

Romans 14:7-9

“For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.”

It was just six days ago we layed to rest in the shadow of the church a sister in the faith. Today with heavy heart we again lay to rest a sister in the faith. Surely here we are only strangers and sojourners and have no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

We perform various rites in our Church. The baptismal font stands before our eyes reminding us of the means which God has given us whereby a person, born in sin, is regenerated and made a child of God. The altar stands before our eyes to remind us of the all sufficient sacrifice which Christ offered, when he offered himself on the altar of the cross. The altar rail reminds us of our need to humbly bow before the Lord in sincere repentance of our sins and receive God's grace and forgiveness as we do in the Sacrament of the Altar. The pulpit stands as a reminder that God has given us his Word to gladly hear and learn. Here many a baby has been baptized into Christ's death, here many a baptized youth has renewed the baptismal covenant in the rite of confirmation and has then received a first communion and departed rejoicing in God's wondrous grace. Here many a sinner

has been comforted with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, strengthened and kept in the true faith. And as the cemetery outside testifies, a mourner has brought the remains of their dear ones to await the Resurrection morn. Yes, everything in Christ's Church is there for only one purpose: to save sinners. Therefore the last rite that we perform today over our departed friend in Christian burial is really a sincere thanksgiving to God for everything that he has done for the departed.

God has through the means of grace brought her to faith, kept her in the true faith, and now at last granted her a blessed end. The entire work of the church in the final analysis points to the homecoming of the faithful soldiers of the cross, after their struggle with and victory over all the enemies of the soul.

When I would stop in and hold devotion for the departed, she often would say: *"Oh that was nice!"* She said that it reminded her of the family devotions that her pious father conducted in the home. No doubt many of the precious scriptural truths that she had learned in her youth were again revived by the Holy Spirit when that Word was again brought to her by her minister. Oh, that parents of this age would not become so modern that they think family devotion is old fashioned. As long as this old earth stands, God's Word will never be outmoded. The fact is that this life is only a preparation school until we finally graduate and receive the high honor of eternal glory, the crown of life in

heaven. Should we not be thankful that God has had mercy upon us and not only sent salvation to this earth, but in the divine school of his Church told us about it? He also leads us by the Holy Spirit to trust in his salvation with our whole heart.

In our text Paul evaluates the whole life of the Christian when he writes: “. . . we belong to the Lord.” Romans 14:9 This passage’s evaluation of the Christian life would be heartily and vehemently rejected by the world. The person of the world today will declare that one’s soul and body belong to no one. The individual declares that a person is responsible to no one higher than oneself for pleasures, thoughts and deeds. If there is only one god to bow before, it is oneself. One should only accept reason and the ability to think things out and also those things that appeal to the flesh - everything else should be rejected. This has been an attitude of the world almost since the beginning. Adam and Eve asserted their independence and placed their own ideas and desires above the Lord’s by eating of the fruit of the tree. The builders of the tower of Babel asserted their independence. Also, the familiar Pharisees of the New Testament asserted their independence and did not want help from anyone. They claimed they could earn a place in the mansions of heaven. Instead of saying: “*We are the Lord’s*” – these people said: “*I am mine.*” The unregenerate person is selfish and everything finally curves back to “*self*”. In the reality of Bible teachings, this proud “*self independence*” is really nothing but a petty outlook.

Over against this Paul places his words: “... we belong to the Lord.” Romans 14:9 Paul explains: “For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.” Romans 14:9 It is of course sin that makes people self-centered. And let none be deceived in thinking that sin is just a harmless accident, no - it calls down God’s wrath. An unbeliever is, in the words of the Bible, a child of wrath, a deceitful creature monstrous beyond belief, a child of the devil, a servant of sin, and in bondage to sin. Under such conditions the holy and righteous God could not own a person, for that person is the instrument of sin. God, who hates sin, can not own anyone in partnership with the devil, a twofold ownership is impossible. If anyone is to return to God and live a God-centered life - that person must be bought back, redeemed.

Christ redeemed everyone for this very purpose: “For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.” Romans 14:9 Purchasing and buying involves a price, and a price was paid by Christ – he died! Paul tells us more about this price in II Corinthians 5 when he writes: “. . . God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them.” II Corinthians 5:19 Through Christ God no longer recognized the guilt and sin of the world. But how could such a plan work since God could not dismiss sin? Sin is still sin and it must be dealt with. God was not and could not be a liar when he promised: “For the wages of

sin is death . . . “ Romans 6:23 Death will always be sin’s wages and this cannot be avoided by anyone. But Paul continues: **“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” II Corinthians 5:21**

Christ was made sin. All the sin of the world was heaped upon him, and for it he made one stupendous payment: the debt of death which we owned. Yes, he died and rose again that we might have life, a fuller life. Now Christ is Lord both of the dead and of the living: **“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” I Corinthians 15:55**

“We are the Lord’s” – this is not a cry of limited freedom or of trembling resignation but rather a cry of triumph, a cry of thanksgiving and of joy. Paul says: **“You are not your own; you were bought at a price.” I Corinthians 6:20** In this passage Paul was not announcing a new era of slavery but eternal freedom. Now, and only now, our life has direction. If having direction in our life is slavery, if desire to do good and serve God is slavery, if living in the shadow of the all merciful and all loving God is bondage, then let us have more of it. It is slavery only to the unbeliever who is disobedient, deceitful, and wicked. Christ was not contradicting himself when he told his believers: **“If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know**

the truth, and the truth will set you free.” John 8:32 There is only freedom in truth, God’s truth, all else is soul-destroying slavery, a sham which captures a person in order to destroy the soul.

It is with joy that Paul writes and it is with joy that we hear: “... **none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.” Romans 14:7-9** These words are all-inclusive and do not allow any tolerance. There is not one moment in a Christian’s life that does not belong to the Lord. Whether awake or asleep, we are the Lord’s; whether we live or fall asleep in the Lord in peaceful death, we are the Lord’s. At the critical hour of death we surrender to no one but the Lord.

In time, in eternity, all the time, we are the Lord’s. Yes, we have been bought with a price, we are the Lord’s - sing it, pray it, live it. This will affect the behavior of the Christian in the world so that they do not live for self or according to human notions, with eyes raised no higher than the earth. The believer will instead direct all desires and actions to God and his salvation and look upward.

And as we seek the direction of our life according to God’s Word we will give expression to all that God has done for us by saying: “*Oh that is nice.*” Thus clinging to our Savior in a sincere faith we can without fear enter the valley of the shadow of death

with Christ at our side, leaning upon him and the staff of his Gospel. We do not weep as those that have no hope. We know that the departed has been taken to heaven. May God give to you and me the strength to continue with the Lord so that in life and in death we say: “. . . we belong to the Lord.” **Romans 14:9**
Then you will be able to say with David: **“I will go to him (a dead child), but he will not return to me.” II Samuel 12:23**

Oh Grand reunion, the reunion in heaven. Oh sweet comfort to know that our loved ones that fall asleep in Jesus are there, and that we will meet them again in glory.