

Who Controls Your Life

by Alan Redpath

The sermon emphasizes the importance of accepting Jesus' lordship and living under His authority, which is essential for Christian experience and living.

Duration: 52:02

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 13:13-17, Romans 14:7-9, Philippians 2:5-11, Colossians 1:15-20, Revelation 19:16

Topics: "Bondage"

Description

In this sermon, Dr. Alan Redbath addresses a crowd of young people, questioning their commitment to God's will. He emphasizes the importance of living a holy life, stating that it is impossible without a holy body. The speaker shares a personal anecdote about his rugby training and relates it to the need for one person to be in control for progress. He then references Philippians 2, highlighting the humility and obedience of Jesus Christ, who willingly went from the throne to the cross. The sermon concludes with a prayer for God to speak to the hearts of the listeners.

Transcript

This message by Dr Alan Redbath was given at Belgrave Heights in 1976, and the title of the message, Who Controls Your Life, and the scripture is from Romans chapter 14 verses 7 to 9. Just a word of prayer together, and I ask you to echo in your heart the prayer which I would offer on your behalf and mine. Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth. Speak just now, some message to meet my need which thou only dost know.

Speak now through thy holy word, and make me see some wonderful truth thou hast to show to me. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

Would you turn with me for the text for our message this evening to the epistle to the Roman, and the 14th chapter, and let me read to you from verses 7 to 9. Romans 14, 7 to 9. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For where we live, we live unto the Lord. And whether we die, we die unto the Lord.

Whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord, both of the dead and the living. To this end Christ both died, and rose, that he might be Lord.

If the history of the 20th century is ever put in writing, which I think is somewhat doubtful, because I believe that the Lord Jesus is coming soon to wind up this civilization of ours, and to reign in authority and power. But if it's ever put in writing, I think that it will major upon the remarkable decline and collapse of a principle of government called democracy. At the beginning of the 20th century this was hailed as the last word in human system of government.

But already new nations that are emerging in Africa, and many different parts of the world, are discovering that it isn't adequate. One of the earliest founders of the communist regime, Lenin, said on one occasion, that the transition between capitalism and communism cannot possibly be accomplished without dictatorship. He knew what he was talking about.

He was dead right. And all this interests me very much for the simple reason that the whole principle of Christian living, and the essence of Christian experience, is dictatorship. Not in the ugly form, but the world experiences it.

Oh no. But Christian living and Christian experience begins with this dramatic and dynamic statement, that to this end Christ both died and rose, that he might be Lord. We don't have to be every very old in life before we discover that we need someone who can have authority over us.

Every ship, when it goes to sea, has a captain who's in undisputed control. Every plane, when it takes off, has a captain who is in complete command. And every home has a head.

And every Christian needs to have a Lord. And as a matter of fact, the reason for the failure of so many of our Christian life, is that somehow we've been fooled into imagining that we can pay lip service to the Lord, and have a nominal kind of faith, and get away with it. The result has been misery and unhappiness, powerlessness, and a complete lack of vital testimony in the Christian church.

Now of course we would all say that we believe that Jesus Christ is Lord, and that we acknowledge his Lordship. But you know, in Britain we have, as you know, what is called a constitutional monarchy. That is to say, we have a Queen.

And she is number one. She is sovereign. She's the leader of the realm.

She's our Queen. But she doesn't make any decisions. Harold Wilson and company do that, for better or worse.

And the more she reigns as Queen, the less she has to do with the government of the country. Hands off. She is sovereign, but she makes no decision.

Now you and I as Christian people are very apt to follow that example, and to set up in our lives a sort of constitutional monarchy, in which the Lord Jesus nominally is head. But what I want to know from us all tonight is, who makes the decisions? Who chooses your life partner? Who chooses your career? Who makes the decisions in your life? Is it Christ, or is it you? I remember many years ago I had a car. The sort of car that I don't get into, I put it on.

A mini car. I paid, I think I'm right in saying, £35 for it. It was reputed to be eight horsepower, but long before I bought it, four of the horses had died.

I remember that I bought it in September, and all went well, more or less, until we came to experience the first days of a freezing cold English winter. Well it had a knob on the dashboard labeled self-starter, but that simply refused to operate, when it was cold. So the only alternative was to get from under the driver's seat, a great long handle, and go round to the front of the car, insert the handle through the hood, or the bonnet, into the engine, and crank it up.

But then you see, I never could quite understand this. Also on the dashboard of the car, there was a knob called choke. And it was essential for that knob to be out full, in order to start the car.

But the trouble was, my problem was, that the choke wouldn't stay out by itself. And I never discovered to this day, how the manufacturers imagined that you could, with one hand, hold out the choke, and with the other hand, get to the front of the car and crank up the engine. So you see, we're faced with that sheer impossibility.

I called for my wife. And I said to her, now would you mind sitting in this seat, and holding on to the choke. So when she did that, I went round to the front, and started winding.

And after a few moments, with a burst of a terrific noise, the four horses sprang into life. And the car began to, at least the engine, began to move. Well having accomplished that feat, I then went round to the driver's seat, and I said to my wife, thank you very much, I'm very grateful, now would you mind taking your hands off.

That's all that's required at the moment. You see, supposing I had started a journey with her, having one hand on the wheel, steering wheel, and a foot on the clutch. And me with a hand on the handbrake, and another foot on the foot brake, and somehow a foot on the accelerator.

Well of course, the thing would be utter catastrophe. The only secret of progress, sure steady progress along the road, was one person in control, all the time. Now I want to speak to you tonight, and I trust that the Holy Spirit will speak to your heart, about the position that Jesus Christ has in your life.

Is he in control? Does he come first? Or second? Or third? Or tenth? Or is he not in any position at all? You might well ask of me, justifiably. It's all very well for you men on a platform to talk about the Lordship of Jesus. But what right has he, after all, to claim the sovereignty of my life? After all, I'm not prepared to hand over control of my life to someone whom I don't know.

And how do I know that he can maintain and keep up this life for me? What is his basic claim for lordship? Let me just say a word or two to you all about that for a moment, will you? Simply by saying this, that regardless of what you or I may think about it, God has put Jesus on the throne. We read in the scriptures tonight, in Psalm 110, The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, until I make all thine enemies thy footstool. And as we've been hearing so helpfully in our morning sessions, the writer to the Hebrews said, God has spoken in these last days in his son, who being the brightness or the outshining of his glory, and the expressed image of his person, upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of God.

So regardless of what you or I may say, he is Lord by divine appointment, and he holds that position by right. And the exciting and the thrilling thing about it, is that Jesus Christ is on the throne in flesh and blood. God has put flesh and blood back where he meant it to be, in Christ, in the place of power and sovereignty.

Oh that's a great comfort to me, and it should be to every Christian. I don't worry too much about what might happen in Moscow, or Washington, or Peking, or anywhere else. I know there's not one of them can lift a finger without permission, from the man upon the throne in heaven.

Sit thou at my right hand, until I have made all thine enemies thy footstool. That's where Jesus is today, and he is there, listen, he is there because of Calvary. What an amazing thing, and what a wonderful portion of the word that was, that was read to us in Philippians 2. Listen to it again, let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of the seven, and was made in the likeness of man, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess him Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Did you listen to what he was doing? Did you in your mind watch him come down that ladder from the throne to the cross? What was he doing? I'll tell you. He was giving up all his rights.

He counted it not a thing to be grasped after to be equal with God, but he went down, made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a seven, made in the likeness of man, found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And a whole generation of human beings in this world, in the Middle East, saw God's perfect man, living the kind of life that God intended all humanity to live. A life that gave up all its independence, all its demands to its own way, all its right to sovereignty, that took upon it flesh and blood, and lived among us as a human being, as a man.

A life of submission. I delight to do thy will, O God. I do nothing of myself, but my Father which is in me, he doeth the work.

A life of submission, and a life of obedience. And that perfect man, Jesus our Lord, took that obedience and took that life right to the cross, and he died, and he offered that life for us there. Two things happened at Calvary.

He died for our sin, in the plural, S-I-N-S. Every sinful action that man has ever committed, or ever woke of it, he bore the guilt of it in his body on the tree. He died for our sin, but he did much more than that.

All the way down from the throne in heaven, all the thirty-three years of his human life, he was dying to the root principle of sin, S-I-N. And what is that? Rebellion. He was saying no to a life of independence.

He was saying no to his own way. He was saying no to his own will. And he lived before us all as one who triumphed in complete dependence upon God, and who delighted to do the will of God.

He died to sin. And may I say to you this, and mark it well, his death for our sins would have been worthless unless it was based upon a life which had died out to the principle of sinning. One who lived in the center of the will of God, one who lived and triumphed all together in the will of God, in every situation in life, took that life to the cross.

And because that was the life he lived, whose death for our sins was accepted in heaven. And the first great sermon on the day of Pentecost said, this same Jesus God hath made both Lord and Christ. He's on the throne because of the life he lived, because of the death he died, because he triumphed over everything, every desire to independent living, because he submitted completely to the Father.

As Mr. Duncan said to us this afternoon, we render partial obedience, but he gave perfect obedience. Jesus gave it in his life, and he was obedient unto death. So at Calvary, he died to the great big principle of sinning, and then he died for our sins.

All that happened at the cross. His basic claim to sovereignty and lordship is at Calvary. And yet, the amazing thing about it in so many Christian lives, oh we want his saviorhood, but we refuse his lordship.

You see, this is it, get this, we want forgiveness for what we've done, but we're not prepared to accept his power over what we are. We want him to forgive our sins, but to leave the capital I in the center of our lives. We want to know that we have a hope of heaven, that all our sins are under the blood of Christ.

Wonderful thought. We want to know him as Savior, but we won't have him as Lord. We still want our own way.

We still want to make our decisions. What a tragic divorce in the character of God, to suggest that we can have Jesus as Savior, but we need not accept him as Lord. Lordship is an essential attribute of deity.

And when Jesus steps across the threshold of my life and yours, he steps over it to assume sovereignty. For he himself is Lord. His basic claim, the lordship.

But what are the implications of it? What will it mean for me in my life? I would just say very quickly, three things. First, absolute submission. My will is not my own, until I make it mine.

It cannot reach the monarch's throne, until itself resides. Because you see the essence of sin, s-i-n, is self-centered living. It's what we've been saying that Jesus refused to do.

Sin is demanding my own way, asserting my own right, asserting that I will keep my claim to all my own life. This is sin. Every day, some of us in this tent, in this hall, pray, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

I wonder how many of us have realized that before we can pray, thy kingdom come, we've got to pray, my kingdom go. For the essence of salvation, and of Christian experience, is the end of a regime in which I have been on the throne of my life, and the beginning of a new regime in which Jesus is Lord. Submission.

Many years ago I was speaking at a young people's meeting in a town in England called Stoke-on-Trent. It's not a very pleasant town, if you go to England, I don't suggest you visit it. But if you turn upside down, some of the best china you have in your homes, you'll probably find that it comes either from there, or a place called Burslem, in the pottery district.

That's where all the lovely china comes from, but it's a very dirty place. When I was there I met a Salvation Army man, whose testimony thrilled me. He told me that he had been converted at a Salvation Army open air meeting.

The next morning, the Sunday morning, he went to a holiness meeting, and he came back home absolutely miserable. And his wife saying, what's the matter with you, I thought you were converted last night. Oh yes, he said I was, but the trouble was that everybody in this morning's meeting had a red sweater on, and I hadn't got one.

Oh, she said that's easy, I'll knit you one. So she knitted him a colossal red sweater, because he was a very large man. And the next Sunday he went to the holiness meeting, and he came back more miserable

still.

And she said, what's the matter with you now? Oh, he said everybody else had lovely white letters on their red jersey, and I hadn't got any. Oh, she didn't know what to do about that, because poor soul, she couldn't read, and she couldn't write. So she sat down by the window the next Monday morning, and was wondering what to do about it, when suddenly someone came along to a shop across the road with a ladder, and climbed up the ladder, and began to paint a sign across the shop window.

And she said, I know what they'll do, I'll copy everything that man's writing on my husband's jersey. Well, do you know, he went out the next Sunday morning to the holiness meeting, and he came back so thrilled and so excited, and he said, you know, they all said to me that my jersey was the best of all. Do you know what it had written on it? This business is now under entirely new management.

You smile at the story, but listen, I want to get to the point. The essence, the implication, the impli... Has that happened to you? Secondly, but not to dwell upon it at length, because we were tremendously challenged by the word this afternoon. The implication of the lordship of Christ is obedience.

And one of the most startling questions which Jesus ever asked, and to which nobody has been able ever to find a suitable reply, is this. Why call ye me Lord, and do not the things that I say? Not everyone that saith to me Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Obedience, at the very heart of Christian experience.

Faith, which isn't followed by obedience, is invalid in New Testament life. We don't obey him in order to get converted, we obey him because we are. Oh my dear friend, you have a perfect right to choose your own master.

God won't coerce any of us, we have a perfect right to do that. But what we have no right to do, and that for which the New Testament makes no provision at all, we just can't wear the uniform of one master, and do the bidding of another. Obedience, the implication of the lordship of Christ.

I must obey God. And thirdly, it means ownership. What says the Apostle Paul in writing to the church at Corinth, in the 6th chapter in the 19th verse? Know you not that you are not your own? You are bought with a price.

Your bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Ownership, that body of yours belongs to him. Now, Christians, especially young Christians here, what are you doing with your body? I wonder as I look round all this crowd of young people, whether half of you have any right to be here at all.

Whether if you were doing the will of God, whether you were given 100% obedience, you wouldn't be in some mission land of the world. What are you doing with that body of yours? It is impossible to live a holy life without a holy body. What's happening in that body of yours? It belongs to Jesus.

It helps by creation and redemption. When I was a lot younger, I used to play rugby football. I played for one of our counties in the north of England.

When I was in training for rugby football during the county championship season, I used to get up at about half past five every morning and run round the suburb of London for ten miles to get fit. When I'd finished my job, I went to a running track in south-west London and did another ten miles. And then I'd half an hour skipping.

And when I'd done that, I came back home and changed into rugby clothes, just a jersey and pants. And I put one shoulder against the corner of a brick wall in the house where I was living and I pushed. Then I went to another corner with this shoulder and I pushed with that one.

Nobody was looking except my landlady who thought it was very peculiar. And it was terribly painful and it hurt dreadfully. But I was determined that when I turned out that next Saturday for my county, anybody who tackled me was going to hit two lumps of concrete and not want to do it again.

The Apostle Paul said in Philip's translation, Philip's letters to young churches, I am no shadow boxer. I do not beat the air. I buffet my body.

I deal it blow upon blow. Lest having proclaimed the rules to other people, I myself should be disqualified. Christian, what's going on in that temple which belongs to Jesus? Is it being defiled? Is it being made corrupt? Is there a playground for the devil? Is he winning the fight? Is Satan getting you down? Ownership of my body.

Is it not lawful, said Jesus, for me to do what I will with my own? Nine months ago I was in the Central Africa Republic. I went to the border of the Sudan. There were 35,000 refugees who had been pitched out of Sudan simply because they weren't Muslim.

They had nothing, literally nothing, except the bits of clothes that they wore. Most of them spoke English. Some of them were bankers, accountants, lawyers, doctors.

And there they were, on the Sudanese border, absolutely homeless and helpless and destitute. Into that situation, the Africa in the mission have sent two girls. Mark it, two girls.

They hadn't any men. Two girls. One a doctor and one a nurse.

They lived in a house that was built in three weeks by my son-in-law and his father. It had no sanitation. The heat was simply terrific.

There were no shops, no possibility of a day off, no possibility of choosing their friends, for they lived themselves alone together. And I want to say from this platform tonight, I have never seen two people so happy in the will of God, in all my life. They had touched a depth of exhilaration.

They didn't care about furlough, they didn't care about friends, they didn't care about dress, they didn't care about money. They only cared about those 35,000 people and winning some of them for Jesus. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will for my own? Oh yes.

As Paul himself said, haven't I a right to marry? Haven't I a right to holidays and remuneration? I have a right to all of these things, but for his sake, he said, his sake I have renounced all of them. Ownership. Ownership.

My friend David Edney went back to Hong Kong some time ago, and after he went he told me that he met a student who had become a Christian, but on his return he had reverted to Communism. And asking the fellow why, he said, oh, he said, your Christianity is too soft, too soft. The Lordship of Christ, it implies submission, it implies obedience, it implies ownership.

Would you for a moment survey in your mind the areas of your life which have never been submitted to the Lordship of Jesus? Is he Lord of your business? Is he Lord of your friendships, especially with the

opposite sex? Is he Lord of your money? Is he Lord of your recreation? Lord of your dress? Lord of your books? Lord of your habits? Is he Lord of all? Oh, that may sound desperately hard, but I want to say to you that when Jesus Christ insists upon sovereignty, he insists upon it in our own best interest. The 14th chapter of Genesis is the first record of the Bible of kings, in the plural, and it is the first record of warfare. And the whole of human history has been the story of kings, in the plural, and warfare.

And there never will be peace until Jesus comes and Jesus reigns, and he's Lord of all. Then this poor world of ours will know peace. But listen, as long as there are rivals to the will of God in your life and mine, as long as this and that person or thing is insisting upon a right to control you and me, there is no peace.

Until he is Lord. Just one more thing as I finish. Oh, you say to me, I know all this.

There's nothing new you can tell me about it, and I've tried it before and it doesn't work. It's not for me. I've surrendered, I've yielded, I've given in, and Jesus Christ has come into my heart.

But it lasted a few weeks, and all wore off, and here I am in Belgrade Heights in 1967, in the same desperate mess as ever. There's nothing in it. May I speak to you not only, not only about his claim for lordship, not only about the implications of lordship, but may I speak to you in clothing about the application of the lordship of Jesus in your life.

You see, it just begins in that moment, when like on the wedding day, the bride says to the bridegroom, and the bridegroom says to the bride, I will. And that surrender of life, one to the other, involves them in a partnership, which is the most sacred and most lovely thing this side of heaven. And the lordship of Jesus begins when you say to him, yes Lord, I will.

And he replies by saying yes, and I will. Does he say that? Oh yes, he does. And maybe it's because we haven't understood, haven't realized that he does reply and say, I will.

It's because we haven't understood that, that all our resolves have broken down. When Jesus says, I will, what does he mean? Listen. The crowning of Jesus Christ as King of your life, is answered in heaven, by the outpouring of his Holy Spirit, who comes into your heart, in order to administer the authority and sovereignty of Jesus Christ.

He's come to you to make it real in your heart. And therefore the secret of daily life, in the acceptance of his sovereign lordship, is simply the daily dependence upon the life of God's Spirit in your heart. Oh, you're apt to say, and perhaps all of us are apt to say, I can't keep it up.

I've broken down because I can't maintain a surrender, and I can't maintain a vow, and I can't maintain this and that. But listen. When you receive Christ into your heart, you receive the life that has submitted to the will of God, and triumphed.

You receive a life of perfect obedience, which he took to the cross. You receive within you the life, the life that God has raised from the tomb. The principle of life, which God has accepted in heaven.

And in accepting that principle, he has rejected all others. Well, may I say to you, dear people, tonight, that a man here may be listening to my voice, and he may have the education of a university, and all the talent and ability that anybody can have in life. But he is still self-centred, instead of God-centred.

He's rejected in the presence of God. But when I accept Jesus into my heart, he comes in the person of his Holy Spirit, and I've received a life of submission, a life of obedience, a life of dependence upon the Lord. And therefore, every day of my life, when temptation attacks, and the old life in me threatens to hit back, what a wonderful thing it is to be able to turn to him and say, Lord, now in this situation, your humility, please.

Your power, please. Your grace, please. Your strength, just right now.

How did you ever realise that God doesn't expect a single thing from you but total failure, but God has given you the Holy Spirit that you need not fail. And here in you, the life of obedience and the life of submission within us, is the life that is adequate for every demand that can ever be made upon us, in the will of God. We were hearing earlier in this convention, about Princess Elizabeth, when she visited Kenya, and went with her husband to that country.

A week later, her father died, King George VI. Her tour was cancelled, and she returned to Britain, and she was met on the tarmac of London Airport, and she was greeted by the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. And the moment she stepped off that plane onto the tarmac, she was Queen by right.

But 15 months later, on the 2nd of June 1953, something happened which electrified most of the world. On the day chosen by the weather experts as likely to be the finest day in 1953, when it never stopped raining from morning till night, she had a culmination day in Westminster Abbey. And I shall never forget viewing that on television.

And the most dramatic moment of all, when the Archbishop of Canterbury, with the crown in his hand, turned and faced the entire congregation of titled people in the Abbey, and said to them, My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen, I present unto you your rightful Sovereign, Elizabeth. Do you assent to pay her homage? And everybody answered with a word that echoed throughout the whole Abbey, I am turning from that congregation to face the Queen. He placed the crown upon her head, and she became our Sovereign.

I have thought tonight, very unworthily, to present to you your rightful Sovereign. Do you acknowledge his right to sovereignty over all your life? What's your answer to that? Don't give it to me, give it to him. Let's pray.

Amen. Sadhu. Prayer.

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