

“The Culture Of The Church”
Romans 14:14-18

Introduction:

1. As We Turn Back In Our Bibles This Morning:
 - To Romans 14 - We Will Continue To See:
 - How The Apostle Paul Is Applying The Gospel:
 - That He Explained:
 - So Clearly & So Thoroughly:
 - To The Life Of The Church!
 - Because - Not Only Will The Gospel Of Jesus Christ:
 - Influence:
 - Your Personal Choices - Especially In Regard To:
 - Your Relationships:
 - With Other People:
 - It Will Also Influence & Change:
 - The Very Culture:
 - In Which You Live!
2. And - This Is What We Find Next:
 - In Romans 14:14-18!
 - In Every Church & In Every Christian:
 - The Gospel Is Designed To Produce:
 - A Culture Shift:
 - That Is Based On Christ & His Cross!
 - So - To Begin This Morning:
 - Let's Read Through These Verses Together:
 - Romans 14:14-18 - Where Paul Writes:
 - “I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that [there is] nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him [it is] unclean. / But if thy brother be grieved with [thy] meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. / Let not then your good be evil spoken of: / For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. / For he that in these things serveth Christ [is] acceptable to God, and approved of men!”
3. This Is To Be The Culture Of The Church!
 - Now - Just What Is A Culture?
 - If You've Traveled Anywhere:
 - Whether In A Foreign Country - Or Even:
 - In Our Own - You Know That:
 - People Live Their Lives In Different Ways!
 - A Culture Consists Of Those Differences!
 - And Those Differences May Include:
 - Different Languages!
 - Different Foods!
 - Different Behaviors!
 - Different Beliefs!
 - I Remember The Minor Culture Shock I Faced:
 - When I First Went To College:
 - In South Carolina!
 - They Actually Did Speak A Different Kind Of English Than I Did! They Loved To Eat This Thing Called Grits! I Learned That There Was No Such Thing As “Fast Food” - Even Though You Might Be Sitting At The Drive Through For It! And Many Still Believed That The South Would Rise Again!
4. Well - Paul Wants Us To Recognize:
 - That When You Trust In Jesus Christ As Your Savior:
 - There's A New Culture:
 - That Should Take Over Your Life!
 - A Spiritual Culture:

- That Will Transform How You Live Your Life:
 - In Your Own Culture!
- And - It Is This Spiritual Culture:
 - That Will Be Our Focus This Morning!
 - In The Verses We Just Read:
 - We Find 4 Elements:
 - Of What Is To Be:
 - Our Christian Culture!

* And - The First Element Is This:

I. *Growing Convictions!*

- Growing Convictions About The Truth!
 - This Is What We Find In The First Part Of:
 - Where Paul Writes - 14:14a - "I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself!"
 - Of Course - This Is What Paul Has Been Dealing With:
 - All Throughout This Chapter!
 - Issues & Matters That Come Up In The Christian Life:
 - That Aren't Clearly Addressed In Scripture!
 - He's Already Talked About:
 - The Issues Of Certain Foods - As Well As:
 - Observing Days & Times!
 - And While Some Christians May Still Be Sensitive These Things:
 - Others Christians May Not Be!
 - Well - Concerning Those Issues:
 - Paul Makes His Conviction & Teaching Here:
 - Very Clear!
 - "There Is Nothing Unclean Of Itself!"
 - Now To Paul - This Is:
 - A Plain Conviction!
 - Because It Is One He Came To:
 - "By The Lord Jesus!"
 - In Other Words - The Truths Of The Gospel Helped Him Understand This Truth!
 - Even As He Told Timothy In 1 Timothy 4:4 - "For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: / For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer!"
 - Now - If There Was Anyone:
 - Who Might Still Have Had Some Sensitivities:
 - About Food & Meat:
 - It Would Have Been The Apostle Paul!
 - In Philippians 3 - He Describes Himself As:
 - A "Hebrew Of The Hebrews!"
 - And - As A Hebrew - He Would Have Consistently Applied The Old Testament Ceremonial Laws To His Eating & Drinking & Overall Living! After All:
 - That Was The Culture Of The Jews!
 - But - When Jesus Saved Him On The Road To Damascus:
 - Everything Changed! His Whole Culture Changed!
 - Since He Was Saved By Jesus:
 - He Was Now Subject To Jesus:
 - As His Lord - And Paul Decided To "Let Jesus Have His Way With Him" In All Matters!
 - So Paul Was Completely Open To The Lord:
 - So That The One Who Changed His Heart:
 - Could Continue To Change His Mind:
 - And His Life!
 - Are You Open To The Lord:
 - To "Let Him Have His Way With Thee?"

- To Change Your Mind - And Even:
 - Change Your Personal Culture?
 - For Paul - It Was Also:
- A Penetrating Conviction!
 - Paul Became Persuaded By The Lord That:
 - “There Is Nothing Unclean Of Itself!”
 - The Main Issue He Was Dealing With:
 - Was The Issue Of Food & Meat!
 - But - I Think More Can Be Included:
 - In The Word “Nothing!”
 - What Is He Talking About?
 - He Seems To Be Pointing To All Things That Were Created By God For Man In The Beginning!
 - That Is - All Things:
 - Made Good By God - And Thus:
 - Good For Man:
 - If Used As Intended!
 - Things To Eat!
 - Things To Drink!
 - Things To Do!
 - In The Time God Has Given!
 - When You & I Use These Things:
 - Within The Parameters Has Set For Us:
 - They Are Good & Beneficial:
 - & Even Pleasing To The Lord!
 - But - What Happens All Too Often?
 - Instead Of Using God’s Good Gifts:
 - We Abuse Them!
 - And That Abuse Is What Leaves The Stain Of Sin:
 - On Those Things That God Himself Meant For Our Good!
 - But Now - For Paul & For All Christians:
 - Just Because Something Is Misused By Others:
 - Does Not Mean That:
 - It Cannot Be Used & Enjoyed By God’s People:
 - The Way He Intended!
 - And This Is The Growing Conviction:
 - That Paul Came To After Being Persuaded By:
 - The Lord Jesus!
 - And This Conviction:
 - Is The Truth Of The Matter!
 - And This Ought To Now Be:
 - The Goal & Desire Of:
 - Every Christian & Every Church!
 - There Should Be A Culture Of Growing Conviction:
 - About The Truth!
 - We Need To Be Teachable:
 - And Open To Jesus Our Lord:
 - And Be Willing To Be:
 - Persuaded By Him:
 - No Matter What Earthly Culture We Live In!
 - But - We Still Must Remember:
 - That This Is A Growing Conviction!
 - Not All Christians Will Have This Same Understanding & Freedom Yet!
 - And So - The Second Element Of The Culture Of The Church Is:

2. *A Growing Consciousness!*

- A Growing Consciousness About Each Other:
 - And Especially - Our Weaknesses & Sensitivities!

- Which Is What We Find In:
 - 14:14b - "But to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean!"
- So - Even Though:
 - The First Part Of This Verse:
 - May Be True For Some!
 - The Second Part Of This Verse:
 - May Be True For Others:
 - Within The Same Body Of Christ!
- And - We Need To Grow In:
 - Our Consciousness & Consideration:
 - Of Each Others' Weaknesses & Sensitivities, So That We Might Help Each Other, Instead Of Hindering!
 - And So We Need To Be Conscious Of:
- The Issues:
 - That Other Christians:
 - Are Concerned About!
 - Even After They "Esteem" Something To Be Unclean, That In Truth:
 - Is Clean & Fine For A Christian To Participate In!
 - To "Esteem" Here Does Not Mean That:
 - This Christian Has Just Put Their Faith On "Auto-Pilot!"
 - Instead - This Christian Has Likely Thought About An Issue, Studied It & Even Prayed About It!
 - But - There Is Still A Check In Their Spirit Or A Pricking Of Their Conscience!
 - And That Is OK! Because A Sensitive Conscience Is Far Better Than A Stubborn Conscience, Even If That Conscience Is Not Yet Fully Formed & Informed By The Gospel!
 - But We All Need To Be Conscious:
 - Of One Another's Consciences!
 - But Also Of:
- The Impediments:
 - That Those Issues Can Create:
 - In The Lives Of Those Brothers & Sisters In Christ!
 - Again Paul Writes - "To him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean!"
 - Now - What Did "Unclean" Things Do To God's People:
 - In The Past / In The Old Testament?
 - If Someone Became Unclean:
 - For Whatever Reason:
 - That Person Would Be Impeded From The Religious Life Of God's People!
 - They Would Not Be Able To Participate:
 - For A Time:
 - In The Opportunities & Worship & Service:
 - Of The Lord!
 - But - Why Would God Have Put These Impediments In Place For His People In The Past?
 - Well - Like So Much Of The Old Testament:
 - They Were Put There As An Object Lesson & A Teaching Tool:
 - So That They Could Learn That Sin Defiles & Needs To Be Cleansed!
 - And That Cleansing Can Only Be Provided By The Lord!
 - Well - When Jesus Came To This Earth:
 - And Died On The Cross - Shedding His Blood:
 - He Came To Cleanse The Unclean!
 - And In Doing So:
 - He Restored All Things To Their Natural Purpose & Use!
 - This Is What The Lord Was Telling Peter:
 - In His Vision In Acts 10!
- But Even Though:

- Things Are Now Clean - In & Through The Lord:
 - When Someone Still Considers It To Be Unclean:
 - It Can Impede & Hinder:
 - Their Walk With The Lord!
 - Their Worship Of The Lord!
 - And Even - Their Witness For The Lord!
- And That Is Why There Is To Be:
 - A Culture Of Growing Consciousness:
 - Within The Church:
 - So That We Don't Do Anything To Hinder Or Harm The Faith:
 - Of Another! (14:13)
- But Then - In Addition To A Culture:
 - Of Growing Conviction:
 - Of Truth - And:
 - Of Growing Consciousness:
 - Of Other Believers:
 - There Needs To Be:

3. *A Growing Charity!*

- A Growing Charity & Love Within The Church!
 - Which Is What We Find In 14:15-16:
 - "But if thy brother be grieved with [thy] meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. / Let not then your good be evil spoken of!"
 - We Find In This Verse That:
 - Even Though, As A Christian:
 - You Have Liberty:
 - There Is A Higher Standard:
 - That Is To Be The Culture Of The Church!
 - And That Is Love! Even:
- A Considerate Love!
 - To Be "Grieved" Means That:
 - There Is A Spiritual Distress:
 - In The Conscience & Spirit:
 - Of A Christian!
 - But If You Continue To Exercise Your Christian Liberties:
 - In The Presence Of Your Brother Or Sister In Christ:
 - Even Though You Know:
 - Their Struggles & Standards & Sensitivities:
 - Then You Are Not Walking Together In The Love Commanded By Christ!
 - Ephesians 5:2 - "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour!"
 - There Is To Be A Culture Of Love:
 - Within The Church!
 - It Is Also To Be:
- A Compassionate Love!
 - 14:15b - "Destroy Him Not With Thy Meat, For Whom Christ Died!"
 - Now - This Is Very Strong Language:
 - And Reveals The Tendency Of:
 - Offending Another Christian:
 - Even In Matters That Are Matters Of Liberty!
 - Instead Of Loving Your Brother Or Sister In Christ:
 - You Are Doing What Would Lead To:
 - Losing Them!
 - Of Course - If That Brother Or Sister:
 - Is A True Christian:
 - They Can Never Be Lost:
 - Since - 14:4b - "Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make

- him stand!”
- But - If Their Spirit Is Grieved:
 - That Grief Can Turn To:
 - Guilt - And That Guilt Can Turn Into:
 - Gloom - And Bring Their Walk In Faith To A Halt!
- Remember - Those Who Are “Weak In Faith”:
 - Have A Hard Enough Time Dealing With Their Sensitive Consciences!
 - May Be A Bruised Reed / Smoking Flax!
 - These Are The Same Ones For Whom Christ Died!
 - Instead, There Needs To Be A Culture Of Charity In The Church!
 - Of Considerate Love!
 - Of Compassionate Love!
 - And Even:
- A Communion Of Love!
 - In 14:16 - Paul Adds:
 - “Let not then your good be evil spoken of!”
 - There Are Some Who Think This Is Talking About:
 - The “Goodness” Of A Christian’s Personal & Individual Freedom!
 - But - The Pronoun - “Your” - In Paul’s Language:
 - Is Plural - It Is The “Good” That Belongs To:
 - All Christians - No Matter The:
 - Strength Or Weakness Of Their Faith!
 - In Other Words - Paul Is Telling The Church As A Whole:
 - Don’t Let Strife Over Those “Little Things”:
 - Like Those Matters Of Liberty:
 - Take Away From Communion In & Your Testimony / Witness Of:
 - The “Good Thing” You All Have In Common!
 - And What Is That Good Thing?
 - The Goodness & The Grace Of God:
 - Proven & Provided Through:
 - The Death Of Jesus Christ:
 - On The Cross!
 - This Is Our Highest Good!
 - And - As All True Christians - In Every True Church:
 - Unite Ourselves Around:
 - This Good:
 - It Should Unite Us Into One Culture!
 - The Culture Of Christ!
 - It Is This Goodness:
 - That Should Identify The Culture Of Our Churches!
 - Not Language!
 - Not Nationality!
 - Though “Every Tribe & Tongue” Will Be Represented In The Kingdom Of God:
 - The Primary Culture The Church Should Be Known For Is:
 - The Culture Of Growing Charity!
 - But Even Further - The Fourth Element Of This Culture:

4. ***A Growing Christlikeness!***

- Which Is What We Then Find In 14:17:
 - “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost!”
 - The Bible Speaks Of The Kingdom Of God:
 - In Different Ways!
 - Here - Paul Is Describing:
 - The Spiritual Reign Of God In & Through His Church!
 - We Are - Right Now:
 - Citizens In The Kingdom Of God:
 - If We Are Believing In Jesus Christ:
 - As Our Savior From Sin!

- And Paul Here Gives Us:
 - The Essence Of That Kingdom!
- Though The Different Cultures In The World:
 - Often Include Physical Things:
 - Like “Meat And Drink!”
 - Those Are Not To Be The Primary Characteristics:
 - Of The Culture Of Christians & The Church!
- No - The Essence Of God’s Kingdom:
 - Is “Righteousness, And Peace, And Joy In The Holy Ghost!”
 - And All Of These Come Through:
 - The Gospel - That Paul Described Back In 5:1-2 - “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: / By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God!”
 - So - In The Culture Of The Church:
 - So - There Needs To Be Spiritual Growth:
- In The Righteousness Of Christ!
 - This Is What First Must Be Possessed:
 - By Members Of The Church:
 - In Order For A Christ-Like Culture:
 - To Take Effect!
 - The Only Thing:
 - That Can Make A Person - Any Person:
 - Right With God:
 - Is The Justifying Righteousness:
 - Of Jesus Christ!
 - This Is Not Something That:
 - You Can Earn!
 - It Is Something That You Must Be Given:
 - And Received By Faith Alone!
 - The More We Grow In Our Understanding Of - And:
 - Our Belief In:
 - The Righteousness Of Christ:
 - The More Our Church’s Culture Will Be Defined By:
 - True Righteousness, Even Toward Each Other!
 - There Also Needs To Be Spiritual Growth:
 - In The Peace Of Christ!
 - This Is What We Need To Be Pursuing Together:
 - In All Ways & In All Dimensions!
 - Reminding Each Other:
 - About The Peace We Have:
 - With God:
 - Vertically!
 - And Then - Further Pursuing:
 - Peace With Each Other:
 - Horizontally!
 - Even With The Peace Of Christ!
 - Because - As Paul Wrote In:
 - Philippians 4:7 - It Is “The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, [that] shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus!”
 - And - The More We:
 - Possess The Truth & Righteousness Of Christ:
 - The More We Will Grow:
 - In The Peace Of Christ!
 - So That Then - There Can Be Spiritual Growth:
- In The Joy Of Christ!
 - A Joy - Not Based On External Circumstances:
 - But A Joy:

- Based On That Internal & Eternal Peace!
 - All Three Of These Are Interconnected!
 - You Can't Truly Have One Without The Others!
- And This Is What We Need To Be Promoting Together!
 - Real Christian Joy!
 - Knowing That This Joy - Along With All The Others:
 - Can Only Come As Fruit Of The Holy Spirit Of God!
- So - Not Only Is This Christ-Like Culture:
 - A Spiritual Culture:
 - It Will Be A Sanctifying Culture!
 - It Will Set Christians & Churches Apart From:
 - The Rest Of The Cultures Of The World!

Conclusion:

1. Is This How The World Sees Us Today:
 - As Christians & As A Church?
 - Is There This Kind Of Different Culture:
 - Within All The Other Cultures:
 - Of This World?
 - Is Our Culture:
 - A Culture Of Growing Conviction:
 - About The Truth?
 - A Culture Of Growing Consciousness & Concern:
 - About The Needs Of Other Christians?
 - A Culture Of Growing Charity:
 - And Love - Within The Body Of Christ?
 - And - A Culture Of Growing Christlikeness:
 - Keeping Our Focus On The Main Things Like:
 - Righteousness, Peace & Joy?
2. Or - Is There Something Else:
 - That Defines Us To The World Around Us?
 - Something That The World Recognizes:
 - Because Its No Different Than Their Culture?
 - The Culture Of The Church:
 - Is To Be Distinct:
 - Because We Are A Distinct People!
 - And That Is Why - In 14:18 - Paul Adds:
 - "For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men!"
 - When You & I Live:
 - As The Christians We Are:
 - Serving Our Savior, Jesus Christ:
 - In The Righteousness, Peace & Joy:
 - That He Provides:
 - We Will Be Both:
 - Acceptable To God & Approved Of Men!
 - To Be Acceptable To God:
 - Means That:
 - He Will Be Delighted & Pleased With Us - With You!
 - And That Is Our Goal! To Please & Glorify The King Of Our Kingdom!
 - But - To Be Approved Of Men:
 - Doesn't Always Mean The Same Thing!
 - It Can Mean:
 - Respect! But That's Not Always The Case, Is It?
 - When The Christian Culture:
 - Confronts:
 - A Worldly Culture:
 - It Can Be Very Offensive!

- Instead - This Means That:
 - Our Distinct, Christian Culture:
 - Will Be Recognized:
 - As Distinct & Different!
 - They Will Be Able To Tell:
 - Even Though You May:
 - Look Like Them!
 - Sound Like Them!
 - Eat Like Them!
 - In Fact - You Are Nothing Like Them!
 - Because - You Are A Citizen:
 - In Another Kingdom - And:
 - You Are The Subject:
 - Of Another King!
 - Because Now:
 - 1 Peter 2:9 - “Ye [are] a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light!”
3. And May This Become:
- More & More True:
 - In The Culture Of Our Church!

Grace Baptist Church
Stephen Elmer, Pastor
4245 North 200 West
Greenfield, Indiana 46140
317-326-2362
www.sermonaudio.com/wordofgrace
www.growatgrace.org
pastor-elmer@hotmail.com