 7-9 explain WHY this Must Be our BENCHMARK -
he Foundation of ALL we do

Rom 14:7-9 - ESV

7 For none of us [us Christians] lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself.

8 For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.

9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

Let me give you **just V.8** from the **NLT** - to clarify this

Rom 14:8 - NLT

8 If we live, it's to honor the Lord. And if we die, it's to honor the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

If we are LIVING to Honor the Lord, or
if we are DYING to Honor the Lord

The Real Issue is - WE BELONG to the LORD

& SO - **Two Christians** can have two different "*positions*"
on **Non-Essential matters**

& ***both*** be **HONORING the Lord**

So - to **whatever** "*position*"

the Lordship of Jesus Christ has brought you to

HONOR Him in that As your **LORD** -

but don't **mistakenly think** that **everyone else** around you
should hold the **same** "*position*" - or look just like you

Now - there's one more Strong Encouragement
to NOT JUDGE one another on these NON-Essential matters

Rom 14:10-12 - ESV

10 Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God;

11 for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."

12 So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

Paul closes today w/ a very powerful encouragement
for Christians to NOT Play JUDGE

He says – when tempted to judge, a brother
we should instead - consider the judgment seat of Christ

2Cor 5:10 - ESV

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

This is the "Bema (Judgment) Seat of Christ"
It is reserved for believers only

& it's a judgment where the things
that we've done as believers are judged

& 1Cor 3:10-15 say;

- Our Foundation is Jesus Christ
- Whatever we build on that Foundation here, will be tested by fire
- To either burn away the useless - or prove the valuable
- & there will be rewards & loss
for what we build on the foundation of Jesus Christ here & now

& I PROMISE you - on THAT Day

when we stand before Jesus Christ
the only actions we will be accountable for, will be our own

We will not be concerned - nor be given the chance to discuss
the actions of any other person

so why are we so interested in discussing them now?

Please - Let's TRULY APPLY this to one another

in Essentials - UNITY
in Non-Essentials - DIVERSITY
in All things - LOVE

UNITY in the midst of DIVERSITY
always covered in AGAPE LOVE for one another

Let's Pray