

Sermon Notes on Rom. 14:1-9, Trinity XIV

1. Read all of Rom. 14:1-15:3. It teaches us about things which God has neither commanded nor forbidden. The technical term for these things is adiaphora. Sometimes Christians have different views concerning these matters. They must be very careful not to accuse each other of false teaching or practice. We summarize: Vss. 1-4 introduce us to the situation: The strong in faith (those who heartily believe in justification by faith in Christ) have no scruples about what they should or should not eat. The weak in faith who have doubts about these matters make rules about what should not be eaten. The strong should not despise the weak. And the weak are not to judge the strong. Vss. 5-9: The weak have scruples about some days being superior to others, about some foods forbidden to them to eat, etc. The strong have no such scruples. But both weak and strong must remember that they do not live and die to themselves but to the Lord. Neither should run roughshod over the other's feelings and convictions. Vss. 10-12: Both weak and strong must remember that they must appear before the judgement-seat of Christ. Vss. 13-18: Do not be offensive to each other. Don't destroy your brother with scruples about food. The Lord died for him. Don't let that which you consider good be regarded as something bad. Vss. 19-23: Avoid everything which causes your brother to sin. Don't do anything against your own conscience. If you do, it is sin, no matter whether God neither commands nor forbids it. 15:1-3: Do as Christ did. He did not live to please Himself. The strong must be patient with the weak.
2. There may be situations in a congregation, perhaps of food, clothing, drink, social activities, what Christians do on Sunday, even matters of liturgy, which can be offensive to the weak, those who makes rules for themselves about which God has neither commanded nor forbidden. Christians must exercise patience and care in these matters. They should never do anything which might disrupt either another Christian's relationship to his Lord or the harmony in a congregation.
3. When the author of these notes was a child he remembers that his father would inform his children on Communion Sundays that he ate no breakfast before going to Communion. He said that this was customary in their family and therefore was a matter of conviction with him. But he insisted that it was not mandatory for us, his children. On these days he did NOT eat breakfast but his children DID eat. Each was convinced in his own mind as to the proper course of action.
4. Our text speaks of two kinds of people: the strong in the faith and the weak in the faith. The strong are those who have a firm grip on salvation by grace through faith. The weak are those who have only a small grip on this teaching. But Christ welcomes and accepts both. Even a weak faith is faith and is not to be despised. Both the strong and the weak have sinful hearts. The strong have a tendency to despise the weak for their immature convictions. And the weak have a tendency to accuse the strong of sinning. The strong must cease despising and the weak must cease judging the strong. Christ is Lord of life and death. He is the Savior and Judge. He accepts both strong and weak. They must do as He does.
5. Examples of adiaphora, things neither commanded nor forbidden:
 - a) The strong at Rome thought they could eat anything without sinning. The weak thought they should eat only vegetables.
 - b) The strong considered all days equal. The weak considered some days more sacred than others.
 - c) At I Cor. 8 we read of the meat problem. The strong had no scruples in eating meat sacrificed to idols. The weak considered that sin.
 - d) At I Cor. 11 we read of the head covering problem. God has made no command here. Christians should not despise or judge each other in these matters.

Sermon Outline on Rom. 14:1-9, Trinity XIV

Theme: WELCOME EACH OTHER AS CHRIST WELCOMES YOU

Introduction: Christians have various views on matters which God has neither commanded nor forbidden. For example, God has not forbidden the proper use of alcoholic beverages. Strong Christians use them moderately without a thought of sinning. Weak Christians may think such use is sinful. The strong ought not despise the weak and the weak ought not judge the strong. This is one of many examples.

I-Why It Is Necessary To Say This

- A-The strong in the faith have a tendency to despise the weak in faith. Our text gives two examples: The strong had no scruples in eating any and all foods. They became impatient with the immaturity of the weak who considered certain foods sinful. The strong considered all days alike. Evidently this is a reference to the Sabbath and other holy days which were abolished when Christ fulfilled the law. The strong became impatient with the immaturity of the weak who considered one day better than others. Other examples can be found at I Cor. 8 and 11.
- B-The weak in the faith have a tendency to accuse the strong of sinning. The weak thought that the Christian's diet should be limited to vegetables and herbs. They considered other foods sinful. They attached righteousness to certain days and so considered the strong as sinful because they did not do this. Again, other examples are found at I Cor. 8 and 11.

II-What These Sinful Reactions Lead To

- A-They forget that all are Christ's servants and belong only to Him. When the strong despise the weak and the weak judge the strong and accuse them of sin, they are considering each other heathen and not Christians. Vs. 4 says: "Who are you to criticize someone else's servant? He belongs to the Lord, who is concerned whether he succeeds or fails. And he will succeed, because the Lord can make him succeed." It is dangerous for the strong and the weak to accuse each other while the Lord considers both His very own servants. It is sin.
- B-They forget that both strong and weak have convictions which serve and praise the Lord. The strong man eats any and all foods to the glory of God without a bad conscience. The weak man eats only vegetables to the glory of God without a bad conscience. Both are equally serving and praising God and should not be despised. Likewise with the observance of certain days, vss. 6-8. Each serves and honors God in his own way and should not be despised or judged. Each lives and dies to the Lord.

III-The Cure For Sinful Despising And Judging

- A-Think of what Christ did for him. In vss. 13-23 which follow our text Paul dwells on what Christ has done for both the strong and the weak. He died for both equally. Both have the same access to God through Jesus Christ. Both are acceptable to Him. Don't let various views about food and days ruin the other man's relation to his Lord. You are a sinner just as he is. You are in need of Christ just as much as he is.
- B-God's kingdom is righteousness, joy and peace in the Spirit. Vs. 17. These are the fruits of faith. The new man in the Christian conquers the works of the flesh. The flesh causes us to despise others. The flesh causes us to judge others wrongly. But our faith in Jesus Christ gives evidence in love, joy and peace. Christ bears with our many weaknesses. We ought to do the same with fellow Christians.

Conclusion: The real test of Christian living is the proper view of things which God neither commands nor forbids. Christians take different views on these matters. These various views ought not disturb the fellowship of faith in Christ.