

Series Title: Truth Unashamed, Part 6- How then shall we live?

Sermon Title: Week 5: Why we do what we do

Date: 06-02-19

- **Last Sunday we started a three week look at Romans 14. Part of “how then shall we live”...**
- **WHEN we are living in a relationship with Jesus Christ, by faith learning to believe what is true, as Romans 12... living sacrifice, renewing our mind- letting God make new our mind, will, emotions... thoughts, feelings, choices... SOMETHING WILL HAPPEN- TRANSFORMATION**
- **THEME of last week... we will grow in a transforming self-awareness of how our LIVING impacts other people.**
- **THIS IS HUGE, because I know it’s shocking to say, but we DISAGREE about things!**
- **Within the church, the body- true all the way back in first generation of believers, people held different convictions about what was RIGHT, APPROPRIATE for how we live as followers of Christ. TAKEAWAY...**

✠ **Recap:** On disputable matters, don’t JUDGE one another!

Romans 14:1-13a ^{12b-13a} So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another.

- **That’s the foundation. Given your differences, Love each other. Respect each other. Don’t judge each other. Don’t be offended!**
- **NOW, having said what we DON’T DO, Paul turns to what we DO. It is the opposite of judging... introduces BIG concept of the..**

✠ **Big concept:** The stumbling block

Romans 14:13-14 *Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister. ¹⁴ I am convinced, being fully persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for that person it is unclean.*

- **WHAT is this about? What is the stumbling block Paul talks about?**
- **Growing up in the church, understanding is this:**
 - **Some activity that is probably ok on its own- lets say playing cards. Like go fish.**
 - **However, cards can also be used to play poker. And poker is most often accompanied by gambling. NOW, some may say that gambling is not a problem, as long as you have healthy boundaries and aren’t addicted. Others would argue strongly that gambling is of itself a sinful activity. REGARDLESS, being addicted to gambling is unhealthy, destructive, and clearly counter to God’s goodness... SIN.**
 - **THEREFORE, back the train up, since this whole spiral could start with playing cards, we shouldn’t do this activity that ‘may or may not’ be morally wrong, as it could cause a person who could be easily drawn into an activity that clearly is.**
- **THEREFORE, in this understanding, a stumbling block is something that while morally neutral (or even good) on its own, could cause a weaker person to fall into something that is not disputable- clearly morally wrong.**
- **Here’s the deal. This is VALID concern, BUT, this is NOT primarily what Paul is talking about.**
- **For Paul, the STUMBLING block/obstacle foremost is not something that would cause a person to fall into destructive behavior, but something that would cause a person to violate their deeply held faith convictions- their conscience - before God.**
 - **Example of meat and vegetables**
 - **OBSTACLE would be a church gathering/culture that coerced a participant to eat meat, gave no respect to their conviction.**
- **DISTINCTION MAY SOUND SUBTLE, but it’s important- because of...**

Two traditional distortions

– *First is when we live based on a*

• Response of **FEAR**

- *Fear of temptation. Might sound wise at first. If there is a behavior I am prone to, and I fear falling into destructive behavior, I'm wise to avoid the opportunity of temptation. This is common sense.*
- *BUT, the next step is to do this for other people. IM AFRAID of what will happen if*
 - *My children meet the wrong people*
 - *What if you read ideas that could lead astray*
 - *Let people into your world that you don't fully know, what could happen*
 - *One activity that might seem fine, leads to other that is not. Fear of 'slippery slope'.
(MUSIC MAN)*
- *TWO PROBLEMS. First, we are commanded not to live out of fear. SECOND, living out of fear almost always leads to...*

• Imposition of **LAW**

- *Attempt to Regulate our activity to prevent the temptation from ever occurring.*
- *Come up with our list of things we cannot do, places we cannot go, people we cannot get to know, because we are Christians.*
- **PROBLEMS!**
 - *Leads us to insulate ourselves from world*
 - *Robs world of our influence in their lives*
 - *Where there is legalistic thinking... what we put on our list of laws doesn't flow from scripture, but on fear of temptation. In extreme, leads to fear of people, fear of things we don't relate to, judgmentalism, prejudice, worse.*
- *EVEN IF WE DON'T go down that rabbit hole, the most obvious problem is that LAW DOESN'T WORK!*
- *This leads to... THE MYTH*

✠ The myth and Pete's story

- *First, the myth: We can remove sin by removing temptation. If we just remove temptation, regulate life enough, then we won't be able to sin.*
- *As the church, we think- if we just regulate people's lives enough, give them enough boundaries so that they don't get too close to things that could tempt them, then our people won't sin.*
- *REALLY? Pete's story... bit creepy, but true! (True story of Pete the eyeless man, from my dad's ministry. Gouging out his eyes did nothing to remove his lust)*
- *REALITY! If our primary hope of not sinning is removing temptation, we have NO HOPE. FEAR AND LAW will not keep us from devastation of sin, AND THEY WILL NOT LEAD TO FREEDOM AND ABUNDANT LIFE from CHRIST'S DBR*
- *NOW. A caveat. As maturing, led by God, do we take WISE, common sense STEPS regarding temptation in how we live? OF COURSE WE DO.*
 - *As a parent, am I going to pay attention to influences in my child's life? YES*
 - *If a person is actively struggling with addiction, is it wise not to have that substance in their home? YES.*
- *IF PRONE to a temptation, is it wise to not expose myself to that temptation- YES... BUT as long as I'm dependent on behavior of other people, NOT FREE!*
- *Push a bit deeper... Go to end of ROMANS 13.*

¹³ Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.

– **SO, how do accomplish that? Religious legalism tries to accomplish this through fear and law. In doing so, may point to last sentence**

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do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

(NASB) make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

- **THE FLESH is our own resources, our own wisdom, APART from dependence upon God, apart from God's leadership. If you think our mind/heart as a vacuum, our FLESH is what will automatically fill it if it isn't filled with something else.**
- **SO, how do we 'make no provision'- LEAVE NO SPACE for the flesh... NOT BY BEING FILLED WITH FEAR AND LAW, BUT BY BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT!**
- **VERSE R13:14.. PUT ON THE LORD JESUS!**
- **Galatians 5:16.. So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.**
- **WE WALK BY THE SPIRIT AS WE WALK in a relationship with God/Christ, because we LOVE HIM.**

† It all comes down to **LOVE**

- **Word to seniors... you can't protect yourself from temptation. Common sense, yes. Follow your conscience, yes. BUT MOST IMPORTANT THING is your relationship with Jesus. SEEK OUT CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP. Find people who love God, and walk with them.**
- **And now Paul gets to heart of his point. Because of our love of God, we will extend this love into how our actions impacts the people we love.**

Romans 14:15 If your brother or sister is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy someone for whom Christ died.

- **Because I love my brother, my friend, it will be my desire to consider how my exercise of freedom might trouble their conscience, or put them into a place that is not right, not healthy for them.**
- **ALCOHOL. Bible doesn't say 'do not drink'. It does say don't get drunk, don't be mastered.**
- **Alcohol holds not addictive power over me. AND YET, if I have a friend who is struggling with alcohol, I'm not going to drink around them. Depending on where I live, who I am in relationship with, not at all**
- **BECAUSE WE LOVE EACH OTHER, living BY THE SPIRIT- there will be times when the Spirit prompts us to lay down our own freedom because of the greater good of what is best for my brother.**
- **BUT THIS isn't fear, law... expression of LOVE**
- **When we are living in love, we will come to see that...**

† Everything speaks

Romans 14:16 Therefore do not let what you know is good be spoken of as evil.

- **We have a power we rarely fully comprehend. It is the power of the witness of our lives. Because we LOVE, we will care about message we send... NEXT WEEK**
- **When we are living by the spirit, motivate by love, We will come to understand...**

† Why we do what we do

Romans 14:17-19 *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, ¹⁸ because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval. ¹⁹ Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.*

- **Eating and drinking- things that 'by rights' I am free to do. Kingdom is not about claiming my rights...**
- **VERSE 19!!! WHAT COULD CHURCH look like if we take this to heart! Make every EFFORT! Look for opportunities! Consider my words, lay down my tendency to get offended, SEEK PEACE and build up my brother and sister. THIS IS POWERFUL, and it's where we will continue next week**