

The Work of God

Now I understand that.. We've been talking about love, loving our neighbors as ourselves, we've been talking about blessing our enemies and praying for them, if an enemy is hungry feed him or thirsty give him a drink... we see here as of lately Paul's really pressing in into the concept of love... and it's no coincidence as we read this text that the Holy Spirit keeps pressing deeper... Calling us deeper into relationship with him, calling us deeper into his word, Calling us deeper into conviction where there's pressure... because where there's pressure the things that don't belong within us get pressed out and it's a good thing...

it hurts it's uncomfortable, we don't want it I don't want it because there's some things that are rather shameful that are left in my heart but God wants to press that out... In the last few weeks I've preached on the fact that it's in our uncomfortability that we grow, right? It's in that time of pressure where real growth begins... we all know how diamonds are formed right?

If we do some research you can come to find out that Diamonds Are the hardest known natural material, and the way that it's created is it 1 ingredient called pure carbon, and I'm not going to get too detailed in the science of it but this one raw ingredient pressed by extreme pressure and heat from the earth's depth, creates into one of the most natural strongest hardest material... and to even mention it's one of the most beautiful, attractive to the eye...stones, that everyone buys, the people have killed for died for... and I find it really interesting that God being such a creative God created the stone like this with such a symbolic metaphor...

because as God calls us into the depth... the depth of his love, of his word, of this path That he has called us to follow... it leads us into points of pressure and heat... right we know the Bible speaks of being refined, broken down and built again... he's the Potter and we're the clay... it is imperative... that we allow ourselves to get to the uncomfortability, in the pressure, in the depth of Jesus Christ... and all the sufferings that we go through, instead of running from Christ but running to him, allowing him to stand with us in that fire stand with us with that pressure, because then a transformation begins to happen.. And we are formed to these beautiful stones... attractive and yet strong... and it's so interesting that the same

beauty can be replicated... but not the same strength... there's so many fake diamonds that can be made from hard plastic, glass, even some stones... but no beauty holds the same amount of strength as a diamond formed and strengthened by the natural heat and pressure by God's given creation... and this is the same for us... we can fake it, we can replicate it we can appear to be nice, we can appear to be kind and say all the right things, we could put a smile on our face, say all the right Christian lingo, full of so-called faith, but the moment the pressure, the difficulties of life begin to press on us, that will determine whether we are real natural diamonds... if it's glass it almost takes no pressure at all, hard plastic might take a little more, replicated stones can take a while, but we know with Christ living within us, the rock the natural strength, we will withstand and be the strongest in all of creation... just as Christ intended us to be, to be the light to be the example, to be the strength for the world to see...

now I know I'm on this little tangent but I just wanted to share it as we go deeper, as we get pressed just a little more when it comes down to loving others, when it comes down to following the two commandments that are the most important that Jesus established, above all other things... love your God and love your neighbor as yourself... so as we read into Romans chapter 14, I'm going to continue off of what pastor Dave was talking about... and we're going to read into the story of Paul and we're going to see that there's even a deeper level of love for each other that he urges us to do... so tuck in your toes... if we have felt convicted about loving our enemies, this is going to press a little deeper... but dear friends, as we get convicted, as we get pressed, as we read this word and listen to this sermon... I want us to always remember and reflect on the tangent that I was talking about, it's for our own good, So we can be strong and reflect the glory, the light of God such a beautiful way, because we know when the light shines upon a diamond, it glistens...'

so let's read **Romans chapter 14 we're going to read verses 19-23...**

“Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace in the things by which one may edify another. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offence. It is good neither to eat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak. Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God.

Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.”

So the context of what Paul is talking about here was, there were mature Christians that through the process of sanctification and transformation, through the growth and depth of their relationship with Christ and understanding of his word, it has given them freedom over the bondages of the flesh, Jews had certain dietary restrictions they could eat certain things by law, right we know that Jews were circumcised gentiles weren't, there was even a situation where there were people who were eating food that was offered to idols...

in other words and this is relative to today... as we press into this relationship with Jesus and we read his word... as the scripture says, it is the truth that sets us free... and as I come to know the truth and Begin to walk out that freedom, where maybe before I was chained by the addiction, of altering my mind not being sober... drinking... But God set me free, to a point where if I was to have a drink it doesn't pull me right back into it, because over time and growth I have been set free, now I can use this freedom of mine and be careless about those around me, well I can do what I want because God sent me free, and “if I do something that offends somebody that's their problem”... and here's the thing I used to think like this very often, because we could be so afraid of being people pleasers, but there's a difference between pleasing people and having real godly love for people, for their sake of transformation, for their sake of their process of becoming a diamond, for their sake of salvation... so Paul here in context was Urging his brothers and sisters of Christ To give up their liberty for the sake of love...

And so the deeper question is... how far are we willing to go for the gospel, for the truth of God to be shared, what are we willing to give up... as we've been going through Romans we talked about giving up ourselves, becoming servants slaves to God, dying to ourselves and giving up our lives to follow Jesus, giving up our pride, to love the unlovable, our enemies... but as we go deeper are we willing to even give up our liberties, the things that we are free to please our flesh with for the sake of taking care of the weak...

I want to use a biblical example and a personal example to solidify what im saying here...

1 Corinthians 8 4-7 “Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth as there are many gods and many Lords, yet for us there is one God, the father, of whom are all things, and we for him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live. However, there is not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.

So we see here there was a situation where they were those who had the knowledge that there's one God, and understanding that there's one God so the food offered to idols is meaningless to them, so they can eat it without sinning without being defiled, because through knowing Christ and knowing the truth they were free... but as Paul says here not everyone has that knowledge they just came to faith, they still don't understand, they're weak, and when they saw these Christians who were eating food from idols, and they thought to themselves ohh well if they can do it so can I, and they ate the food and they were defiled their conscious was affected they started doubting, they were weak in their faith so they started doubting and in that doubt they sinned against themselves... and that is the concept of stumbling a brother or a sister... and what does Jesus say about stumbling a brother and sister who was weak in faith...

mark 9:42 “But whoever causes one of these little ones who believes in me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.”

There's two things that I see here, one of them is scary and one of them is lovely... Jesus really cares about his children, And I know as I'm preaching on this and I'm throwing around the word weak in faith, a little one, a new believer, a baby in Christ... let me tell you something it is completely OK to be weak in the faith, to be a baby, because you just started the path... and no one should expect you to be walking let alone running when you're barely learning to stand, I love when someone who never knew Christ begins his journey of knowing him and falling in love with him and being reborn... because you see visibly the growth of Christ

within that person... and I see there's fewer new believer be encouraged, and do not fear, Or be discouraged if you keep getting up and you fall back down... you're just learning to walk, and God loves you so much, and he's watching you as a proud father so excited that his child was beginning to grow and take baby steps, and once you develop the concept of walking, there will be people that come and they will try to trip you up, they will speak death, they'll try to stumble you, but this is the wonderful love of God, you don't have to defend yourself... because we have a father who is watching and he sees those who are purposely trying to cause you to stumble...

and he is not happy when someone comes along and causes one of his little ones to stumble, and I think it really shows how much Jesus cares and how scary it is to have to face him if we choose to disobey what Jesus is talking about here...

Now I understand that we make mistakes, maybe we have been taking advantage of our freedom, maybe we've been too selfish with our lives too focused on ourselves, that we are aware of those who are weak in faith around us, and there is a Reality whether we like it or not... we are called to be holy for he is holy, we are called to be the light in this Dark World, We are called to bring hope where there is hopelessness and there's plenty of that going around right now... so in other words we need to start acting like God's children, and the way we eat, the way we drink, the way we talk... the way that we carry ourselves, and the way that we love...

and I'm not saying nor am I talking about cleaning up our outer appearance, like the religious people do, like I have done, and being a replicated diamond, but I'm talking about pressing in to the word, into the relationship with Christ, into his presence into his light, where our sin is exposed, and is pressed out, and it's God himself who brings the growth and change, all we have to do is just stay there, it hurts but stay in the fire, it's embarrassing but stay in the light, it's uncomfortable but stay in the pressure, and then we become we are called to be... holy... it's OK if you are weak in faith, it's OK if you're a baby, if you're just learning to walk and you're stumbling around, we might be still dealing with certain sins, our mouth may still be pretty dirty in the way we talk, We still walk around with pride in our hearts, and that is OK... but hear me out... it is not OK to stay there, growth is expected. There's a time frame of when my child is still learning to walk, stumbling

around all that but there comes a point or it's like OK kid, now you're just being lazy, now you just found comfort in where you're sitting... you can walk when you choose not to. And this is not OK, God knows when we are capable of walking but we choose rather to sit in our sin and believe in our hearts that it's OK, he gave us that much grace then he will give us grace now...

no... child of God, we are called to walk, call to run and follow Jesus in his footsteps to the ends of the world the Bible says, **Romans 10:15 "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things."** We are called to walk, the righteous man falls 7 times And rise again but the wicked shall fall by calamity proverbs 24:16... the righteous will fall but the righteous will get up, rise again and keep moving forward and keep growing, but the wicked shall fall into calamity... and they shall sit and they shall stay...

So there's a difference between making mistakes, maybe even causing someone to stumble from our mistakes, but getting back up, repenting before God and the person that we have stumbled, and picking our brother or sister up and through repentance both begin to grow...

1 Corinthians 8:9-13 "But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idols temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, you wound their weak consciences, you've sinned against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble."

Now I know before I was talking about us being potentially comfortable in our sin and that in itself can cause others to stumble when we call ourselves Christians, but going back to the context of what we're talking about again, we could be free, holy and sinless... and yet selfish, still worried about ourselves or peripheral vision is tunneled, with just ourselves in our scope... So worried about fulfilling the first commandment and forgetting the other, we love God, but do we love our neighbors... Are we aware of our brothers and sisters around us, are we aware of their spiritual walk, you know we can all sit Sunday after Sunday in this very building for years and years, we'll still be strangers to each other... this ought not

to be, and this is what Paul's talking about here in the context of the church, he's urging them to receive the weak in faith, get to know who they are, help them grow, and ultimately to be careful not to cause others to stumble...

you know I find Paul's character very interesting, yes he might have been a cut your throat type of guy, maybe he didn't have a whole lot of friends, maybe struggle with pride all kinds of flaws because he was human, what I can really learn from and love about him is this deep deep love for the gospel, for the truth of God to be shared, and I just think as he says here in verse 13 of first Corinthians chapter 8 if food makes my brother stumble I will never again eat meat lest I make my brother stumble, and that's where I want us to press in deeper, how far are we willing to go for the sake of others to know God, to be saved, to have what we have here today, we come and we worship and we rejoice and we rest our burdens onto a God a father who loves us and died for us, and we are blessed and we rejoice... and we walk out those double doors, and there are many out there, who this morning are drowning in sin, dying in hopelessness, and are going to hell... But we prefer our comfort zone over souls that are going to hell...

and I too fall short of this, how often when I'm driving and I see a person in need and look at my time and ahh I don't know if I have time for this... and then conviction from the spirit kicks in... me and each of you, doesn't it matter if you're a babe or a nine foot giant in the spirit, we have been given freedom, authority, and above all else.. The God in whom is all power, the God who can destroy soul and flesh, the God who is so strong that he will send his Angel to bind Satan the king of all demons him cast him into the pit of hell, this is the God that lives in you and me... if only we knew... if only we believed... if only we came to know him in such a depth of relationship, we children of God in this world would set it ablaze, But instead we sleep because we enjoy our comfort zone, as Dave lovingly mentioned it we set boundaries, we set up walls, around our hearts because we're afraid... but the Bible says do not fear the one who can hurt the flesh, do not fear the one who can kill you physically harm you emotionally harm you, whether human or demon, because they cannot hurt your soul they cannot take your soul, because our soul belongs to God... but rather fear God who is capable of destroying both the flesh and the soul...

there should be two things that fill us with boldness to go to the ends of the earth, and bring good news of salvation and love of God to those who don't know it...

1. Healthy Fear of the Lord

that's right. There is a fear of the Lord that we as a Christian nation have lost, that is dwindling, I don't have any social media but I have Facebook and sometimes I'll download it and it's not what's going on in the world that saddens me and brings sorrow to my heart, because those who do not know God we could not be surprised of what they do and the evil and wickedness that they commit, but what brings me sorrow is the churches that know of God... have lost the fear of the Lord, who fear humans, who fear this cancel culture, who fear these communities who openly rejoice in their sin, and they fear the ones who can hurt their church, not the one who's God over every living soul in existence.... It's this healthy fear of God and it comes down to knowing him personally, that will cause us to stand when everyone else bows to the authorities of evil, like in the day of Daniel, when the nations we're afraid of the great king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar... and he builds a big idol made of gold and declares a law that if anyone doesn't bow will be killed... now if we read this story of Daniel, we can see how God was his defender, he feared the Lord, and that fear drove him and led him onto this path where not only did God save his life multiple times but he was exalted amongst the royalty, amongst the high governing places... this is we're a healthy fear of God can get us... and there is a time coming church... and ever so growing persecution, because the Bible stand against sin, but the question is when that persecution walks through these double doors, will we stand, will we be steadfast in the pressure... if there's one thing that can bring any consolation, I know I'm young, and I know I can speak a little too soon of this.. But as the pastor I will stand, and if I have to I will die, and I hope that each one of you stand with me, because I know that when the fires are set ablaze, and as the young generation likes to say we're cooked... meaning we're held under flame, just as the story of Daniel and Jesus will be standing amongst us, and he already is standing amongst us now... 'amen?

In the second thing that drives us, motivates us to do the work of God, to step out of boldness, to stand...

2. Healthy understanding of Love.

someone else may have the zeal to die for Christ to die for his truth, to stand in the face of persecution, but are we also compelled by love.. When the persecutors come, do we see their path that is leading to hell, and burn with love for their salvation...

but will I love enough, do I love enough to be ready to lay it all down for the sake of Christ and His children. But again to achieve such love, we must look at others through the lens of God... in order to see the way that God sees people it requires us to get to know him personally, growing in depth in that relationship and love with God, because as we get to know Him, we fall deeply in love with him, and as we fall deeply in love with him, we value it fall deeply in love with his creation, and his greatest creation it's us his children created and formed in his image...

we are called to...

Give up... our lives. Give in... to ministry and servanthood. Give... tithes and offerings/finances

We are not takers, we are givers because we are children of the most high God who is a what? GIVER!

He provides for us! He has given and continues to give so much..

He gives us... Breathe and life. (children, work, food, creation! Subdue the earth and all that's in it)

He gives us... purpose and wisdom. He gives us... Mercy and Grace.

He gave us.. His only begotten Son, for who so ever believes onto Him will be "GIVEN" everlasting/eternal life!

So what is stopping us from giving into His story... and sharing His story....

So il quicky give the summary of each verse as we conclude chapter 14 verses 19-23, I wont reach each verse but give the simple answers to each verse.

V19: Pursue peace and edification.

Instead of just living for ourselves may we daily stop a take a step back. Ask the Holy Spirit to check our hearts and tongues... are we choosing to live in a way that's reflecting the light of God and edifying/building up others... this reminds me of a scripture that's speaks of our tongue and how we can use it to edify which

means to build someone up or we could use our tongue to knock someone down...

Ephesians 4:29-32 “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, But what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”

This might step on our toes a little bit, but I think often we don't think about how our very tongue can actually cause someone to stumble. I'm going to call it as it is, this concept of sarcasm. Sarcastically making fun of someone or belittling someone, putting someone down in a joking way, it's something that is ingrained in our dialogue, in the way that we interact with one another. It's funny... there's so many times that I've been hurt because someone made fun of something that was no laughing matter, there's been times where I've hurt and offended others because I have sarcastically put them down... I think it's time to call it as it is... it is sin. If we read in ephesians chapter 5 as well it speaks of what it means to walk in love, and we are familiar with this... ephesians 5:3-4 “But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for Saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.”

I know that we joke around amongst each other, because that's how we love each other... but I genuinely in my heart can never seem to believe that the bad seeds that proceed from our mouths, can produce good fruit. As the Bible says how can fresh water and bitter water come from the same place, how can we bless with the same mouth that we curse... I think if we were to really ask the Holy Spirit who knows all things right before we speak, is the joke or sarcasm that im about to say towards someone going to edify them, is it going to build them up, or is it going to hurt them, I believe we will find an answer. Because often times I come to notice many wont speak up against it so id rather not do it at all... So going back to the context, Being aware of those who are weak in faith, not allowing anything to

hinder the gospel, the spreading of the good word. We are called to pursue peace and edification.

V20-21: Restrain your freedom.

We must ask ourselves, what effect will my actions have on others if I do this?

It matters to God when we have a posture of having a loving concern for those around us, not a posture of whether we are right on nonessential things...

whether we have the freedom to do what we want with the freedom we have been given. There is no greater love than to give up our very own freedom that God may have given us for the sake of loving others... Jesus had the freedom of being completely ok with being in heaven instead of living and suffering in the flesh and going as far as even dying... a God who never needed to suffer or die... gave up His freedom so that we may be free... I think its ok if sometimes we give up our freedoms for the sake of a little one of His to love on them...

V22-23: Bring no judgement onto self.

Blessed is the person who doesn't bring judgement on themselves by carelessly doing everything their conscience may approve. If there is a situation where we think that others might be negatively affected in their walk with God by our example... then its best to test our freedom in private before God, and we have to make sure we invite the Holy Spirit in all that we do so He can tell us Himself whether we do is right before Him or not... because if we are loveless and selfish about our freedoms... we could cause others to stumble and bring Gods judgement onto ourselves... and if we read into verse 23... if I personally am about to do something and I have doubt in my heart that maybe what I'm about to do is wrong... then I'm already under judgement and I probably shouldn't do it Because if the motive behind what we do is unbelief... that action becomes a sin.

I cant help but think of the song we sing for worship... Good good father, there's a part that we sing, As you call me deeper still, deeper still, into love.... Dear church God is always calling us deeper into his word, deeper in this relationship with him, deeper still... because as we talked about in the beginning it's in that depth, it's in the depth of the earth where there's pressure where there's heat where the diamonds are formed... he calls us to go deeper. Roots of a tree must grow deeper, to be able to withstand the storms the winds that may come, you know we saw

the true test happen when the winds came in a way like they never have recently, and we got to see how many trees we're going to either dry it up or or appear to look pretty healthy but we're actually dying inside, where the roots were either rotten or not very deep... I hope that we can understand what I am speaking metaphorically... what does our spiritual circumstance look like... We Maybe someone who has been on this journey with the Lord for a long time, and you are fully grown tree, and maybe thought to yourself, I'm pretty good size I think I'm done growing, it would be a big mistake and rather a common mistake that many of us do when we're in church for so long and we're following this journey for so long that we begin to believe that we're OK, I'm not sinning like I used to, I go to church I tithe, I will occasionally help and serve, and then we grow complacent... comfortable, in our roots are no longer growing, still seeking and in search of the living water, and slowly very very slowly, from within that tree can grow dry, and not produce fruit anymore in the seasons that it should, and even come to a point where that tree dries up and dies... the reason the trees root, is it grows to find that living water that's underneath the ground and it places its roots in every possible direction in every possible way to drink from this living water because the tree knows that the water is its source of life, and it's so important no matter our age both physically or spiritually, that we never stop seeking after the living water recognizing the need for the water, no matter how we look up above the ground, because when we look at a tree that's above the ground sometimes we don't see growth, or there's very little growth, but we are often mistaken that most of the growth happens underground, and this brings me to encourage the little ones, the tree saplings, that just started the journey, that they're just little trees that are barely sticking out from the ground, not even yet capable of producing fruit... we are called to take care of the saplings and stop expecting growth that could be seen, or fruit that can be grown... because like I said most of the growth happens in the depth where we do not see, and it is impossible for fruit to be produced if there is not enough roots in the depth, roots that is chasing after the living water, because it's that water and gives the capability for fruit to be produced, and above all else for any growth that happens above the soil or in other words the appearance... so This is why it's so important, above all the other things, that we are pressing into the depth chasing the living water chasing Jesus, drinking from him, for he is the true source that will bring us growth that will help us produce fruit, for both the fully grown tree in the little sapling, so it's imperative, crucially

important... that each one of us no matter where we are in our spiritual walk, are deeply recognizing our need for that source for Jesus and are running for it growing towards seeking after it... love your God, and love your neighbor as yourself...

Band can come forward...as we come to a close...

oftentimes the seeds that come from the big trees land in between them, and they begin to grow in the safety of the fully grown, were the strong storms and winds protect the little sapling that doesn't have enough roots to keep it from getting uprooted... we see here in the context of the scriptures that we are called to receive the weak, to take care of those that might not be able to withstand the storms, we have those that are here in this church right now, there have been hit by storms, but may have not been rooted enough in Christ, and that is OK... and they're barely holding on by a little root that's still standing in the soil, they still have a foot in Jesus but they need help, they need those big trees to break the winds, I said this before and again I say this now, if you are weak, if you're getting hit by the storms, you're barely holding on... there's no shame in asking for help... it doesn't matter if you're a man... I hate so much that society and the way that we grew up, says you're a man, you should be strong enough to deal with it, real men don't cry, real men don't ask for help, they take care of themselves...

this is a prideful lie that comes from the pit of hell, we all need help, we all need Jesus, we all need a shoulder to cry on, we all need to cry, there's a reason why that's a God-given emotion in the physical creative part of our body

as we come into prayer and worship,