

From the Pulpit of Keith Miller
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August 16, 2020

Living Well in a COVID-19 World

Romans 13:8-14

Introduction

The average person lives 78 years, which is a total of 28,488 days. Of our 28,488 days, we sleep 8,541 of our 28,488 days away leaving us with only 19,947 days on earth awake. So, how does the average person use his/her average number of days on earth?

5,300 days are consumed watching TV and/or playing video games.

3,988 days are consumed with work.

1,305 days are spent with training and education to make you a better employee

1,460 days are spent with housework

416 days are spent in the bathroom

325 days getting dressed.

150 days are spent looking for things we lost.

25 days **a year** on social media.

23 days **a year** are spent on our cell phones, which will only increase over time.

Seventy-eight years (28,470 days) may sound like a lot of time, but...

We are only left with about 5,000 days on this planet to make a difference.

When you consider just how many days we do have, the prayer of the Psalmist makes a whole lot more sense: **“So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom”** (Psalm 90:12).

In the epistle of James, we are admonished: **“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit’ – yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that’”** (James 4:13-15).

There are three ways you can live your life.

You can continue living out your years with little thought about what happens after the last of your days comes to an end.

A second option that is perhaps more relevant to 2020 is that you can avoid every possible danger by staying home with as little interaction with people and the outside world as safely possible

Video of the 2013 parody music video titled YOLO

The song begins with what seems to be less parody today than it was in 2013:
YOLO, you only live once
The battle cry of a generation
This life is a precious gift
So don't get too crazy
It's not worth the risk" (see music video).

The third way to live your life is what is expected of the Christian in light of who we are as citizens of a different kingdom.

Romans 13:1-7 reminds us that while on earth, we must do three things.

First, we need to give proper respect to those in authority over us that is due recognizing that God has given the sword of judgment to the government, and not the Church, to suppress the evil that we humans are capable of.

Secondly, we must live out our days understanding that, "**The Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will**" (Dan. 5:21), and that when we are forced into civil disobedience, we must do so respectfully, honorably, and charitably.

Thirdly, as we live out our lives on earth, we must never forget that we have a responsibility to give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what belongs to God (Matt. 12:13-17).

The Only Debt The Christian Owes is the Debt to Love

As we live out our days on this planet, we are told to live by the following principle: "**Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, and honor to whom honor is owed**" (v. 7).

We are to live this way so that the only debt that we are left to pay is the one that never ends: Love.

Jesus said that the two greatest commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets: "**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'**" (Matt. 22:34-40).

Think about the reality of who you are in light of what Paul wrote in Romans concerning what God has done for you through his Son Jesus:

In Jesus, I am experiencing the power of God through the gospel (Romans 1:16-17)

In Jesus, I am justified freely by His grace (Rom. 3:24)

In Jesus, I am reconciled to God (Rom. 5:6-11; 2 Cor. 5:21)

In Jesus, I will never be forsaken or abandoned by God (Romans 5; 8:31-34; John 10)

In Jesus, I have no fear of hell or condemnation (Romans 8:1; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 9:14)

In Jesus, I am now God's child (Romans 8:23; 1 Peter 1:3)

In Jesus, I am loved and treasured by Almighty God (Romans 8:34-39; John 16:27)

In Jesus, I belong to God (Romans 9:25-26; John 17:9)

In Jesus, God is working all things together for my good (Rom. 8:28)

In Jesus, I am set apart for the mission of God (Rom. 10:14-21; Eph. 2:10)

In Jesus, I am a member of the body of Christ (Rom. 12:3-8; Eph. 3:6)

This is why Paul wrote: **“Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.”**

The power of the gospel enables me to love powerfully and transformatively. If I love my neighbor, I will not...

This is what Paul meant by what he wrote in verse 10, **“Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”**

The Life Best Lived is the Life Lived for God

Verse eleven is an example of how, when the ESV, (rarely) gets the translation wrong; the NIV gets it right in the way verse eleven is translated: **“And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber...”**

Verse eleven is the continuation of Paul’s point from verses 8-10. Love your neighbor, knowing who you are in Christ and that your time on earth is limited.

Every day we live is one day closer to our last day on earth, so live every day as though it were your last. The New King James translates verse 11 Wyoming style: **“And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed”** (Romans 13:11, NKJV).

If you are a Christian, you are not only alive, but you have been spiritually woke, so live and act like it; for the time for actions is now, and not when it is convenient, safe, or when a vaccine for COVID-19 is finally available.

When Paul wrote these words, there was something worse that the church was facing than a virus that has a 1.2% chance of killing you.

So, what was Paul’s advice? **“The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime...”** (vv. 12-13a).

The day that Paul was referring to in verse 12 is the day of the Christians will experience the completion of his/her salvation.

The coming day is not only the resurrection we will experience, but the second coming of Jesus Christ who will also judge both the living and the dead. We are to live in light of the day because with it comes a judgment of which Paul warns in Romans 14:12, **“So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.”**

When Paul wrote to Christians everywhere that, “**salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed**” he was not sharing bad news, but great news.

With each passing day, we are one day closer to the day when there will be no more death, no more sin, so more suffering, and certainly no more COVID-19!

Because of our relationship with Jesus, we know that our victory is already secure because of our security in Jesus.

So, we of all people should be known for our activity as followers of Jesus instead of the activity of those who are still asleep and dead in their sins. Why? Because, as Paul concludes: “**The night is far gone; the day is at hand**” (v. 12).

There is a great line from the movie *The Dead Poet’s Society*, when John Keating (played by Robin Williams) brings his students into the hall to look upon the pictures of those who have gone before them.

As the students stared intently into the display case, Keating leaned over the shoulders of his new students and whispered *carpe diem*, which means, “seize the day.”

Romans 13:11-14 is Paul’s encouragement “seize the day” not because one day we will all be pushing daffodils in the grave, but because we will all stand before the King of kings and Lord of lords and will answer for the way we spent our days in light of all that we have received.

How are we to “seize the day” as followers of Jesus? Paul tells us in the remaining verses of Romans 13: “***So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires***” (Romans 13:12–14).

The best way to live out our days in light of day of our salvation is that we do it together.

Time is too short to wait and hope that COVID-19 will go away so that we can be the Church that God is calling us to be.

This is why the author of Hebrews encouraged the suffering Church of his day with the following words not unlike the apostle Paul’s: “***And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near***” (Hebrews 10:24–25).

There is always going to be a COVID-19 in our world that will threaten and tempt us into safety, security, and comfort.

In the days and weeks to come, how will you seize the days God has given you?

How is your life a testimony to the world that you are proof that God is in the business of raising the dead?