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Everything That Is Not Faith Is Sin

Rom 14:1-23 *Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. 2 For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. 3 Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. 4 Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand. 5 One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks. 7 For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. 8 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. 9 For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living. 10 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. 11 For it is written: "AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL CONFESS TO GOD." 12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. 13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way. 14 I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. 15 Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died. 16 Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; 17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. 18 For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. 19 Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. 20 Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense. 21 It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak. 22 Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. 23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.*

I have been thinking about this chapter of Romans for a while now.

I want to go through this chapter this morning and just kind of point out what I see Paul is trying to get across here. I think that this chapter is probably interpreted a bunch of different ways, because, like much of the bible, I think "christians" like to take pieces of chapters that talk about outward issues or behaviors and make a new law out of them. Well, I think if we look at the last verse of this chapter, it pretty much takes out the option of being able to claim a law of any kind. "whatever *is* not from faith is sin." The discussion here has to do with faith. Although Paul talks a lot about drinking and eating or observing days as being more important than others, he is ultimately talking about living out from faith. He talks about natural things only to show that natural things are inconsequential in regards to faith working.

And just so we are all clear about the word "faith"... If we use "faith" as a thing based on learning a particular system of beliefs, if that's our definition of faith, then Paul wouldn't be able to even write this chapter. I mean, if faith has anything to do with beliefs, then faith would have to have "rules." And man's definition of faith does have rules. When we say, "I have faith" we generally mean that we have a system of beliefs. It could be Islam, it could be Christianity. Either way, "faith" becomes this generic word for "religion." And, in turn, "faith" is then attached to a system or rules. But Paul is saying that the rules are out the window here, and directly tying that to faith. His understanding of faith is this place where faith is having light working inwardly, and regardless of what you choose to "do", faith justifies the believer, makes the believer acceptable to God, because faith is the same thing as being in the Spirit, and anything outside of faith is separation from God, regardless of what the natural thing is, it's where the heart of man is absent from Light... In this passage Paul is saying that nothing is unclean, but even if you think or believe otherwise, as long as you are in Christ and living by faith, it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter if you do or don't do. Again, in the last verse of the chapter: "everything that does not come from faith is sin."

In religion, man establishes rules and regulations that he thinks are good for our eventual salvation and judgement when the natural life is over (our account to God). We make rules that govern the flesh into the WAY that we keep our soul righteous. I'm pretty sure we all see how many ways that doesn't even make sense in the light. What we are doing when we attempt to be good by our actions is simply trying to live pure and holy lives in the flesh... thinking that our flesh is supposed to be "tamed." We establish these external laws, or rules, instead of living by the internal law of the Spirit of Life.

This passage in Romans **8:1** talks about that... Paul says:

"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous

requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires."

Do you see how making rules and regulations for the flesh is just setting our minds back on the flesh? We are living according to what our flesh does, and therefore are not living according to the Spirit that is in us. Paul isn't telling Christians what is right and wrong in the flesh... he is telling Christians that the nature of sin is the only thing that you can live in, regardless of what you are doing, if you are NOT living by faith.

So back up to the beginning of the Chapter:

Rom 14:1 *"Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. (NAS is: not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions). 2 For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. 3 Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. 4 Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand."*

Paul says do not quarrel over disputable matters, or argue about opinions over fleshly things. I know for me, recently, I started to realize that many times over the last several years (and recently I'm sure), I have taken certain "things" that people are doing and judging them. I haven't necessarily said a whole lot, if anything, but I know there are many things that I have kind of stood back and said to myself, "that is not important" or "that doesn't really matter at all." But I like what Paul says... "Who are you to judge someone else's servant?" and then he basically says that it's not my responsibility to make them stand, it is the Lord... and the other side of that is the possibility, however unlikely, that maybe I'm the one that's doing something that doesn't matter! And if that is true, then what? Well... same thing, it is the Lord who will make me stand.

The thing inside of us that wants to judge is just very simply self-righteousness... it is one of many expressions of self that is still trying to live. We are only really able to judge someone if WE are still living, because if we are living in Christ, by the cross, then we have died, we have come to the judgement of the cross and that is the only judgement that matters in our hearts. I think that's really what Paul is getting at in this whole chapter, and it's this simple: If you let the cross work in your heart, then you are not living in sin. If you don't let the cross work in your heart, then you can only live in sin. It doesn't matter what you do or don't do, if you don't have Christ, you don't have faith, and if you don't have faith, then you don't have life.

I also like what Paul says in verse 12:

12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

I think if we stop and just let that statement sink in and really consider it it will probably have some impact. But we have to understand that this account of ourselves isn't what we did or didn't do in the flesh, this account is just like the parable of the wicked servant that buried the talents (money). I think it's worth saying this to, before I read the parable... Jesus never came saying that He was after ruling the earth. I mean, the Kingdom of God that Jesus was always describing, was always inward and spiritual. He is talking about something that is eternal... planting a seed in an eternal way in our soul, and working His salvation out in the soul of man. None of these parables is talking about a natural reality. There are a few verses that come to mind:

John 18:36

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."

So the parable that I want to read that kind of deals with this account of ourselves in

Matthew 25:14

The Parable of the Talents

14 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. 15 And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. 16 Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. 17 And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. 18 But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. 19 After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. 20 "So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' 21 His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' 22 He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' 23 His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' 24 "Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.' 26 "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. 27 So you ought to have deposited my

money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. 28 Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. 29 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. 30 And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

This account is an account of the seed that is planted in us. This isn't natural, this isn't our efforts to do the right thing, or our Sunday attendance record, or our ability to understand good doctrine. You know, those things are just things. Some people do them, some people don't. The account of ourselves is the account of whether or not we received the seed (which is Christ) and bore an increase. It is totally inward. And that is what Paul is talking about in Romans 14. He is saying that our judgements of natural things are worthless. He's saying that this one eats and this one doesn't, but it doesn't matter, if faith, if the seed of Christ is not the source, then eating or not eating is just sin.

Jesus says the same thing to the woman at the well about the natural compared to the spiritual in **John 4:19**

19 The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship." 21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. 23 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

I kind of see this same thing going on that's in Romans 14. The woman here is asking what is right about the natural world, about how man naturally relates to God, is it this system, this method, or this other way? But it isn't a natural issue for Jesus, it is IN Spirit and IN Truth. And Paul is saying that regardless of what it is we are doing or not doing, the issue is Faith, which is only known by the Spirit. Faith is the Spirit of Truth shining Light in the heart to give us the knowledge of the glory of God IN the face of Jesus Christ. I think so many people think that faith is somehow taught from generation to generation, from human to human, and it is a method of worship. It is a method that is combined with a particular doctrine and the more we know of the doctrine, or the more religiously we follow the doctrine, the more faith we have. Well, again, Paul doesn't say that faith is doing one thing a particular way. Faith is life, and Life is Christ, and Paul says Christ is IN you. So if you "know" faith, you "know" Christ, if you don't know faith, then you only know sin. Faith and sin are opposing natures. The faith of the Son of God is implanted in the believer... it is the seed, planted in you. And as the seed grows, your measure of faith grows. As the seed is dormant, the measure of faith is dormant. If there is no growth, there is only sin. Do you see how the wicked servant that buried the talents is just the example of no faith at work in the heart. God has deposited this seed in our

heart, and a wicked servant will not allow for it's increase, a "faithful" servant will naturally allow for an increase. Faith and increase are connected. If there is no faith, there is no increase.

So back to **Romans 14:17**

17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. 18 For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men.

The servant who serves Christ in Righteousness and peace and joy IN the Holy Spirit is acceptable to God and approved by men. I'm not sure I get the "approved by men" statement, which may just be as simple as Paul saying that "if someone is in Christ, this is approved by men, or others, or the body, who are in Christ." But here it is again, the one who is IN the Holy Spirit is acceptable to God. The acceptance of anything is due to the nature that is at work in us. Being in the Holy Spirit is being acceptable. And this is, of course, totally outside of the natural realm...

I also like the parallel here of the parable of the talents where the master says: "Enter into the joy of your lord." INTO the joy of the Lord. and Paul says that joy is found IN the Holy Spirit.

I am just always coming back to this thing... this really important, simple truth that christianity is the Life of Christ. The church is the Life of Christ. The Kingdom is the corporate body of those that are filled with Christ, an inward reality that has an outward expression, but the rule isn't outward, the rule is inward, and our expectations in the outward can be many things, they can even be opposing "things" but faith is what is true and real and must be working in us or we have no life at all.