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Sermon Study on Rom. 14:1-9

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rung, "to make a legalistic use of individual passages or of the entire Scripture. . . . We must be in accord with Luther and his spirit of freedom and apply this touchstone to every word of Scripture: does it give expression to the Gospel as Gospel, the pure and clear Gospel?" (*Op. cit.*, pp. 306, 308.)

This, then, is the charter of liberty proclaimed by the moderns: Having renounced the tyranny of the words of Scripture as such, we vow allegiance to the Word of God contained in them; and our Christian consciousness shall tell us how much of Scripture is the Word of God to which we can submit.

We are asked to come in under this charter of liberty. We cannot do so, for three reasons.

TH. ENGELDER

(To be continued)

Sermon Study on Rom. 14:1-9

Eisenach Epistle for the Twentieth Sunday after Trinity

In the first part of the Epistle to the Romans, chaps. 1-11, Paul sets forth the central doctrine of justification by faith in the vicarious atonement of Christ. In the second part, chaps. 12-16, from which our epistle lesson is taken, the Apostle indicates in the form of a lengthy exhortation the lessons for our Christian life and conduct implied in this glorious doctrine. In the paragraph preceding our epistle, he had urged all Christians, particularly in view of the close approach of the Last Day, to cast off the works of darkness, to put on the armor of light, and not to make provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof, Rom. 13:12, 14. This latter exhortation is well explained by Chrysostom, "As the Apostle forbade not drinking, but drunkenness, not marrying, but chambering, so he does not forbid providing for the flesh, but providing for it to the point of stirring up desires, as by going beyond one's actual needs." And Theophylact says, "Unto health, but not unto wantonness, unbridled lust, provide for the flesh."

Now, how far may one go in providing for one's flesh? Where does the God-pleasing provision end? Where does catering to the lusts of the flesh begin? Just what may we do, and what must we avoid to walk honestly? Since the Apostle warns so persistently against excesses in eating and drinking, just where are the limits to be drawn? These were the questions engaging the minds of the Christians at Rome, and the conflicting views threatened to cause disturbance and eventually disruption within the congregation. The Apostle enters at length upon this problem; teaches his readers the correct attitude toward matters of indif-

ference, toward such things as God has left to the choice of the individual Christian; points out to them the proper spirit which should govern them in their attitude toward those holding different views from their own, and warns them against some specific dangers threatening each of the two parties.

In chap. 14 Paul takes up in particular the problem of meat or vegetable diet and addresses both parties holding different opinions. In chap. 15 he addresses particularly the strong and points out their duty in general to exercise their strength in bearing the weak and to strive for mutual edification, rather than indulge in petty bickerings and faultfindings.

"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputation." Rom. 14:1. The article does not single out an individual; it designates a class, as is evident from the entire context. The congregation at Rome did not consist of one individual who ate meat and a second individual who chose a vegetable diet. The article here is clearly generic, pointing to a class without specifying any one individual. Weak, ἀσθενούντα, lacking strength. The present participle designates not a momentary weakness, but a continuing state. The Apostle does not speak of physical but of spiritual weakness, a weakness in "the faith," τῇ πίστει, dative of relation. Faith is not the objective faith, the faith which is believed, the Christian doctrine. V. 2, where the verb "believeth" is used, and the noun πίστις in vv. 22, 23 rule out the idea of objective faith. Moreover, in this chapter the Apostle does not speak of a weakness in doctrine, but of a weakness manifesting itself in the area of Christian life and conduct due to a failure on the part of the weak Christian to realize the full implication for his conduct of doctrines well known to him. Faith, therefore, here retains its usual sense of subjective faith. A Christian's faith is essentially conviction, assurance; a conviction based not on his own reasoning or experience or desire, but firmly founded on and rooted in God's Word, in the promises of Scripture. "Mere subjective moral conviction, however steadfast in character, without this objective basis is still to be designated as ἀπιστία, unbelief, not πίστις." (Philippi.) The most precious promise and the only saving promise is the Gospel truth, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." To accept this Gospel, to put one's trust in this divine promise, to rely for salvation solely on Jesus Christ, that, and that alone, is saving faith. Yet that is not the whole of Christian faith. The faith of a Christian in its totality comprises trust not only in the saving Gospel truths. Christian faith makes God's Word the only rule and norm of its entire life and conduct. Whatever God's Word forbids, the Christian will shun; whatever God's Word demands, the Christian will do. To God's prohibition as well

as to His command the Christian's faith says, "Yea and Amen," whether his reason understands or not, though his flesh raises a thousand objections. A word of Scripture like "Flee youthful lusts" will bind the Christian's conscience to refrain from such amusements, such literature, such conversation, as would tend to arouse in him "lusts," such desires as God and Christ want him to flee. In such matters Christian faith exercises its divine power by keeping under his body and bringing it unto subjection of God's word and will, 1 Cor. 9:27. In our passage, however, the Apostle does not speak of questions of conduct decided in God's Word, either by commandment or by prohibition. He has in mind questions pertaining to the large field of adiaphora, matters of indifference, things wherein the Christian's faith has the liberty to choose for himself.

The weak in faith is not to be cast out of the Christian Church; on the contrary, he is to be "received." The term *προσλαμβάνω* is used in the New Testament in a good and in an evil sense, in the latter, e. g., Acts 17:5. In the present discussion Paul uses the term to denote the reception into Christian fellowship. This fellowship was established when they became members of the Christian Church through faith. Into this fellowship the congregation members are to receive the weak continually, as the present imperative indicates. The weakness, therefore, which the Apostle has in mind, is not of such a nature as to sever the unity of faith and Christian fellowship, even though it is a long continued weakness, lasting perhaps throughout the lifetime of the weak Christian. As long as the weakness continues, so long is the congregation to keep on receiving him. In this sense, of lovingly receiving into fellowship, the word is used, e. g., Philem. 12:17; Acts 18:26. In Rom. 13:2; 15:7, the word describes God's and Christ's reception of believing Christians irrespective of their weakness. Particularly from 15:7 an illuminating light falls on the spirit in which Christians are to receive their weak brethren. It is the spirit of God and Christ, that spirit of grace and loving-kindness to which they owe their own reception into fellowship with the saints and into the household of God. It is a spirit of unfeigned love, brotherly affection, considerate kindness, never-ending tolerance of the weakness of the brethren.

The Apostle regards this spirit of such importance in the proper reception of the weak brother that he adds, "Not to doubtful disputations." This is a gentle reminder addressed to those who have just been directed to receive the weak in faith, calling their attention to a danger against which they must be on their guard. "To," *εἰς*, denotes here the result which follows an action. The reception of the weak on the part of the congregation members

was to be of a nature and to be conducted in a spirit that would render impossible "doubtful disputations." This phrase has been variously interpreted. According to Zahn the Apostle warns here against a discussion of the contrasting views. Then the Apostle would be committing the same fault against which he warns his readers, for he certainly enters upon a lengthy discussion of this whole matter. Philippi sees here a warning against calling forth doubting thoughts in the mind of the weak person. Yet, *διάκρισις*; in the sense of doubt is not found in Biblical Greek and is exceedingly rare in classical Greek. In the two other passages in which the word occurs in the New Testament it designates a discriminating, discerning judgment; concerning spirits, 1 Cor. 12:10; concerning good and evil, Heb. 5:14. *Διαλογισμός* designates "the thinking of a man deliberating with himself" (Thayer); reasoning, thought, opinion, view. In the New Testament the term usually has a derogatory connotation, a sinful, at least a faulty, erroneous reasoning or line of thought. This seems to fit best into the present connection. Receive not the weak brother in a manner which will result in passing judgment on his views or on his line of reasoning which induced him to adopt his course of action. That would not be receiving the brother into Christian fellowship, that would not strengthen him nor remove his scruples. That would rather have the opposite result. It would only serve to place a stumbling block or an occasion to fall into the brother's way, against which possibility the Apostle warns so earnestly, v. 13. And there is danger of that in a twofold direction, one described vv. 14-19, the other vv. 20-23.

Even though nothing is unclean of itself and of itself cannot harm the weak brother, yet because of his weakness, because he regards it as unclean for himself, it becomes unclean for him. This fact should never be overlooked by the confident Christian, should put him on his guard against grieving the weak brother because of meat. Note that Paul does not write "through food," *διὰ βρώματος*, denoting the cause, but *διὰ βρώμα*, because of, by reason, on account of, denoting the reason for which something is done. Nor does he add the pronoun, thy food, nor the article. He simply says "on account of food," food as food, an adiaphorous matter, in which one may do as he pleases, no special kind of food being prescribed or forbidden. In this matter of food the weak brother is not to be grieved, the present indicative denoting the constant or repeated grieving. And again Paul does not define more closely the manner in which he is grieved. While he may be thinking particularly of grieving him by despising him, vv. 3, 10b, yet the expression includes any manner of causing grief or sorrow to him. Grieving the brother is not walking charitably, v. 15. Charity rather

seeks peace and edification, v. 19. Grieving the neighbor in any manner may close his heart against instruction and finally destroy him for whom Christ died and destroy him through your food, your food being the cause of his destruction!

That is the one way of placing a stumbling block in his way. The other is outlined in vv. 20-23. In order to escape the contempt or ridicule of his fellow Christians, the weak brother may be induced to eat what he still regards as unclean to himself. That would indeed be evil, wrong, baneful for himself, v. 20. For one who is still in a state of deliberating with himself (that is the meaning of the present participle διακρινόμενος) has been condemned because he ate before being sure that he might eat. Hence, while v. 22 is true, yet v. 21 must never be lost sight of. Rather refrain from meat than cause your brother to lose his salvation.

The prohibition of sitting in judgment upon the weak brother does not prohibit brotherly instruction and admonition. On the contrary, the Apostle himself instructs in a tactful, loving manner the weak, and he admonishes his readers to pursue a course which would make for mutual edification, 14:19. Talking the matter over on the basis of Scripture in brotherly love may be helpful to both parties. The weak Christian may thereby be emboldened to cast off his scruples and to enjoy the full liberty of a believing child of God. The other may learn to recognize some weakness of his own, some failure properly to understand the reasons, the doubts, the scruples of him whom he regarded as a weak brother. Even if after prolonged discussion each one still retains his own opinion, both will have gained a better understanding of, a higher regard for, a more affectionate love toward each other, and may have learned to avoid the dangers against which the Apostle warns both.

"For one believeth that he may eat all things; another, who is weak, eateth herbs," v. 2. While v. 1 had stated the general principle governing the attitude of a Christian toward the brother weak in faith, the particular weakness had not been named. This information is given in v. 2. The one has confidence to eat all things. On πιστεύω with the infinitive in the sense of "to have confidence" compare Acts 15:11 (we have confidence to be saved), and the similar expression πιστὸν ἔχω Acts 14:9. Over against those who confidently ate whatever food was served them there were others who were weak, ἀσθενῶν, in a state of weakness. These were "the weak in faith" whom the Apostle had in mind particularly when he laid down the general rule, v. 1. Being weak in their conviction, they did not eat meat, but adopted a strictly vegetarian diet; they ate herbs, vegetables. The fact that the distinction between meat and vegetable diet was never made in the Jewish law, as little as wine was forbidden to the Jews (v. 21),

rules out the interpretation that the congregation at Rome was perturbed by Judaizing errorists such as had broken into the congregation of Galatia. If that had been the case, the Apostle would have warned the Christians against the peril of being led astray by false doctrine and would have condemned the false teachers in such scathing terms as he employed against the Judaizers in Galatia, Gal. 1:6-9; 5:7-12; 6:12, 13; the errorists in Colossae, Col. 2:8-23; in Corinth, 2 Cor. 10:1 to 11:15; cp. also 1 Tim. 4:1-9. Neither does it seem that the weak brethren in Rome demanded that all Christians refrain from eating meat and adopt a purely vegetarian diet. In that case Paul would have given them an extensive instruction on the doctrine of Christian liberty and on adiaphora, as he instructed the Christians at Colossae and in Galatia on these doctrinal questions and the Christians at Corinth on the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, which some among them were denying. In the case of the weak brethren at Rome, Paul quite evidently takes for granted that the doctrine of Christian liberty is well known. The trouble there was that this doctrine was not properly applied, neither by the weak in their own conduct and in their attitude toward others, nor by the other members in their treatment of the weak. The Apostle pleads with the weak not to commit the fatal mistake of making a doctrinal issue out of matters which God has left free, on which each one may be ruled by his own mind, v. 5, since there is no doctrine, no word of God demanding a certain diet. He warns the weak against improper sinful judging, v. 3, and the other members against sinful pride and self-exaltation, v. 3a, and against offending the weak, vv. 14-23.

The Apostle definitely attributes the refusal to eat meat to the weakness of the Christian, a continuing weakness characterizing these members of the Christian congregation. They could not gain the confidence to eat all things, although their brethren in the faith continually exercised their Christian liberty in this matter. Just what reasons caused the weak to hesitate to adopt a more varied diet we are not told. The individual Christians may have been moved by different reasons. Perhaps they were timid, over-anxious Christians, who dared not to make use of their liberty, because they feared that eating meat and drinking wine, indulging in these kinds of food, might lead them to excess, to surfeiting and drunkenness, or at least distract their thoughts and minds from that close devotion to the Lord which they felt they owed Him. But irrespective of the exact nature of their misgivings, three facts are clear. The first: their misgivings induced them not to eat meat but to restrict themselves to a vegetable diet; the second: the Apostle attributes their choice, their asceticism, to a weakness in their faith; the third: while calling their attention to their weak-

ness which ought not continue and while warning them against certain dangers to which they were exposed, perhaps inclined, the Apostle does not demand that they cease their asceticism, that they eat all things, but regards them as his brethren, exhorts the other members of the congregation to receive them in a spirit of brotherly affection and solicitude, which should prompt them to respect the conviction of these weak brethren and for their sake even refrain from eating meat if thereby the weak brother be grieved or offended, vv. 13-24. This mutual forbearance and tolerance, refraining from judging and from despising the brother, is the great lesson of our text.

In fact, before warning the weak against the dangers besetting them, the Apostle first voices a note of warning to the strong. "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not." V. 3a. Before considering this warning, let us take note that while the Apostle calls the vegetarians weak brethren, he does not call the others strong. Only after his extended discussion of this particular weakness has been concluded and only after he proceeds to the application of the truths outlined in chapter 14 of weaknesses in general, does the Apostle make a distinction between weak and strong, 15:1, and then only for the purpose of reminding the strong of their duty to exercise their strength in the proper manner by bearing the infirmities of the weak. We have here a splendid example of apostolic wisdom and pastoral tact. Paul does not want to create a division, does not want to split the congregation into two opposite factions, that of the strong and that of the weak. He wants to avoid a twofold danger: that of needlessly humiliating the weak, and that of stirring up thoughts of pride and self-exaltation in those who would classify themselves as the strong. Moreover, a Christian who had full confidence in the matter of food and drink might have been weak in another respect. Paul does not mean to create the impression as though the mere confidence to eat all kinds of food constituted the Christian a strong Christian. The very fact that he looked down upon the weak would prove his own weakness, his own lack of love, of brotherly consideration and Christian knowledge.

In warning the confident Christian not to despise the weak, Paul uses a very strong expression, ἐξουθενέω, as a comparison of passages in which it occurs will show, Luke 18:9; 23:11; 1 Cor. 1:28; 6:4; 16:11; Gal. 4:14. To regard a fellow Christian as a man utterly of no account is certainly doing despite against Christ Himself, who acknowledges every Christian, weak or strong, as a member of His body. Yet, that is the very sin against which Paul warns. He sees the danger threatening one who disregards his plea to receive the weak in faith, or who receives him only

in a spirit which will lead him on to judging the thoughts of his fellow Christian. Instead of charitably, affectionately seeking to help the brother to overcome his weakness and attain to the same degree of assured confidence in the use of Christian liberty that he himself enjoys, he will ridicule the scruples of the weak, regard the brother as narrow-minded and superstitious, "will sneer at the scruples of the weak as mere prejudice or obscurantism." *Exp. Gr. Test.* This is the danger to which the Christian confiding in his liberty is exposed and against which he must be on his guard.

Having warned the one class against spiritual pride and self-exaltation, Paul immediately turns to the other class with a warning just as outspoken because just as necessary. "Let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth." If the weak brother begins to judge his fellow Christian who in full confidence of faith eats all things, if he regards and treats him on this account as a lax and unprincipled person, as less faithful than himself to his Lord and Savior, he unduly exalts himself over his fellow Christian and passes adverse judgment on the brother in matters on which no such judgment should be passed. Eating meat or eating vegetables does not in the least affect one's standing before God. Eating only vegetables does not make you the better Christian, and eating meat does not make your fellow Christian less acceptable to God, less beloved by Him, "for God hath received him," accepted him into His companionship, adopted him as a member of His family. Note the consummate skill of the Apostle in choosing the words of his admonition. While exhorting the weak, he at the same time reminds the strong that after all, Christianity is not a matter of one's own choice, but of God's gracious reception, and therefore the confident Christian should never exalt himself above his weak brother, lest he fall from grace.

"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up; for God is able to make him stand." V. 4.

Paul adds another reason why the weak Christian should not judge his brother making full use of his liberty to eat meat. Such judging would be usurping a right belonging to Christ alone. The term *οικέτης* for servant occurs only here and in Luke 16:13; Acts 10:7; 1 Pet. 2:18. While *δοῦλος* emphasizes the bondage, *οικέτης* stresses the connection with the house, hence translated "house servant" Acts 10:17. As long as the master is satisfied with him whom he has received as his house servant and regards him as a member of his household, no one has the right to doubt or dispute or deny the right of the servant to membership in the household of that master. The master alone decides whom he shall retain in his service or dismiss from his household. The Church is Christ's

household, not the Christian's. The right of passing judgment upon the members of Christ's house belongs exclusively to the Head of the House, Christ, not to its individual members. The judgment of one member regarding the right to membership of another in the household of Christ does not affect the standing of the one being judged, moreover is sinful and displeasing to the Master of the House. Each individual servant of Christ has his own Master, the same that is the Master of the entire household. And this Master has told each Christian, "Neither be ye called masters, for one is your Master, even Christ," Matt. 23:10. This implies that no one may usurp mastery over the members of that household which is a royal priesthood, 1 Pet. 2:9, and that no Christian need fear the derogatory opinion and judgment of any other as to his status within the Church so long as his Master is satisfied with him; cp. 1 Cor. 4:3-5.

A servant of Christ "standeth or falleth to his own Master," τῷ ᾧ ὡς κριτὴς. The dative is that of relation. The Lord Jesus is the one and only Master to whom the Christian as a Christian stands in the relation of a house servant, and in relation to whom he stands as long as he stands as a Christian and falls if and when he falls, apostatizes from Christ. His relation to his friends, to his family, his country, etc., may change without in the least interfering with his relation to Christ. He may be disowned, ostracized, denounced as a pestilent fellow; cp. Acts 24:5. That will not affect his relation to Christ so long as Christ owns him as one of His servants. On the other hand, a member of the congregation may be honored and respected by his fellow members, he may hold a responsible position, and still Christ's judgment may be: I never knew you, Matt. 7:23. Where this Lord of the Church has not given the right to pass judgment on a member of the Church, as He has, e. g., Matt. 18:15 ff.; 1 Cor. 5:1-13, it is stark presumption to usurp that right over one's fellow servant which belongs exclusively to his own Master. Not Christ's servant, but Christ, the Lord and Master, has the right to decide whether a man may eat meat, any kind of food, and remain a good Christian.

"Yea, he shall be holden up." The meat eater shall be holden up, shall be made to stand, in spite of the doubts and misgivings of the weak brother, even though the weak brother cannot see how it is possible that one permits himself such liberties and still can remain a servant of Christ. Still he remains just that. Still he stands, because he is made to stand. There is one who is able to uphold the meat eater as well as the vegetarian. "For God is able to make him stand." That God whom the weak brother trusts to keep him in faith while eating vegetables is not shorn of His power to save by the fact that one eats meat. That is a lesson

which the weak Christian must never forget. Do not make your own opinion, your own weakness, the divining rod in endeavoring to locate the wellspring of saving faith. It is not the opinion and judgment of man, least of all the weakness in faith of a fellow Christian, that establishes the Christianity of the meat eater, but God and His grace, the same God and the same grace which makes the vegetarian to stand.

Note again how tactfully the Apostle chooses his words in order really to edify (v. 19) both classes. While he addresses his admonition primarily to the weak, he teaches at the same time a very necessary lesson to the others in order to guard them against sinful pride: cp. 3a. They must constantly be aware that while they confidently make full use of the liberty Christ has procured for them, it is not their own valor and strength that keeps them standing. It is the power of God alone. Hence, they should beware of abusing their liberty. Cp. Rom. 11:20b; 14:14-23; 1 Cor. 10:12.

"One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord, and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it." Vv. 5, 6a. Just what do the terms *esteem*, *κρίνω*, and *regard*, *φρονέω*, mean? *Κρίνω* originally means to separate, put aside; then, to choose, select; and because one selects that which one approves, the word obtains the meaning to esteem, approve. In this latter sense it is used in v. 5, as is proved by the term *φρονέω*, which the writer chooses in v. 6 in lieu of *κρίνω*. *Φρονέω* means to have understanding, to direct one's mind to something, to seek the interest of some person or object, to be zealous in one's service, to serve, or observe, or look out for his glory, interest, etc. So one separates, selects, esteems a day above a day, is zealous in the observance of a day in preference to another. Now, what day has the author in mind? Interpreters thinking of Judaizing errorists, or of Jewish Christians, regard the Sabbath as the day chosen. This interpretation restricting the day to the Sabbath exclusively is ruled out by the omission of the article. Paul's words are too comprehensive to permit a restriction to the Sabbath. The "day" is left as vague and indefinite as language can make it. The term includes any one day, or several days of the week, or month, or year, in regular or irregular intervals.

What was the motive prompting the selection of a day before another, or of esteeming every day alike? The Apostle states that very clearly. Both the observer and the non-observer of days is motivated by his sincere desire to serve the Lord. The dative *κυρίῳ* is again the dative of relation. The action flows in both cases from a relation of love and esteem of the Lord, the Lord

Jesus, to whom this term is applied throughout the context. Their one and all-important question was, How can I keep my relation to Jesus, my Lord, unclouded, close, intimate, so that Christ may be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death? Phil. 1:20. The clause "He that eateth not," etc., is omitted in most texts and is not necessary, though it does not introduce a thought foreign to the context as Zahn states. It may, however, have been caused by Homoeoteleuton, as the *Exp. Gr. Test.* suggests, following Philippi, Tischendorf, and other noted critics. In the sermon, of course, the pastor will explain this clause also, particularly, as Stoeckhardt observes, since it is a matter of course that the one who regards all days alike and sanctifies every day by the word of God and prayer does so with the intention of serving the Lord in this manner.

Just in what manner did the Christians want to serve the Lord on the day chosen? That again is not stated. Certainly public worship cannot be considered. In the first place, the duty of congregational service is not a matter left to the individual nor even to the congregation to decide. That is a duty imposed on them by the Lord, and neglect of public worship is contrary to God's will, Heb. 10:25; Luke 10:16. In the second place, the decision as to the day on which the congregation gathers for public worship is a matter for the congregation to decide. It is not left to the choice of the individual, who according to 1 Cor. 14:33, 40 is required to submit to the order established by the congregation. The Christian may have chosen a day on which he concentrated in a special manner on the study of the Word of God, on works of charity, on visiting the sick, on admonishing the erring brother, refraining perhaps from his daily work, or restricting that to the most necessary matters, or rising earlier. And all this not in a self-righteous, vaunting spirit, but for the sole purpose of serving the Savior. Another Christian did not choose a special day but made it a point to serve the Lord and do good to all men, especially to those of the household of faith, as he had opportunity. The Apostle gives his approval to whatever the individual has decided on and adds only the exhortation, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his mind"; be carried to fullness of assurance and conviction that what he does and how he does it is pleasing to the Lord and serviceable to his own and his neighbor's welfare.

But why does the Apostle enter into this matter at all? Was there a clash of views also with regard to the question of observing days? We believe that this question did not disturb the congregation at Rome. At least it did not perturb the Christians there to such an extent, nor was it fraught with such dangers for the individual, as did the question of meat or vegetable diet. We

believe that is proved by the manner in which the Apostle introduces and treats this question. In speaking of observing days, Paul does not distinguish between weak and strong Christians. He simply states what one does and what another does. Moreover, he does not devote much time to this matter, nor does he refer to it after v. 6a, but immediately returns to the question of eating and drinking. It seems quite plausible that there was no dispute on the question of days in the church at Rome. Each one did as he pleased without judging or despising the other. We hold, therefore, that the Apostle introduces this matter only in order to show the folly of making the difference in diet a controversial matter. Why do you not pursue the same course with regard to food that you are taking with regard to days? In the latter question you fully recognize the right of every individual Christian to decide this matter for himself and make full use of his liberty to choose or not to choose a day. Those of you observing days do not judge those that regard all days alike, while the latter do not despise the former. Now, the question of meat and drink lies on the same plane with the question of days. In neither case does God prescribe a particular course of action. In both he has left it to the "mind," the opinion, the consideration of the individual. And this heart and mind is imbued with a desire to choose only what is pleasing to the Lord. That is proved by the fact that "he that eateth," "giveth God thanks," sanctifies his eating by the Word of God and prayer and hence "eateth to the Lord," serves the Lord by eating to His glory. Cp. 1 Cor. 10:31. In like manner, "he that eateth not," who has chosen rather to eat herbs, also "giveth God thanks," sanctifies also his vegetable diet by God's Word and prayer. Hence, "to the Lord he eateth not," serves the Lord by eating not meat, but vegetables to the glory of the Lord. If then one of the fellow Christians has after prayerful and careful deliberation made up his mind just which of the two possible courses is the best for him to follow, considering his individual character, his personal inclinations, his environment and associations, and the peculiar temptations to which he may be exposed and be particularly vulnerable, then concede to him the liberty to adopt and follow this course and receive and treat him as a brother in faith. If he has decided on a vegetable diet, do not despise and ridicule him, even though this choice may be due to his weakness, and irrespective of whether the recognition of this weakness has led him to adopt his course or whether he is not even aware of his weakness in doing so. If another brother feels free to eat all things, then let not the vegetarian judge and condemn him, but in mutual love and consideration let them continue to preserve the unity of faith through the bond of peace.

"For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether 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's." Vv. 7, 8. Marvelous words! Words that are spirit and are life indeed! Words that ought to dispel all desire to sit in judgment upon or to despise one who like himself has been the recipient of so high an honor and privilege! The Apostle assures his readers that the spirit of self-effacing loyalty to the Lord manifested by the Christians at Rome in their manner of dealing with the question of observance of days and which he pictures as the ideal one in dealing with the question of eating and drinking, is not something unusual, something out of the ordinary, and that the admonition to exercise this spirit is not uncalled for or asking the impossible. On the contrary, he asserts that this is the spirit actually governing and permeating the entire Christian life, the spirit underlying and determining every action of the Christian. No Christian lives to himself, no Christian dies to himself; a Christian lives and dies unto the Lord. The datives *ἑαυτῷ* and *κυρίῳ* again are datives of relation. The relation of a Christian to his life and to his death is not one centered in himself, his own interest, his own strength, his own glory. Both living and dying is for the Christian inseparably related to Christ, indissolubly connected with his Lord Jesus. What is implied in living and dying unto the Lord is best learned from Scripture itself. Read Paul's confession Phil. 3:4-11. That is living to Christ. Read Col. 3:1 to 4:6. That is living unto the Lord! Read 2 Tim. 4:6-8, 18. That is dying unto Jesus! Read Phil. 1:20-26. That is living and dying unto the Lord Jesus Christ! And now, note! What Paul declares to be his earnest expectation and hope, Phil. 1:20; what is the subject of his constant prayer for his readers, 1 Thess. 1:11, 12; what Peter urges upon all Christians as the goal of their Christian service, a goal never to be lost sight of, 1 Pet. 4:11, that Paul pronounces here as his firm conviction, declares it by infallible inspiration of God as an unqualified, indisputable fact of all Christians. Including himself with his readers and excluding not one of them, whether weak or strong, he tells them, tells us, None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself; whether we live, we live unto the Lord, whether we die, we die unto the Lord. The two *καὶ* left untranslated in the Authorized Version connect the latter two statements intimately, the latter being the natural result and outflow of the former.

The fact that the Old Adam, our old sinful flesh and blood, still clings to the Christian is left out of consideration. The Apostle does not exhort his readers to strive for this spirit; he does not merely hold living and dying unto Christ before their eyes as a

wonderful ideal, never to be attained, but well worth battling for. No, he states it as a simple fact: None of us liveth unto himself. We all live and die unto the Lord. The Apostle describes the Christians as God and Christ see them, washed, purified, justified, sanctified, by the name of the Lord Jesus. All their sins (and they sin daily) are forgiven, their iniquities were subdued, their sins cast forever into the depths of the sea, Micah 7:19, when He to whom they now live died for them on the cross, 2 Cor. 5:19 f., and thus blotted their sins forever from the memory of God, Jer. 31:34. For Christ's sake God views the life the Christian now lives in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God as the life that Christ lives in them, as the life according to the new man. That is a living unto Christ and Christ alone: "For me to live is Christ"; Christ the beginning and the end, the center and the circumference of a Christian's life; to Him he lives, to Him, committing body and soul into His loving and almighty hands, the Christian dies. What a glorious, blessed life, what a blessed, glorious death!

From this marvelous fact the Apostle draws a conclusion equally marvelous. "For to this end Christ both died and rose and revived that He might be Lord both of the dead and living." V. 9. Oñv draws the conclusion from the statement just made. The very fact that we live and die unto the Lord proves without the shadow of a doubt that we are the Lord's own. For only then can one live and die unto the Lord, after he who cannot by his own reason or strength come to Jesus, has been brought by the Holy Spirit to the Lord and through faith has been made the Lord's own. And what a blessed privilege and comfort it is to know that in life and death we are the Lord's, His own sheep, John 10:27-30, His servants, His friends, John 15:15, whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren, Heb. 2:11; members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones, whom He nourishes and cherishes, Eph. 5:29, 30. No matter what happens to us, we know Rom. 8:35-40. Neither death nor life can separate us from Christ. Even in death we are the Lord's. As He governs and rules the life and development of His Christians from infancy to old age, so He is with them always, ruling and governing their death and decay. It is He that has said, Gen. 3:19b. He it is that at His appointed time permits death to take us out of the land of the living and corruption to seize upon our inanimate body. Yet though we die, though our body changes, His loving power does not change. His we are in life and death. As our soul, washed by His blood, is carried by His angels into Abraham's bosom, Luke 16:22, to be with Him in Paradise, Luke 23:43; Rev. 14:13, so he does not forget our body, redeemed by that selfsame blood. He whose wisdom is past finding out, whose power knows no limits, watches over our

body as it slowly dissolves into its elements; He preserves these elements in loving care, and on the Last Day He will again breathe into that dust the breath of life, will restore to us our soul, and in eternal life we shall be the Lord's.

Is that true? Is that possible? Paul silences all doubts and answers all misgivings. "For to this end Christ both died and rose and revived that He might be Lord of the dead and living." V. 9. The reading best attested omits "and revived." It is included in "rose," for His resurrection was unto life, and life eternal. Two incontestable facts, Christ's death, Christ's resurrection, constitute the incontrovertible proof for the statement of v. 8, that we are the Lord's. For no other purpose did Christ die and rise from the dead than to establish and prove His Lordship over dead and living. Already in the word of prophecy this was foretold for the comfort of the believing children of God, Is. 53:12. This lordship Christ proved before His resurrection by not only healing physically, mentally, and spiritually those that lived, but by raising the dead, quickening whosoever He would, John 5:21; Luke 7:14; 8:54; John 11:43. That was proved at the time of His death and resurrection, Matt. 27:51-53; that is the universal testimony of the New Testament, Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:20-27, 55-57; Heb. 2:14, 15, etc. Christ has established it beyond the shadow of a reasonable doubt that He is indeed the Lord of the dead and the living, of all that believe on Him and in His power live unto Him and die unto Him.

This statement of the great basic facts of Christianity is the most powerful motive to receive one another considerately and lovingly and not to judge or despise any brother because in matters left to the decision of the Christians his view may differ from one's own. Therefore the Apostle repeats his admonition of v. 3 in the form of a double question and reversing the order of v. 3. "But why dost thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou set at nought thy brother?" V. 10. "If even death cannot destroy the life communion of the Christian with Christ, why should eating or not eating be permitted to do this? And if the rule of Christ over His redeemed is not affected essentially either by the life or the death of His own, why should the distinction between vegetarians and meat eaters destroy that unity and communion so essential to the welfare of the congregation? Let above all the ascetic but also the liberal-minded Christian keep this ever in mind." Zahn, *Roemerbrief*, p. 575 f.

In preaching on this text the pastor, after having explained the term *adiaphoron* in the introduction, may speak on *The Apostle's Instruction on Adiaphora*. 1. As to their nature. They are matters which God has left free, in which the Christian's mind has liberty to choose, never, however, abusing this liberty. Warn

against sins as being matters of indifference because so regarded by men. God's Word alone decides what is sin and what an adiaphoron. 2. As to their implications. A. Negative: Do not judge or despise a Christian because he differs from you in his conduct in regard to adiaphora. B. Positive: Also in adiaphora we must live unto the Lord, in fulfilling His will, to the glory of His Name, in gratitude to His love, to the welfare of our brother.—*We Live Unto the Lord*. 1. What does this mean? Vv. 7, 8. 2. How is this manifested? Vv. 1-6. 3. Whence do we receive the power? V. 9.—*The Christian's Relation to Adiaphora*. He does not permit different opinions to disturb the peace of the congregation. Vv. 1-6. In these matters also he lives unto the Lord. Vv. 7-9.—*The Fruit of Christ's Lordship Over Dead and Over Living*. 1. We live and die unto the Lord. 2. We live in peace and harmony with our fellow Christians.—On vv. 7-9: *Jesus Is Our Lord!* To Him we live; to Him we die; His own we are in time and eternity. Or, *Jesus Is Our Lord!* Therefore we are His own in life and death; therefore let us live and die unto Him.

TH. LAETSCH

Outlines on the Wuertemberg Epistle Selections

Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity

1 John 4:7-12

If anybody thinks the Bible is an old book with no message for our times he ought to study this text. How practical! how timely! how intimately related to everyday life and present problems! The Scriptures, of course, contain revelations about supernatural, heavenly things. Let us be supremely thankful for that feature! But they likewise bring us instruction pertaining to our conduct, our contact with our fellow Christians and people in general. Cf. the letters to the Romans, the Ephesians, and Colossians, which have in definite divisions a doctrinal and a practical part. The text treats a practical topic by speaking of the love we owe each other. The question is answered

Why Must Christians Have and Manifest Love?

1

God their heavenly Father is love. He does not merely manifest love; He is love. To paint Him, as Luther says, a person would have to paint love. He is eager to be closely united with us, to help and to bless us. Cf. our creation and preservation. That there is so much suffering in the world does not disprove the reality of God's love; it merely testifies to the power of sin.