

For the Lord!
Romans 14:7-9

One of the most outstanding statements that has ever been heard are these words, "God has spoken!" It should take our breath away that the God of eternity has given light to our way in this dark world. He has made it possible to know him, and in knowing him - knowing ourselves, knowing the world around us and why it is the way it is. We know how to come to him. We know the truths of the cross and of salvation because God has spoken. And we know even the certainty of our great hope to be with him throughout eternity.

And we know these words, but listen to them again, and drink them in, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, "**All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.**" All Scripture is the production of God, and all Scripture is profitable to the people of God. We are people of the book and should even be more consumed with the Scriptures because they are the very words of the eternal, all perfect, Creator God.

But they are also sufficient as verse 17 of 2 Timothy 3 says to make the man of God complete and equipped for everything good work. What we say is the Bible is sufficient. I do not need another word or revelation from God. The Scriptures are sufficient for whatever I face in life. Now here is where we have to be careful because the Scriptures are sufficient but they do not give us the answer of everything we face in life. The Scriptures might command us - "husbands love your wives," but what does that exactly look like in your context? What are the struggles and needs of your spouse? The Scriptures gives principles as far as love being giving and sacrificial but it does not say every Wednesday bring home flowers, or have a date night every second Tuesday evening of the month, or what specific sins you should look over and which ones you should discuss. That is why believers many times turn to other believers with questions about how to raise their children. They know that they are to instruct and discipline them in the Lord, but what does that look like with my fifteen year old, and this particular struggle they are having? How do I apply the Bible in this situation?

What the Bible presents is commands, and truths and real life stories of people living in a fallen world, along with the knowledge of God and his promises to us. What the Bible imparts to us is not a detailed textbook for handling every situation, but wisdom through the knowledge of Him. And that is where the problem comes in. We make specific applications absolute. If anyone differs then they are out of the Lord's will. You should have grounded your child, or you should have discusses it with your child. Or it just was not that big of a deal. You should have overlooked it. You do not want to discourage them. Even this pandemic that we have gone through, individuals has sought out the wisdom of God's Word, but have been so adamant that they are right and everyone that does not agree with them is sinning against God, incurring his judgment, and is willfully disobeying and dishonouring him. And there is no specific verses in the Bible that instruct us specifically how to respond to a pandemic.

And you can see this in the ancient world with the observance of particular days or the eating of certain foods that good Christians differed on how to live for the glory of God in a fallen world and how to love others who disagree with us. This is really

tricky stuff but we often get closed in certain areas that the Bible does not address specifically instead of seeking to really understand and really seek the glory of God in these situations, and really look at the motivations of why individuals who hold differing views - why they are holding them? Are they holding them because they are trying to disobey God? Are they holding these views because they are trying to serve and glorify and be faithful to Him?

And this morning we come to verses 7-9 which basically outline what life is all about. The chapters from chapter 12 on has been telling us how we are to live before others whether they are believers in the household of faith, or unbelievers that we have contact with, or even those who are over us in government. But the main message is not how we live before others, but in living before others - how we live before God. Remember 12:1, **“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”** There is an important principle that we need to recognize in our disputes and disagreements with others, and it is this: life is not about you. It does not have you at the centre. It has God at the centre. And if that is true in your life then there is a way that we will respond and treat others even when we disagree about certain aspects of what it looks like to live by faith in Jesus Christ. And even as we will see next week, there is even a willingness to give up what is legitimate in our lives for the spiritual welfare and good of other believers who might struggle in certain areas that we do not.

But the only way that you can have that attitude is to realize that life is not about you. Do you realize that all of life is about the glory of God? Do I realize that whether therefore I eat or drink it is all about God's glory? I want us to really cement and emblazon this in our thinking this morning, by seeing two points. One is the principle and the second is the example.

1. We need to see the principle. Vv. 7-8.

The tendency of each one of us is to make life about ourselves. That is the nature of sin. It makes us self-centred and glory thieves. Sin causes us to make life about self, what I want and desire. I want everyone else and God to serve my purposes and objectives, and I want everything to revolve around me. And when it doesn't I am angry at God and others. Think of why you are angry at others, and it is not primarily that they have broken God's Law or somehow dishonoured him. But the primary reason is that they have offended or dishonoured you. They have done something against you. They have broken the laws of your kingdom.

But listen to what salvation in Christ instructs and teaches us in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, **“For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.”** Now listen to what he says because I do not want you to miss it. Jesus coming and laying down his life for us instructs us to do what? Those who are recipients of this gospel **“might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sakes died and was raised again.”** Here is a truth that you know but often that we have a hard time living out - life is not about you, but it is about another and that is

Jesus Christ. It is about his glory and honour, and about living for him and his purposes.

And this is his whole point in this passage. Look at verse 7 because he says it negatively first and then positively in verse 8, but both verses are saying the same thing, **“For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself.”** He was pointing out the in the last verses why we live the way that we live with strongly held religious convictions that we have taken from the Word of God. It is not that we are apathetic to the what people are believing or how they are living. But the difference here is not between conforming to worldly practices and trying to honour the God of our salvation. No, both groups have exegeted the Scriptures and hold opposing views in how to honour God with a certain day. Again, the observation of the day is not a salvation issue but how we honour and glorify Christ. Why is this so important? It is because all of life is about him, and that is the whole point here.

Now there is a sense when he says that none of us live or die to himself that none of us are an island to ourselves. Ours lives and how we live, along with our attitudes affect others. We all know that. If you are around a believer who is constantly rejoicing in God’s goodness, you cannot help but rejoice and be thankful. If you are around someone who constantly complains and is bitter, that bitterness spreads to us and we can feel complaints and ingratitude rising up in us. But the main emphasis here is not living with one another but that all of life is lived before God. There is never a day or moment that our lives are isolated from God. We are always in his presence, and life is about him. Even when we die, we do not cease living but come into his presence.

And again, he says the same thing in verse 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.”** Now what is the emphasis in the verse? And it is easy to see because we have the phrase “the Lord” repeated three times indicating whether we live or die life is all about the Lord. It is not about us. Why do we need that emphasized with the problem at hand? And the reason why is what makes us so domineering and so argumentative is self-glory rather than God’s glory. We want to convince ourselves that we are really fighting for is God’s glory but it is really our own glory. Self-glory will cause your marriage to turn into a battle ground where you always have to be right. Self-glory will cause you to be an exhausting friend that is hard to love, and life is always about you and not about others. Self-glory will cause you to think too highly of your opinions and too low of others, and also be very impatient with others who disagree with you. Self glory will deceive you and entrap you. “I know I am right and everyone else is wrong!” Self-glory will destroy people in the name of the Lord.

We need to be reminded time and time again that life is not about us. It is not about my wants and desires. It is not about people doing my will or even coming to all the conclusions that I make. Look at your relationships in the church. Look at your relations with other believers. Look at your relationships with even those outside the church - your extended family or those at work. What are they like? Some relationships will be difficult, but I find often we blame all the problems on others, and never truly look and see if we are patience, loving or forgiving of others. We never stop and see if we are easy to get along with. We never see that we truly have made life about us. And many times what we need rescue from is not our circumstances or others or even Covid but what we need is rescue from self and self-glory. The question becomes how

do we get that rescue from making life about self - people need to listen to me and see me and look up to me? Well there is only one message that can rescue us or more accurately one person who can rescue us from the natural tendency to make life, church and everything else about you - and that is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

2. We need to see the example of Christ. V.9.

This verse is such a powerful motivation and such a compass to where our hearts and lives need to be. So often we know what God's Word says. But so often we argue against God's Word. We know that husbands are to love their wives or wives are to submit to their husbands or children are to obey their children. We know those things, but we use the word "but." But you do not know what it is like. "To death do us part?" Certainly God wants me to be happy and I cannot be happy living with him or her. We want to define God's Word. We want to decide the limits on actions and so forth. And in the context, we want to control the actions and practices of others. In short, we want to be God.

And the gospel of Jesus Christ gives us two things as believers. One it gives us the perfect example of Jesus Christ. We know how to live that life through thick and thin for the glory of God. The other thing it does is so humbling. And that is it reminds me quite clearly that I am not Lord or captain of my own ship or ruler of my own realm. It reminds me that life is about someone else. But also reminds me of my need of this Lord. Even as a believer, as long as I am in this mortal flesh, I need to be rescued from self more than I need physical or relational or economic rescue. I am so needy. Do you recognize both that you are not Lord and your need of his daily and momentary grace in your life? If I listened to how you talked about others in the church or how you handle individuals that disagree with you, would there be any indication of His lordship in your life?

Look at verse 9, "**For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.**" Now this is one of the unique verses that give us the intent or purpose of Jesus' coming, and dying on the cross, and his rising up out of death. The word "end" here has the meaning of purpose or what was to be accomplished. We have Christ dying and then we have his resurrection, and what was the outcome of that resurrection? We would certainly say that his death and rising were our salvation and that is truly correct, but there is a more glorious reason for us as believers. We are certainly kingdom citizens but there is a king and Lord of that kingdom, and it is none other than Jesus Christ.

Now some might argue that they thought Jesus was always the Lord. He certainly is God in human flesh. The Word, the eternal God took on human flesh. Even Thomas professed of Jesus very accurately, "My Lord and my God." He is Lord and God, but hasn't he always been Lord and God? And the short answer to that question is: yes. He has always been Lord and God. But what this is talking about is his redemptive Lordship. Through the substitutionary death of Christ and through his resurrection He is forever Lord of his people. He is head of the church. He is our Lord, Saviour, King. He is our all. Life is about him. It is not about us. Jesus is not a commodity or a resource that we tap in to make our life work. He is Lord. Life and everything is about him.

And I love the terminology that is used here, because Jesus died and lived again so that he might be **“Lord both of the dead and of the living.”** This really is our hope. The meaning of “dead” here cannot mean to cease living because then Jesus cannot be Lord over the dead because they have no life. The meaning here is if death takes us, we are absent from the body but at home with the Lord. He is our Lord and we are at home with him. But he is our Lord in death. This is such a comforting text for us as we remember those who have died in the Lord but also face death ourselves. Jesus has conquered death, and although death is still our enemy there is one who is Lord over those who are no longer with us.

And you think of the next life and how it is consumed with Jesus Christ, it is amazing. We read in Revelation 5:9-13, **“And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.’ Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!’ And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, ‘To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!’”**

He is Lord of the dead! He is Lord of those who have departed from our midst. And if that does not get you excited, I do not know what will. But there is a glorious truth because we realize that he is not just Lord of the dead in Christ but also of the living. He is our Lord. Life is about him. And I think this is an excellent principle as we consider that he is Lord of the living and the dead. Will what people eat or don't eat, whether they observe a holy day or do not, will that matter to me ten thousand years from now? Here they are trying to honour Jesus Christ. Again, if they were denying Christ or leading others away from him, that would be a big deal, but so often when we start to look at things and issues from the eternal vantage point we start to see what is important and what is not. And here is the other thing: He is Lord. He is sovereign. Don't you think with some of these issues that I can just trust him that he knows best? Don't you think I should be concerned with what is going on in my heart and how I am treating others?

You see, it really is a humbling truth to realize and recognize that life is not about you. You are not Lord. But it creates so much joy and direction in our lives, with so much meaning. My life is not about my little kingdom but about his kingdom and the king that is worthy of all glory. Whose kingdom are you living for? If we live for his kingdom there is a way that we will treat others and we will live for his glory.