

We Are the Lord's

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*We do not live to ourselves
And we do not die to ourselves.
If we live, we live to the Lord.
If we die, we die to the Lord.
So then, whether we live or whether we die,
We are the Lord's.*

*To this end Christ died and lived again,
so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.*

If we live...

There are a variety of ways to complete that thought, other ways that humanity has finished the phase:

If we live, we had better grab everything we can before someone else gets it first.

- Life is a competition
- Finish first.
- It's up to you.

Or, if we live, we had better fight for all we are worth; life is a great battle and only the strong survive.

Not every sentence completion need be contentious. We might finish the thought.

If we live, we the make the best we have with what we have, because that's all there is to it. It is what it is. Nothing more.

The assumption beneath all of these is that we live to ourselves.

- I am responsible for myself
- and accountable to myself
- because there is no one other than myself upon whom I can rely.
 - If I make it, I will have done it my way;
 - I will have fought my own battles
 - and supplied my own needs.
 - I am alone and therefore the champion my own cause.

If we live...

If we die.... How else to finish that thought?

If we die, we are dust and that's it. Star dust, maybe; compost for the next go around, maybe. Or maybe we'll live because we become someone's memory, hopefully a good one.

Or, if we die, we'd better have been enough, because somebody is going to judge us. Weigh in on our lives.

- Good enough?
- Accomplished enough?

- Religious enough?
- Sufficiently happy,
- or generous, or
- whatever else might be within our control.

Do you see those are only variations of the first theme: It begins “I am alone and it’s up to me to do what I can for myself.”

If we live, if we die... to ourselves...

Paul insists that even the best of us is lost because the gap between what we can do for ourselves and what God would call “truly worthy” is too great.

Living to ourselves, dying to ourselves... they both are a dead end.

Paul insists, if we live, we live *to the Lord*. If we die, we die *to the Lord*.

So whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s!

That is Paul’s proclamation of good news!

The Heidelberg Catechism, one of the teaching devices of the Reformed tradition begins with the question:

Q. What is your only comfort in life and in death?

A. That I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.

He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil.

He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven; in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.

Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.

If we have come to believe, or fear, or have become resigned to the supposed fact that we must make our own way in the world, it is good news to trust that our lives are actually in God’s hands.

Christ is our champion. And he is more than enough for all of us.

I recently came across a description of the gospel written by Dr. James Goodloe, a Presbyterian Pastor and conservative theologian:

There are many different words used in the Bible to describe the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And most of the time, the word used to describe the good news

relates to the bad news
in which the hearer is living.

So, for instance, the sinners are forgiven,
the sick are made well,
the hungry are fed,
the lonely are befriended,
and the lost are found.
Or again, the enslaved are redeemed,
the captives are set free,
those under attack are delivered,
the filthy are cleansed,
the thirsty are given living water,
and the dead are raised.

Moreover, those who weep have their tears wiped away,
those who are bereaved have their loved ones restored,
those being scattered across the face of the earth are regathered,
those in exile are carried home,
and those being thrown away on the garbage heap of life are saved.

We have heard all of these
and probably several more.
And they are not mutually exclusive.
We may benefit from several
or even many of them
at the same time.

But how often have we heard the good news described as “comfort”
as it is in 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 –

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ’s sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.

We live to the Lord. We die to the Lord. We are the Lord’s. He is our comfort, and His assurances are enough for all of us.

Whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s.

And lastly it must be said, if we are the Lord’s, if we live and die to Him, loyalty to Him must be the thing that drives us. If we are the Lord’s, it’s not about us. His purposes, His mission to heal and save the world, His claim upon our lives supersedes the self-interested, self-directed, give me what I want, tell me only what I want to hear life.

The servant does not say to his or her Lord, “Master, give me what I want, or do for me what I require of You.” Jesus may be our friend, but we are not His equal. He didn’t die to become a slave to us – rather, He lived and died so that He might be Lord of both the living and the dead.

If we live...
If we die...

We are the Lord's.
So that He is the master of our lives. Amen.