



ROMANS Part 125

Chapter 14:6-9

Living and dying
to the Lord; “To
heck with it.”



6 He who is disposed to the day, is disposed to it to the Lord; and he who is eating, is eating to the Lord, for he is thanking God. And he who is not eating, to the Lord is not eating, and is thanking God. 7 For not one of us is living to himself, and not one is dying to himself. 8 For both, if we should be living, to the Lord are we living, and if we should be dying, to the Lord are we dying. Then, both if we should be living and if we should be dying, we

are the Lord's. 9 For for this Christ died and lives, that He should be Lord of the dead as well as of the living.

I often tell you that we members of the body of Christ are closer than blood relations. The folks under discussion in this passage are members of the body of Christ. As part of this unique organization, we live together and die together—not literally but spiritually. Spiritually speaking, we're stuck. This is the best kind of “stuck” that there is, because sometimes we would manually escape this call due to its difficulty. This would be a giant mistake. It would be like selling off Microsoft stock in 1977. God keeps us from doing that, sometimes against our wills. He changes our wills, using other people to do it—primarily other members of the body of Christ. I have written people to say, “Hang in there,” or “Don't quit.” These phrases come across as clichés, but they're not clichés because we're all hanging from something, by our fingernails, and we're all sometimes tempted to retire to a greener pasture.

Love will keep us together—not our love for each other, per se, but the love of God for us. This carries over and *becomes* our love for each other. I will explain.

CHRIST, OUR CONDUCTOR

It is because we are all living and dying to the Lord that we are threaded to one another. Our love for the Lord spills over and splashes onto our body-of-Christ associates. The Lord Jesus Christ is our common Head. It is much easier to pay attention to One than to a hundred and one. The result is that we are all more or less on the same page. We are like musicians in an orchestra following a single conductor. If we're all watching the same man waving his arms (none of the musicians stare at their orchestra mates), then whatever rhythm, speed or feeling that man wants, we deliver. And we do it at the same time. Then we see out of our peripheral vision that we



are all pretty much “dancing” to the same music. Well, of course. Our eyes are on the same Conductor.

“WHATEVER MAKES YOU HAPPY”

Notice that the phrase that keeps cropping up in this passage is, “to the Lord.” Paul uses it five times. Then, to screw the point home he adds, “We are the Lord’s.” The idea is for us to live to please only One: the Lord. (This reduces all life to a simplicity.) If you think that refusing meat is pleasing to the Lord, then do it and be happy. If you think that eating shrimp wrapped in bacon and washing it down with whiskey is pleasing to the Lord (because the Lord made the shrimp, the bacon and the whiskey), then do it and be happy. You do it “to the Lord” and you don’t worry about anyone else’s opinion. You don’t do either thing to your wife, or to your husband, or to your child, or to your Aunt Mary. Oddly, these people are much harder to please than the Lord.

TO BREATHE OR NOT TO BREATHE

What if you are living? Then you live to the Lord. What if you are dying? Then you die to the Lord. These are the extremes. Everything that happens to us occurs between these two bookends of “living” and “dying,” which is why

Paul lays them out. It simplifies everything. It saves ink.

See what Paul has reduced this existence to, for our sakes: 1) You are either alive or you’re dead; 2) if you’re alive, you do everything to the Lord; 3) if you are dying, then you dedicate the whole nasty process to the Lord; 4) you say, “To heck with it,” and just live to the Lord. This is my addition. Paul did not say that you should say, “To heck with it.” It is I, Martin Zender, who am saying this. For some reason, “to heck with it” is, to me, an agreeable modern-day substitute for “do everything to the Lord.” In my mind, the expression properly announces, colloquially, that I’ve given up trying to please everyone and I’ve released my strangle-hold on life and death and everything in-between, and handed it over to One. Again, the Lord is much easier to please than Aunt Mary.

The Lord’s life is an acceptable substitute for mine. Aunt Mary’s—not so much.

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF CHRIST

The Lord lived and died. He came to Earth via Bethlehem—via the uterine wall of a teenage girl—and then went to the cross. The Lord let it all hang out. By this I mean



that He just lived, and then He just died. In-between, He performed miracles on the Sabbath, ate things that He wasn’t supposed to eat, and mingled with people He wasn’t supposed to mingle with. He just kind of “gave up” to His Father’s will and never bent to political correctness.



He eschewed what the collective considered expedient. He basically said, “Screw the religious establishment and the prevailing social mores.”

Jesus Christ did all of this actively. So I’m not saying that He sat around. Every day, He actively gave up. “Give up” was a verb to Him. “To heck with it” was a verb. The Lord wanted to live, but in the end He just kind of said, “To heck with it” and died. He threw away His life into His Father’s arms because the Father was so much bigger than He and had laid out to Him a bigger plan to which His death and resurrection would vitally contribute. The Father’s world was kind of messy, but no one could deny its greatness. The Father had made the elephant as well as the daffodil and so, wow, what a range. The Father could not die, and so it was almost natural to give everything to the Father and say, “To heck with it.” You had to trust the One you were saying “To heck with it” to, and of course He did.

HE AIN’T HEAVY; HE’S JESUS

This is one fine attitude. I wish it on all of us. The Lord is much bigger than anything else in this life. Why not

offer everything to Him? Additionally, He’s so relaxed because of all He went through in this life, and ultimately survived. He “let it all hang out,” and it worked. He said, “To heck with it,” and it played out very nicely for Him in the end.

Now to us. With this attitude in place and in play, we needn’t please anyone other than the Lord, or sweat too much over any detail other than offering everything to Him as a living sacrifice. Do this, and things will work out very nicely. Now, later, Paul does speak about considering the feelings of others, but he mentions this only as a matter of politeness and of joy in doing it, and not as a matter of selling out one’s own soul to another person or losing one’s self-awareness. It’s certainly not a matter of law. I’ll talk more about this later; it’s tricky.

For now, the default setting of your life ought to be, “What pleases the Lord?” The Lord is so easy-going by this time (after all He has been through), that you may have a hard time believing that He is so easy-going, but you will *not* have a hard time pleasing Him because of how easy-going He now is, subsequent to the drama of the cross. Remember, He died for our sins and there is



therefore now no more condemnation. And so the Lord naturally wants us all to live condemnation-free lives and count on the cross having taken care of all our mistakes, past, present and future.

TRICKLE DOWN

Just imagine if we all lived like this. By default, we would all get along better because we would all have the same disposition toward the Lord. You see? We would get along by accident, by concentrating on something other than getting along. The whole thing would start, not with our disposition toward one another, but with our disposition toward the Lord. Once that happened, then the “happy juice” of contentment would flow over the edges of our lives and splash everyone around us. We would all get dampened by the same fluid grace. “Getting along better” never really happens by trying to get along better, but by living and dying to the Lord (“to heck with it”) and letting the ensuing happiness overflow our banks.

“MY SOUL TO KEEP”

“For for this Christ died and lives, that He should be Lord of the dead as well as of the living” (Romans 14:9).

Don’t let this sentence trip you up. It simply confirms everything I’ve been telling you. “For for this Christ died and lives.” For what did Christ live and die? For your joy of being allowed, even encouraged to say, “To heck with it” and throw your life and even your death into His loving and accepting arms. For this cause, He is the Lord of the dead as well as of the living. This does not mean that the dead are living. Pay attention. We still have the demarcations: *dead and living*. How is Christ the Lord of the living? That’s easy. If you are living, He is your Lord. How is He the Lord of the dead? Here is where it’s possible to trip. He’s the Lord of the dead in that the dead are not forgotten by Him. The dead are on hold in that they are dead and not alive, and thus it is just like they are asleep. Does it bother Christ when you are asleep? Does He forget about you? Apply that now to death, because sleep is very much *like* death. The dead do not know anything (Ecclesiastes 9:5). *They* don’t know anything, true, but the Lord knows everything about *them*. He’s got them where He wants them—for now. They won’t always be dead. He does not forget about them. He will resurrect them to life in due time, so He’s *their* Lord just as much as He’s the Lord of the living, even though the dead have no awareness that He’s still their Lord. It doesn’t matter. One’s awareness in this matter doesn’t matter to Christ. *He* has the awareness, because He’s alive. Subsequent to His resurrection, He entered immortality, never to die again. So He’s “on it.”

This is why, if you must, you can die in peace. If it happens to you, you can just give it up. Death can be as easy to do to the Lord as living. You trust Him either way. You just say, “To heck with it.”

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Concentrate on Christ first, then upon each other. Try to understand how easy Christ is. He said, even to Israelites, that His yoke was easy and His burden was light (Matthew 11:30). If the yoke is easy and the burden is light for Israelites, who still operate in the arena of law, then how easy and light is it for we who appreciate the truth of justification by faith—the whole “no condemnation” thing—apart from works of law?

It’s easier and lighter than shrimp wrapped in bacon.

—MZ (*To be continued.*)

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