***Christians Live and Die to the Lord Jesus Christ
RO173-02***

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We now continue in Romans 14:1-12 on the subject of "The Spirit of Toleration." This is segment number six.

The Bible, as most of you, I think, well understand, is not man's book of religious ideas and experiences, which is to be evaluated, revised, and reinterpreted by people in terms of their own era of history. The Bible is, in fact, God's book, inherently revealing His unalterable truths for time and eternity. The Bible, therefore, is not subject to revision by sinful human beings to fit current ideas, practices, and fads. The Bible is, in fact, the divine manual for revealing how man is designed to function effectively at all times.

God has, however, attached severe penalties for violations of His laws governing human relationships. The Bible is very explicit on some things that human beings are allowed to do, and on things that human beings are never to do. The Bible is written in language we can understand, and the Bible gives very specific guidance to us.

Now where the Word of God does not give explicit directions on some matter, then the individual is free to follow his own preferences. Each Christian, in that case, must be satisfied that his lifestyle is compatible with the moral code of God. If a Christian is in doubt on some practice, then he simply should avoid it. It is essential, obviously, therefore, to know what the Bible reveals as the mind and the will of God, in order for us to do right, so that we may be in a position of having God's blessing upon us, and experience happiness in life.

Christians are, however, to treat each other in loving toleration on these matters which are left by God to our personal preference. And this has been the topic of the apostle Paul in Romans 14, where he has illustrated this principle by the fact that some Christians have differences over matters of diet, and some Christians have differences over the matter of observing special days as holy and set apart to God.

**Pleasing God**

Pleasing God, however, we must remember, is not based upon performing religious rituals or ceremonies, but on knowing and obeying doctrine. So, where God has spoken, we have specific guidance. Where He has not spoken, we are free to operate on our own within the confines of that which is compatible to the basic principles of the Word of God. For this reason, God exalts the knowledge of His word in Scripture above all else.

**God's Attitude toward His Word**

From time to time, it is very important that we remind ourselves of what God's attitude is toward His Word, or we will lose sight of why learning that Word is important. We will lose track of why it is important for us to be out to a church service. In Psalm 138:2, this is where the exaltation of the Word of God is forcefully set forth, when God says, "I will worship toward your holy temple, and praise your name for your lovingkindness; for your truth; for you have magnified Your Word above Your Name.

Now in the Bible, a person's name told what that person was like. A person's name was an expression of the character, and the temperament, and the quality of that person. So, to speak about the name of God is to speak about everything that God is. Nothing could be higher. And here, the psalmist, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in referring to doctrinal truth, says that God has magnified His Word about His very name.

It is the Lord Jesus who pointed out, as recorded for us, in Matthew 4:4, that you and I, as human beings, cannot live without the Word of God. Matthew 4:4 says, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." Again, this is exalting the supremacy of knowing what God thinks so that we can speak about what is right and what is wrong, so that we have some guidance for our lifestyle.

**Knowing Bible Doctrine**

In John 8:31-32, this is further reinforced. And Jesus said to those Jews who believed on Him, if you continue in My Word, then you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." This is what's so important about knowing doctrine. It is the only way that a human being finds his way into freedom. With every increase in your knowledge of the Word of God, you take a step forward into greater freedom. I think that you can readily see that the people who are enslaved in our society today: enslaved to sin; and, enslaved to all kinds of misconceptions that affect every area of life, are those who do not know the guiding principles of the Word of God.

Isaiah 40:8 says, "The grass withers, and the flower fades, but the Word of God shall stand forever." Nothing is more permanent than your knowledge of Scripture. Nothing is a more sure foundation for your life than the Word of God.

To this, we may also add Matthew 24:35, where the Lord says, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Words shall not pass away." Yet we live in a society today that belittles the Scripture (belittles the Word of God), and is if that isn't bad enough, the poison has crept into Christian circles, and into the community of local churches. Satan has successfully led even Christians to minimize the Bible as the first and foremost guide to true wisdom for living. And they have substituted human judgment.

One of the handouts that we have given you today will point that out to you, as prominent Christian leaders have themselves been caught up in psychological and psychiatric concepts that are being substituted for the principles of the Word of God. Men are looking to guidance from humanists, and their wisdom of the world, that God laughs at, as guidance for human relationships, and bypassing instead the guidance of the Word of God, or giving it a secondary place; or, worse, trying to prove by what the humanist psychologist comes up with that the Bible is true.

1 Corinthians 3:18-20 put it this way: "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, 'He takes the wise in their own craftiness.' And again, the Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain."

God the Holy Spirit has very kindly informed us here to be very careful about the wisdom; the confident opinions; the confident conclusions; and, the great insights that man, on his own, without God, comes up with. God sits in heaven, and He laughs at this. This is utter foolishness. And yet, Christians go to church, and the last thing on earth they generally receive is the Word of God.

**Altars in Churches**

Last week, I visited a church. It had pews. And people said in those pews. As you sat, you looked forward, as people generally do in church. And right up front, at the focal point, was an altar. It had candles on it. And it had a Bible. It had other paraphernalia. But as I sat there, it struck me that the most prominent feature in the eyes of the congregation, as they sat there, was the altar before which the pastor proceeded to perform religious rituals and ceremonies.

Now since we know from the Word of God that an altar is a place for sacrifice in order to gain access to God, the implication is clear. The pastor was standing in front of that altar performing certain ceremonies in order to lead that congregation to God. They were seeking access to Him, and their words explicitly made it clear that they were seeking forgiveness of sins and peace with God. The position of the altar as the focus of attention automatically conveyed the impression to the congregation that man must still try to satisfy the justice of God relative to his sin, in order to secure forgiveness and eternal life in heaven, even though the Bible has explicitly declared that the Lord Jesus Christ has made all altars obsolete. So, when you walk into a church, and there is an altar as the focal center of attention, you have insulted the grace of God.

Hebrews 10:10-14 put it this way: "By which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands daily ministering and offering often the same sacrifices which can never take away sins." The priests in the Old Testament order of the sacrificial system of the Mosaic Law never could sit down. They were always on their feet because their work was never done. And here I sat and watched a pastor acting as a priest, on his feet, trying to do the work of getting people some access to God, and forgiveness for their sins. And all he was doing was as useless as when the Jewish priests were sacrificing animals relative to securing forgiveness for sins. It was all a picture of what somebody who was qualified to do would have to do someday in the future, namely Jesus Christ.

Verse 12 says, "But this Man (referring to Jesus Christ), after He had offered one sacrifice for sin forever, sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting His enemies to be made His footstool. For by one offering, He had perfected forever them that are sanctified." One offering has perfected us forever in the sight of God – we who have been set apart for eternal life.

Notice verse 18: "Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin." Where God has done His work of forgiving our sins on the basis of His own justice being satisfied through the death of Christ, there's nothing more that you can add.

Now as if this wasn't bad enough, as the service proceeded, a layman stepped up here to another position called "a lectern," and from there, he read a portion of Scripture. But you will notice that it is not the center of attention. The Scripture reading was given a secondary impact in your observation by being off to the side. And eventually, the time came for the sermon, and he walked over, and there was another piece of furniture in the pulpit. It too was off to one side. And when you listened to the sermon, you had a look off to one side. It was a secondary, off-to-the-side event. When you looked forward, all you saw was the altar of sacrifice, trying to make it back to God. The very arrangement of the lectern in the pulpit indicated to us, as we sat there, looking off to one side or the other, that here was an aside event taking place, and that the preaching and the reading of the Word of God were not the key issues for which those people had gathered.

The central position in the church-age of grace should be occupied by the pulpit from which God's doctrines are proclaimed. We no longer need an altar in a Christian church. It is a demonstration of a great misunderstanding of what God has done. God has spoken to us specifically on some things in the Bible, and on those matters, we have no optional choices. We must obey them. But it is through the preaching of the Word that we understand that. So, we have to move the lectern and the pulpit to the center position, and we have to take the altar, and put it in the utility building where it belongs. It is no longer pertinent to us as Christians.

To obey the essential doctrines requires a knowledge of those doctrines. The Holy Spirit teaches us, in Romans 14, the principle of toleration on non-moral issues, while sustaining complete obedience to those issues that are moral, and on which God has spoken specifically to us.

This is illustrated, as we have pointed out, by differences about diets and dates. Each type of Christian, however, Paul points out, whether he eats vegetables and meat, or just vegetables; or, whether he observes holy days, or treats every day of the week as sacred unto God – each type of Christian does this because he seeks to honor Jesus Christ, and therefore, he should be received as a brother in Christ. Each Christian, furthermore, is going to have to account for his life to his Master Jesus Christ. He will then account to Christ for the diet he followed; for the lifestyle he led; for the days he observed; and, for the whole thing. That's his business between the Lord and himself.

**No Christian Lives to Himself**

So, with that background of the importance of the Word of God, the key to all understanding: what we must do; and, what we are free to have choices about – we come to Romans 14:7, where Paul says, "For none of us lives to himself, and no man dies to himself." The word "for" introduces now an amplification of what has been said in the preceding verses. The word "none" indicates that no one (referring both to strong and weak Christians – whether you are a strong Christian or a weak Christian, either type is included here. Each type of us, and he's referring here to Christians. This does not apply to unbelievers. Each of us "lives." The Greek word here is the word "zao." And this word refers to the Christians lifestyle. And we are told that no Christian, whether he is a strong Christian or a weak Christian, lives to himself.

**Christians Live to the Lord Jesus Christ**

The idea is that a Christian's focus has changed from himself (where it was when he was an unbeliever) to the Lord Jesus Christ. This statement is not a condemnation of self-centeredness or of independence from other people. This statement does not mean that we all influence people in some other way: "For none of us lives to himself." He doesn't mean that every Christian influences other people for good or for bad. That's not the idea.

What this means is that no spiritual Christian considers himself his own master, so that he is at liberty to do as he pleases in his life. As the personal servant (as the personal house servant, which is the word previously used in this passage) – as the personal house servant of Jesus Christ, the spiritual Christian endeavors to obey the will of God in his life, and to glorify Jesus Christ. The unbeliever and the carnal Christian live only for themselves. They pursue their own desires. They pursue their own self-exaltation. And they readily resort to evil practices in order to do that. The unbeliever and the carnal Christian do not live their lives for the glory of Jesus Christ.

Nothing is so sad as to see a Christian who has fallen into carnality, who is preoccupied every day, and every moment of every day, with exalting himself, and pursuing his objectives. The unbeliever, of course, is dominated by his sin nature, so his focus has to be on himself, and he cannot please God. Even the human good of the unbeliever, and of the carnal Christian, are to please and exalt himself. Our society is filled with do-gooders, and they are motivated by the fact that it makes them feel good, and it brings them a certain exaltation in the eyes of other people.

Their motivation is not noble. Ultimately, the Christian is going to focus on honoring Jesus Christ. You will do it before or after death. And if you didn't listen carefully, and missed that, you might want to listen again. Ultimately, each of us is going to honor Jesus Christ, because He is our Lord. You will do it whether you want to or not. You do it with great loss, or you will do it with great gain. But you are going to honor Him.

In Philippians 1:6, we read, "Being confident of this very thing: that He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." God has performed the good work of bringing you salvation; of transforming you into the image of Christ; and, of putting you into the royal family of God. And He is going to bring you along, so that you will act like royalty.

**Where is your Focus?**

Living for the Lord Jesus Christ, of course, is expressed in life relationships that honor Him. You indicate that your focus is on Christ, and that you recognize that you are living the life of Christ through your body by the words you use when you talk to people. You indicate that by the treatment that you give other people. You indicate that by your response when you come upon genuine needs that people have? You indicate that by the consideration for those who serve you. You indicate that by how you drive. Does your driving reflect the fact that your focus is on Jesus Christ, and that Jesus Christ is sitting behind that wheel driving through you? This is indicative of how you play games. When you start losing, do you start cheating? Do you get mad, and turn the table over? Where is your focus? That's what he means?

None of us Christians lives for himself. We don't live for ourselves. Now if your focus is on yourself, you'll do all those things sooner or later. It's reflected by your conduct at social events – how you act in social situations. And it is most certainly reflected (whether you are living for Jesus Christ) by how you fulfill your work obligations. It is indicated by your attitude when you're broke and in poverty. And it is even more indicated by your attitude when you're kind of well-off, and you're in wealth. It is certainly indicated whether you are living for Jesus Christ when your health is not very good. It's easy to live for Jesus Christ when you're in good health. But it is also indicated indeed by how you act in sickness – when you're not well, as it is by what you do with your life when you are in good health.

So, all the spiritual Christian does in his life, Paul says in this simple little phrase, is governed by his desire to please his master Jesus Christ. We Christians are not called just to do our own thing. And if you suspect that maybe that's how it is that you are living, you should take a clue from our mission director of Berean East (Berean Mission) in Kentucky, and our mission director, Jack Smith, who wakes up every morning. He's going to go to a job where his life is at hazard, and where he must associate with all kinds of vileness that he observes, and that he hears, that he sees, as he works in the penitentiary. But he goes to that service as one who does not live for himself, but who lives for Jesus Christ, and through whom Christ lives. Therefore, as he is fond of saying, he begins the day by addressing his Heavenly Father, and saying, "Sir, I am your servant this day, and I would be pleased for your guidance as to how you wish to use me." And then he says that he goes to his gun tower; he lays out his weapons; goes about his duties; and, waits for the Lord to open the opportunities for this witness to proclaim the Word of Life.

Now this is what is known as living for Christ. Unfortunately, I think that most Christians get up in the morning, and they're out hustling to do all those things in life that they've wanted to get done. And after they've been frozen in for a few days by bad weather, they just cannot wait to get out there to do all those things that they wanted to do. The last thing most Christians ever do is wake up in the morning and say, "Here is a day for me to live for Christ. Yes, I'm going to go to my employment. Yes, I'm going to do all these other things. Yes, I'm have these family responsibilities and these other responsibilities. But first of all, this day is my great opportunity to live for Christ, and to make heaven count for an eternal reward in my behalf."

**We don't Die to Ourselves**

On the other hand, Paul says that we don't die for ourselves either, as Christians: "No man, whether you are a strong or a weak Christian dies." We have this word several times here: "apothnesko." "Apothnesko" refers to the Christian's physical death – a personal experience somewhere down the line. We Christians do not die for ourselves. And the idea here is that no Christian just dies on his own.

**Suicide**

Now if a Christian commits suicide, he has taken God's prerogative into his own hands, and that is a very sinful thing to do. But because he is in Christ, and therefore secure, the suicide goes into heaven. But suicide is never justified in the Word of God. The Christian does not die on his own. The Christian's death is beyond his control because it again is in the hands of his Lord Jesus Christ. This is just as your life is not in your hands. It is beyond your control, unless you go grabbing it. It is in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Christian's death is also to be a moment in which he glorifies God.

**We Die to Christ**

So, we Christians live one day at a time by the grace of God's provisions, and at His call, we place our souls in His hand, and enter His presence through death. And the spiritual Christian lives for the glory of God. And after death, he continues to live for the glory of God, only he does it in the very presence of the Lord.

So, Paul says, "No spiritual Christian lives or dies for himself, for the simple reason that you and I are not our own masters. Jesus Christ has bought us by His death on the cross. He is the Master. This is made clear in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: "What? Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, Who is in you, and Whom you have of God? You're not your own. For you are bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body." Glorify God in your body. That's how you live. That's your lifestyle.

**How do you Make Christ the Lord of your Life?**

So, as Christians, our life and our death are under the sovereign authority of Jesus Christ. And how do I make Jesus Christ Lord of my life? There is a lot of misconception in the world, in the area of evangelism. How often have you heard preachers say to someone that they should make Christ the Savior and the Lord of their life? And the two are connected. If you make Christ the Savior of your life, you automatically make Him the Lord of your life, because at the moment that you are saved, you are in the inner circle of temporal fellowship. The condition under which Christ is not the Lord of your life is when you're out there sinning out of the inner circle of temporal fellowship. So, how do you make Christ the Lord of your life?

Some preachers tell you that, at some point in your life, you make the decision that from henceforth you will serve God. Most of you can make that kind of a decision, but you won't keep it. You'll go back to serving yourself. Making Christ Lord is a repeated practice in Scripture. It is described as being filled with the Holy Spirit. It is achieved by utilizing the principle of 1 John 1:9 of confessing your own sins to God the Father. And every time you confess your own sins, so that God the Holy Spirit takes you back into the inner circle, where He has maximum opportunity for blessing you, at that point, Christ is Lord of your life. He is not Lord of your life when you are walking in willful sin, or when you are walking in indifference to whether you are living for Him and ultimately dying for Him.

Since we Christians share the goal of living and dying for Jesus, we have to also respect the fact that there will be differences on non-essential matters among us. If a brother is living and dying for Jesus, that is his motivation. That's all we ask of him. How he expresses that is between him and the Lord. Sound doctrine from the Bible is our guide. Jesus Christ is our Master in life and death.

Then in Romans 14:8-9, Paul zeros in on the Lordship of Jesus Christ. He says, "For whether we live." Actually, the word "whether" should be translated as "if." It is the Greek word "ean." And "ean" is that Greek participle that tells us that we have a third-class condition. We have an "if" which is third-class. A third-class condition "if" means "maybe you will, and maybe you won't." So, Paul says here: "If we live." This is referring to the moment you are. How long, you don't know. But if you are in the condition of being alive here on this earth, then he says, "We live unto the Lord. We are living as Christians unto Jesus Christ. We are living by His will, for His glory. We know this is referring to the Lord Jesus Christ because verse 9 explicitly attaches this concept to Christ. He is our Lord. And it is for Jesus Christ that a spiritual Christian lives while he is alive here on this earth.

**Death for the Christian**

On the other hand, the Christian may die. And again, we have: "Whether we die" (or "if" we die). And again, it's ean – the signal of a third-class condition: "If we die." You may die; or, you may not die. Some of you will be here when the Lord returns at the rapture. Some of you may not be. And again, if you die: "It is dying for the Lord," again referring to Jesus Christ. God's will for the Christian does include a scheduled time of death. And death is met by the educated Christian (educated in Scripture) in the conscious understanding that he is being ushered into the very presence of Jesus Christ, who is his Lord. Death has a totally different frame of reference for the Christian. It is not a dark, frightful, unknown experience. It is simply being ushered out of this life of service into another expression of service, but in God's presence.

**The Christian's Confidence about Death**

This confidence at death is based on the knowledge that you belong to Jesus Christ. The Christians attitude toward our physical death is totally different from that of the unsaved person. Of course, death for the Christian is still the wages of sin. Death for the Christian is still an abnormality in God's perfect creation. It was caused by sin, and death is not good. The Christian knows, however, that death is the last enemy that he's going to face. And when he faces this last enemy, we are going to be victorious.

Hebrews 2:14-15 point that out to us. Death is the last enemy we face, and we will be victorious over it: "For as much then as the children (born-again people) are partakers of flesh and blood, He (Jesus Christ) also, Himself, likewise partook of the same; that, through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death; that is, the devil." Satan held this terrifying power over human beings: "And delivered them, through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." We Christians have been delivered from that fear and that bondage.

Death is ultimately going to be totally defeated by God by the fact that He's going to reverse it. 1 Corinthians 15:54 indicates to us that death is going to be reversed by bringing back to life those who have died: "So, when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'" When believers are brought back to life, and when unbelievers are brought back to life (as they will be), then death has been totally reversed.

Paul says, "Whether we live, we live for the Lord. Whether we die, we die for the Lord." Then he summarizes it by saying, "Whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lords. And again, it's a third-class condition. Whether if we live or if we die, we are the Lord's.

**Eternal Security**

The word "are is the Greek word "eimi." This is the word for the status quo of the Christian – his status in life and death. And in that condition of life or death, here is a very wonderful statement: "We are." It is present tense – constantly are. It is active. Personally, this is our status. It is indicative. It is a fact of life. We are the Lord’s. We belong to the "Kurios." What is he saying? He is telling us, again, as the Bible does in a variety of ways, that we have eternal security in our salvation. Those of you who are weak, immature Christians, and those of you who are strong mature Christians (both classes), once in Christ, you are always in Christ. Once you are born again, you have been born into the family of God, and you can never be unborn out of that family.

The Lord Jesus made this explicitly clear in John 10:28-29, when He said, "I have given unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish. Neither shall anyone pluck them out of My hand. My Father, Who gave them to Me is greater than all. And no one is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. It's very hard to understand how anybody can read a passage like that and still believe that you can lose your salvation. What Paul is actually saying under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, here in Romans 14, is that what you are alive on this earth as a Christian, you are secure in Christ. And when you die, you are secure in Christ. Eternal security is the great fact that motivates us as Christians. Because the Lord Jesus Christ is the sole mediator between God and man, He has the right to be the Lord, both of living and dead believers. This is based upon the fact of his substitutionary death, and of His present intercession in heaven. Jesus Christ is not Lord because He is God. This was not His privileged position by the fact that He was Creator. He had to earn the position of being Lord of living and dead believers.

2 Corinthians 5:15 tells us: "And he that died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him Who died for them and rose again." What is Paul saying? He is saying that Christ died for us for the explicit purpose that you stop living for yourself, and you now consider living for Jesus Christ. His plans and his purpose is what it's all about for you.

Hebrews 7:25 says, "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come under God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them. Because he has paid the price, and because He now intercedes to keep you saved, He has the right to be your Lord.

2 Corinthians 5:6-9 make it very clear that while we are here on this earth as believers, we are absent from the Lord. And when we die, we go to be with him. 2 Corinthians 5:6: "Therefore, we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and willing rather, to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labor, that whether present or absent, living or dead, we may be accepted of Him." Paul is saying the same thing here again. He is to be our lord in life as in death, and we are the Lords in either status. We cannot be dismissed into the lake of fire ever again.

In Romans 14:9, Paul then concludes this section. He says, "For to this end (that is, for this purpose), Christ died." And here it refers to the physical death of Jesus Christ on the cross. It is again our same word "apothnesko." Here it is aorist tense, which points to a point in history when Christ died on that cross. It is active voice. He did it Himself. This is a statement of fact. Jesus Christ purchase from eternal death those who are in his family, the Body of Christ, the church.

Acts 20:28 puts it this way: "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to feed the church of God which He has purchased with His own blood. Here the apostle Paul is having a farewell meeting with pastor-teachers from all over the city of Ephesus, down there at the seashore. He is on his way to Jerusalem, and he tells them, "I want to tell you, boys, one thing more. I cannot reiterate this (I cannot stress this) enough – that you should understand that God has placed you over a congregation of people, and that you have been made their overseer. You're the one responsible for their spiritual well-being. And you must feed them the Word of God. If you do not feed them the Word of God, you are denying them their heritage. This is why Christ died for them – so that they had the capacity to become alive spiritually, and be able to understand the Word of God.

The word "rose," if you have a King James translation, is not in the Greek. Jesus Christ both died and He revived. The word "revived" is the Greek word "zao" again. This word here means "to live." And it is in a tense which stresses the beginning action; that is, He came to life. This refers, of course, to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection of Christ established the truth of His claims. He claimed to be Savior. He claimed to be God. He claimed to have power over death. He claimed to be our Lord. Had He not risen from the dead, all those claims would have been proven false. And He did this, we are told, in order that he might be lord. He died so that he could be our Lord ("Kurieuo"). This word means to exercise lordship over someone. At a certain point in time, He did this personally so that he could potentially be our Lord.

This is interesting. This Greek word (this verb) is in the subjunctive mood, which means maybe it will be; and, maybe it won't. It's a possibility. Some of you don't want him to be Lord, and you don't let Him be Lord. You don't govern your day by what is His plan. You govern your day by the enormous things that you have put together for yourself. What the Bible here is telling us that He died and He rose again for the explicit purpose that he could be the Lord, both of dead and living Christians. The precise reason for His death on the cross was to establish his lordship over each believer. This did not belong to Him by right of His deity. It is the product of His humiliation in the process of redeeming mankind. You can read about that humiliation and that redemption in Acts 2:36, Romans 8:34, and Philippians 2:9-11. There is coming a time when He will be recognized for the Lord that He is. And everybody (every Christian) is ultimately going to bow in His presence.

Philippians 2:9-11 tell us that: "Wherefore God also had highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that the name of Jesus, every knee should bow: things in heaven; things in earth; and, things under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. He became Lord by His death and His resurrection. Jesus Christ is now in His life of resurrection power, bringing reconciliation and peace to those sinners who will trusted Him (2 Corinthians 5:19 and Romans 5:25). The dead Christians and the living Christians – they're all under His lordship. Jesus Christ died and rose from the dead in order to become the Lord of all believers.

He doesn't treat us as slaves that He has taken out of the slave market of sin. Instead, He treats us as His bride. And He endured the suffering and the shame of crucifixion for the joy of becoming our Lord. Hebrews 12:2 tells us that. Isaiah 53:3, Isaiah 53:7-8, and Isaiah 10:11 tell about His enormous sufferings. But He did it, the prophet Isaiah says, because He was going to have the joy of seeing His children that would be the product of His suffering.

So, as the Lord of the redeemed sinners, it is the joy of Jesus Christ to lead us into the best that God has for us. Since He is our Lord, we are to seek His purposes for our lives. Since Jesus Christ is Lord of every Christian, we should not try to usurp His place by butting into the business of the lives of other believers. That's part of the point that Paul is making here – of stressing that Christ is our Lord. If He is the Lord, then He's the quarterback who calls the plays. It is not up to us to do that for other Christians. We do not usurp the Lord's prerogative in these non-moral issues.

So, the point that we need to leave this with is to ask ourselves the question: what prophet will it be to you as a Christian in heaven to have denied the Lord Jesus Christ the right to direct your life on this earth as Lord? That is the question that the thoughtful Christian asks himself. What profit is it going to be to me – once I'm in His presence in heaven, to have lived my life denying His Lordship, and running the show, and doing my own thing? Jesus Christ exercises sovereign authority over both living and dead Christians because of His death and resurrection. That gives Him the right to that. For you to deny Him, that is very foolish indeed.

Ephesians 4:9-10 declare to us His authority based on that death and resurrection. He entered the realm of the dead in Hades, Ephesians 4 tells us. There in Hades, He proclaimed to people that they were going to be transferred to heaven because now the debt had been paid. He conquered death Himself because He was sinless, so death could not hold Him, so, He arose again. And Jesus Christ was released to resurrection as the Lord of all believers.

So, spiritual Christians are happy, while they're on earth, to live for Jesus Christ. He is their Lord. And after death, they're even happier to be with him. Philippians 1:21 puts it this way: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." It's a pity if you cannot say that for you to live is Christ. When you live, Christ is living. That's what we're talking about today. Christ is living through me. And to die is greater gain. It is to be in His very presence. As Lord over life and death, Jesus Christ is able to preserve each believer in his salvation.

That's what the apostle Paul stressed again to us. Whether we are alive or whether we are dead, we are the Lord's, and we are the Lord's for good. John 10:28: "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither should anyone pluck them out of My hand."

John 11:25-26: "Jesus said unto her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall live. And whosoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

Our calling, and what Paul has taught us this morning, is well summed up in Colossians 3:1-3. Listen carefully: "If you then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For you are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." How could you put it more beautifully than that? The apostle Paul says, "Jesus Christ died. And He arose so that he could be Lord in charge of your life. And He is the Lord, both of the dead and the living. Why squander the opportunity to have the greatest Guide that any human being could have for time and eternity? Why, indeed?

Dr. John E. Danish, 1988

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