

We belong to the Lord in life and in death

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 07 July 2019

Preacher: Daniel Ralph

[0 : 00] Please turn in your Bible to Romans chapter 14.

Romans chapter 14. And we're going to be looking at verses 7 through to 9. Oh, thanks, Evan. So Romans chapter 14, verses 7 through to 9.

Now hear God's word. For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. 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. For to this end, Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

Well, may God bless those few words to us, and of course the meaning of them as we come back to them in a moment after this next hymn.

[1 : 33] Thank you.

And verses 7 through to 9. Having read these verses, they should ring a sound of familiarity in the sense that they sound very similar to some of the things mentioned in Romans 8.

The very things promised there. That to belong to the Lord is a wonderful thing. And in belonging to the Lord, you have the Lord's blessing upon you.

And death doesn't alter that relationship. Death doesn't change that relationship at all. It makes no difference whatsoever to that relationship that begins between a person that Christ is saved and, of course, Christ himself.

And the reason we recognize this is because that relationship was actually created through death. Through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[3 : 07] And these are things that, as believers, we can escape from. That death is at the very center of the Christian faith. And therefore, we speak so much about the death of Christ that when it actually comes to a death of a brother in the Lord or a sister in the Lord, that it has to affect their understanding.

It must make a difference.

It's a pure excitement for the person who has gone to be with the Lord. Christ's death achieves all of that. And our death is simply a move from the church visible to the church invisible.

It's simply a relocation of your membership to where it's going to be forever. When a believer dies, it simply means that they've left one church to join the other one.

That's all that it means. It means that they have left behind brothers and sisters. So, in one sense, there is separation. But from the Lord's point of view, it's not separation.

[4 : 44] It's reunion. And so, there's that bittersweet emotion again. It's both at the same time. But, of course, for different parties involved.

So, we speak the truth that a person belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ upon death is absent from the body and present with the Lord. Separation from us, but reunion with God.

Separation from us, and so the sorrow begins. But precious is the death of a saint in the Lord's eyes. Precious. That's how he sees it.

That's how he looks upon it. When Solomon spoke those words in Ecclesiastes, remember your creator in the days of your youth, in chapter 12, of course, he's saying so much more than just remember that you have a creator.

Or remember that the world was created by a creator. Now, what he's saying is very similar to the words here in Romans 14 by Paul. It's like an earlier reflection of the same truth.

[5 : 55] Solomon had no limitations in terms of intelligence, in terms of finance, in terms of power and authority, earthly speaking.

And so, he could pursue life to its very end in every sphere. But then he got to the parts of life that were incredibly difficult.

The parts of life which no human being can ever tame. The parts of life where no human being can ever control so that they obey his will or her will.

And in the midst of all of those pains and sorrows and difficulties, he never ever renounced his basic faith in God.

But he had a life full of questions. But all of those sorrows brought great difficulties in understanding, in trying to work it out and trying to deal with whys.

[6 : 53] Why, why, why? Why? But at the end of the day, that even though he had all of that, he never renounced his basic faith in God. Hence, he says at the very end of the book, make sure you, as you listen, remember the creator in the days of your youth.

Never forget the basic faith that you have in God as the most important faith that you have in God. And of course, never forget that those questions are not just limited to us, but God himself asked why.

This God gave his son to the cross and the Lord Jesus Christ just before he died asked God why. My God, my God, why, he said.

So the questions of why are part of this world, and the answers are found in the next. With God. God knows what he's doing, and this is something that we should never forget.

And that's how Solomon really is stating what he does in the Ecclesiastes. Remember the creator in the days of your youth. In other words, God knows what he's doing. God always knows what he's doing.

[8 : 08] God not only knows the beginning from the end, he is the one who begins every beginning. And he is the one who ends every ending. Okay, he doesn't just know when a life begins and when it ends.

He begins that life and ends that life. God knows what he's doing, Solomon is saying. Remember the creator in the days of your youth. And so Paul, in a very similar way in Romans 14 here, is saying the same thing.

Whether you live or you die, you're the Lord's. You will live and you will die according to the Lord's interests. According to the Lord's will. Why?

Because you're his. And you will forever be his. That the summary of these few verses are fairly simple in that Paul is saying here that when a believer lives, that he recognizes or she recognizes that their life is to live, to be lived in accordance with the Lord.

That we live to the Lord. That our thoughts, our will, our desires are always to line up with God's. And, you know, sometimes that can be difficult in life, but that's essentially what he's saying.

[9 : 20] That the whole purpose of the Christian life is alignment. The whole purpose of the Christian life is to simply line up with God's. That you would see things from his point of view.

That you would believe the same things that he reveals to us. That there's just that alignment, that oneness, that unity. But then, of course, Paul says that when we die, we die to the Lord.

And that's a little bit more difficult to understand. Because we know what it takes to live according to the Lord. We're not always sure about what it takes to die according to the Lord.

But what Paul is saying here is that whether we live or we die, we're always doing it according to the Lord's interests. That the Lord has a particular interest in life and death and the length of that life and the taking of that life.

You know, precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of one of his saints. The Lord has a particular interest in life. Your life as a believer. And this is what Paul is trying to convince this church.

[10 : 28] It's not just about how you live down here. But it's about how you approach a glory. That when you die, you die to the Lord. Knowing that this is the Lord's doing.

That this is not a medical mishap. That this is not a particular accident. That this is not an illness. This is the Lord's doing.

It's happening according to the Lord's interest. And this is something that Paul wants the church to understand. That it would bear down upon their own interest.

That as they consider all of these things, these weighty matters of both beginning and end. That they would understand that it's the Lord's interest that they're to be considered. To be considered above all.

That the Lord knows what he's doing with those who belong to him. The Lord looks after us. And he takes care of us.

[11 : 23] And he knows what he's doing all the time. Hence why Paul can say that whether we live or we die, we're the Lord's. And the reason why that is the case is because Christ is both the Lord of the dead and the living.

That through Christ's death, he is both Lord of both the dead and the living. He's telling you who you belong to and why.

And how it just happened to be that way. So what do the interests of the Lord actually look like as we live life? Well, some of the things that it looks like is that God's will is worked out over time.

That we get to know God in deeper and wider ways throughout our Christian life. None of us understand the complexities of God all in one go. And none of us really understand all the complexities of God even at the end of life.

But what we do understand is that the basic things. The things that we know must be true. And therefore are clearly evidently true. In that his love is shown to us in Christ Jesus.

[12 : 28] In giving his son to the very things that we have sorrow over. Death and suffering. That God in giving his son to those very things is demonstrating to us.

That these things are part of this world. But at the same time, it's more than just death and suffering, isn't it? That Jesus Christ is doing more than just suffering.

And he's doing something more than just dying. He is saving. He is redeeming. He is giving his life to death. Willingly.

Voluntarily. And God is judging him for the wrong committed against him. Our wrongs. The sin.

And there is what's known as the penal substitution. That Jesus in our place is separated from God the Father. My God, my God.

[13 : 26] Why have thou forsaken me? So that you wouldn't be separated. Ever. Again. That's the point of the cross. That Jesus is opening in his arms as they're nailed to the cross.

Welcoming us to God. That as he is lifted high. We see God's love for us. And yet we see it in suffering. We see it in death.

And yet what we're seeing is the Lord's interests. This is of interest to God. Special interest to him. He has given his son.

So that man may not die but live. Even though he dies. But what then does belonging mean? If we're brought to God in this very particular way.

This very strange way. The more you think about it. The more strange it may seem. That God would choose that way to bring us to him. But that way was the very way necessary.

[14 : 29] It's the only way possible to be brought to God. But what does it mean to actually belong? Well one of the things that it means is this. That by virtue of union.

By virtue of belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever is God's is ours. Whatever belongs to Jesus now belongs to us. Simply because we belong to him.

That's the only way to receive the blessing of God in its fullness. Through belonging. By belonging. That's the blessing of union. That outside of Christ none of these blessings exist.

In the same way that they do in Christ. But in Christ. You enjoy them in this life. We live to the Lord. But in death. You simply enjoy them in a greater and fuller measure.

You get all of them. You enter into all of them. As we sung that song. That there's going to come a day where we're going to be able to love God with a heart that doesn't sin.

[15 : 30] With an unsinning heart. And we're not able quite to do that. And not are we able. Not in that we're not able to be able to understand God without a mind that doesn't sin either.

And we sin against God in thought, word and deed. And that isn't just an offence to God. What it does is it alters the way that we can even think about God. We don't know we see God clearly as we should.

And yet we really need to. So we repent. We believe. We come back to God's word. Because that's the place where he has revealed what he is like. There's no other way we could know God.

Unless God revealed himself to us. I've used the illustration before. But it's a really wonderful one. I think it's Dorothy Sayers. And she makes the point.

You know, the only way that a person in a story can get to know the author of the story. Is if the author writes themselves into the story. You know, the only way.

[16 : 33] The characters that have been created by the author. Can get to know the one who created them. Is if the author themselves write themselves into the story.

And that's what we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. That God writing himself into his creation. Revealing himself in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So that we would know what life should look like. So that we would know what life really is. So that we would know what love really is for one another. And more importantly. Or as importantly.

More importantly I think. Love for God first. Belonging to Jesus. Means that there's a certain love that changes people.

In the church. And that love has a strange kind of. Not motive necessarily. But it has a strange kind of way of thinking.

- [17 : 29] Where a believer would even be willing. Where a believer would even be willing. To suffer what someone else is suffering. So that they wouldn't suffer it. Where a believer would be. Would look at another believer. And look at them and go. If only I could take it all from you. And I would do it for you. If only I could suffer in your place.
- That's a strange kind of love. But that very love. Is the very love that. The Lord Jesus Christ demonstrates to his people. And Paul mentions this in Galatians 3.
- He mentions it in Romans 9. He mentions that that is the very type of love. That you begin to experience. When you become a Christian. So you look at brothers and sisters. Who are struggling in hospital.
- Who are on their way to glory. And you look at them and think. If only I could take half of it. Or even all of it. That's not unusual. It's actually.
- [18 : 22] Being like Christ. The difficulty is. We can't do it. The difficulty is. However much we now want to do it. We can't do it. But we are reminded.
- That Christ did that very thing. And accomplished that very thing. And completed that very thing. That the joy of union with Christ. Is a joy.
- Of knowing. That Christ has done it all. That all the blessings. Come to us. Through Christ. And true. We imitate Christ. As best we can. To love one another.
- But the blessings come from him. Through us of course. But from him. Most importantly then. Jesus is Lord.
- In verse 9. States very very clearly. For to this end. Christ died. And lived again. That he might be both Lord. Of the dead.
- [19 : 19] And. The living. You know. As a believer. We should never really ever. Overlook. The accomplishment. The accomplishment. Of Christ. That Jesus is Lord.
- Over not just life. But death. He's Lord over both. Dominions. That what Jesus Christ. Accomplished. Changed both. Dominions. That in his.
- Death and resurrection. He secured his lordship. Over people. And that's what belonging. To Jesus. Means. If we were to put this into a question. It would be something like this.
- What could happen to the one who's Lord over all? Nothing. Another question might be. What can happen to the one. Who belongs to the Lord of all?
- And the answer is. Nothing. Because through Christ's death and resurrection. He is Lord. Over. Over. All. And so when we live under the lordship of Christ.
- [20 : 21] We're really living under someone who has dominion over everything. Over life and death. So whether we live or die. We do it to the Lord. Why? Because Jesus is Lord over. Both.
- And nothing can come against us. Because nothing can come against him. By virtue of union. That's the joy. Of belonging to the Lord. That's the. Understanding we need.
- Of what it means for Jesus to be Lord. That nothing can happen to you. Because nothing can happen to him. That you cannot die.
- Without rising. Because Christ died. And rose. That's why you will die. And rise. What happened to him. Happens to you.
- Because. You belong to him. That's the point. Of union. That's the point. Of. Lordship. One of the greatest understandings.
- [21 : 18] I think. Any Christian believer. Needs to have. Is of course. The very basic ones. And one of the very basic ones. Is that God is in need of nothing. Needs absolutely nothing.
- And no one. And neither does God. Owe man. Anything. Nothing. He doesn't stand in any man's debt. Whatsoever.

And yet. These things. Which seem to. Perhaps. Put God at a distance. Are actually. The very truths. That explain the reason. For the death. And resurrection. Of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That if God is in need of nothing. Then there must be another reason. For why we belong to him. And as I've often said. As a believer. It's much better to be wanted.

Than to be needed. It's much better to belong. Than to be employed. It's much better to be with.

[22 : 16] Because they want you there. Than it is. Because. They somehow need. Something. From you. The joy of knowing that God is in need of nothing.

Is actually the joy. And the assurance of knowing. That God wants you. And he wants you. Demonstrated by his love.

For you. As we close then. As an exhortation. I want to finish with a reminder. And the reminder.

Is very similar to Paul's reminder. It's very similar to Solomon's reminder. And it's very simply. That you are forever of the Lord's. And there's nothing in life. Or death.

That can change that. The moment you belong. To him. You know. The way that life. Can change you. It can change you. Temporarily. Down here. But it cannot change.

[23 : 10] The one who you belong to. Or the fact that you belong. To him. The reason being. Is because God. The Lord Jesus Christ. Is Lord. Over both the dead. And the living.

The other thing to remember. Of course. Is to recognize. That the Lord. Does everything. According to his own interests. Not always pleasing to us. Not always that comfortable.

To us. Either. But he determines. When I'm born. And he'll determine. When I go. And it's the same. Full of you here.

That the sadness. We feel in this life. Is exactly the same. Kind of sadness. As Solomon felt. The questions. That we have. In this life. Are the same kind of questions. That Solomon had. But we ought to take a lesson.

From Solomon. Or at least. We're to follow his example. And that is. However many questions. We have. Unanswered. We should never renounce. Our basic faith. And we should remember.

[24 : 08] The creator. In the days. Of our youth. That life is always. Going to be painful. That life is always. Going to contain. Sorrow. And death is always.

Going to happen. Unless of course. The Lord returns. But until that day. Death will happen. But that death. Doesn't separate us. From him.

It actually. Reunites us. To him. In a different kind. Of way. The believer. Is absent from the body. And present with. The Lord. Here's a final thought.

Solomon knew very well. Not to try and figure things out. Or at least. To get to the point. Where he recognized. That he couldn't figure. Things out. And therefore.

The greatness of wisdom. Of Solomon's wisdom. Was not in the fact. That he knew it all. But it was in the fact. That he knew. That he didn't know it all. It wasn't in the fact.

[25 : 09] That he knew it all. But it was in the fact. That he knew. That he couldn't. Know it all. And so. He had his questions. In all of those. Mists of sorrows.

And pains. But he did not. Renounce his basic faith. In the Lord. So Solomon says. And as Paul. Reminds us here. In a kind of. Different way.

But nonetheless. The same truth applies. Remember. You are the Lord's. Whether you live. Or you die. You are always. The Lord's.

As Paul puts it here. With this I'll finish. For if we live. We live to the Lord. And if we die. We die to the Lord. So whether we live. Or we die.

We are the Lord's. For to this end. Christ died. And lived again. That he might be Lord. Both of the dead. And the living. And we say.

[26 : 05] Amen. Amen. Amen.