

I AM NOT MY OWN*PSALM 103:1-7 ESV // ROMANS 14:1-12 ESV***MONDAY 9/18/23**

Psalm 103:1-7 / Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!

Romans 14:1-12 / 1 As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. 2 One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables.

REFLECTION Last week our church studied the importance of putting on the clothes of Christ. More accurately, how to have the mind and heart of Christ. When we think like Jesus the world takes on a new look. We begin to see ourselves as a part of something so much bigger than our small world. We begin to see life through the lens of the Holy Spirit. This continues to enlighten us on how the Body of Christ is to live in harmony and unity. First, note, not everyone is on the same level of faith. Among the children of God some are weaker in faith than others. Therefore we should be careful not to quarrel and argue over basic doctrines of our faith. For us to keep unity we sometimes need tenderness and kindness so as not to become alienated in our faith. The early Church was made up of mostly Jews and, after Pentecost, Gentiles. Until then, these 2 groups of people did not associate. One reason was the Jews had long standing customs to the rites of the Mosaic Law. The Gentiles had previously ascribed to many ancient pagan rituals. Both are now united to Christ. This was a perfect arena for differences of opinion which caused quarrels and contention. The way to live together without any discord was by spending time sharing their love of Christ and sharing their lives together. God makes us stronger by uniting us and teaching us to trust Christ's wisdom. God's grace must always be plentiful to go around. To give it to others we must first have received grace abundantly from our Lord.

PRAYER O Lord Jesus help me to live in unity with others, yet not compromise my faith. Guide me daily Lord Jesus to achieve this high goal. We think we know what's best but only You have the path for us. May I follow your words and not mine. In Jesus Name Amen

TUESDAY 9/19/23

Psalm 103:1-7 / 2 Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

Romans 14:1-12 / 3 Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. 4 Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master[a] that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

REFLECTION It might seem strange to us that St Paul speaks about eating certain foods so we might not cause disorder and offend our fellow Christians. The real issue here, I think, is more about passing judgment on others. We love to judge others. We do so because we take the spotlight off ourselves. Today, like then, people have their own personal superstitions and extreme attitudes about ways of being holy. Some people think certain foods and drink cause them to sin. Indeed some do. But we need to be careful about giving advice on what foods are good or bad. St Paul is saying let's leave the judgment to God. Even though Christians may have divided opinions about what makes us holy. Only those in Christ Jesus are holy. St Paul tells us to restrain ourselves from superficial judgments. We ought to abstain from condemning one another and be gracious to one another and be merciful and kind. This is the work we need to do to create a community of God's grace. Let love be abound. The lack of faith or our weakness of faith need not divide us. Now that does not mean everyone gets to choose what is right and holy; the Bible is clear about such things. Our consciousness is also filled with the Spirit of truth which readily guides us. 1 Corinthians 8:1-6 "Now regarding your question about food that has been offered to idols. Yes, we know that "we all have knowledge" about this issue. But while knowledge makes us feel important, it is love that strengthens the church. 2 Anyone who claims to know all the answers doesn't really know very much. 3 But the person who loves God is the one whom God recognizes. 4 So, what about eating meat that has been offered to idols? Well, we all know that an idol is not really a god and that there is only one God. 5 There may be so-called gods, both in heaven and on earth, and some people actually worship many gods and many lords. 6 But for us, there is one God, the Father, by whom all things were created, and for whom we live. And there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things were created, and through whom we live. "(NLT)

PRAYER Heavenly Father what a blessing you are to send your Son for my redemption. You heal my soul and you forget my many sins. Help me not to be so condemning and judgmental. Praise you Father, my Creator, and thank you for all your benefits. In Jesus Name Amen.

WEDNESDAY 9/20/23

Psalm 103:1-7 / (Bless the Lord, O my soul) 3 who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, Romans 14:1-12 / 5 One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.

REFLECTION St Paul is writing about Christian freedoms: Freedom to honor God with our lives, not with what we eat and drink, and don't eat and drink. Romans 14:16-18 "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." Christians who are guided by the Spirit possess a certain and clear knowledge of Christian freedoms. A life of righteousness and holiness is not about what foods to eat or not eat. These are trivial matters. Yes, we set aside certain holy days to pay extra attention to God's redemptive plan, but these events do not make us holy. The precept of how to be holy arises out of Judaism's change when Christ Jesus, the true holy one, came to earth. God used certain regulations which prohibited the Jews from eating certain meats (Leviticus 11). There are various reasons for this. God does not tell the Jews that the food itself is detestable, but if you eat it, it would make you ceremonially unclean. That is the point; certain foods make you ceremonially unclean. God told them to detest such foods. We do not know why God chose these kinds of meat. The fact is The Jewish people accepted these regulations and have had been brought up with them from their childhood. Even St Peter was challenged to change his thinking about being ceremonially unclean. One afternoon while in prayer God told Peter to go and eat some of these meats. Peter refused because he thought they would defile him. Acts 10:9-16 "9 About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. 10 He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. 11 He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. 12 It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. 13 Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." 14 "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." 15 The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." 16 This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven." It would take time for Peter and other disciples to get used to the precept of eating foods once forbidden to them. The issue is Jesus Christ is the only one who makes us holy, righteous and clean. The problem in the early church was how these Jewish traditions caused the Gentiles to be isolated. St Paul is addressing the need for being united in Christ as one body. The best rule of thumb is, Christians ought to be careful about what is true obedience, and what is pleasing to God. Let's bear in mind the first principle of a right conduct is "dependent on the will of God." St Paul is teaching us we need to help others be restraining ourselves from offending people with weak faith. The will of God is to preside over all our actions and deeds. Let's be careful not to be pietistic. Piety can be so very divisive.

PRAYER O bless my soul Lord Jesus and help me to overcome false piety and other sins. Forgive me of all my vices and set me free from them. In Jesus Name Amen.

THURSDAY 9/21/23

Psalm 103:1-7 / (Bless the Lord, O my soul) 4 who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy.

Romans 14:1-12/ 7 For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. 8 For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.

REFLECTION For the past year I have been teaching a class on the Heidelberg Catechism. It is an excellent teaching on the foundational principles of Christianity. Question #1: What is my only comfort in life and death? The answer is: I am not my own but belong body and soul to my faithful Lord Jesus Christ. That is exactly what St Paul is teaching to the Romans. If you are in the Lord, alive or dead, you will always be with the Lord. I believe these are the most comforting words ever written. No matter the activities in our lives, we are in Christ and He is in us. That is the will of God the Father so that we might be reunited with Him. The life of a Christian is to live out the will of God. The will of God for us is to be in Christ. When we accept this powerful truth we come alive in God. This happens only after we have been broken and accepted that God does all the work reclaiming us as His most precious possession. He breaks us before we are anointed with the Holy Spirit. From this "new birth" we are being conditioned to love God and His will for our lives. It is His good pleasure to do so. So, whether we live or die we are in Christ Jesus. This means our death, and our life, are held secure in the hand of God.

PRAYER Lord Jesus, you redeemed my life from the pit and I give you all the praise. I sing a song of glory because you crown me with your steadfast love and mercy. In Jesus Name Amen.

FRIDAY 9/22/23

Psalms 103:1-7/// (Bless the Lord, O my soul) 5 who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagles. Romans 14:1-12/// 9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. 10 Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you why do you despise your brother?

REFLECTION The essence of being a Christian is knowing that, through Jesus Christ, we become immortal. That is an amazing truth, almost too wonderful to believe. Yet that is the Gospel, the good news! God gives us His promise we will have eternal life by believing Christ is God's Son. John 3: "14 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, 15 that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him." [b] 16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." The sacrifice of His beloved Son provides this awe inspiring true doctrine. So, let us discontinue to pass judgment on our neighbors. We are free and immortal. Each day we wake, whether we live or die, we are under the power of Christ. Christ claims this power over us, since he has obtained it by so great a price. That ought to put a spring in our step and a smile on our faces. Jesus had undergone death for our salvation. A simple message with a profound impact. Jesus establishes authority over us and once he has it it cannot ever be destroyed. Not even by death. We will rise again with Him because we are His property. By his death and resurrection our life advances towards the place of His glory. Jesus' resurrection creates a new state of life for us. Christ has dominion over us and grants us eternal life.

PRAYER How can I say thank you enough Lord Jesus for you alone renewed me and lifted me up to new life. It is like I am flying on eagle's wings. In Jesus Name Amen.



SATURDAY 9/23/23

Psalms 103:1-7/// 6 The Lord works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed. 7 He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.

Romans 14:1-12/// 10 For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; 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 will give an account of himself to God.

REFLECTION Jesus, like His Father, created something out of nothing. He created new life out of the dead. All of humanity is subject to Christ's authority, whether people know it or not. Jesus' whole life and His activities upon the earth gave Him the right and authority to judge all of humanity. We are not to be the judge nor the jury in spiritual matters. My Lord, your Lord, has complete dominion over all of heaven and all of earth. Every knee will bow and every tongue confess He is Lord. He has established the right to judge and assumes the character of a judge and acts completely within God's reason. He was called before the Father, to be the only true judge, from whom no one can escape. St James 4:11-12 " 11 Don't speak evil against each other, dear brothers and sisters If you criticize and judge each other, then you are criticizing and judging God's law. But your job is to obey the law, not to judge whether it applies to you. 12 God alone, who gave the law, is the Judge. He alone has the power to save or to destroy. So what right do you have to judge your neighbor? God has assigned the court of justice to Christ, which means He has the power to judge. One day we will all be summoned to bow down before him.

PRAYER Say the Lord's Prayer and be reminded of God's glory and power. Listen to the words and focus on our dependence resting on God's grace.



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