

“Grow With Grace”
Romans 14:1-4

Introduction:

1. Let’s Turn Back In Our Bibles This Morning:
 - To Romans 14 - Where:
 - As We Start A New Chapter:
 - Paul Directs Our Attention:
 - To A Not-So-New Theme:
 - And That Is - Our Relationship To One Another:
 - As A Church & As The People Of God!
2. Back In Romans 12:
 - We Were Already Told To:
 - 12:10 - To “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another!”
 - Well - That Love & Affection:
 - Is To Be Displayed:
 - As We Grow Together - While:
 - “Endeavouring To Keep The Unity Of The Spirit In The Bond Of Peace!”
3. And So - Beginning In:
 - 14:1-4 - We Read These Instructions For The Body Of Christ:
 - “Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, [but] not to doubtful disputations. / For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. / Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. / Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand!”
 - In These Verses:
 - Paul Introduces Us To The Fact That:
 - Within The Body Of Christ:
 - There Are Members Who May Be:
 - Weaker In Their Faith - And Others:
 - Who May Be Stronger In Their Faith! (15:1)
 - And - This Is To Be Expected:
 - Since - Just Like Our Physical Bodies:
 - The Spiritual Body Of Christ:
 - Is Meant To Grow And Develop:
 - In Its Strength And Ability!
 - **IE:** Remember When We Took Our Children To The Doctor For Their Annual Wellness Visits - Every Year - The Doctor Would Pull Out A Chart That He Used To Plot Their Progress! Their Height & Weight & Age - And It Was Such A Relief To Know That They Were - For The Most Part - Normal!
 - But - For Some Others - That Chart Might Have Shown Some Abnormalities - That Might Be Of Concern For Their Health & Their Growth!
 - And - In A Way - So It Is For The Church!
4. But - Since The Body Of Christ - As A Whole:
 - Is Made Up Of:
 - Individual Members & Bodies - Of Christians:
 - You & Me:
 - The Growth Rate May Be Quite Different:
 - To Each One Of Us!
 - And So - In These Verses:
 - The Lord Wants Us To Learn:
 - How To Grow **With** Grace!
 - That Is - To Be Patient With Each Other:
 - And Give Time & Space:
 - As Each Member Grows & Develops According To The Work Of God:
 - In Their Lives!
5. And So - In These Verses:
 - We Find Four Ways:

- In Which We - As A Church:
 - Can Grow Together - In Our Faith:
 - But With Grace & Graciousness:
 - Toward Each Other!
- And So - We First See:

1. ***The Tests Of Our Growth:***

- Which Is - "The Faith!"
 - As We Are Told In 14:1:
 - "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations!"
 - Paul Makes Clear In This Verse That:
 - He Is Talking About True Believers Within The Body Of Christ!
 - So - Any Difference That Their Might Be:
 - Between Christians:
 - He Is Not Talking About:
 - Matters That Stray From "The True Faith" Of Christ!
 - **IE:** Just Like When We Took Our Children To The Doctor - There Were Certain Measurements He Took
 - Height & Weight & Circumferences - And Depending On Their Age - There Was A Certain Range That Was Healthy & Normal! Anything Outside Of That Range Was A Cause For Concern! And So - When It Comes To Growth As Christians & As A Church - There Are Certain Tests & Measurements That Are Critical To The Faith!
 - So - When He's Talking About Stronger Christians Receiving Weaker Christians In The Faith - He's **Not** Talking About:
- The Clear Doctrines Of The Faith!
 - Which Were Summed Up By The Reformers:
 - Using The 5 Great "Solas" Of The Reformation!
 - That The Church Is Founded On:
 - Scripture Alone!
 - Grace Alone!
 - Faith Alone!
 - Christ Alone!
 - For The Glory Of God Alone!
 - And So - Paul Is Not Encouraging Believers:
 - To Compromise The Clear & Fundamental Doctrines Of The Christian Faith:
 - For The Sake Of Unity!
 - Also - He's Not Talking About:
- The Clear Duties Of The Faith!
 - Which We Find All Throughout The New Testament!
 - God Calls Us - As His People:
 - To Holiness!
 - 1 Peter 1:15-16 - "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy!"
 - And So - When Paul Calls On The Church:
 - To Receive Those Who Are "Weak In The Faith":
 - He Is Not Encouraging His People:
 - To Condone Sins That Are Clearly Condemned In Scripture:
 - All For The Sake Of Unity! Also - He's Not Talking About:
- The Clear Discernment Of The Faith!
 - Which Jesus Himself Calls Us To!
 - Many Outside & Even Inside The Church Point To Jesus' Words In Matthew:
 - "Judge Not, That Ye Be Not Judged!"
 - But They Fail To Recall His Words:
 - In John 7:24 - "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment!"
 - Christians Are Called To Make Judgment Calls:
 - About All Kinds Of Things!
 - Including People!
 - But - We Are Not To Make Those Judgments:
 - Based On Our Own Opinions & Preferences:

- But Upon The Clear Principles Of God's Word!
- And So - Once Again - Paul Is Not Encouraging Us:
 - For The Sake Of Those Who Might Be:
 - "Weaker In The Faith" - To:
 - Suspend Our Own Judgment & Discernment About Matters Related To Our Christian Life!
 - So - What Is Paul Talking About?
- The Unclear Differences Of The Faith!
 - Or - "Doubtful" Things:
 - That Are Not Moral In Nature - And:
 - Are Not Included In The Clear:
 - Doctrines & Duties & Discernment Of The Christian Faith!
 - The Latin Word Used To Describe These Things Is:
 - Adiaphora - Which Means:
 - "Indifferent Things" - Or - "Things That Are Spiritually Neutral - Neither Right Nor Wrong - In And Of Themselves!"
- And So - As We Go Through This Passage Together:
 - And Learn To Grow With Grace:
 - As The Body Of Christ:
 - We Must Remember That We Are Not Called To Compromise The Truth Or To Condone Sin:
 - For The Sake Of Unity! Because When We Do So:
 - There Can Be No Growth!
 - To Grow With Grace:
 - We Need To Remember The Tests Of True Faith:
 - And Keep Our Focus:
 - On Those Things! Those Fundamental Doctrines & Duties & Discernment:
 - That Are Clear In The Word Of God!
 - Because - That Is How We Can All Grow!
 - 1 Peter 2:2 - "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby!"
 - But - Still - We Need To Learn:

2. ***The Truth Of Our Growth:***

- As Christians & As A Church!
 - **IE:** And That Is - Just Like All Of The Children That Had Dr. Greenwood As Their Doctor Over The Years - He Saw Some That Were Normal & Healthy - But He Also Saw Some That Were Not As Healthy - And He Would Do What He Could To Help Them!
 - And So - The Truth Of Our Growth:
 - Even As A Church Is This:
 - There Are Some Who Are:
 - Stronger In The Faith - And:
 - There Are Some Who Are:
 - Weaker In The Faith!
 - Not In Their Faith In Christ:
 - But In Their Faith In The Fulness Of Their Justification & In The Freedom That It Brings!
 - A Weaker Brother Or Sister:
 - Is Not An Inferior Christian:
 - But Is One Who - Because Of Their Past:
 - Has Certain Sensitivities And Scruples And Struggles:
 - About Unclear Matters Within The Christian Life!
 - And The Example Paul Gives Is Found:
 - In 14:2 - "For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs!"
 - In The Old Testament:
 - There Were Restrictions In God's Law:
 - About What Food His People Could & Could Not Eat!
 - But In The New Testament:
 - God Showed Peter In A Vision That The Distinctions Between Clean & Unclean

- Animals & People:
 - Was Done Away With In The Gospel!
- And So - Food & Meat:
 - Became A Non-Moral Issue!
 - But - Not Only Was This A Struggle For Peter:
 - It Was Probably A Struggle For Other Jews Who Became Christians As Well!
 - But - Perhaps This Was Also A Concern:
 - For Romans Who Came To Christ:
 - Out Of Their Former Idolatry:
 - When They Remembered Sacrificing Animals To Idols & Then Eating Their Meat!
 - Perhaps They Too:
 - Were Sensitive To This:
 - In Their Newfound Walk With God!
 - In Rome - These Were Not Issues Of Salvation:
 - Like Paul Dealt With In Galatians:
 - But Were Matters Of Conscience!
 - And In This - Their Faith To Eat Anything - Was Weak!
- And - Even Though In These Verses:
 - The Apostle Paul:
 - Agrees With:
 - The Stronger Brethren:
 - About Matters Of Christian Liberty!
 - He Also:
 - Accepts:
 - The Weaker Brethren:
 - Who May Still Be Struggling With Some Issues That May Or May Not Be Wrong In & Of Themselves!
 - And So - He:
 - Admonishes:
 - Them Both - To Edify One Another:
 - Based Not On Personal Opinions Or On Observations But On:
 - Objective Truth!
 - And So - This Is Why In 14:1:
 - He Calls On The Stronger Brethren:
 - To "Receive" - "Him That Is Weak In The Faith" - "But Not To Doubtful Disputations!"
 - In Other Words - To Grow Together:
 - With Grace!
 - To "Receive" Here:
 - Means To Welcome Someone:
 - With Open Arms! For Fellowship & Friendship!
 - Not To Argue Or To Embarrass:
 - But Likely To Give God The Time & Space:
 - To Work In Each Others' Lives & Hearts!
 - And So - To Grow With Grace:
 - We Need to Remember The Truth Of Our Growth:
 - And That Is - We All Have Room:
 - For Growth!
 - Though Paul Said This:
 - About His Physical Needs:
 - I Think It Can Apply To All Of Our:
 - Spiritual Needs!
 - 2 Corinthians 11:29 - "Who is weak, and I am not weak?"
 - We Need To Grow:
 - In Our Own Faith - Even As:
 - We Encourage Each Other:
 - To Grow In Their Faith!
 - And - I Think Its Probably Not:

- A Helpful Thing:
 - For Christians To Go Around Thinking Or Saying About Themselves:
 - I'm A Stronger Christian!
 - Because - That Can Lead To Pride & Division - Which Is Entirely Against Paul's Point In These Verses!
- Instead - Accept The Truth That:
 - Within The Body Of Christ:
 - There Are Stronger Members & There Are Weaker Members:
 - And We All Need To Be Sensitive To Each Other:
 - And Find Ways To Help Each Other To Grow!
- But Then - Third - We Also Need To Remember:

3. ***The Treatment In Our Growth!***

- Which Is What We Find In:
 - 14:3 - "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him!"
 - Matters Of Preference & Matters Of Liberty:
 - Are Things That Often Divide:
 - Christians & Churches Unnecessarily!
 - **IE:** Just Like - When Kids Are Young - They Are Sometimes Mean & Mistreat Other Kids That Have Difficulties Or Deficiencies - Sadly - Things Don't Always Change For The Better As They Grow Older!
 - This Shouldn't Be The Way In The World!
 - But - Especially - This Shouldn't Be The Way In The Church!
 - So - To The Strong:
 - Paul Tells Them That There Should Be:
- No Contempt:
 - For Their Weaker Brethren!
 - "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not!"
 - Paul Does Not Call On Them To:
 - Try To Change The Weaker Brother:
 - Or Even To Try To:
 - Convince The Weaker Brother:
 - About His Weakness!
 - He Says - Don't "Despise" Him!
 - Don't Look Down On Him!
 - Don't Ignore Him!
 - But - 14:1 - Receive Him:
 - With Love And Grace!
 - After All - They Might Have Some Good Reasons:
 - For Their Sensitivities!
 - And You Might End Up Wounding Their Weak Conscience:
 - Which Is A Sin Itself!
 - 1 Corinthians 8:12 - "But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ!"
 - So - Stronger Christians:
 - Must Treat Weaker Christians:
 - As Christ Treats Them!
 - But Then - Paul Adds - To The Weaker Brother Or Sister - That There Should Be:
- No Condemnation:
 - Of The Stronger Brethren!
 - 14:3b - "And let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth!"
 - This Means That:
 - In Matters That Are Not Clear:
 - In God's Word:
 - Those Who Are Weaker In The Faith Are Not To Bind The Behavior:
 - Of Those Who Are Stronger In The Faith:
 - Based On Their Own Conscience!

- And This Is Why - To Grow With Grace:
 - As A Whole Body Of Christ:
 - We Need To Remember To Treat One Another:
 - With Humility & Respect:
 - And Love!
 - Our Goal Is Go Grow:
 - In Our Fellowship With Each Other!
 - How Do You Think About & Treat Others:
 - With Different Sensitivities & Standards Than You?
 - But Then - Fourth - We Need To Remember:

4. ***The Touchstone Of Our Growth:***

- Which Is The Lord Himself!
 - 14:3b-4 - "For God hath received him. / Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand!"
 - We Need To Grow Together:
 - With & Through Grace:
 - Because Of:
- God's Reception:
 - Of His People!
 - We Are To Treat Brothers & Sisters In Christ:
 - Whether Weaker Or Stronger:
 - Because - 14:3b - "God Hath Received Him!"
 - This Is The Same Reception:
 - That Paul Tells Those Who Are Stronger In Faith:
 - To Have Toward:
 - Those Who Are Weaker In Faith:
 - In 14:1!
 - And Here - It Is Both:
 - The Strong & The Weak:
 - Who Are Received:
 - By The Lord!
 - And So - All That Paul Is Talking About Here:
 - Is A Family Matter!
 - Because God Receives Us All - How?
 - Through The Gospel! "By Grace Through Faith In Christ!"
 - And Whether Your Faith:
 - Is Strong Or Weak - Or:
 - Your Knowledge Is:
 - Deep Or Somewhat Shallow & Simple:
 - Yet - If Your Faith Is In Jesus Christ Alone:
 - God The Father Receives You n That Basis!
 - And He Does So:
 - In Order To Grow & Nurture You:
 - According To His Will & Through The Means Of:
 - His Word, His Spirit, And His People!
 - And Now, We Must Do The Same!
 - Receive Each Other:
 - As God Receives Us!
 - But - If We Don't - In 14:4 - There's A Rebuke To Remind Us Of:
- God's Regard:
 - Of His People!
 - That Is - Whether Weak Or Strong:
 - A Christian Is His Own Servant!
 - You & I Belong To & Serve:
 - The Lord - First & Foremost!
 - And So - "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth!"
 - Once Again - Though We Are Called:

- To “Judge Righteous Judgments” About Things:
 - Based On The Light & Truth Of God’s Word!
- When It Comes To Fellow Christians:
 - And Matters That Are Not:
 - Clear Doctrines & Duties & Discernments From Scripture:
 - We Leave Them To The Lord & His Work!
- Because - Ultimately:
 - The Growth Of Your Faith:
 - From Weak To Strong Is:
- God’s Responsibility!
 - 14:4b - “Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand!”
 - You See - Any Strength Of Faith:
 - Any Knowledge Or Maturity:
 - Is A Matter Of Grace & Growth:
 - From The Lord!
 - It Has Nothing To Do:
 - With A Person’s Natural:
 - Ability Or Capacity Or Prowess Or Even Genius!
 - And Though The Church:
 - Does Have A Responsibility:
 - To Foster The Faithfulness Of Its Members:
 - As Well As Deal With Unfaithfulness:
 - According To The Clear Commandments Of God!
 - Yet - In Matters Of Conscience:
 - Christians Answer To God Alone!
- But - Just Look At What God Can Do:
 - When We Let One Another:
 - Grow With Grace!
 - We See:
 - God’s Own Promise!
 - “Yea, He Shall Be Holden Up!”
 - Weak Or Strong - If A Person Is In Christ:
 - God Promises To Bring Them:
 - To Completion!
 - From The Most Simple:
 - To The Most Seasoned In Faith:
 - All Believers Will Be One Day:
 - Fully Sanctified & Glorified By The Lord!
 - The Process Began Here:
 - Will Be Fulfilled There!
 - And This Is Why:
 - We Ought To See Each Other - And:
 - Treat Each Other:
 - In These Ways!
 - For We All Will “Be Made To Stand” One Day!
 - No Matter What Stage Of Our Faith:
 - We Are In Today!
 - And This Is All Because Of:
 - God’s Own Power!
 - 14:4c - “For God is able to make him stand!”
 - God Is Able To Make:
 - You To Stand As Well!
- So - While We Strive:
 - To Help Each Other:
 - To Fulfill God’s Will:
 - As It Is Revealed To Us:
 - Through His Word!
 - We Let God Do:

- His Ongoing Work:
 - In Those Areas Of Life:
 - That Are Not Specifically Dealth With There!

Conclusion:

1. So - As We Remember:
 - The Tests Of Our Growth - As Christians & As A Church!
 - As Well As:
 - The Truth & The Treatment & The Touchstone:
 - Of Our Growth!
 - Let Us Grow Together:
 - With Grace!
 - Grow In Our Focus:
 - On The Bedrock Of Our Faith:
 - The Word Of God!
 - Grow In Our Faith:
 - Our Personal Faith:
 - Knowing That We Each Have Our Own Areas Of Weakness & Even Blindness!
 - Pray - "Search Me!"
 - Grow In Our Fellowship!
 - By Thinking About & Treating Each Other:
 - In A Christ-Like Way!
 - All The While Seeking To:
 - Grow In Our Faithfulness:
 - Our Personal Faithfulness:
 - To Our Master - Before Whom We "Stand Or Fall!"
2. Let Us Remember To:
 - Grow With Grace:
 - As God Does His Own Work:
 - In The Heart Of:
 - Each One Of Us!
 - Because - As Paul Wrote:
 - In 1 Corinthians 3:6-7 - "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase! / So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase!"
 - And This Work:
 - God Continues To Do:
 - In You & In Me!

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