

Lesson 21 – *HANDOUT* (Rocky – 06/15/2025) **RIGHTEOUSNESS IN RELATION TO OTHER CHRISTIANS**  
(A Secondary Title Might Be): **UNITY AMIDST DIVERSITY IN THE CHURCH**  
(Romans 14:1-12)

**OPENING SCRIPTURE** – (This is a conflagration of several verses from 1 Corinthians Chapter Eight):

VERSE 1 “**NOW CONCERNING THINGS SACRIFICED TO IDOLS**” ... (THIS IS ONE EXAMPLE PAUL WILL USE TO MAKE A GENERAL POINT IN TODAY’S TEXT – Meat offered to idols was a specific issue, particularly for Gentile converts, so it is used not only as a specific point of interest, but to represent ANY TABOO that Jews or Gentiles might associate with their past lives prior to becoming Christians.)

VERSE 4 “**WE KNOW THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS AN IDOL IN THE WORLD, AND THERE IS NO GOD BUT ONE**” ... (Here PAUL dismantles the idea that an idol accounts for anything ... and since this is true, meat offered to idols cannot itself defile anyone.)

VERSE 9 “**BUT TAKE CARE THAT THIS LIBERTY DOES NOT BECOME A STUMBLING BLOCK TO THE WEAK**” ... (PAUL warns that MISUSED FREEDOM may cause some to fall back into an old way of life that could involve sins associated with paganism, or even legalism associated with the Mosaic Law.)

VERSE 13 “**THEREFORE, IF FOOD CAUSES MY BROTHER TO STUMBLE, I WILL NEVER EAT MEAT AGAIN, SO THAT I WILL NOT CAUSE MY BROTHER TO STUMBLE**” ... (Though none of these things is unclean or sinful in-and-of-itself, the misuse of FREEDOM can confuse, and even dislodge the faith of new believers.)

And as a related thought regarding a specific passage in **THE BOOK OF ACTS**, I would remind you of God’s pronouncement to **PETER** in **ACTS 10**: “WHAT GOD HAS CLEANSED, NO LONGER CONSIDER UNHOLY” – Acts 10:15<sup>B</sup>.

In this section of Romans, Paul distinguishes things that are essential for Christians from things that are non-essential. Non-essential matters are man-made issues that are not supported by Scripture. Think of it this way: ESSENTIALS are what GOD COMMANDS ... while NON-ESSENTIALS are what MAN FORBIDS, even though GOD DOES NOT.

There are ESSENTIALS that can be thought of as CORE DEMANDS FOR BELIEVERS; typically these are CORE DOCTRINES that are taught CLEARLY in Scripture. Examples certainly would include:

- **SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH ALONE IN JESUS CHRIST** (Ephesians 2:8-9). There is no place in **THE CHURCH** for ‘a works-righteousness’ plan of salvation that compromises **SALVATION** by **GRACE ALONE**. Also essential is a position that acknowledges ...
- **THE FULL HUMANITY AND DEITY OF JESUS CHRIST** (John 1:1, 14; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 2:14, 17). Confusion about **THE NATURE OF CHRIST** cannot be permitted in **THE CHURCH**.
- **THE BODILY RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST IS ESSENTIAL** (1 Corinthians 15:3-4, 14). PAUL is clear that apart from the bodily resurrection of JESUS, our faith is meaningless. And there are ...
- **CERTAIN MORAL COMMANDS** that are non-negotiable, among which is drunkenness, since we mentioned previously the issue of WINE (Galatians 5:19-21); then of course ...
- **THE PHYSICAL RETURN OF JESUS CHRIST TO ESTABLISH HIS KINGDOM IS A CORE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE** (John 14:2-3; Acts 1:10-11; Hebrews 9:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

These are not the only ESSENTIALS for **CHRISTIANS**, but they are good examples of what I mean by ESSENTIALS.

In contrast to the **ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES** (*known in Scripture as ‘THE APOSTLES’ DOCTRINE’*) are **TABOOS** that are *man-made prejudices* that have been *elevated to essential-status* by **TRADITION, CULTURAL NORMS, and LEGALISTIC TEACHINGS.**

We would be wise to recall a core criticism **JESUS** directed at the **PHARISEES**, viz., that they paid more attention to **TRADITIONS** and **MAN-MADE RULES** than they did to the Scriptures.

#### HOW TO DISTINGUISH ESSENTIALS FROM NON-ESSENTIALS

Category	Based on Scripture?	Required for Fellowship?	Room for Liberty	Sinful to Disagree?
Essentials	✓ Yes; Clear Commands or Teachings	✓ Yes	✗ No	✓ Yes
Non-Essentials	✓ Freedom to Disagree	✗ No	✓ Yes	✗ No
TABOOS	✗ No; Man-Made Rules	✗ No	✗ Often Denied	✗ But Treated as a Yes

#### SUMMARY OF PAUL’S APPROACH

Concern or Point of Dispute	Paul’s Response
Is Eating Meat Offered to Idols a sin?	<b>No</b> , not in and of itself because idols are nothing
What if someone is offended?	Don’t eat; <b>refrain</b> out of love for the weaker Christian
Can I simply follow my conscience?	<b>Yes</b> , but do not force others to violate their consciences
What is the greater goal	<b>Glorification of God</b> and the <b>edification of the Body of Christ</b> – the Church
Final principle on which our choices should be made: <i>“Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.”</i>	

#### WHAT IS THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF GOD IN ROMANS 14:10?

*"Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or why do you judge your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written, 'AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL CONFESS TO GOD.' So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God" – Romans 14:10-12.*

**WORD STUDY OF THE GREEK NOUN βῆμα** (*pronounced bēma*) – This word occurs twelve times in the New Testament; it is a derivative of the verb βαίνω (*pronounced ‘bainō’*) that means, ‘to go, step, or walk.’

Root Verb:	βαίνω – (‘bainō’)
Literal Meaning:	A step or a stride’
Secular Usage:	Podium, Tribunal Seat

*New Testament Usage:      Judgment Seat of the Divine Christ*

*Bēma* is a noun of action that for all practical purposes means, 'a step' (as in 'a step or stride') that later came to mean 'that which is stepped upon,' such as 'a raised platform' of some sort. We can think of the *Bēma* as a podium. A good, contemporary example would be the platform where athletes receive their medals after winning an event in the Olympics. As such, in Roman cities like Corinth, it came to be used of the raised platform on which judges sat to render judicial decisions (*verdicts*). When Paul was brought before GALLIO (*the Proconsul of ACHAIA*) in Acts 18:12, the term *bēma* is used twice to refer to **THE JUDGMENT SEAT**, the seat of GALLIO'S **AUTHORITY**, the place where a judicial decision would be rendered.

In the New Testament, *bēma* sometimes is used to refer to a divine tribunal – and this is how it is used on our passage (*Romans 14:10*): "We all will stand before **THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF GOD** then again, "for we must all appear before **THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST**" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

The general context is Paul's desire to avoid a 'two-way' judgmental division in the Roman Church. The division is between what he calls (A) **THE WEAK** and (B) **THE STRONG**. By his use of the term '**WEAK**,' PAUL is not making a moral judgment about the person or implying anything negative, nor should we infer any of these things from the text. Instead he is using this term to refer to **THE SENSITIVITY OF THE CONSCIENCE OF NEW BELIEVERS**.

By '**WEAK**' he means the conscience of the new believer is overly sensitive, or not yet fully informed regarding **THE DOCTRINE OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY**. *ALL OF US, no matter how long we have been believers ... ALL OF US have much yet to learn.*

**WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OUR APPEARING BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF GOD AND OUR ETERNAL SALVATION?**

When we stand before the Judgment Seat of God, it will **NOT** be to determine our salvation or our eternal destiny. This 'judgment' is not about salvation. The issue of salvation was settled at the cross when Jesus died as our substitute and took on Himself the guilt and the punishment for our sins. Salvation is 'a settled matter.' The price for our sin has been paid and we are eternally secure **IN CHRIST** for eternity.

**THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT OF REVELATION 20** about which we all have heard will take place at the end of the Millennial Reign of Christ, approximately **1,000-years AFTER** believers appear before the Judgment Seat of God described in Romans.

Those who appear at **THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT** are condemned already and 100% of the defendants at that judgment will be cast into **THE LAKE OF FIRE**. **No believer in CHRIST will be present at THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT.**

So what is the point of this event that we all will attend at the **βῆμα (bēma)**? It is solely about **SANCTIFICATION** and **STEWARDSHIP**. It is to review on an individual basis the quality of our faithfulness to Christ **AFTER** our salvation. It is the time when believers will be reviewed and awarded for faithful service. The Scriptural basis for this is found in various passages in the New Testament:

**1 Corinthians 9:24-27** – Believers 'run for an imperishable crown.'

**2 Timothy 4:8** – 'A Crown of Righteousness' will be awarded by Christ Himself (*the Righteous Judge*) 'to all who have loved His appearing' (*eschatology is important*).

**James 1:12** – The Lord has promised 'a crown of life' to those who love Him.

**1 Peter 5:4** – When Christ, ‘the Chief Shepherd’ appears, believers will receive ‘*the unfading crown of glory.*’

We must realize also that there is the possible loss of these rewards (*not a loss of our salvation but a loss of the rewards given for faithful service*). 1 Corinthians 3:15 says: “*If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved.*” *Again, our salvation is secure, but we can miss out on rewards based on the motives that drove our works of service during our post-conversion lives.*

#### **SO HOW SHOULD THIS KNOWLEDGE BE APPLIED IN OUR LIVES?**

First, we must avoid judging others over non-essentials. God Himself will review these non-essentials at **HIS JUDGMENT SEAT**. He alone is the judge and we are accountable only to Him – not to each other, and not to any earthly power or organization.

Next, we should live with **ETERNITY IN VIEW**. Some may say **ESCHATOLOGY** (*the study of ‘last things’*) is not important; however, the Bible affirms just the opposite. It is important to understand God has a plan that is unfolding before our eyes. It is a plan that affects the Nation of Israel, and it is a plan that affects the Church. At the end of this age, we need to know that a time of accounting is coming. This should drive us to humility, and the knowledge of God’s infinite Grace.

Since each of us will stand before the Judgment Seat of God Almighty, our focus should be on faithful service, not on judging others. God will sort out the beneficial from the non-beneficial, taking the burden of judging on Himself, thus relieving us of any necessity to take on a responsibility that is not ours.