

## Unity! Truth! & Unity! Romans 14:1-13

Father's Day

Romans is about **Doctrine and Duty, Belief and Behavior**... in a believer's life...

An overwhelming theme in the end of Romans is **Love and Unity**.

Romans 14 is quick to point out the absolute **necessity of staying United and undivided**. Not letting anything get in the way of church unity. Especially non essential opinions and personal convictions that differ from person to person.

The Roman church was diverse people group, various backgrounds, customs, and cultural norms. You had the **Jewish believers** who grew up with many rituals and customs when it came to dietary laws, worship practices, and then there were the **Roman believers** who didn't have those same backgrounds, they grew up void of any godly living therefore having no real history with such practices.

These two diverse people groups collided when they came to Christ, worshiping JC as Lord & Savior in the same churches... . The people Paul is addressing in this passage are **believers**, they are church people. Wait a minute, they are all saved by Jesus...This should be one **big happy family**...but it wasn't!

The Jewish believers who thought they were **more holy** for keeping certain customs were all upset at the **The Roman believers for not following their Jewish laws** who thought the Jewish believers were up tight legalistic failures. They seemed to be arguing over whether or

not to eat meat, what days to worship on, one group thought they honored God & the other dishonored God...

What Paul is addressing here in ch 14 is much **less the individual details** about what non essential practices are right and wrong. What Paul is about to tell the Roman church is that there is nothing more important and more effective as a witness to the **world than UNITY in the church family**. They shouldn't be arguing about petty details that are not Biblical commands, or about things that are outside our circle of personal tradition or conviction. And neither should we, council when it comes to other Jesus loving churches or about one another!

Above all things the family of God (church) is to be unified around & **defined by its Savior not by its differences**. It's ok for us to have differences when it comes to non essential & personal convictions, the Lord through Paul commands us **not to quarrel about these things**, for quarreling will bring our **division**, and that will affect the **witness of Christ to the world!**

**Jesus was absolutely dedicated to the Unity of the family....**

**John 17:11 & 21-23** 11 Now I am departing from the world; they are staying in this world, but I am coming to you. Holy Father, **you have given me your name**; now protect them by the power of your name so that **they will be united just as we are** .... 21 I pray that they will **all be one, just as you and I are one**—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us **so that the world will believe you sent me**. 22 “I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may **be one as we are one**. 23 I am in them and you are in me. May they experience **such perfect unity that the world will know** that you sent me and **that you love them as much as you love me**.

Just moments before Jesus is executed, He prays that the disc. & all believers to come would be in such unity as the Trinity!! Amazing oneness!

Jesus says that **harmony & the oneness** of the church will be a **greater witness** to the world than we could ever imagine. It is the greatest way to reach the world... not by changing policies, politics, society or culture.

22 Such perfect unity that the world will know You sent Me,  
& You love them as much as Me!

That's a big boast, a big claim, and an eye opener! That the **world will be won**, by Oneness, through church unity! This does not compute on my logic meter.

But then again how does **touching a stick** to a sea open the waters to dry land? How does **walking around a city** bring the massive Jericho walls down (75 mill lb)? This is God we're talking about here.

**Philippians 1.27-28** Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a **manner worthy of the Good News** about Christ. Then, whether I come and see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are **standing together with one spirit and one purpose**, fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News. 28 Don't be intimidated in any way by your enemies. **This will be a sign** (oneness) to them that they are going **to be destroyed**, but that you are going to be saved, even by God himself....

**Standing Together with one spirit, purpose,** Paul writes to Philippian church Encouraging unity in order to convince, convict, and convert unbelievers

**Oneness a Sign, they will be Destroyed?** When your comfortably sitting on a train going to somewhere nice, you don't want to get off. But if you're made aware the train is headed for a broken bridge...you're ready to jump ship!

Silent **Oneness of the church family brings the world to the attention** of JC so much more than when the church family is pointing out each others weakness & faults.

**God is so against division!**

Likewise, the **disease of division** within the church family can turn many from Christ. God hates division in a family!

**Proverbs 6:16** There are six things the Lord hates— **no, seven things** he detests: 17 haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that kill the innocent, 18 a heart that plots evil, feet that race to do wrong, 19 a false witness who pours out lies, (7) **a person who sows discord in a family.**

The 7th, A person who divides a family from within a family... God has hatred towards a person who tries to separate His family. If a member of family outside immediate family tried to be divisive, or undermine what I was teaching as a dad, it would be over, no matter how close, they would be out....as a dad, it pains me to see the

kids fighting hurting each other. Even more if one sibling tried to turn the others away from what we are teaching

Titus warns against divisiveness/ppl, **Titus 3:10** If people are **causing divisions** among you, give a first and second warning. After that, have nothing more to do with them. **11** For people like that **have turned away from the truth**, and their own sins condemn them.

Why is division so dangerous and unity so important?

**1 Corinthians 3:16** Don't you realize that **all of you together are the temple of God** and that the Spirit of God lives in you? **17** God will **destroy anyone who destroys this temple**. For God's temple is holy, and **you are that temple**. NLT.

Peter I want you to be like living stones stacked on top of each other you all forming one Temple.

**1 Peter 2:5** you also, like living stones, are being **built into a spiritual house** to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

YOU are that acceptable living sacrifice to God, we are, the church is being built upon one another. We are a people fit together, closely...if we start pushing one another away....we fall like the walls of Jericho. Like any stone wall, each stone is laid one upon another, we depend on one another, there is strength in unity. If ever there was a time when unity was needed, it's now!

**Unity is such a big deal.** That's why God is so against divisiveness gossiping slander he hates when his children fight amongst themselves about non-biblical issues and preferences.... non-essentials/

Augustine put it well... "Essentials Unity, Non essentials Liberty, All Charity"

**Essential truths?** We are all sinners, Jesus was the Christ, God in the flesh, He alone died on cross for our sins, buried, rose, and will come again. Jesus is the only way to salvation. NO variance from this.

**Non- essentials....** What to eat, drink, days to worship, raising hands, music style,

**In All things...**have love! Love your dad, wife, neighbor, enemy!

So what do you do with people in the church who have differing opinions on **non essential issues**? That's the issue Paul addresses in Romans 14

**I Accept** other believers who are **weak in faith**, and **don't argue** with them about what they think is right or wrong.

What do you do with those who think differently on non essentials, **accept them.... you love them**. Paul warns us not to make spiritual maturity a requirement for fellowship, there are those **who are weak in the faith**.

There are many **reasons why a Christian might be weak**.

- They may be a babe in Christ (babies are weak)
- They may be sick or diseased (by legalism, difficult upbringing)
- They may be malnourished (they lack good teaching)
- They may lack exercise (needing encouraging)

\*This is why we teach, love, disciple, encourage through the Word of God. It makes us strong, together, and united

2 **For instance**, one person believes it's all right to eat anything. But another believer with a sensitive conscience will eat only vegetables. 3 Those **who feel free** to eat anything **must not look down** on those who don't. And those who don't eat certain foods **must not condemn** those who do, for God has accepted them.

As an example, Paul uses those who eat meat and don't eat meat... those that didn't may have been because the local meat offered to idols (Paul says idols aren't real, don't worry about it! [1 Corinthians 8](#)), or they were still following Jewish laws and customs.

This got the church to arguing about who was right & wrong in their non-essential convictions... was causing division! God hates

**Titus 3:9** Do not get involved in **foolish discussions** about spiritual pedigrees or in **quarrels and fights about obedience to Jewish laws**. These things are useless and a waste of time.

Paul is saying, keep your eyes on the prize, & off the flies! Jesus is the prize, the quarreling is a buzz of flies!

**He who is weak eats only vegetables:** In Paul's mind, the weak brother is the **stricter one**. They weren't weaker in the faith because of what they ate or didn't eat, they were weaker because of their legalistic attitudes and lack of love towards others.

**Mark 7:18** So He said to them, "Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a

man from outside cannot defile him, 19 because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?”

Funny the weak ones probably didn't see themselves as weak. Thought themselves the strong, non meat eaters! Legalism has a way of making us **think that we are strong** and those who don't keep the rules the way we do **are weak**. Paul is speaking against that, saying this brings division, dangerous.

So if quarreling is divisive, judging our family is inappropriate, we are not each others masters..

4 Who are you to condemn **someone else's servants**? Their **own master** will judge whether they stand or fall. And with the Lord's help, they will stand and receive **his approval**. 5 **In the same way**, some think one day is more holy than another day, while others think every day is alike.

Paul isn't saying to **erase our differences**, **he is saying to rise above them**, look over them and see that it is only Jesus leaning in from heaven, who dropped in from above for a short period, who saved us from all our sin. **Who are we to judge** another person? That is the **Lord's job**, for all souls belong to Me, He says in Ezekiel 18:44 “Behold, all souls are Mine; The soul of the father As well as the soul of the son is Mine;

That isn't to say we just **blindly say we will be united** with anyone and anything they say. We wont say “well in our camp we believe it is wrong to steal, over there they think it's ok, but we will still stay united anyway”... well that isn't what the text is telling us. Non



essentials here. Things the Bible is clear on we stick together on and even divide over. Jesus *is the only way* to know the Father. There is no other way.

**Issues like** days to worship, things to eat, not eat, drink not drink, tattoos, piercings, smoking, a glass of wine... Issues like, teaching **topical vs expositional**, a series vs straight through word for word, more teaching style, more charismatic, tongues, praying out loud or silent, hands **folded or not folded**, eyes open or shut for prayer, communion weekly, monthly, annually, how we share Jesus, pray, ... these things can be such sticking points and cause divisions (you laugh!)...and the **world is watching!** Example of how dumb we sound to the world when we argue over non essentials

“Once I saw this guy on a bridge about to jump. I said, "Don't do it!" He said, "Nobody loves me." I said, "God loves you. Do you believe in God?"

He said, "Yes." I said, "Are you a Christian or a Jew?" He said, "A Christian." I said, "Me, too! Protestant or Catholic?" He said, "Protestant." I said, "Me, too! What franchise?" He said, "Baptist." I said, "Me, too! Northern Baptist or Southern Baptist?" He said, "Northern Baptist." I said, "Me, too! Northern Conservative Baptist or Northern Liberal Baptist?"

He said, "Northern Conservative Baptist." I said, "Me, too! Northern Conservative Baptist Great Lakes Region, or Northern Conservative Baptist Eastern Region?" He said, "Northern Conservative Baptist Great Lakes Region." I said, "Me, too!"

Northern Conservative†Baptist Great Lakes Region Council of 1879, or Northern Conservative Baptist Great Lakes Region Council of 1912?" He said, "Northern Conservative Baptist Great Lakes Region Council of 1912." I said, "**Die, heretic!**" **And I pushed him over.**

We should never get to a place where we think we have all the right answers. The **Word of God has all the answers**, in black and white. The HS deals with the greys by giving us a personal conviction in each of our hearts, that differs greatly from person to person, church to church at times. So have grace in non essentials. Remember the essential, no wavering from them at all..

5. You should **each be fully convinced** that whichever day you choose is acceptable. 6 Those who worship the Lord on a special day **do it to honor him**. Those who eat any kind of food **do so to honor the Lord**, since they give thanks to God before eating. And those who refuse to eat certain foods also **want to please the Lord** and give thanks to God.

Fully convinced in what you believe is acceptable... **fully convinced in our personal convictions**, not allowing our differences to divide us. If you have a personal conviction, stick with it, believe in it, and let others believe in their own...

Fully convinced, **alcohol is an absolute evil for me**, unacceptable, personal conviction, not found in the Bible, I can find many scriptures that speak against drinking in general (proverbs 22, Exodus), but the Bible does not say all drinking is bad, forbidden, sin. Jesus 1st miracle. Timothy take a little wine for stomach.

Because of wreckage in past, I won't do it. BUt Im no longer a slave to drinking or not drinking. In my freedom from drug and alcohol I am free to **not drink to the glory of God to honor God**. Others have liberty to have ONE glass of wine, a BEER, I don't want. We are free to do as God wills us personally.

Weed...it's legal now, what do I do with that?? Is that in the Bible? Bible is clear that being drunk (intoxicating) is a sin. Weed is intoxicating.

In regards to non essential liberties... Charles Spurgeon, Spurgeon once penned a letter to the editor of the Daily Telegraph after he was criticized for saying to his congregation, "I intend to smoke a good cigar to the glory of God before I go to bed tonight."

Though, we are also told not to be a slave to anyone or thing but Christ, addiction is tough. It doesn't change our salvation.

In what ever conviction we have we are to do whatever we decide is right to the honor and glory of God, while not making another believer weaker in the faith stumble. So, if I am doing what I believe is best in honor of the Lord, I am to let you, other churches do the same for...

7 For we don't live for ourselves or die for ourselves. 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**. 9 Christ died and rose again for this very purpose—to be Lord both of the living and of the dead.

Paul reminds the Roman Christians that "No man is an island." (Romans 12:1 Living Sacrifice) All believers belong to God, and God alone. Christ died so we may be free to live or die to Him!

There is danger in condemning another believer...looking down on  
10 So **why do you condemn another believer? Why do you look down on** another believer? Remember, we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. 11 For the Scriptures say, "As surely as I live," says the LORD, "every knee will bend to me,

and every tongue will confess and give praise to God.””

The strict believer found it easy to condemn his brother. The meat eater was unspiritual to him. The *free* Christian, he had no problem looking down his nose at the uptight do gooder non meat eating veggie guy.

**Both were wrong** based on the rest of what the Bible texts told us and what Paul is saying right here!

Paul’s concern for unity and personal holiness goes far beyond eating and drinking & rest. We all will give an account before the Lord God one day. Standing before Him, alone until He takes out the **book of our sin**. Those in found in Jesus, washed white, the book washed red, covering all my sins and shame! To those who did not accept Him....death

12 Yes, each of us will give a **personal account to God**. 13 So **let’s stop condemning each other**. Decide instead to live in such a way that you will not cause another believer to stumble and fall.

Since we are **responsible for ourselves** when it comes to judgment, and that is more than we can handle on our own, lets let God do the worrying about our fellow family and those outside the family.... Stay united, for God’s sake, literally.

Imagine what the world would look like if the church, the family of God across the world stopped arguing and debating who had

the best and right traditions? And we all in one accord pointed to the person of Jesus Christ, the risen Savior as our true Shepherd, our One love, our common bond, Christ the Lord?!

What a witness Oneness and Unity would make...

**Romans 15:5** May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus. 6 Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7 Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory.

