



COMMENTARIES ON 'ROMANS'

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Chapter 14

Verse 1, 2. *"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things; another, who is weak, eateth herbs."*

I am aware that to most what is here said is a difficulty. And therefore I must first give the subject of the whole of this passage, and what he wishes to correct in writing this. What does he wish to correct then? There were many of the Jews which believed, who adhered of conscience to the Law, and after their believing, still kept to the observance of meats, as not having courage yet to quit the service of the Law entirely. Then that they might not be observed if they kept from swine's flesh only, they abstained in consequence from all flesh, and ate herbs only, that what they were doing might have more the appearance of a fast than of observance of the Law. Others again were farther advanced, and kept up no one thing of the kind, who became to those, who did keep them, distressing and offensive, by reproaching them, accusing them, driving them to despondency. Therefore the blessed Paul, out of fear lest, from a wish to be right about a trifle, they should overthrow the whole, and from a wish to bring them to indifference about what they ate, should put them in a fair way for deserting the faith, and out of a zeal to put everything right at once, before the fit opportunity was come, should do mischief on vital points, so by this continual rebuking setting them adrift from their agreement in Christ, and so they should remain not righted in either respect: observe what great judgment he uses and how he concerns himself with both interests with his customary wisdom. For neither does he venture to say to those who rebuke, Ye are doing amiss, that he may not seem to be confirming the other in their observances; nor again, Ye are doing right, lest he should make them the more vehement accusers: but he makes his rebuke to square with each. And in appearance he is rebuking the stronger, but he pours forth all he has to say against the other in his address to these. For the kind of correction most likely to be less grating is, when a person addresses some one else, while he is striking a blow at a different person, since this does not permit the person rebuked to fly into a passion, and introduces the medicine of correction unperceived. See now with what judgment he does this, and how well-timed he is with it. For after saying, "make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof," then he proceeds to the discussion of these points, that he might not seem to be speaking in defense of those who were the rebukers, and were for eating of anything. For the weaker part ever requires more forethought. Wherefore he aims his blow against the strong, immediately saying as follows, "Him that is weak in the faith." You see one blow immediately given to him. For by calling him weak, he points out that he is not healthy. Then he adds next, "receive," and point out again that he requires much attention. And this is a sign of extreme debility. "Not to doubtful disputations." See, he has laid on a third stripe. For here he makes it appear that his error is of such a nature, that even those who do not transgress in the same manner, and who nevertheless admit him to their affection, and are earnestly bent upon curing him, are at doubt. You see how in appearance he is conversing with these, but is rebuking others secretly and without giving

offense. Then by placing them beside each other, one he gives encomiums, the other accusations. For he goes on to say, "One believeth that he may eat all things," commending him on the score of his faith. "Another who is weak, eateth herbs," disparaging this one again, on the score of his weakness. Then since the blow he had given was deadly, (used hyperbolically), he comforts him again in these words,

Verse 3. *"Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not."*

He does not say, let him alone, nor does he say, do not blame him, nor yet, do not set him right; but do not reproach him, do not "despise" him, to show they were doing a thing perfectly ridiculous. But of this he speaks in other words. "Let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth." For as the more advanced made light of these, as of little faith, and falsely healed, and spurious, and still Judaizers, so they too judged these as law-breakers, or as given to gluttony. And of these it is likely that many were of the Gentiles too. Wherefore he proceeds, "for God hath received him. But in the other's case he does not say this. And yet to be despised was the eater's share, as a glutton, but to be judged, his that did not eat, as of little faith. But he has made them change places, to show that he not only does not deserve to be despised, but that he can even despise. But do I condemn him? he means. By no means. For this is why he proceeds, "for God hath received him." Why then speakest thou to him of the law, as to a transgressor? "For God hath received him:" that is, has shown His unspeakable grace about him, and hath freed him from all charges against him; then again he turns to the strong.

Verse 4. *"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?"*

Whence it appears that they too judged, and did not despise only. "To his own Master he standeth or falleth." See here is another stroke. And the indignation seems to be against the strong man, and he attacks him. When he says, "Yea, he shall be holden up," he shows that he is still wavering, and requireth so much attention as to call in God as a physician for this, "for God," he says, "is able to make him stand." And this we say of things we are quite in despair about. Then, that he may not despair he both gives him the name of a servant when he says, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?" And here again he secretly attacks him. For it is not because he does things worthy to exempt him from being judged, that I bid you not judge him, but because he is Another's servant, that is, not thine, but God's. Then to solace him again he does not say, "falleth," but what? "standeth or falleth." But whether it be the latter or the former, either of these is the Master's concernment, since the loss also goes to Him, if he does fall, as the riches too, if he stand. And this again if we do not attend to Paul's aim in not wishing them to be rebuked before a fitting opportunity, is very unworthy of the mutual care becoming for Christians. But (as I am always saying) we must examine the mind with which it is spoken, and the subject on which it is said and the object he would compass when he says it. But he makes them respectful by no slight motive, when he says this: for what he means is, if God, Who undergoeth the loss, hitherto doth nothing, how can you be else than ill-timed and out of all measure exact, when you seize on him and annoy him?

Verse 5. *"One man esteemeth one day above another, another esteemeth every day alike."*

Here he seems to me to be giving a gentle hint about fasting. For it is not unlikely that some who fasted were always judging those who did not, or among the observances it is likely that there were some that on fixed days abstained, and on fixed days did not. Whence also he says, "Let every man be fully

persuaded in his own mind.” And in this way he released those who kept the observances from fear, by saying that the thing was indifferent, and he removed also the quarrelsomeness of those who attacked them, by showing that it was no very desirable task to be always making a trouble about these things. Yet it was not a very desirable task, not in its own nature, but on account of the time chosen, and because they were novices in the faith. For when he is writing to the Colossians, it is with great earnestness that he forbids it, saying, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the elements of the world, and not after Christ.” (Colossians 2:8) And again, “Let no man judge you in meat or in drink” (ib. 16), and, “let no man beguile you of your reward.” (ib. 18.) And when writing to the Galatians with great precision, he exacts of them Christian spirit and perfectness in this matter. But here he does not use this vehemency, because the faith was lately planted in them. Let us therefore not apply the phrase, “Let every man be persuaded in his own mind,” to all subjects. For when he is speaking of doctrines, hear what he says, “If any one preacheth unto you any gospel other than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:9), “even” if it be “an angel.” And again, “I fear lest by any means as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted.” (2 Corinthians 11:3.) And in writing to the Philippians, he says, “Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.” (Philippians 3:2.) But with the Romans, since it was not yet the proper time for setting things of this sort right, “Let every man,” he says, “be fully persuaded in his own mind.” For he had been speaking of fasting. It was to clear away the vanity of the others and to release these from fear then, that he said as follows:

Verse 6. *“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.” And, “He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.”*

He still keeps to the same subject. And what he means is about this. The thing is not concerned with fundamentals. For the thing requisite is, if this person and the other are acting for God’s sake, the thing requisite is, if both terminate in thanksgiving. For indeed both this than and that give thanks to God. If then both do give thanks to God, the difference is no great one. But let me draw your notice to the way in which here also he aims unawares a blow at the Judaizers. For if the thing required be this, the “giving of thanks,” it is plain enough that he which eateth it is that “giveth thanks,” and not “he which eateth not.” For how should he, while he still holds to the Law? As then he told the Galatians, “As many of you as are justified by the Law are fallen from grace” (Galatians 5:4); so here he hints it only, but does not unfold it so much. For as yet it was not time to do so. But for the present he bears with it: but by what follows he gives it a further opening. For where he says,

Verse 7, 8. *“For none of us liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord,”*

by this too he makes the same clearer. For how can he that liveth unto the Law, be living unto Christ? But this is not the only thing that he effects by this, he also holds back the person who was in so much haste for their being set right, and persuades him to be patient, by showing that it is impossible for God to despise them, but that in due time He will set them right. What is the force then of “none of us liveth to himself?” It means, We are not free, we have a Master who also would have us live, and willeth not that we die, and to whom both of these are of more interest than to us. For by what is here said he shows that he hath a greater concern for us than we have ourselves, and considereth more than we do,

as well our life to be wealth, as our death to be a loss. For we do not die to ourselves alone, but to our Master also, if we do die. But by death here he means that from the faith. However, this were enough to convince us that He taketh care for us, in that it is to Him we live, and to Him we die. Still he is not satisfied with saying this, but proceeds further. For after saying, "Whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's," and passing froth that death to the physical one, that he may not give an appearance of harshness to his language, he gives another very great indication of His care for us. Now of what kind is this?

Verse 9. *"For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living."*

And so let us at least convince thee, that He is thoughtful for our salvation. For had He not had this great care for us, where were the need of the Dispensation? He then that hath shown so much anxiety about our becoming His, as to take the form of a servant, and to die, will He despise us after we have become so? This cannot be so, assuredly it cannot! Nor would He choose to waste so much pains. "For to this end (he says) he also died," as if any one were to say, Such an one will not have the heart to despise his servant. For he minded his own purse. (Cf. Exodus 21:21.) For indeed we are not so much in love with money, as is He with our salvation. Wherefore it was not money, but His own Blood that He gave as bail for us. And for this cause He would not have the heart to give them up, for whom He had laid down so great a price. See too how he shows that His power also is unspeakable. For he says, "to this end He both died and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and the living." And above he said, "for whether we live or die, we are His." See what a wide extended Mastery! see what unconquerable might! see what exact providence over us! For tell me not, he means, of the living. Even for the departed He taketh care. But if He doth of the departed, it is quite plain that He doth of the living also. For He hath not omitted any point for this Mastery, making out for Himself more claims than men do, and especially beside all other things in order to take care of us. For a man puts down money, and for this clings strongly to his own slave. But He Himself paid down His death; and the salvation of one who was purchased at so great a price, and the Mastery over whom He had gained with so much anxiety and trouble, He is not likely to count of no value. But this he says to make the Judaizer abashed, and to persuade him to call to mind the greatness of the benefit, and how that when dead he had come to be alive, and that there was nothing that he gained from the Law, and how that it would be the last degree of unfeelingness, to leave Him Who had shown so much care toward him, and run away back to the Law. After attacking him then sufficiently, he relaxes again, and says,

Verse 10. *"But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother?"*

And so he seems to be setting them upon a level, but from that he has said, he shows that the difference between them is great. First then by the appellation of "brother" he does away with disputatiousness, and then also by calling that awful day to their mind. For after saying, "Why dost thou set at nought thy brother?" he proceeds, "For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ."

And he seems indeed to be again rebuking the more advanced in saying this, but he is putting the mind of the Judaizer to confusion by not only calling for his reverence to the benefit that had been done him, but also making him afraid of the punishment to come. "For we shall all," he says, "stand before the judgment-seat of Christ."

Verse 11, 12. *“For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.”*

See how he again puts his mind into confusion, while he seems to be rebuking the other. For he intimates some such thing, as if he had said, How does it affect you? Are you to be punished for him? But this he does not say, but hints at it by putting it in a milder form, and saying, “For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ:” and, “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” And he introduces the prophet in witness of the subjection of all to Him, yea a subjection extended even to those in the Old Testament, and of all absolutely. For he does not barely say every one shall worship, but “shall confess,” that is, shall give an account of what he has done. Be in anxiety then as seeing the Master of all sitting on his judgment-seat, and do not make schisms and divisions in the Church, by breaking away from grace, and running over to the Law. For the Law also is His. And why say I so of the Law? Even those in the Law and those before the Law are His. And it is not the Law that will demand an account of thee, but Christ, of thee and of all the human race. See how he has released us from the fear of the Law. Then that he may not seem to be saying this to frighten them for the occasion, but to have come to it in the course he had proposed himself, he again keeps to the same subject, and says,

Verse 13. *“Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way.”*

This does not apply to one less than the other: wherefore it may well fit with both, both the advanced man that was offended at the observance of meats, and the unadvanced that stumbled at the vehement rebuke given him. But consider, I pray you, the great punishment we shall suffer, if we give offense at all. For if in a case where the thing was against law, yet, as they rebuked unseasonably, he forbade their doing it, in order that a brother might not be made to offend and stumble; when we give an offense without having anything to set right even, what treatment shall we deserve? For if not saving others be a crime (and that it is so, he who buried the talent proves), what will be the effect of giving him offense also? But what if he gives himself the offense, you may say, by being weak? Why this is just why thou oughtest to be patient. For if he were strong, then he would not require so much attention. But now, since he is of the feebler sort, he does on this ground need considerable care. Let us then yield him this, and in all respects bear his burdens, as it is not of our own sins only that we shall have to give an account, but for those also wherein we cause others to offend. For if that account, were even by itself hard to pass, when these be added too, how are we to be saved? And let us not suppose, that if we can find accomplices in our sins, that will be an excuse; as this will prove an addition to our punishment. Since the serpent too was punished more than the woman, as was the woman likewise more than the man (1 Timothy 2:14); and Jezebel also was punished more severely than Ahab, who had seized the vineyard; for it was she that devised the whole matter, and caused the king to offend. (1 Kings 21:23, 25, 29.) And therefore thou, when thou art the author of destruction to others, wilt suffer more severely than those who have been subverted by thee. For sinning is not so ruinous as leading others also into the same. Wherefore he speaks of those who “not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.” (Romans 1:32.) And so when we see any sinning, let us, so far from thrusting them on, even pull them back from the pit of iniquity, that we may not have to be punished for the ruin of others besides ourselves. And let us be continually in mind of the awful judgment-seat, of the stream of fire, of the chains never to be loosed, of the darkness with no light, the gnashing of teeth, and the venomous worm.

“Ah, but God is merciful!” Are these then mere words? and was not that rich man punished for despising Lazarus? Are not the foolish virgins cast out of the Bride-chamber? Do not they who did not feed Him go away into “the fire prepared for the devil?” (Matthew 25:41.) Will not he that hath soiled garments be “bound hand and foot” (ib. 22:13), and go to ruin? Will, not he that demanded the hundred pence to be paid, be given over to the tormentors? Is not that said of the adulterers true, that “their worm shall not die, nor their fire be quenched?” (Mark 9:43.) Are these but mere threats then? Yea, it is answered. And from what source pray dost thou venture to make such an assertion, and that too when thou passest judgment of thine own opinion? Why, I shall be able to prove the contrary, both from what He said, and from what He did. (See John 5:22.) For if you will not believe by the punishments that are to come, at least believe by those that have happened already. For what have happened, and have come forth into reality, surely are not threats and words. Who then was it that flooded the whole world, and affected that baleful wreck, and the utter destruction of our whole race! Who was it that after this hurled those thunders and lightnings upon the land of Sodom? Who that drowned all Egypt in the sea? Who that consumed the six hundred thousand men in the wilderness? Who that burnt up the synagogue of Abiram? Who that bade the earth open her mouth for the company of Core and Dathan, and swallow them up? Who that carried off the threescore and ten thousand at one sweep in David’s time? Shall I mention also those that were punished individually! Cain, who was given up to a continual vengeance? (the son of) Charmi, who was stoned with his whole family? Or him, that suffered the same thing for gathering sticks on the sabbath? The forty children who were consumed by those beasts, and obtained no pardon even on the score of their age? And if you would see these same things even after the times of grace, just consider what great suffering the Jews had, how the women ate their children, some roasting them, and some consuming them in other ways: how after being given up to irremediable famine, and wars varied and severe, they threw all previous catastrophes into the shade by the exceeding greatness of their own calamities. For that it was Christ Who did these things unto them, hear Him declaring as much, both by parables, and clearly and explicitly. By parables, as when He says. “But those that would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them” (Luke 19:27); and by that of the vineyard, and that of the marriage. But clearly and explicitly, as when He threatens that they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into the nations, and there shall be upon the earth “distress of nations with perplexity, at the roaring of the sea and waves; men’s hearts failing them for fear.” (ib. 21:24, 25, 26.) “And there shall be tribulation, such as there never was, no, nor ever shall be.” (Matthew 24:21.) And what a punishment Ananias too and Sapphira suffered, for the theft of a few pieces of money, ye all know. Seest thou not the daily calamities also? Or have these too not taken place? Seest thou not now men that are pining with famine? those that suffer elephantiasis, or are maimed in body? those that live in constant poverty, those that suffer countless irreparable evils? Now then will it be reasonable for some to be punished, and some not? For if God be not unjust (and unjust He is not), thou also wilt assuredly suffer punishment, if thou sinnest. But if because He is merciful He doth not punish, then ought not these either to have been punished. But now because of these words of yours, God even here punisheth many, that when ye believe not the words of the threatening, the deeds of vengeance ye may at least believe. And since things of old do not affright you so much, by things which happen in every generation, He correcteth those that in every generation are growing listless. And what is the reason, it may be said, why He doth not punish all here? That He may give the others an interval for repentance. Why then does He not take vengeance upon all in the next world?” It is lest many should disbelieve in His providence. How many robbers are there who have been taken, and how many that have left this life unpunished? Where is the mercy of God then? it is my turn now to ask of thee. For supposing no one at all had vengeance taken upon him, then you might have taken refuge in

this. But now that some are punished, and some are not, though they be the worse sinners, how can it be reasonable that there be not the same punishments for the same sins? How can those punished appear to be else than wronged? What reason is there then why all are not punished here? Hear His own defense for these things. For when some had died by the falling of a tower on them: He said to those who raised a question upon this, "Suppose ye that they were sinners above all then? I tell you nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:4, 5); so exhorting us not to feel confident when others suffer punishment, and we ourselves, though we have committed many transgressions, do not. For except we change our conduct, we assuredly shall suffer. And how, it may be said, is it that we are to be punished without end for sinning a short time here? how, I ask, is it that in this world, those who in a short moment of time have done one murder, are condemned to constant punishment in the mines? "But it is not God that does this," it may be said. How then came He to keep the man with a palsy for thirty and eight years in so great punishments? For that it was for sins that He punished him, hear what He says, "Behold, thou art made whole, sin no more." (John 5:14.) Still it is said, he found a release. But the case is not so with the other life. For that there, there will never be any release, hear from His own mouth, "Their worm will not die, nor their fire be quenched." (Mark 9:44.) And "these shall go into everlasting life, but these into everlasting punishment." (Matthew 25:46.) Now if the life be eternal, the punishment is eternal. Seest thou not how severely He threatened the Jews? Then have the things threatened come to pass, or were those that were told them a mere talk? "One stone shall not remain upon another." (Luke 21:6.) And has it remained? But what, when He says, "There shall be tribulation such as hath not been?" (Matthew 24:21.) Has it not come then? Read the history of Josephus, and thou wilt not be able to draw thy breath even, at only hearing what they suffered for their doings. This I say, not that I may pain you, but that I may make you secure, and lest by having humored you overmuch, I should but make a way for the endurance of sorer punishments. For why, pray, dost thou not deem it right thou shouldst be punished for sinning? Hath He not told thee all beforehand? Hath He not threatened thee? not come to thy aid? not done things even without number for thy salvation's sake? Gave He thee not the layer of Regeneration, and forgave He not all thy former sins? Hath He not after this forgiveness, and the layer, also given thee the succor of repentance if thou sin? Hath He not made the way to forgiveness of sins, even after all this, easy to thee? Hear then what He hath enjoined: "If thou forgive thy neighbor, I also will forgive thee" (ib. 6:14), He says. What hardship is there in this? "If ye judge the cause of the fatherless, and see that the widow have right, come and let us converse together," He saith, "and if your sins be as purple, I will make them white as snow." (Isaiah 1:17, 18.) What labor is there here? "Tell thy sins, that thou mayest be justified." (Isaiah 43:26. LXX.) What hardship is there in this? "Redeem thy sins with alms." (Daniel 4:24.) What toilsomeness is there in this? The Publican said, "Be merciful to me a sinner," and "went down home justified." (Luke 18:13, 14.) What labor is it to imitate the Publican? And wilt thou not be persuaded even after this that there is punishment and vengeance? At that rate thou wilt deny that even the devil is punished For, "Depart," He says, "into the fire prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matthew 25:41.) Now if there be no hell, then neither is he punished. But if he is punished, it is plain that we shall also. For we also have disobeyed, even if it be not in the same way. And how comest thou not to be afraid to speak such daring things? For when thou sayest that God is merciful, and doth not punish, if He should punish he will be found in thy case to be no longer merciful. See then unto what language the devil leadeth you? And what? are the monks that have taken up with the mountains, and yield examples of such manifold self-denial, to go away without their crown? For if the wicked are not to be punished, and there is no recompense made to any one, some one else will say, perhaps, that neither are the good crowned. Nay, it will be said, For this is suitable with God, that there should be a kingdom only, and not a hell. Well

then, shall the whoremonger, and the adulterer, and the man who hath done evils unnumbered, enjoy the same advantages with the man who has exhibited soberness and holiness, and Paul is to stand with Nero, or rather even the devil with Paul? For if there be no hell and yet there will be a Resurrection of all, then the wicked will attain to the same good things! And who would say this? Who even of men that were quite crazed? or rather, which of the devils even would say this? For even they confess that there is a hell. Wherefore also they cried out and said, "Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time?" (ib. 8:29.) How then comest thou not to fear and tremble, when even the devils confess what thyself art denying? Or how is it that thou dost not see who is the teacher of these evil doctrines? For he who deceived the first man, and under the pretext of greater hopes, threw them out even of the blessings they had in possession, he it is who now suggests the saying and fancying of these things. And for this reason he persuades some to suspect there is no hell, that he may thrust them into hell. As God on the other hand threateneth hell, and made hell ready, that by coming to know of it thou mightest so live as not to fall into hell. And yet if, when there is a hell, the devil persuades thee to these things, how came the devils to confess it, if it did not exist, whose aim and desire it is that we should not suspect anything of the kind, that through fearlessness we might become the more listless, and so fall with them into that fire? How then (it will be said) came they to confess it? It was through their not bearing the compulsion laid upon them. Taking all these things into consideration then, let those who talk in this way leave off deceiving both themselves and others since even for these words of theirs they will be punished for detracting from those awful things, and relaxing the vigor of many who are minded to be in earnest, and do not even do as much as those barbarians, for they, though they were ignorant of everything, when they heard that the city was to be destroyed, were so far from disbelieving, that they even groaned, and girded themselves with sackcloth, and were confounded, and did not cease to use every means until they had allayed the wrath. (Jonah 3:5.) But dost thou, who hast had so great experience of facts and of teaching, make light of what is told thee? The contrary then will be thy fate. For as they through fear of the words had not to undergo the vengeance in act, so thou who despisest the threatening by words, wilt have to undergo the punishment in very deed. And if now what thou art told seems a fable to thee, it will not, however, seem so when the very things convince thee, in that Day. Have you never noticed what He did even in this world? How when He met with two thieves, He counted them not worthy of the same estate, but one He led into the Kingdom, and the other He sent away into Hell? And why speak I of a robber and murderer? For even the Apostle He did not spare, when he had become a traitor, but even when He saw him rushing to the halter, and hanging, and bursting asunder in the midst (for he did "burst asunder, and all his bowels gushed out") (Acts 1:18), still when He foresaw all these things, He let him suffer all the same, giving thee froth the present a proof of all that is in the other world also. Do not then cheat yourselves, through being persuaded of the devil. These devices are his. For if both judges, and masters, and teachers, and savages, respect the good, and punish the evil, with what reason is the contrary to be the case with God, while the good man and he who is not so are deemed worthy of the same estate? And when will they leave off their wickedness? For they who now are expecting punishment, and are amongst so many terrors, those from the judges and from the laws, and yet do not for this depart from iniquity; when on their departing this life they are to lay aside even this fear, and are not only not to be cast into hell, but are even to obtain a kingdom; when will they leave doing wickedly? Is this then mercy, pray? to add to wickedness, to set up rewards for iniquity, to count the sober and the unchastened, the faithful and the irreligious, Paul and the devil, to have the same deserts? But how long am I to be trifling? Wherefore I exhort you to get you free from this madness, and having grown to be your own masters, persuade your souls to fear and to tremble, that they may at once be saved from the

hell to come, and may, after passing the life in this world soberly, attain unto the good things to come by the grace and love towards man, etc.

Verse 14. *“I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself, but to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.”*

After first rebuking the person who judgeth his brother, and moving him to leave off this reproaching, he then explains himself further upon the doctrinal part, and instructs in a dispassionate tone the weaker sort, displaying in this case too a great deal of gentleness. For he does not say he shall be punished, nor anything of the sort, but merely disburdens him of his fears in the matter, and that with a view to his being more easily persuaded with what he tells him; and he says, “I know, and am persuaded.” And then to prevent any of those who did not trust him saying, And what is it to us if thou art persuaded? for thou art no trustworthy evidence to be set in competition with so great a law, and with oracles brought down from above, he proceeds, “in the Lord.” That is, as having learned from Him, as having my confidence from Him. The judgment then is not one of the mind of man. What is it that thou art persuaded of and knowest? Tell us. “That there is nothing unclean of itself.” By nature, he says, nothing is unclean but it becomes so by the spirit in which a man uses it. Therefore it becomes so to himself only, and not to all. “For to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.” What then? Why not correct thy brother, that he may think it not unclean? Why not with full authority call him away from this habit of mind and conception of things, that he may never make it common? My reason is, he says, I am afraid to grieve him. Wherefore he proceeds,

Verse 15. *“But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably.”*

You see how far, for the present, he goes in affection for him, showing that he makes so great account of him, that with a view not to grieve him he does not venture even to enjoin things of great urgency, but by yieldingness would rather draw him to himself, and by charity. For even when he has freed him of his fears, he does not drag him and force him, but leaves him his own master. For keeping a person from meats is no such matter as overwhelming with grief. You see how much he insists upon charity. And this is because he is aware that it can do everything. And on this ground he makes somewhat larger demand upon them. For so far he says from its being proper for them to distress you at all, they ought even, if need be, not to hesitate at condescending to you. Whence he proceeds to say, “Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.” Or dost thou not value thy brother enough even to purchase his salvation at the price of abstinence from meats? And yet Christ refused not to become a slave, nor yet to die for him; but thou dost not despise even food, that thou mayest save him. And yet with it all Christ was not to gain all, yet still He died for all; so fulfilling His own part. But art thou aware that by meat thou art overthrowing him in the more important matters, and yet makest a disputing? And him who is the object of such care unto Christ, dost thou consider so contemptible, and dishonor one whom He loveth? Yet He died not for the weak only, but even for an enemy. And wilt not thou refrain from meats even, for him that is weak? Yet Christ did what was greatest even, but thou not even the less. And He was Master, thou a brother. These words then were enough to tongue-tie him. For they show him to be of a little spirit, and after having the benefit of great things from God, not to give in return even little ones.

Verse 16, 17. *“Let not then your good be evil spoken of. For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink.”*

By their “good,” he means here either their faith, or the hope of rewards hereafter, or the perfectness of their religious state. For it is not only that you fail to profit your brother, he means, but the doctrine itself, and the grace of God, and His gift, you cause to be evil spoken of. Now when thou tightest, when thou quarrellest, when thou art vexatious, when thou makest schism in the Church, and reproachest thy brother, and art distant with him, those that are without will speak evil of you. And so good is so far from coming of this, that just the opposite is the case. For your good is charity, love of the brotherhood, being united, being bound together, living at peace, living in gentleness. He again, to put an end to his fears and the other’s disputatiousness, says, “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink.” Is it by these, he means, that we are to be approved? As he says in another passage too, “Neither if we eat are we the better, neither if we eat not are we the worse.” And he does not need any proof, but is content with stating it. And what he says is this, If thou eatest, does this lead thee to the Kingdom? And this was why, by way of satirizing them as mightily pleased with themselves herein, he said, not “meat” only, but “drink.” What then are the things that do bring us here? “Righteousness, and peace, and joy,” and a virtuous life, and peace with our brethren (whereto this quarrelsomeness is opposed), the joy from unanimity, which this rebuking puts an end to. But this he said not to one party only, but to both of them, it being a fit season for saying it to both. Then as he had mentioned peace and joy, but there is a peace and joy over bad actions also, he adds, “in the Holy Ghost.” Since he that ruins his brother, hath at Once subverted peace, and wronged joy, more grievously than he that plunders money. And what is worse is, that Another saved him, and thou wrongest and ruinst him. Since then eating, and the supposed perfect state, does not bring in these virtues, but the things subversive of them it does bring in, how can it be else than right to make light of little things, in order to give firmness to great ones? Then since this rebuking took place in some degree out of vanity, he proceeds to say,

Verse 18. *“For he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men.”*

For they will not admire thee so much for thy perfect state, as all will for peace and amity. For this is a goodly thing, that all will have the benefit of, but of that not one even will.

Verse 19. *“Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify one another:”*

This applies to the other, that he may grow peaceable. But the other to the latter too, that he may not destroy his brother. Still he has made both apply to either again, by saying, “one another,” and showing that without peace it is not easy to edify.

Verse 20. *“For meat destroy not the work of God.”*

Giving this name to the salvation of a brother, and adding greatly to the fears, and showing that he is doing the opposite of that he desires. For thou, he says, art so far from building up as thou intendest, that thou dost even destroy, and that a building too not of man but of God, and not for any great end either, but for a trivial thing. For it was “for meat,” he says. Then lest so many indulgences should confirm the weaker brother in his misconception, he again becomes doctrinal, as follows,

“All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for that man who eateth with offense.”

Who does it, that is, with a bad conscience. And so if you should force him, and he should eat, there would be nothing gained. For it is not the eating that maketh unclean, but the intention with which a man eats. If then thou dost not set that aright, thou hast done all to no purpose, and hast made things worse: for thinking a thing unclean is not so bad as tasting it when one thinks it unclean. Here then you are committing two errors, one by increasing his prejudice through your quarrelsomeness, and another by getting him to taste of what is unclean. And so, as long as you do not persuade him, do not force him.

Verse 21. *“It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.”*

Again, he requires the greater alternative, that they should not only not force him, but even condescend to him. For he often did this himself also, as when he circumcised (Acts 16:3), when he was shorn (ib. 18:18), when he sacrificed that Jewish sacrifice. (ib. 21:26, see p. 126). And he does not say to the man “do so,” but he states it in the form of a sentiment to prevent again making the other, the weaker man, too listless. And what are his words? “It is good not to eat flesh.” And why do I say flesh? if it be wine, or any other thing of the sort besides, which gives offense, refrain. For nothing is so important as thy brother’s salvation. And this Christ shows us, since He came from Heaven, and suffered all that He went through, for our sakes. And let me beg you to observe, how he also drives it home upon the other, by the words “stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.” And do not tell me (he means) that he is so without reason but, that thou hast power to set it right. For the other has a sufficient claim to be helped in his weakness, and to thee this were no loss not being a case of hypocrisy (Galatians 2:13), but of edification and economy. For if thou force him, he is at once destroyed, and will condemn thee, and fortify himself the more in not eating. But if thou condescend to him, then he will love thee, and will not suspect thee as a teacher, and thou wilt afterwards gain the power of sowing imperceptibly in him the right views. But if he once hate thee, then thou hast closed the entrance for thy reasoning. Do not then compel him, but even thyself refrain for his sake, not refraining from it as unclean, but because he is offended, and he will love thee the more. So Paul also advises when he says, “It is good not to eat flesh,” not because it was unclean, but because the brother is offended and is weak.

Verse 22. *“Hast thou faith? have it to thyself.”*

Here he seems to me to be giving a gentle warning to the more advanced on the score of vanity. And what he says is this, Dost thou wish to show me that thou art perfect, and fully furnished? Do not show it to me, but let thy conscience suffice. And by faith, be here means that concerned not with doctrines, but with the subject in hand. For of the former it says, “With the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:10); and, “Whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny.” (Luke 9:26.) For the former by not being confessed, ruins us; and so does this by being confessed unseasonably. “Happy is he that condemneth not himself in the thing which he alloweth.” Again he strikes at the weaker one, and gives him (i.e. the stronger) a sufficient crown, in that of his conscience. Even if no man see, that is, thou art able to be happy in thyself. For after saying, “Have it to thyself,” to prevent his thinking this a contemptible tribunal, he tells him this is better to thee than the world. And if all accuse thee, and thou condemn not thyself, and thy conscience lay no charge against thee, thou art happy. But this is a statement he did not make to apply to any person whatever. For there are many that

condemn not themselves, and yet are great transgressors: and these are the most miserable of men. But he still keeps to the subject in hand.

Verse 23. *“And he that doubteth is condemned if he eat.”*

Again, it is to exhort him to spare the weaker, that he says this. For what good is it if he eat in doubt, and condemn himself? For I approve of him, who both eateth, and doeth it not with doubting. See how he induces him not to eating only, but to eating with a good conscience too. Then he mentions likewise the reason why he is condemned. continuing in these words,

“Because he eateth not of faith.” Not because it is unclean, but because it is not of faith. For he did not believe that it is clean, but though unclean he touched it. But by this he shows them also what great harm they do by compelling men, and not persuading them, to touch things which had hitherto appeared unclean to them, that for this at all events they might leave rebuking. “For whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” For when a person does not feel sure, nor believe that a thing is clean, how can he do else than sin? Now all these things have been spoken by Paul of the subject in hand, not of everything. And observe what care he takes not to offend any; and he had said before, “If thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably.” But if one should not grieve him, much less ought one to give him offense. And again, “For meat destroy not the work of God.” For if it were a grievous act of iniquity to throw down a Church, much more so is it to do so to the spiritual Temple. Since a man is more dignified than a Church: for it was not for walls that Christ died, but for these temples.

Let us then watch our own conduct on all sides, and afford to no one ever so little handle. For this life present is a race-course and we ought to have thousands of eyes on every side, and not even to fancy that ignorance will be an adequate excuse. For there is such a thing, there certainly is, as being punished for ignorance, when the ignorance is inexcusable. Since the Jews too were ignorant. yet not ignorant in an excusable way. And the Gentiles were ignorant, but they are without excuse. (Romans 1:20.) For when thou art ignorant of those things which it is not possible to know, thou wilt not be subject to any charge for it: but when of things easy and possible, thou wilt be punished with the utmost rigor. Else if we be not excessively supine, but contribute our own share to its full amount, God will also reach forth His hand unto us in those things which we are ignorant of. And this is what Paul said to the Philippians likewise. “If in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.” (Philippians 3:15.) But when we are not willing to do even what we are masters of, we shall not have the benefit of His assistance in this either. And this was the case with the Jews too. “For this cause,” He says, “speak I unto them in parables, because seeing they see not.” (Matthew 13:13.) In what sense was it that seeing they saw not? They saw devils cast out, and they said, He hath a devil. They saw the dead raised, and they worshipped not, but attempted to kill Him. But not of this character was Cornelius. (ib. 12:24.) For this reason then, when he was doing the whole of his duty with sincerity, God added unto him’ that which was lacking also. Say not then, how came God to neglect such and such a one who was no formalist and a good man, though a Gentile? For in the first place no man can possibly know for certain whether a person is no formalist, but He only who “formed the hearts severally.” (Psalm 33:32. 15, LXX.) And then there is this to be said too, that perchance such an one was neither thoughtful nor earnest. And how, it may be said, could be, as being very uninformed? Let me beg you to consider then this simple and single-hearted man, and take notice of him in the affairs of life, and you will see him a pattern of the utmost scrupulousness, such that if he would have shown it in spiritual matters he would not have been

overlooked: for the facts of the truth are clearer than the sun. And wherever a man may go, he might easily lay hold of his own salvation, if he were minded, that is, to be heedful, and not to look on this as a by-work. For were the doings shut up into Palestine, or in a little corner of the world? Hast thou not heard the prophet say, "All shall know Me from the least even to the greatest?" (Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 8:11.) Do not you see the things themselves uttering the truth? How then are these to be excused, seeing as they do the doctrine of the truth spread far and wide, and not troubling themselves, or caring to learn it? And dost thou require all this, it is asked, of a rude savage? Nay not of a rude savage only, but of any who is more savage than men of the present day. For why is it, pray, that in matters of this world he knows how to answer when he is wronged, and to resist when he has violence done him, and do and devise everything to prevent his ever having his will thwarted even in the slightest degree; but in spiritual concerns he has not used this same judgment? And when a man worships a stone, and thinks it a God, he both keeps feasts to it, and spends money on it, and shows much fear towards it, and in no case becomes listless from his simpleness. But when he has to seek to the very and true God, do you then mention singleness and simpleness to me? These things are not so, assuredly they are not! For the complaints are those of mere listlessness. For which do you think the most simple and rude, those in Abraham's day or those now? (Joshua 24:2.) Clearly the former. And when that it was easiest to find religion out now or then? Clearly now. For now the Name of God is proclaimed even by all men, and the Prophets have preached, the things come to pass, the Gentiles been convinced. (Genesis 32:29; Judges 13:18.) But at that day the majority were still in an uninstructed state, and sin was dominant. And there was no law to instruct, nor prophets, nor miracles, nor doctrine, nor multitude of men acquainted with it, nor aught else of the kind, but all things then lay as it were in a deep darkness, and a night moonless and stormy. And yet even then that wondrous and noble man, though the obstacles were so great, still knew God and practiced virtue, and led many to the same zeal; and this though he had not even the wisdom of those without. For how should he, when there were no letters even yet invented? Yet still he brought his own share in, and God joined to bring in what was lacking to him. For you cannot say even this, that Abraham received his religion from his fathers, because he (Terah, see Joshua 24:2.) was an idolater. But still, though he was from such forefathers and was uncivilized, and lived among uncivilized people, and had no instructor in religion, yet he attained to a knowledge of God, and in comparison with all his descendants, who had the advantage both of the Law and the Prophets, he was so much more illustrious as no words can express. Why was it then? It was because in things of this world he did not give himself any great anxiety, but in things of the spirit he applied his whole attention. And what of Melchizedek? was not he also born about those times, and was so bright as to be called even a priest of God? For it is impossible in the extreme, that the sober-minded should ever be overlooked. And let not these things be a trouble to us, but knowing that it is the mind with which in each case the power lies, let us look to our own duties, that we may grow better. Let us not be demanding an account of God or enquire why He let such an one alone, but called such an one. For we are doing the same as if a servant that had given offense were to pry into his master's housekeeping. Wretched and miserable man, when thou oughtest to be thoughtful about the account thou hast to give, and how thou wilt reconcile thy master, dost thou call him to account for things that thou art not to give an account of, passing over those things of which thou art to give a reckoning? What am I to say to the Gentile? he asks. Why, the same that I have been saying. And look not merely to what thou shalt say to the Gentile, but also to the means of amending thyself? When he is offended by examining into thy life, then consider what thou wilt say. For if he be offended, thou wilt not be called to a reckoning for him, but if it be thy way of life by which he is injured, thou wilt have to undergo the greatest danger. When he seeth thee philosophizing about the kingdom, and fluttering at the things of

this life, and at once afraid about hell, and trembling at the calamities of this life, then lay it to mind. When he sees this, and accuses thee, and says, If thou art in love with the Kingdom, how is it thou dost not look down upon the things of this life? If thou art expecting the awful judgment, why dost thou not despise the terrors of this world? If thou hopest for immortality, why dost thou not think scorn of death? When he says this, be thou anxious what defense thou wilt make. When he sees thee trembling at the thought of losing thy money, thee that expectest the heavens, and exceedingly glad about a single penny, and selling thy soul again for a little money, then lay it to mind. For these are the things, just these, that make the Gentiles stumble. And so, if thou art thoughtful about his salvation, make thy defense on these heads, not by words, but by actions. For it is not through that question that anybody ever blasphemed God, but through men's bad lives it is, that there are thousands of blasphemies in all quarters. Set him right then. For the Gentile will next ask thee, How am I to know that God's commands are feasible? For thou that art of Christian extraction, and hast been brought up in this fine religion, dost not do anything of the kind. And what will you tell him? You will be sure to say, I will show you others that do; monks that dwell in the deserts. And art thou not ashamed to confess to being a Christian, and yet to send to others, as unable to show that you display the temper of a Christian? For he also will say directly, What need have I to go to the mountains, and to hunt up the deserts? For if there is no possibility for a person who is living in the midst of cities to be a disciple, this is a sad imputation on this rule of conduct, that we are to leave the cities, and run to the deserts. But show me a man who has a wife, and children, and family, and yet pursueth wisdom. What are we then to say to all this? Must we not hang down our heads, and be ashamed? For Christ gave us no such commandment; but what? "Let your light shine before men" (Matthew 5:16), not mountains, and deserts, and wildernesses, and out-of-the-way places. And this I say, not as abusing those who have taken up with the mountains, but as bewailing those that dwell in cities, because they have banished virtue from thence. Wherefore I beseech you let us introduce the discipline they have there here also, that the cities may become cities indeed. This will improve the Gentile. This will free him from countless offenses. And so if thou wouldst set him free from scandal, and thyself enjoy rewards without number, set thy own life in order, and make it shine forth upon all sides, "that men may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." For so we also shall enjoy that unutterable and great glory, which God grant that we may all attain to, by the grace and love toward man, etc.