

“The Calling Of The Church”
Romans 14:19-23

Introduction:

1. Let’s Turn Back In Our Bibles This Morning:
 - To Romans 14 - Where - Over The Last Several Weeks:
 - We Have Been Exploring:
 - One Important Dimension:
 - In Our Relationships With:
 - Other Christians - In The Church!
 - And That Dimension Has Been:
 - How To Handle:
 - Matters That Aren’t Clearly Addressed:
 - In The Word Of God!
2. This Must Have Been:
 - A Very Sensitive Issue In The Early Church:
 - Because - Not Only Does Paul Devote:
 - More Than One Chapter To It:
 - Here In Romans!
 - He Also Addressed It:
 - In More Than One Letter!
 - He Does So At Length:
 - In 1 Corinthians As Well!
 - It Was & Still Is:
 - An Important Issue:
 - Because - As Charles Hodge Once Wrote:
 - “The Fellowship Of The Saints Is Not To Be Broken For Unessential Matters!”
 - In Fact - This Could Be The Theme Of Romans 14:
 - As A Whole!
3. Well - Throughout Romans 14:
 - The Apostle Paul:
 - Has Been Giving Us Guidelines:
 - To Help Us Navigate Through:
 - Our Daily Choices & Decisions:
 - So That Our Unity As Christians:
 - Can Be Maintained!
 - **IE:** Because - Just Like Any Relationship - Any Friendship - Any Marriage - It Takes Effort To Maintain That Relationship!
 - And So - What Do We Need To Consider:
 - When We Make Decisions:
 - About Those “Unessential Matters?”
 - Last Week - We Learned About:
 - The Culture Of The Church:
 - And How The Righteousness & Peace & Joy We Have In Jesus Christ:
 - Ought To Influence The Choices We Make!
 - Well - This Week:
 - As We Come To The End Of The Chapter:
 - We Will Discover:
 - The Calling Of The Church!
 - And That Is To Pursue After:
 - Those Things That Are True:
 - In Order To Maintain The Unity Of The Church!
4. And This Is What We Find In:
 - 14:19-23 - After Describing God’s Kingdom:
 - As A Kingdom Of Peace - He Writes:
 - “Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. / For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed [are] pure; but [it is] evil for that man who eateth with offence. / [It is] good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor [any

thing] whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. / Hast thou faith? have [it] to thyself before God. / Happy [is] he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. / And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because [he eateth] not of faith: for whatsoever [is] not of faith is sin!”

- In These Verses - At The End Of This Chapter:
 - The Apostle Paul Tells Us:
 - That There Are Some Things:
 - We Need To “Follow After!”
 - And This Means That:
 - We Are To Pursue After These Things:
 - With All Our Heart & With All Our Strength!
 - IE: Its Like What’s Coming Up In Indiana Over The Next Month Or So - And That Is - Deer Hunting Season! I’m Pretty Sure Most Of Us Aren’t Avid Hunters - But If Someone Is A Hunter - There’s A Devotion To It - Almost Like Nothing Else! And Most Hunters Will “Pursue” After The Biggest Game & The Buck With The Largest Rack On Its Head!
- Well - This Is The Kind Of Devotion We Need To Have:
 - As We Look More Closely At:
 - Three Things - Even Three Goals:
 - We Need To “Follow After” And Pursue:
 - In Order To Maintain:
 - The Essential Unity:
 - Of The Church!
 - Those Goals Are:
 - True Christian Progress!
 - True Christian Purity! And:
 - True Christian Practice!
 - Let’s Look More At These Together!

* First - We Need To Pursue After:

1. True Christian Progress:

- Within The Church!
 - This Is What We Find In:
 - 14:19-20a - “Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. / For meat destroy not the work of God!”
 - In The First Part Of 14:19:
 - When Paul Uses The Word “Therefore” - He Is:
 - Calling For Practical Application:
 - Of The Principles He Gave Us:
 - Earlier In The Chapter!
 - So - Because Of:
 - The Mutual Culture:
 - We Are To Have As A Church:
 - In 14:14-18! And:
 - The Mutual Care:
 - We Are To Have For Each Other:
 - In 14:9-13! And:
 - The Mutual Commitment:
 - We Have To The Lord:
 - In 14:5-8! And:
 - The Mutual Communion:
 - We Have As His Servants:
 - In 14:1-4!
 - “Let Us Therefore Follow After” And Pursue After:
 - True Christian Progress:
 - Which Is Growth!
 - And - In 14:19 - We Find:
- The Way Of Growth!
 - Its By Following After & Pursuing:

- “The Things Which Make For Peace, And Things Wherewith One May Edify Another!”
 - So - Peace & Edification:
 - Are To Be Some Of Our Most Basic Goals:
 - As Christians & As A Church!
- The Way Of Peace:
 - And Harmony Within The Church:
 - Is Not A “Peace At Any Cost!”
 - Instead - It Is A Peace:
 - That Reflects The Peace Of God:
 - And His Kingdom!
 - Which Can Only Exist Properly:
 - When Rooted In The Righteousness Of God! (14:17) And:
- The Way Of Edification:
 - Are Those Things That Will:
 - Build Up & Develop Other Christians:
 - For Growth In & Usefulness For:
 - The Lord!
 - And - These Are The Things:
 - That We Need To Be Pursuing After:
 - For The Benefit Of The Body Of Christ!
- And - I Believe:
 - The Connection Between:
 - Peace & Edification Is So Close:
 - That When You Pursue The One:
 - The Other Will Naturally Follow!
 - So - What Are Some Of The Best Ways:
 - To Pursue These Things?
- Through Your Words!
 - Your Words Can Yield Peace:
 - Within The Church:
 - When Your Words Reflect:
 - God’s Word!
 - And - At The Same Time:
 - It Is God’s Word:
 - That Will Build Up:
 - The Strength Of The Church!
- Through Your Prayers!
 - Your Prayers Can Yield Peace:
 - Within The Church:
 - When Your Prayers Reflect:
 - God’s Promises!
 - And - At The Same Time:
 - It Is God’s Promises:
 - That Will Build Up:
 - The Faith Of The Church!
- Through Your Works!
 - Your Works Can Yield Peace:
 - Within The Church:
 - When Your Works Reflect:
 - God’s Will!
 - And - At The Same Time:
 - It Is God’s Will:
 - That Will Build Up:
 - The Righteousness Of The Church!
 - Especially Since:
 - As James Tells Us - In James 3:18 - “And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace!”
- This Is The Way:

- To Grow & To Build Up:
 - The Body Of Christ!
 - And These Are The Things:
 - We Are To Pursue!
 - 14:19 - "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another!"
 - But Then - In 14:20a - We Find:
- The Warning Of Growth!
 - 14:20a - "For meat destroy not the work of God!"
 - Here We Have:
 - The First Of Three:
 - Contrasts & Opposites:
 - In These Verses!
 - To "Destroy" Here:
 - Is The Opposite Of:
 - "Edify" In 14:19!
 - To "Destroy" Means:
 - To Tear Down - Instead Of:
 - "Edify" - Which Means:
 - To Build Up!
 - And What Is It That All-Too Often Tears Down:
 - The "Work Of God?"
 - Trivial Things & Peripheral Things - Like:
 - "Meat!"
 - In Other Words:
 - When It Comes To The Spiritual Growth And Progress:
 - Of Others - Don't Let:
 - Things As Mundane As Food:
 - Be The "Hill You Die On!"
 - Especially Since:
 - The Work Is God's Work!
 - This Points Us Back To:
 - 14:15 - Where Paul Also Wrote - "Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died!"
 - But - There Are Other Things:
 - Besides "Meat" That Distract Us:
 - From True Christian Progress!
 - **IE**: How Many Churches Have Divided Over Issues Like Building Projects / Paint Colors / Etc!
 - We Need To Remember That:
 - Each & Every Christian:
 - Is The Work Of God!
 - Whether They Are Strong In Their Faith:
 - Or Weaker In Their Faith!
 - And So Is:
 - Each & Every Church!
 - And We Must Endeavor:
 - To Build Up His Work:
 - Instead Of Tearing It Down!
 - Of Course - None Of Us Can:
 - "Destroy" God's Work:
 - In An Absolute Sense!
 - But It May Be Possible For Us:
 - To Deprive Others:
 - Of The Benefits Of That Work!
 - And - Instead Of Edification:
 - We Start To Dissolve Another Christian's:
 - Faith & Peace & Joy!

- And That Is Why:
 - When Your Liberty In Christ:
 - Becomes A Liability:
 - To The Growth Of Christians:
 - It Takes Away From God's Own Work!
- So - Pursue After:
 - True Christian Progress!
 - Growth In Those Essential Things:
 - That Will Yield Peace & Edification!
 - These Are The Things:
 - That Will Unify & Bless The Church!

* But Then - Second - We Need To Also Pursue / Follow After:

2. **True Christian Purity:**

- Within The Church!
 - And This Is What We Find In:
 - 14:20b-21 - "All things indeed [are] pure; but [it is] evil for that man who eateth with offence. / [It is] good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor [any thing] whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak!"
 - In These Verses:
 - We Have The Second Of Three:
 - Opposites / Contrasts:
 - In The Words:
 - "Evil" (Verse 20) - And:
 - "Good" (Verse 21)!
 - And These Show Us That:
 - True Christian Purity:
 - Can Only Come:
 - From The Heart!
 - And So - When Paul Once Again Tells Us:
 - In 14:20b - That - "All Things Indeed Are Pure / Clean!"
 - He Is Describing:
 - The True Essence Of Things!
 - Much Like He Wrote Back In:
 - 14:14a - "I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that [there is] nothing unclean of itself!"
 - This Means That:
 - It Is Entirely Right & Proper For Christians:
 - To Use Those Good Things Created By God For Our Good!
 - But - The Problem Comes:
 - When Instead Of Using Those Good Things:
 - In The Way He Intended:
 - We Misuse Or Abuse Those Things! And That Is Sin!
 - We See This Difference:
 - In Hebrews 13:4 - "Marriage [is] honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge!"
 - So - Purity Is More About:
 - Your Approach To Things:
 - Than The Things Themselves!
 - Purity Is A Matter Of The Heart!
 - And That Is Why:
 - At The End Of 14:20:
 - Paul Again Points Out:
 - The True Experience Of Things!
 - 14:20c - "But It Is Evil / Bad / Wrong For That Man Who Eateth With Offense!"
 - This Can Be Taken In One Of Two Ways!
 - First - It Can Describe:
 - A Christian Stronger In Faith Who Eats Meat:
 - Intending To Offend - Or - Put A Stumbling-Block Before:

- A Brother In Christ! Or:
- Second - It Can Describe:
 - A Christian Weaker In Faith Who Eats Meat:
 - After Being Influenced By:
 - Another Christian - And:
 - Against His Own Conscience!
- I Think The Second Way Is The Best Way To See This:
 - First - Because Of The Contrast:
 - Between This Sentence:
 - And The Next Verse!
 - But Also Because Of:
 - The Preposition Used - Translated Here “With” - Is Often Translated:
 - On Account Of / Because Of!
- So - If Another Christian:
 - Is Tempted To Go Against Their Conscience:
 - Because Of A Stumbling-Block:
 - That Another Christian Has Put In Their Way:
 - Its Wrong For Them To Do So!
- Isn't This What Paul Already Said:
 - In 14:14b - “But to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him [it is] unclean!”
 - The Reason This Is True:
 - Is Because Purity Is:
 - A Matter Of The Heart!
 - Its An Internal Matter:
 - Not Just About External Matters!
 - And So - In 14:21 - Paul Tells Us To Pursue After:
 - The True Edification Of Things!
 - 14:21 - “[It is] good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor [any thing] whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak!”
 - If Its Bad & Wrong:
 - For A Christian To Do Something:
 - Against Their Conscience!
 - It Is Then Good & Right:
 - For You & I To:
 - See These Times & Situations:
 - As Opportunities To Edify & Build Up:
 - Those Who May Be Weaker In The Faith!
 - This Verse Describes:
 - The Selfless Nature:
 - Of Christian Brotherhood & Sisterhood!
 - Especially When You Abstain:
 - From What You:
 - Can Partake In & Enjoy:
 - Out Of A Heart For:
 - Those Who Can't!
 - And - Paul Say's That:
 - Its “Good!”
 - That Is - It Brings Pleasure:
 - To The Lord!
 - **IE:** Like Parents Are Pleased & Smile When Their Child Is Selfless & Shares With Another Child - Their Toys! It's A Sign Of Maturity & Growth!
 - So - Pursue After:
 - True Christian Purity!
 - Purity Of Heart!
 - And If Refraining & Abstaining:
 - Even From Good & Allowable Things:
 - Will Help Another Christian In Their Walk Of Faith:
 - Then Do So!

- Even As The Apostle Paul Did:
 - In 1 Corinthians 8:13:
 - “Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend!”
 - But - Why Would He Do So?
 - Because Of What He Says In:
 - 1 Corinthians 8:12:
 - “But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ!”
- It Is True Christian Purity:
 - That Will Unify & Bless The Church!

* But Then - Third - We Need To Also Pursue / Follow After:

3. ***True Christian Practice:***

- Within The Church!
 - Which Is What We Find Next In:
 - 14:22-23 - “Hast thou faith? have [it] to thyself before God. Happy [is] he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. / And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because [he eateth] not of faith: for whatsoever [is] not of faith is sin!”
 - Here We Find The Third:
 - Contrast Between:
 - The One Who Has:
 - Faith In Those Things He Does:
 - In 14:22 - And:
 - The One Who Has:
 - Doubts In Those Same Things:
 - In 14:23!
 - And This Shows That:
 - True Christian Practice:
 - Must Always Be Grounded In:
 - Faith & Confidence:
 - Instead Of Doubt!
 - The Practice Of Stronger Christians:
 - Is In View In 14:22 - And:
 - Instead Of A Question:
 - The First Part Can Also Be Translated As:
 - “You Who Have Faith!”
 - Here - He’s Not Talking About:
 - Saving Faith - But:
 - The Confidence That Faith:
 - Brings To A Christian’s Life!
 - Even Freedom & Boldness In The Lord!
 - But There Is Still A Connection Between:
 - Saving Faith & Living Faith!
 - When You Turn To & Trust In Jesus Christ As Your Savior From Sin - It Brings Forgiveness & Freedom! Gospel!
 - And So - The Stronger Christian:
 - Can Practice That Faith & Freedom:
 - Privately:
 - Before The Lord!
 - “Have It To Thyself Before God!”
 - Or - “Keep It Between Yourself And God!” (ESV)
 - This Does Not Mean:
 - That You Are Living:
 - In A Hypocritical Way!
 - Instead - You Are Living:
 - In A Cautious Way:
 - And Trying To Be Considerate Of Those Who May Still Be Sensitive &

- Struggling With:
 - Matters Of Conscience!
 - And That's Why - In The Second Part:
 - Of 14:22 - Paul Adds That:
- The Stronger Christian:
 - Ought To Practice Their Faith & Freedom:
 - Perceptively! Because:
 - "Happy [is] he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth!"
- This Means That All Christians:
 - Are To Live Their Lives:
 - The Way We Find In:
 - Acts 24:16 - "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and [toward] men!"
 - If You Knowingly Practice / Participate In Things:
 - That Wound Another Christian's Conscience:
 - It Is Wrong - And You Will Be "Condemning Yourself!"
 - But - If You Knowingly Refrain & Abstain From Those Things:
 - You Are Considered Blessed & Happy!
- So - Stronger Christians:
 - Are To Walk & Practice:
 - According To A Faith:
 - Sensitive To Other Christians!
 - But - Then - Paul Turns To:
- The Practice Of Weaker Christians!
 - In 14:23 - Where He Adds:
 - "And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because [he eateth] not of faith: for whatsoever [is] not of faith is sin!"
 - To "Doubt" Here:
 - Means To Waver:
 - Like A Ship In The Sea!
 - And You Wonder About:
 - Something Not Clearly Addressed In Scripture:
 - Should I? Shouldn't I?
 - Can I? Can't I?
 - This Is Evidence Of A Tender Conscience & A Weaker Faith!
- God Does Not Condemn:
 - This Kind Of Weaker Faith:
 - And So - Neither Should We!
 - Instead - If Your Conscience Is Crying Out To You About A Matter:
 - Don't Ignore It!
 - Because - If You Do:
 - That Is Wrong Too!
 - Wrong - Even To The Point:
 - Of Being Sin!
- And This Is The Principle At Stake:
 - "For Whatsoever Is Not Of Faith Is Sin!"
 - Any Thought!
 - Any Word!
 - Any Action!
 - Anything That Is:
 - "Contradicted By One's Christian Conscience Is Sin!" (William Hendrickson)
- And So - We Need To All Pursue After:
 - True Christian Practice:
 - Which Is A Walk Of Faith!
 - Because It Is This Kind Of Practice That Will:
 - Unify & Bless The Church!

Conclusion:

1. What Are You Pursuing:
 - As A Christian Today?
 - What Are We Pursuing:
 - As A Church Today?
 - Are You Pursuing Those Things:
 - That Will Unify & Bless & Build Up:
 - Others - Within The Body Of Christ?
 - Or - Do The Things You Do - And:
 - The Things You Say:
 - Tend To Tear Others Down?
2. Remember These Things:
 - That We Are To Follow & Pursue!
 - Pursue After:
 - True Christian Progress!
 - This Is To Be The Mark We Aim At!
 - Growth In Christ!
 - Edify One Another!
 - Don't Destroy The Work Of God Over Trivial Things!
 - Pursue After:
 - True Christian Purity!
 - This Is To Be The Motive We Have!
 - Hearts For Christ!
 - Do What's Good & Best:
 - For Your Brother & Sister In Christ:
 - No Matter The Cost & Sacrifice!
 - Pursue After:
 - True Christian Practice!
 - This Is To Be The Manner In Which We Live Our Lives!
 - Faith In Christ!
 - And Doing All Things With A Clear Conscience:
 - Before God & Man!
 - 3. This Is The Calling Of The Church!
 - Pursue After Those Things:
 - That Will Bring True Unity & Blessing:
 - To The Body Of Christ!

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