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Romans

For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. Romans 14:7

We are reminded, based on the previous discussion concerning foods and days, that "none of us lives to himself." We are accountable to God and to live for God. What He has ordained is right and therefore we are to treat His granted liberties as appropriate. In essence, those around us who eat differently or worship differently are to be given regard for their choices without judgment as long as they are not forbidden. For example, we may not like others eating pork, but there is nothing wrong with it. We may like to eat pork and we shouldn't be shamed by those who don't. The food is acceptable because we have been accepted (see Acts 10:34, 35, for example).

Disputable matters are to be handled as such. And not only do none of us live to ourselves, but "no one dies to himself" either. God is in control of our lives and He likewise controls our deaths. The timing of our death, the duration of our time in the grave, the status we will be given in eternity, and the rewards and losses we shall receive are all up to Him. As we don't control these things, then why should we judge other believers in matters of a disputable nature which He alone will decide upon? There are enough doctrinal issues which are clear and of great importance that we don't need to get in a tizzy over the lesser issues.

Remember though, there is a difference between freedom to act and being coerced into acting. We have the freedom to eat what we wish, or abstain from the same. We have the freedom to observe whatever day we wish or consider all

days the same. But when we are told that we must eat or not eat, or that we must observe or not observe, then a line is crossed. Imposing the law where the law has been set aside is to set aside the grace of Christ.

Understanding this distinction is necessary because it all comes down to what God has done in Christ. Freedom in Him is exactly that, freedom. Rejecting what He has done then can only be bondage. Let us never allow our freedoms to be exchanged for a return to bondage.

Life application: Because we neither live nor die to self, we are to live for God and in harmony with those who are likewise in Christ. Be separate from those who attempt to find fault in disputable matters and be at peace with God.

For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. Romans 14:8

Paul is speaking to believers here as he has throughout the epistle. The earth and all its fullness belongs to the Lord, it is true, but Paul's words are not speaking in this general sense. Rather, his words are directed to those who are "His" in the sense of relationship. Although this should be obvious from the surrounding context, and even within the verse itself, it is not uncommon for verses like this to be ripped out of their context and universally applied. But they are directed to His people, not the world at large.

And so Paul begins with, "For if we live, we live to the Lord." As an all-encompassing thought concerning our lives, he says "for if we live." This is stated to tie back to the previous thoughts concerning eating food and observing days. He used these two concepts as emblematic of all matters which are doubtful. Food is a daily necessity which keeps us alive and sustains us. When we observe a day or days during the week we form the schedule around which we conduct our other affairs. In other words, these two things have been used by Paul as representative of our on-going life and activities. If we eat, we do so to the Lord. If

we observe a day or days, we do so to the Lord. As these represent our general life, then he sums up that "if we live, we live to the Lord."

In the same manner, when these activities cease because of our death, we are no less the Lord's. Because of our position in Christ and our spiritual rebirth, our bodies may die, but we are eternally alive in Him. To confirm this he says, "if we die, we die to the Lord." This is a wonderful verse which demonstrates the eternal security possessed by the believer. There is nothing, including death, which can separate us from Jesus Christ; we are always His.

"Therefore" - because of these things, "whether we live or die, we are the Lord's." This sums up what has been stated in verses 1-7. Having used that which sustains life (food) and that upon which we determine our weekly cycle of life (the basic 7-day rotating period established at creation), Paul has shown that we belong to the Lord.

But let us remember what this means from the perspective of those previous verses. The use of "we" isn't speaking about the individual. Rather, he is speaking about all those who are in Christ. Whoever is in Christ, whether he lives or he dies, belongs to the Lord. As this is so, we are not to despise other believers over matters of food or days. Instead, we are asked to accept them and their mode of life and worship as having already been accepted by Him.

Life application: Make an effort when you encounter the word "therefore" to go back and review the context of that word. Verses, especially verses with conjunctions, are not isolated thoughts which can be pulled out of their greater context. Instead, they build upon what has been previously stated.

For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living. Romans 14:9

A review of some of the closest conjunctions of the preceding verses will help understand what Paul is relaying in this verse:

"For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living."

As always, he uses these connectors to build his thoughts and help us to be sound in our doctrine. The first "for" came as a result of the idea that the things we as believers do are centered on the faith we possess. Because this is so,

- 1) We neither live nor die to ourselves, but rather we exist for the Lord who has redeemed us.
- 2) As He is the Lord of both the living and the dead, then in both life and death our conduct should be directed to Him.
- 3) Because of these things, no matter what happens to us, either in life or in death, we still belong to Him.

And then verse 9 -

4) It was for this all-encompassing state in which we live that Christ died and rose again to life.

What would be the point of the cross if Christ were only the Lord of the dead? And what a sad state it would be if He were only the Lord of the living - because we all die. In either of those scenarios, there would be a lack in His Lordship; it would not be an all-encompassing Lordship, and therefore He wouldn't truly be Lord at all. Presidents aren't presidents of the dead. And anyone could die at any time during a presidential term. Therefore, their presidency is a temporary and tenuous type of rule. The same is true with kings or any other type of leader.

But Christ died for His people at the cross of Calvary. Because He did, He is the Lord of all His people who have died. And even more, Christ was triumphant over death; He rose again. Because He did, He is Lord of all the living. There is no aspect of the believer's existence that is not covered by Christ. He is the complete Lord of His people.

Paul is asking us to remember this because we have believing friends who have died; Christ is their Lord. We also are here for an indeterminate amount of time. And our time is filled with setbacks, trials, and troubles. But He is our Lord through those times. We are being invited to view the world and all that it brings our way from the perspective of Jesus' cross-death and resurrection. The most formidable foes that we could face have been vanquished. Christ is Lord!

"I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death." Revelation 1:18

Life application: Our relationship with Jesus isn't just a get-together on Sunday morning. Our relationship with Jesus is an every-moment existence. He is our Baptizer into the Holy Spirit. We now have the fullness of His presence at all times. But He can get more of us. Submit to Christ and live each moment for Him.

But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

Romans 14:10

"But why do you judge your brother?" is asked according to what Paul has submitted so far throughout this chapter. If someone wants to refrain from eating certain foods, then don't laugh at them in their weakness. If someone eats anything and everything, then don't judge them as if they were somehow unacceptable to Christ. God has already accepted them. The same is true with the observance of certain days. If someone wants to go to church on Thursday morning, isn't that his business? Those things which are not specified in the Bible

for New Testament believers are left up to personal choice. So who are we to judge another for what they have been given liberty by Christ to do?

Likewise, "why do you show contempt for your brother?" Showing contempt is, in fact, a type of judgment on them. If you refrain from eating pork, you still have no right to look down on people who do as if they were somehow beneath you. Diet, in particular, has become a standard of class in modern society. People who refrain from certain foods, especially meat, tend to look down on those who eat meat as if they were more contemptible than they. Add Christian faith into that mix, and it becomes a standard of accepting them as fellow Christians. But Paul has already shown that those who don't eat are the weak in the faith. So where does the contempt come from? It comes from pride in self.

The very fact that Paul asks these two questions demonstrates that they are unacceptable attitudes towards those around us. Let those who eat enjoy their food without being held in contempt, and let those who abstain enjoy their food without judgment. Likewise, have the same attitude toward others' observance or non-observance of certain days.

Paul has already said that those who have called on Christ have been received by Christ (verse 3). He is the final judge of all such things. And we know this is true because, as he continues, "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."

For believers, the question of salvation is not addressed here because salvation is eternal. It is a grant which will not be revoked. Therefore, the judgment we will receive from Christ is a judgment for rewards and loss of rewards. In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul explains this judgment -

"Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but

we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences." 2 Corinthians 5:9-11

The "things done in the body" are our actions from the time of our salvation. They will be judged in a completely fair and unbiased manner and rewards will be based on whether they survive the judgment. This is explain in 1 Corinthians 3 -

"Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." 1 Corinthians 3:12-15

Understanding this then, it should be clear that we have no right or authority to judge one another in these undefined matters. We do not set the standard. Rather, Jesus set it in the pages of Scripture and we are to adhere to that. When we violate Scripture, He will judge us for loss. When we uphold His words, He will judge us for reward. And those things which are not delineated in Scripture are matters of conscience for the individual, not for others to judge and condemn.

Life application: Scripture is our standard. When those around us violate set matters of doctrine, we are to correct them accordingly. But when their actions have not been defined by Scripture, we need to step back and allow them the freedom which Christ has granted.

For it is written:

**"As I live, says the Lord,
Every knee shall bow to Me,
And every tongue shall confess to God."** Romans 14:11

Again we begin with the conjunction "for" to show us that this verse is tied to the previous discussion. Because it is, it has to be evaluated from that context. Therefore, the quote which Paul now gives from Isaiah 45:23 is given not so much for the truth that all people will pay obeisance to Jesus (which is still true nonetheless) as it is to acknowledge that every person is accountable to Jesus rather than to the arbitrary judgment of others.

In other words, Romans 14:1-10 has been talking about other believer's accountability to Christ, not to us. We are to refrain from judging others based on matters which Christ has not specifically defined (using foods and the observance of certain days as examples). Understanding this quote from this context will help us to keep it in that intended train of thought.

And so he now states, "For it is written:" Paul is reaching once again back to Scripture to justify his previous thoughts. Returning to his often-cited prophet, Isaiah, he gives a general idea of 45:23, not a direct quote. Here is the exact verse for comparison -

"I have sworn by Myself;
The word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness,
And shall not return,
That to Me every knee shall bow,
Every tongue shall take an oath."

It must be noted for the sake of doctrine that this quote is preceded by these words in Isaiah 45:22, "I am God, and there is no other." And then, immediately following the quote, this is read in Isaiah 45:24, "He shall say, 'Surely in the Lord I have righteousness and strength.'" In other words, Paul is showing us several very clear things -

- 1) There is one God.
- 2) Jehovah is that God.
- 3) Jesus is Jehovah incarnate; the one God.

To come to any other conclusion would be to state that the God presented in the Bible is confused. With such a conclusion the only logical subsequent conclusion is that the Bible is not true and that the God of the Bible is not truly God. But He is. Paul is clearly identifying Jesus as the one God, the true God, and the only God. And this conclusion then must support the concept of the Trinity - not a triplicity or a triad, but one God in three Persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as the Bible elsewhere confirms.

This God, now cited by Paul says, "As I live, says the Lord..." The equivalent of this statement is "I have sworn by myself." The two expressions are conceptually a one-to-one comparison as is noted elsewhere in the Old Testament. As there is no one greater than God, to swear by Himself means that the statement is certain. This is explained in Hebrews 6:13-18. And the oath He swears is that -

"Every knee shall bow to Me,
And every tongue shall confess to God."

There is no person who has ever lived who will fail to recognize this truth. Jesus is the Lord God who will be so acknowledged by every son of Adam. Every knee will bow in homage and in submission to Him and "every tongue shall confess to God." In other words, God will be exalted through their confession that Jesus Christ is, in fact, Lord. This is the intent of the words as Paul states them, but let us now return to the context of those words. We have been given ten verses of instruction concerning accountability to the Lord. Our allegiance is to Him, not to the whims of others. Our responsibilities are those defined for us in His word, not in legalistic additions by those around us.

If God has a prescription for us in His word, then we are subject to that directive and those around us may hold us accountable to what is stated. But if there is freedom within a precept (such as eating meat or eating only vegetables) then we are accountable to the Lord only for what we do; others have no say in our decisions. Remember this before you point out a supposed fault in another or when you are supposedly faulted by another. God's word is the authority. Stand firmly on this and remember that you will bow to Jesus, not to anyone else.

Life application: By keeping Romans 14:11 in its proper context, we can see how fervently God feels about His word. We are completely accountable to it and not to the external pressures of others who feel differently about disputable matters. And the only way we can know what God expects of us or what liberties God has granted to us is to know our Bible and properly apply it. Know your Bible!