

Living for the Lord

Romans 14:5-9

Late one evening, young Adoniram Judson rode into a small village. He placed his horse in the stall and went to the inn to get a room. The innkeeper apologized, saying that the inn was nearly full, but there was one room available. Unfortunately, it was next to the room of a man who was very ill and might die during that evening. Throughout the night, as Judson heard the groaning and muttering of the man next door, it troubled him. "What disturbed him was the thought that the man in the next room might not be prepared for death. Was he, himself? . . . He wondered how he himself would face death. His father would welcome it as a door opening outward to immortal glory. So much his creed had done for him.

But to Adoniram the son, the freethinker, the Deist, the infidel, lying huddled under the covers, death was an exit, not an entrance. It was a door to an empty pit, to darkness darker than night, at best to extinction, at worst to— what? On this matter his philosophy was silent. It had no answer but 'Who knows?' . . . There was a terror in these fantastically unwinding ideas." He wondered "what would the classmates at Brown say to these terrors of the night, who thought of him as bold in thought? Above all, what would [Jacob] Eames say — Eames the clearheaded, skeptical, witty, talented? He imagined Eames laughter and felt shame.ⁱ

"The next morning he found his host, asked for a bill and asked casually whether the young man in the next room was better. 'He is dead,' was the answer. 'Dead?' Adoniram was taken aback. There was a heavy finality to the word. For an instant, some of his fear of the night made itself felt once more. Adoniram stammered out the few conventional phrases common to humanity. 'Do you know who he was?' 'Oh yes. Young man from the college in Providence. Name was Eames, Jacob Eames.'"ii As Judson rode away from the village, one word dominated his mind. It was the word, "Lost!" "For that hell should open in that country inn and snatch Jacob Eames, his dearest friend and guide, from the next bed— this could not, simply could not, be pure coincidence . . . Was this the real God? If so, He had a purpose for Adoniram, which Adoniram must learn to read. In his very bones, all at once, logic or no logic, Adoniram was imbued with the feeling that the God of the Bible was the real God. And Adoniram was filled with despair and dread. For Deist logic and evidence said 'no.'"iii

Deeply troubled, Judson returned to his home, and found employment teaching in nearby Boston. There he happened upon the book "The Fourfold State" by Thomas Boston.^{iv} Seventy-one days later, "On the second day of December — a day he never forgot — he made a solemn dedication of himself to God. With the issue settled and himself at peace, he devoted himself with a single mind to his studies. The next summer he joined the church at Plymouth, to the unrelieved joy of his father, mother, and Abby. From this time on he was literally a new man. He banished forever those dreams of literary and political ambition in which he had formerly indulged, and simply asked himself, How shall I so order my future being as best to please God?"^v Judson's question, "How shall I order my future being as to best please God?" is the most important question that each one of should be asking as we read Romans 14:5-9:

⁵ One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day *alike*. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. ⁶ He that regardeth the day, regardeth *it* unto the Lord; and he that

regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard *it*. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. ⁷ For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. ⁸ For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. ⁹ For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived [came to life], that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

Context

In our discussion of Romans 14:1-5, we learned about the importance of receiving Christian brothers and sisters from various backgrounds. For instance, (14:1-3) we learned to warmly welcome those who are "weak in the faith" without despising them. We do so because "God has received him" (14:3) and "God is able to make him stand" (14:4). Believers may have different viewpoints about food (14:2) and the importance of various days (14:5), but each is to be received with hospitality. The "bookend" to this section of Romans emphasizes this theme: "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God." So Paul's appeal is that there would be no manipulation of brethren: "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

The Point of Today's Text

When viewed in its context, the point of verses 5 through 9 is clear: Let us live and die for the Lord who died and lives for us. And let us grant other believers the liberty to do the same.

As you can see from this summary statement, these verses appear to be a mirror image: the death and life of Jesus Christ reflected in the life and death of every Christian.

The Glory of the Lord

⁶ He that regardeth the day, regardeth *it* unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard *it*. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

Practical Theology — with this end in mind: Living for the Lord, v. 6

■ Living unto the Lord, 6a

- Some place special importance on a particular day, and do so to honor the Lord.
- Some place no importance on that day, and do so to honor the Lord.

As we noted last week, the reverence of some for a special day was probably the Sabbath (7th) Day or one of the feast days under the Mosaic Law. Those who celebrated those days did so to honor the Lord, and nothing should be done to overturn their worshipful practice. Others, with the same worshipful spirit, did nothing to make this day special; these folks should not be treated with scorn. The New Testament does prescribe a special reverence for the Lord's Day (Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:2, Revelation 1:10, based on passages from the Gospels such as Matthew 28:1, Mark 16:2, Luke 24:1, and John 20:1). The point is that people were making different decisions to do "all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31); nothing should hinder this.

■ Giving thanks unto the Lord, 6b

Those who were eating only vegetables (v.2), and those who were also eating meat were doing so to honor the Lord. They ate each delicious morsel with thankful hearts to the glory of God. What is Paul's point? *Let us live and die for the Lord who died and lives for us. And let us grant other believers the liberty to do the same.*

■ Whether we live or die, it is unto the Lord, v.7, 8

- No man lives to himself or dies to himself

⁷ For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. ⁸ For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

Some would say that verse 7 is close to the poetic expression "no man is an island."^{vi} It is certainly true that, in the Body of Christ, no man can think that his actions will have no effect on fellow members. But Paul has something else in mind. "Cranfield points out that "the expression 'live to oneself' is used both in Greek and in Latin of living selfishly, caring only for one's own interest and comfort" (*Romans*, 2:707, n. 3). Plutarch, the late first and early second century Greek biographer, declared that it is "a disgraceful thing to live and die for ourselves alone" (*Vita Cleom.*, 31).^{vii} There are only two choices on the shelf, pleasing God and pleasing self. So Paul points every believer toward the great goal of Philippians 1:20, "**so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.**" Again Paul's point is this: *Let us live and die for the Lord who died and lives for us. And let us grant other believers the liberty to do the same.*

"Barclay writes, 'We stand before God in the awful loneliness of our own souls; to Him we can take nothing but the character which in life we have been building up.'^{viii} When we stand before the Lord, we will be held responsible for this characteristic: Christlikeness. *So let us live and die for the Lord who died and lives for us. And let us grant other believers the liberty to do the same.*

The Lord of All Glory

⁹ For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

Glorious Theology – with this end in mind: The Lord Who Lives for Us, v. 9

- Christ died for our sins (and was buried).
- Christ rose again to demonstrate His victory over death.
- Christ "revived" – came to life – to fulfill this particular purpose: **that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.**

Through verse 9 we can see that the Spirit of God wants each of us to grow up in our understanding of the Gospel; we need to learn to live out the implications of God's Good News.

Jesus taught this truth in Matthew 22:31-32. The Sadducees (who did not believe in a resurrection) challenged Jesus with what they thought was a trick question. But listen to Jesus' response: "³¹ **But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying,** ³² **I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.**" In the Scriptures, God did not say, "I was the God of Abraham . . ." but "I am the God of Abraham . . ." This is clear teaching that there is an afterlife – there is human existence after physical death.

About verse 9, one author noted, "Paul is creating the closest possible link between Christ's redemptive acts, death and returning to life, with the two most basic aspects of a Christian's experience, which are living and dying."^{ix} Every one of us here was brought forth to life through human birth; unless the Lord returns before we die, each one of us will face the reality of physical death and the afterlife. How do we face it? Look again at the kind note in our bulletin today from one of our sisters in Christ. When she faced the very real possibility that she might be taking her last breath, she thought of Hebrews 13:5 and its promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." This is what it means to mix your faith with the promises of God – the Lord of both the dead and the living.

Conclusion: How Should We Then Live?

In 1 John 4:17, we find the same connection (that Paul is making in Romans 14:5-9): "**Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world.**" How can we stand at the Judgment Seat with boldness? Here's how: our love for the Lord transforms us with the result that "**as He is, so are we in this world.**" When we devote our hearts to love the Lord, we are transformed into the image of Christ, and the result will be that we will be full of boldness at the Judgment Seat of Christ. In Romans 14:5-9, we learn to *live and die for the Lord who died and lives for us. And let us grant other believers the liberty to do the same.* ". . . **Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living**" (Romans 14:9).

This glorious text of Scripture brings us back to the question raised by Adoniram Judson: "How shall I order my future being as to best please God?"

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ⁱ Courtney Anderson, *To The Golden Shore, The Life of Adoniram Judson*, Judson Press, 1987, p.43

ⁱⁱ Ibid. p. 44

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid. p. 44-45

^{iv} This book is still available today and would be helpful to you. It is available as a free download at <https://www.monergism.com/human-nature-its-fourfold-state> or if you would rather read a paperback version, our bookstore could order this for you. The fourfold state of human nature consists of innocence (in the Garden of Eden), man's sinful nature, the state of grace, and the eternal state.

^v Courtney Anderson, p. 50

^{vi} John Donne, "No Man Is An Island" <https://web.cs.dal.ca/~johnston/poetry/island.html>

^{vii} Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, vol. 27, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995).

^{viii} Mounce, p.254, quoting Barclay in *Romans* p. 188.

^{ix} David Abernathy, *An Exegetical Summary of Romans 9–16* (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2009), 281. Citing Douglas Moo and James D. G. Dunn.