# The Early Church, Our Church

A seven-week worship series



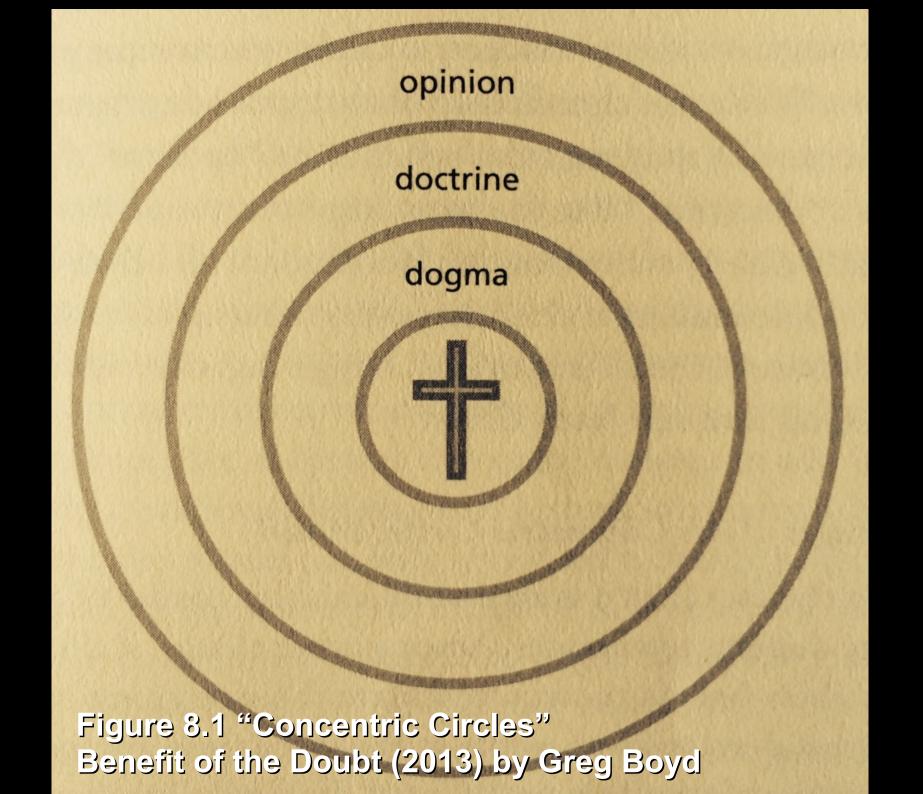
### Rome

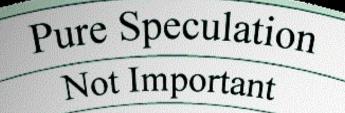
- Rome founded in 753 BC
- Capital of Roman Empire (pop. over 1 million)
- Uncertain on how the gospel reached Rome
- Paul arrived in Rome as prisoner three years after his letter to the Romans had been written (Jews expelled, AD 49; they return AD 54; letter to Romans AD 57; Paul arrives in AD 60)
- Many Christians greet Paul along the Appian Way, encouraging Paul for 30-40 miles.

### Letter to the Romans

- Written from the back streets of Corinth
- Most systematic and logical doctrinal letter/book
- "chief book" in NT and purest gospel (Luther)
- Paul sees an end to his Mediterranean ministry, desires to journey further West into Spain
- An "occasional" document laying out the gospel as it reconciles both Jew and Gentile to God
- Paul encourages unity/harmony in Christ despite cultural differences and maturity in faith

"In the essentials let there be unity; in the non-essentials let there be freedom; and in all things let there be love."





Important but not Essential

Essential for DenominationalOrthodoxy

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Traditional Orthodoxy

Essential for Historic
Christian Orthodoxy

Essential for Salvation

"How do we know which issues come into which category? This is a huge question, and the only way to answer it is to go back through not only Romans but also the gospels and the rest of the New Testament and weigh carefully, case by case, what is said and, equally important, the reasons why it is said. We cannot and must not use the "Let's agree to disagree" line as a way of avoiding the challenge..."

N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone (Romans)* pgs 102-103

#### Paul, Romans 14:1-3 NLT

1 Accept other believers who are weak in faith, and don't argue with them about what they think is right or wrong. 2 For instance, one person believes it's all right to eat anything. But another believer with a sensitive conscience will eat only vegetables. 3 Those who feel free to eat anything must not look down on those who don't. And those who don't eat certain foods must not condemn those who do, for God has accepted them.

#### Romans 14:4 NLT

4 Who are you to condemn someone else's servants? Their own master will judge whether they stand or fall. And with the Lord's help, they will stand and receive his approval.

#### Romans 14:5-6 NLT

- **5** In the same way, some think one day is more holy than another day, while others think every day is alike. You should each be fully convinced that whichever day you choose is acceptable.
- 6 Those who worship the Lord on a special day do it to honor him. Those who eat any kind of food do so to honor the Lord, since they give thanks to God before eating. And those who refuse to eat certain foods also want to please the Lord and give thanks to God.

#### **Romans 14:7-10 NLT**

**7** For we don't live for ourselves or die for ourselves. **8** If we live, it's to honor the Lord. And if we die, it's to honor the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. **9** Christ died and rose again for this very purpose—to be Lord both of the living and of the dead.

**10** So why do you <u>condemn</u> another believer? Why do you look down on another believer? Remember, we will all stand before the <u>judgment</u> seat of God.

#### **Romans 14:12-14 NLT**

- **12** Yes, each of us will give a personal account to God. **13** So let's stop condemning each other. Decide instead to live in such a way that you will not cause another believer to stumble and fall.
- **14** I know and am convinced on the authority of the Lord Jesus that no food, in and of itself, is wrong to eat. But <u>if someone believes it is wrong</u>, then for that person it is wrong.

#### Romans 14:15-19 NLT

- **15** And <u>if another believer is distressed</u> by what you eat, you are not acting in love if you eat it. Don't let your eating ruin someone for whom Christ died. **16** Then you will not be criticized for doing something you believe is good.
- 17 For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. 18 If you serve Christ with this attitude, you will please God, and others will approve of you, too. 19 So then, let us aim for harmony in the church and try to build each other up.

#### **Romans 14:20-21 NLT**

20 Don't tear apart the work of God over what you eat. Remember, all foods are acceptable, but it is wrong to eat something if it makes another person stumble. 21 It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything else if it might cause another believer to stumble.

#### **Romans 14:22-23 NLT**

- 22 You may believe there's nothing wrong with what you are doing, but keep it between yourself and God. Blessed are those who don't feel guilty for doing something they have decided is right.
- 23 But if you have doubts about whether or not you should eat something, you are sinning if you go ahead and do it. For you are not following your convictions. If you do anything you believe is not right, you are sinning.

# "Eating Meat & Drinking Wine" Modern Parallels

- Drinking alcohol (moderation vs. abstaining)
- Observing the "Sabbath" on a certain day
- Predestination vs. Free will (God's Sovereignty)
- Worship styles and Bible version in the church
- Secular vs Christian music
- Frequency of communion, mode of baptism, etc.
- Interpretation of Genesis 1-2; did a snake literally talk?; authorship of certain books, etc.

#### **Romans 15:5-7 NLT**

**5** May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus. **6** Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7 Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory.

## **Getting Our Life From Christ?**

It means you are...

- open and not personally threatened by opposing beliefs, especially non-essential ones;
- recognizing that we all see through a mirror dimly (1 Cor 13:12), so you freely extend grace;
- listening and taking the "weak in faith" into account, having a care for the community;
- welcoming those who profess Christ but may be "honoring God" differently than you.

"A church need not abandon or water down its doctrinal stance to welcome people in this radically open way. It simply needs to have an understanding that not everything is equally important, and the one and only thing that is absolutely essential is a relationship with Christ. It thus only needs to be encouraging all its people to get all their *life* from Jesus Christ and to therefore be gracious enough to allow space for people to disagree, to doubt, and to be in process."

Greg Boyd, Benefit of the Doubt (pg 173)

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