**Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost Sermon**

**Text:** Romans 14:5-9

**Theme:** Freedom comes with responsibility!

 I like the Reader’s Digest. It is fun and easy to read. I look forward to the little often humorous anecdotes at the ends of longer articles like this; “Can you believe that the father of Traffic Safety William Eno, who invented the stop sign, speed limits and the one way street and the roundabout—never learned to drive!”

 Perhaps the section I look forward to the most is the “Quotable Quotes” . I enjoy hearing quotes, learning who made them and why. I like to use them in sermons, and sometimes in my every day conversation with people. Just recently I hear two quotes. They both have a personal connection to me because they were made by Pastors. The first is from Dr. David Livingstone, the famous Pastor and explorer from England who traveled through South Central Africa, where I served as a missionary.

Here is his quote:

**All that I am, I owe to Jesus Christ, revealed to me in His divine Book.**

*- David Livingstone*

The second quote is from the Famous American Pastor Billy Graham.

**I’ve read the last page of the Bible. It’s all going to turn out all right.**

*- Billy Graham*

 Why do quotes from famous people have an effect on us? Throughout human history, great leaders, explorers and thinkers have used the power of words to transform our emotions. They can be used to bring us to their causes, or shape our destiny. Like**; “We have nothing to fear except fear itself.”** which President Roosevelt said**,** when he made a speech during the Great Depression that the US was plunged into following the Wall Street crash of 1929.

 Today, I do not want us to look at quotes from famous people. Instead I would like to look at three words that refer to the greatest quotes of all. These quotes have real power. They can and will transform us. They shape our destiny. Quotes from God! They all begin; “**Thus, says the Lord”**

 Some 3,800 times the Bible declares, “God said,” or “Thus says the Lord” The New Testament writers included approximately 250 express Old Testament quotations where God speaks to us!

 We hear that refrain again and again in the Scriptures. **Thus, says the Lord!** When, the Lord has speaks, that’s the end of the matter. There is no room for discussion, debate, or compromise. His word stands as the final authority for our faith and life. I will say it again. **His word stands as the final authority for our faith and life.**  Feel free to quote me if you want!

 But what about those questions of life that he has not given us a direct answer for? What food are we to eat? Which days are we to worship? How to worship, traditional services or contemporary services? What classes to take in school? What kind of work to do? Run for office or not? How many children should you have? How much money should you give to church? We call these things that aren’t commanded nor forbidden by this big theological word called *adiaphora*. Things that are neither commanded or forbidden!

 So, take for example, if someone stands up in church at the wrong time, claps, says Amen or alleluia at a time not traditionally said, or starts swaying and dancing, or if the Pastor would leave the pulpit when preaching? Would someone call 911? Well, our text for today tells us no! don’t call 911. We are called to be free, but where there is freedom, there is also responsibility.

**5One person values one day above another. Another person values every day the same. Let each person be fully convinced in his own mind. 6The person who honors a certain day does this for the Lord, and the person who eats does this for the Lord, because he gives thanks to God. And the person who does not eat does this for the Lord and gives thanks to God.**

**7In fact, not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself. 8Indeed, if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. 9For this reason he died, rose, and lived, to be Lord of both the dead and the living.**

 Yes, we are free. This is the most amazing thing God has to say to us. Here is another quote: **You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. Galatians 5:13** We do not need to fulfill God’s law perfectly to get into heaven. In fact, that is impossible for us, but Jesus’ life and death makes us free. You are free from the guilt that drives so many decisions. You are free from the terror of death that overwhelms the choices people make. Free from rules and orders that are man-made used by the devil to keep us from the free grace God gives us through faith. **If you have died with Christ to the spiritual forces of the world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its regulations: 21**[**“Do**](https://www.biblehub.com/greek/3361.htm)[**not handle,**](https://www.biblehub.com/greek/680.htm)[**do**](https://www.biblehub.com/greek/3366.htm)[**not taste,**](https://www.biblehub.com/greek/1089.htm)[**do**](https://www.biblehub.com/greek/3366.htm)[**not touch!**](https://www.biblehub.com/greek/2345.htm)**22These will all perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings.…Colossians 2:20-22) .**

 But, my dear friends, we are not free of the debt of love that we talked about last week in Romans 13. Love does not want our choices to harm another’s faith in Jesus; rather, we want our choices and decision to build others up in Christ. That’s one principle Paul lays out in Romans 14. **With Freedom Comes Responsibility! But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians%205:13&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29176a)**]; rather, serve one another humbly in love. Galatians 5:13**

 As Paul begins Romans 14, he points out a situation in the church. It wasn’t a serious doctrinal error that threatened to destroy the faith. Yet this had become a big issue among the Roman Christians. Some insisted it was best not to eat certain foods in particular meat, maybe because so much of it had been dedicated to idols or maybe because they were still use to Jewish dietary laws. Others ate all kinds of food, recognizing that all of it was a gift from God. As I said, neither group tried to make their practice necessary for salvation, but they were tempted to look down on those in the other group as lesser Christians. Not showing love. Making those who did feel bad.

 Take a moment now and examine your own hearts. As a Bible-based church body, we stand firm on the truth of God’s Word. **Thus say the Lord!** We do not waver! We dare not compromise any doctrine or teaching of the Scriptures -- and rightly so.

 But it’s tempting to let that attitude slip into areas that God’s Word has not spoken on directly. It’s tempting to label actions that don’t fit our way of doing things as wrong. It’s tempting to think that others are not quite as good of a Christian if they do things differently. It’s tempting to stick in our heals and say, “Why change? This was good enough for our grandparents and look at how Christian they were. It’s good enough for us.”

 The irony of all this is that in our personal lives we find it easier to compromise the truths of God’s Word a little bit to fit in with the pressures of this world—like the view of marriage and divorce, living together, homosexuality, R rated movies and the like.

 Paul warns us not squabble over those things the Lord hasn’t spoken on. Why? He says our life and death belong to him. Why look down on a fellow Christian when they don’t share our opinion on the best way to do something which God has not commanded or forbidden? We belong to the same Lord.

 Now, that is Good News. See how it changes us! We are free. We belong to the Lord. Not even death can separate you from him. For he is the Lord of both the dead and the living. He rules from eternity to eternity. And you belong to him. What a blessed remembrance we have when we receive his body and blood in the Lord’s Supper! You belong to him.

 So, in your freedom remember that you belong to him. Everything that you do -- it’s all for the Lord. Now the quote from Dr. Livingstone has even more meaning for me. **All that I am I owe to Jesus Christ, revealed to me in His divine Book.**

**Amen**