

# Romans 14:16-19 Commentary

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Romans 14:16 **Therefore do not let what** is for you a **good thing be spoken of as evil**; (NASB: Lockman)

**Greek:** me blasphemestho (3SPPM) oun humon to agaon

**Amplified:** Do not therefore let what seems good to you be considered an evil thing [by someone else]. [In other words, do not give occasion for others to criticize that which is justifiable for you.] ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**NLT:** Then you will not be condemned for doing something you know is all right. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** You mustn't let something that is all right for you look like an evil practice to somebody else. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** Therefore, stop allowing your good to be spoken of in a reproachful and evil manner

## ROMANS ROAD to RIGHTEOUSNESS

Romans 1:18-3:20	Romans 3:21-5:21	Romans 6:1-8:39	Romans 9:1-11:36	Romans 12:1-16:27
SIN	SALVATION	SANCTIFICATION	SOVEREIGNTY	SERVICE
NEED FOR SALVATION	WAY OF SALVATION	LIFE OF SALVATION	SCOPE OF SALVATION	SERVICE OF SALVATION

God's Holiness In Condemning Sin	God's Grace In Justifying Sinners	God's Power In Sanctifying Believers	God's Sovereignty In Saving Jew and Gentile	Gods Glory The Object of Service
Deadliness of Sin	Design of Grace	Demonstration of Salvation		
		Power Given	Promises Fulfilled	Paths Pursued
Righteousness Needed	Righteousness Credited	Righteousness Demonstrated	Righteousness Restored to Israel	Righteousness Applied
God's Righteousness IN LAW	God's Righteousness IMPUTED	God's Righteousness OBEYED	God's Righteousness IN ELECTION	God's Righteousness DISPLAYED
Slaves to Sin	Slaves to God			Slaves Serving God
Doctrine				Duty
Life by Faith				Service by Faith
Modified from Irving L. Jensen's excellent work " <a href="#">Jensen's Survey of the NT</a> "				

**THEREFORE DO NOT LET WHAT IS FOR YOU A GOOD THING BE SPOKEN OF AS EVIL: me blasphemeistho (3SPPM) ourn humon to agathon:**

- Romans 12:17; 1Corinthians 10:29-30; 2 Corinthians 8:20-21; 1 Thessalonians 5:22
- Reciprocal.; Ruth 3:14 - Let it not Ephesians 5:2 - walk
- Romans 14 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Romans 14:1-15:13 Building Up One Another Without Offending, Part 1 - Study Guide \(click dropdown menu\)](#)- John MacArthur
- [Romans 14:16-23 Building Up One Another Without Offending, Part 2](#)- John MacArthur
- [Romans 14:1-15:13 Building Up One Another Without Offending, Part 2 - Study Guide \(click dropdown menu\)](#)- John MacArthur

**Middletown Bible** - The Law of Love (Romans 14:1-15:3) - For further help in understanding how to live so as to not cause a brother to stumble, see our paper entitled, "[Guidance: 67 Biblical Tests to Use in Deciding Upon a Course of Action](#)"

**Therefore** - Always pause and ponder this **term of conclusion**.

**Do not let... be spoken of as evil** - First words in the Greek for emphasis. See discussion below.

**Hodge** - 'Do not so use your liberty, which is good and valuable, as to make it the occasion of evil, and so liable to censure.' Thus Calvin and most other commentators. This supposes that the exhortation here given is addressed to the strong in faith. The **humon** (you) however, may include both classes, and the exhortation extend to the weak as well as to the good. Your good, that special good which belongs to you as Christians, viz., the gospel. ([Romans 14 - Hodge's Commentary on Romans](#))

**Denney** - It has been taken (1) as the good common to all Christians—the Messianic salvation—which will be blasphemed by the non-Christian, when they see the wantonness with which Christians rob each other of it by such conduct as Paul rebukes in Romans 14:15; and (2) as Christian liberty, the freedom of conscience which has been won by Christ, but which will inevitably get a bad name if it is exercised in an inconsiderate loveless fashion. The latter meaning alone seems relevant. ([Romans 14 - The Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

**Wuest** feels "The **“good”** here refers to “Christian liberty, the freedom of conscience which has been won by Christ, but which will inevitably get a bad name if it is exercised in an inconsiderate, loveless fashion.” (Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament)

**Newell** feels that **“Good”** here refers to the use of Christian liberty by those who are strong of faith, which is indeed good and delightful to God in itself; but in the use of which one must take heed that it be not judged and spoken evil of by the weaker brethren. We must always have the weaker in mind. You may have very blessed liberty in Christ; and that is good! But watch, in using your freedom, lest some one not having your freedom calls your path wickedness! Don't lose your liberty, but use it carefully. (See Romans 14:22) ([Romans 14 - Newell's Commentary on Romans](#))

**Good (18) (agathos)** means intrinsically good, inherently good in quality but with the idea of good which is also profitable, useful, benefiting others, benevolent (marked by or disposed to doing good).

**Be spoken of as evil (987)(blasphemeo)** is derived from **bláx** = sluggish, slow, stupid + **phémē** = rumor, fame or more likely derived from **bláptō** = to hurt, injure, harm + **phémē** from **phēmí** = to speak. **Blasphemeo** means literally to speak to harm and in general means to bring into ill repute and so to slander, to defame (to harm the reputation of by libel or slander) or to speak evil of (as here in Ro 14:16). **Blasphemeo** means to slander what is good by equating it with **evil**.

**Gary Hill** - To **blaspheme** then is to switch (misidentify) evil and good, i.e. reverse moral values which naturally defames (deliberately damages) what is good. Blasphemy represents what is "injurious to God's honor and holiness" (DNTT, 3, 342). (See excellent resource **The Discovery Bible to enable deeper Word Studies** = <http://www.helpsbible.org> - see [reviews of "The Discovery Bible"](#))

**Blasphemeo** is a **Greek construction which combines a negative ("me" = not) with a present imperative** (command, cp similar construction in Ro 14:15 = "do not destroy"), a combination which means to stop an action which is already in progress. Stop letting this good thing be "**blasphemed**". The **Wuest** paraphrases this meaning - "Therefore, stop allowing your good to be spoken of in a reproachful and evil manner."

**Blasphemeo** is used 2 other times in Romans (Ro 2:24-note, Ro 3:8-note)

**Blasphemy** is any word or act that insults the honor and dignity of another person or thing. Paul reaffirms that the position of the strong is right and "good", but advises them to stop letting what is good become the object of slander or reviling. You may be fighting so hard for your rights over a "non essential" that others are beginning to speak of it as evil. Don't allow anyone to say that what you consider good as being evil. The strong is to give up his rights in these areas of non essentials. **Liberty** does not mean **license**. The believer is to use his liberty, but not abuse it and not place an obstacle or stumbling block in a brother's Christian walk or do anything that would bring ruin to the brother's spiritual life. These are grave dangers not to be underestimated. The stronger brother must always to keep in mind how his conduct in this area of non essentials (externals rather than eternal) will affect weaker Christians.

**Stedman** - If you [as a stronger brother] are going to create division by arguing so hard for your rights, or your freedom, or by flaunting your liberty in the face of those who do not agree with it, then you are distorting the gospel itself, Paul argues. He actually uses the word blaspheme. You are causing that which is good, Paul says, the good news about Christ, to be blasphemed because you are making too much of an issue over a minor matter. You are insisting that your rights are so important that you have to divide the church over them, or separate from a brother or sister who does not believe as you do. That is saying to the watching world around that Christianity consists of whether you do, or do not do, a certain thing. **I heard of a church some time ago that got into an unholy argument over whether they ought to have a Christmas tree at their Christmas program.** Some thought that a tree was fine; others thought it was a pagan practice, and they got so angry at each other that they actually got into fist fights over it. One group dragged the tree out, then the other group dragged it back in. They ended up suing each other in a court of law and, of course, the whole thing was spread in the newspapers for the entire community to read. What else could non-Christians conclude other than that the gospel consists of whether you have a Christmas tree or not? They made such an important issue over it, they were ready to physically attack one another." ([The Right to Yield](#))

**John MacArthur** - What does "**your good**" refer to? The Greek word translated "good" is *agathos*. It refers to that which is qualitatively or intrinsically good. Paul has in mind our freedom in Christ--all that salvation provides, all the goodness of enjoying everything God has given us. When someone speaks evil about that good, it has just been blasphemed. We can enjoy everything God has given us. A strong Christian can give thanks for his freedom and rejoice in it. But if he damages other people by abusing it, and the world sees his indifference to the pain of his weaker brother, do you think they will conclude that Christians are a marvelous group of people? Not at all. In Romans 2 Paul tells us that while the Jews were trying to show the world how righteous they were, they destroyed the reputation of God. In verse 24 he says, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you." (b) A scriptural principle In 1 Corinthians 10:28-30 the apostle Paul says, "*If any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that showed it, and for conscience' sake; for the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof-- conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other; for why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience? For if I, by grace, be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that which I give thanks?*" This is what Paul means: suppose you go to dinner at a pagan's house with another believer. Your host serves meat offered to idols. You're strong in the faith, your brother is weak, and you're both trying to evangelize the pagan. Your weaker brother puts an elbow in your ribs and whispers, "I can't eat that; it's meat offered to idols. My conscience won't allow me to eat it." Your host is proud of the fact that he is serving you meat sacrificed to idols. What are you going to do? Offend the pagan or your weaker brother? Offend the pagan. If you offend your weaker brother, you've discredited the significance of Christian love. If you offend the pagan to show love to your brother, you've provided a profound testimony for that pagan. You have shown him that love overrules everything. That's the kind of fellowship most pagans would like to get into: a brotherhood where people care enough about each other to set aside their liberties. Perhaps the pagan will be drawn to the gospel by that

example. **The point of Romans 14:16 is not to forfeit your witness by overdoing your liberty and offending your brother before an unbeliever.** The unbeliever needs to see your love for your brother. We don't need to show the world how free we are; we need to show them how loving we are. (**Building Up One Another Without Offending, Part 2**)

**Steven Cole** - Love does not insist in its rights in disregard of the testimony of Christ (Ro 14:16). Romans 14:16: "Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; ..." Some say that the "good thing" refers to the gospel, but in the context it seems to refer to the liberty that we enjoy in Christ as a result of the gospel. Paul does not say who it is that speaks evil of your liberty that has caused harm to a brother. It may be other weak believers, who say, "Look at what your liberty in Christ did! You have liberty, but where's your love?" Or it could be unbelievers, who see that you're not walking in love and scoff at the message behind your liberty, namely, the gospel. Either way, the testimony of Christ, which is supposed to result in believers loving one another, will be damaged. The late Bible teacher, **H. A. Ironside**, was once at a Sunday School picnic in Detroit where a former Muslim from India who had come to know Christ was present. His name was Mohammed Ali (not the boxer!) and he ran his father's tea business in the States. As Ironside and he were chatting, a young woman came by passing out sandwiches. Ironside helped himself to several of them, but when Mr. Ali learned that they were all pork or ham, he refused to take any. The young woman laughingly said, "Why, Mr. Ali, you surprise me. Are you so under law that you can't eat pork? Don't you know that a Christian is at liberty to eat any kind of meat?" "I am at liberty to eat it," he said, "but I am also at liberty to let it alone. You know that I was brought up a strict Muslim. My old father, nearly eighty years of age now, is still a Muslim. Every three years I go back to India to give an account of the business and to visit the folks at home. Always I know how I will be greeted. The friends will be sitting inside. My father will come to the door and say, 'Mohammed, have those infidels taught you to eat the filthy hog meat yet?' 'No, father,' I will say. 'Pork has never passed my lips.' Then I can go in and have the opportunity to preach Christ to them. If I took one of your sandwiches, I could not preach Christ to my father the next time I go home." (**Edited from [1 Corinthians 8 - Ironside's Notes on 1 Corinthians 8](#)**) That converted Muslim was willing to limit his liberty in Christ for the sake of the gospel. Whether towards unbelievers or toward weaker Christians, out of love we should not insist on our rights if it would damage the testimony of Christ.

**Conclusion** - As I said, it is difficult to extrapolate the principles that Paul sets forth here into modern situations. The first thing to determine is whether the Bible speaks directly to the situation. If so, obey what it commands. If not, don't think first about your rights to liberty. Rather, think about your weaker brother's spiritual growth. Love trumps liberty. Love says, "My liberty is no big deal. The big deal is that my brother grows in his walk with Christ."

#### **Application Questions**

- 1 What are some situations where the principles from this text may apply? Be as specific and practical as possible.
- 2 Has a stronger believer ever caused you to violate your conscience by following his example? Was it difficult to recover?
- 3 Sometimes Jesus deliberately offended the legalists to make a point (e.g., Luke 11:37-52). Should we do this? When? How?
- 4 Sometimes it seems that whatever you do is bound to offend someone on both sides. What should you do then? [Love Trumps Liberty \(Romans 14:13-16\)](#)

**Romans 14:17 for the [kingdom](#) of [God](#) is not [eating](#) and [drinking](#), but [righteousness](#) and [peace](#) and [joy](#) in the [Holy Spirit](#). ([NASB: Lockman](#))**

**Greek:** ou gar estin (3SPA) e basileia tou theou brosis kai posis alla dikaiosune kai eirene kai chara en pneumatihagio:

**Amplified:**[After all] the kingdom of God is not a matter of [getting the] food and drink [one likes], but instead it is righteousness (that state which makes a person acceptable to God) and [heart] peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**NLT:** For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** After all, the kingdom of Heaven is not a matter of whether you get what you like to eat and drink, but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the sphere of the Holy Spirit;

**Young's Literal:** for the reign of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the

**FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NOT EATING and DRINKING: ou gar estin (3SPAI) e basileia tou theou brosis kai posis**

- Col 2:16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23
- Romans 14 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Romans 14:1-15:13 Building Up One Another Without Offending, Part 1 - Study Guide \(click dropdown menu\)](#)- John MacArthur
- [Romans 14:16-23 Building Up One Another Without Offending, Part 2](#)- John MacArthur
- [Romans 14:1-15:13 Building Up One Another Without Offending, Part 2 - Study Guide \(click dropdown menu\)](#)- John MacArthur

## THE KINGDOM OF GOD

**For** (gar) - term of explanation

**Denney** - Insistence and strife on such matters are inconsistent with Christianity

**Hodges** - This is a new reason for forbearance. No principle of duty is sacrificed; nothing essential to religion is disregarded, for religion does not consist in external observances, but in the inward graces of the Spirit. It has already been remarked (Romans 14:4), that with all his desire of peace, no one was more firm and unyielding, when any dereliction of Christian principle was required of him, than the apostle. But the case under consideration is very different. There is no sin in abstaining from certain meats, and therefore, if the good of others require this abstinence, we are bound to exercise it. The phrase, kingdom of God, almost uniformly signifies the kingdom of the Messiah, under some one of its aspects, as consisting of all professing Christians, of all his own people, of glorified believers, or as existing in the heart. It is the spiritual theocracy. The theocracy of the Old Testament was ceremonial and ritual; that of the New is inward and spiritual. Christianity, as we should say, does not consist in things external (like) Meat and drink. ([Romans 14 - Hodge's Commentary on Romans](#))

The **kingdom of God** is the sphere of salvation where God rules as King in the hearts of those He has saved.

The main point of the Christian faith is not eating or drinking or \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank = some area not clearly spelled out in Scripture). The **kingdom of God** does not consist in observing or not observing days, eating or not eating meats, or any other secondary issues of religious scruples. The **kingdom of God** is not externals but eternal (and "internals" - i.e., transformed hearts ruled by the King's Emissary the Holy Spirit). What really counts in the **kingdom of God** is not EXTERNAL REGULATIONS but ETERNAL REALITIES.

Paul's main point is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. A non-Christian, looking at a Christian, ought to see these things, not wrangling and disputing and fighting and law courts, but righteousness, here he is not referring so much to our righteous standing ([justification](#)) but our righteous walking ([sanctification](#)).

**Lange** defines **Kingdom** as "The heavenly sphere of life in which God's Word and Spirit govern, and whose organ on earth is the Church."

**Denney** - Usually in Paul **kingdom of God** is transcendent; the kingdom is that which comes with the second advent, and is the inheritance of believers; it is essentially (as it is called in 2 Timothy 4:18) a heavenly kingdom. See 1Th 2:12, 2Th 1:5, 1Cor 6:9f., 1Cor 15:50, Gal 5:21. This use of the expression, however, does not exclude another, which is more akin to what we find in the Gospels, and regards the Kingdom of God as in some sense also present: we have examples of this here, and in 1Cor 4:20 : perhaps also in Acts 20:25. ([Romans 14 - The Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

**John MacArthur** - The **kingdom** is the sphere of salvation; it is God ruling in the hearts of those who believe in Christ. We all belong to it when we're saved. The essence of that kingdom is not meat and drink. We haven't been saved to promote externals or fight over non-essentials--though sad to say we've done a wonderful job of it. I believe fighting over non-essentials has become widespread Christian recreation, and is probably a key reason that many people reject the gospel. That's sad because believers who fight over those things have missed the point of the kingdom. ([Building Up One Another Without Offending, Part 2](#))

**George Ladd** - The **kingdom of God** means primarily the rule of God, the divine kingly authority... The **kingdom of God** is the divine authority and rule given by the Father to the Son (Luke 22:29). Christ will exercise this rule until he has subdued all that is hostile to God. When he has put all enemies under his feet, he will return the kingdom—his messianic authority—to the Father (1Cor. 15:24-28)." ([Evangelical Dictionary of Theology](#))

## THE KINGDOM: NOW BUT NOT YET HERE BUT STILL FUTURE

**Kingdom** (932)(**basileia** [see word study] from **basileus** = a sovereign, king, monarch) denotes sovereignty, royal power, dominion. Properly **basileia** is the territory or people over which a king sovereignly rules. A Kingdom requires a king and the believer's King is King Jesus! The **Kingdom of Heaven/God** is both simple and complex and has been the subject of many non-Biblical interpretations (this summary makes no attempt to review these interpretations). It is as simple as the truth that wherever the King (God/Jesus) rules and reigns, there the kingdom is present! It is complex in that a number of references to Kingdom of God/Heaven have prophetic (eschatological) overtones, so it has a present and future aspect. It is also complex in the sense that the Kingdom of God/Heaven is described in both testaments from Genesis to Revelation (See Tony Garland's interesting related summary of [Genesis and Revelation as Bookends](#)). It follows that any attempt to give a Biblical definition of kingdom will be woefully lacking. So as you read these notes on the definition of basileia, understand that this is only a summary --indeed, it will take all eternity to comprehend God's Kingdom, a Kingdom which will endure forever and ever! Amen!

The **Kingdom of God** is the place where God reigns as King. Some have divided it into two basic aspects - the **universal kingdom** (God's sovereign rule over all creation) and the **mediatorial kingdom** which "refers to God's spiritual rule and authority over His people on earth through divinely chosen mediators." (MacArthur)

### MacArthur summarizes the **mediatorial kingdom of God**

Through Adam, then the patriarchs, Moses, Joshua, the judges, prophets, and the kings of Israel and Judah, God revealed His will and mediated His authority to His people. With the end of Israel's monarchy began the times of the Gentiles. During that period, which will last until the Second Coming of Christ, God mediates His spiritual rule over the hearts of believers through the church (Acts 20:25+; Ro 14:17+; Col. 1:13+). He does so by means of the Word and the living Christ (Gal. 2:20-note)(**ED: AND HIS INDWELLING SPIRIT**). The final phase of the mediatorial, spiritual kingdom will dominate the earth in the form of the millennial kingdom, to be set up following Christ's return (**ED: AT THAT TIME, THE FORMERLY INVISIBLE KINGDOM WILL THEN BE VISIBLE**). During that thousand year period, the Lord Jesus Christ will personally reign on earth, exercising sovereign control over the creation and all men. At the end of the Millennium, with the destruction of all rebels, the spiritual kingdom will be merged with the universal kingdom (1 Cor. 15:24), and they will become the same. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts 1-12)

The topic **Kingdom of God** (synonymous term = **Kingdom of Heaven**) can be confusing as the interpretation depends on the context in which it is used - It can mean a spiritual Kingdom, a Millennial Kingdom or a Kingdom in the New Heaven and New Earth. Many who espouse the teaching of [replacement theology or supersessionism](#) do not accept a literal earthly **Kingdom of God**. I am firmly convinced (from Scripture) that there will be a literal earthly **Kingdom of God** ruled by the King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ. For that reason I have several detailed discussions on the **Kingdom of God** in the commentaries on the following verses...

- Luke 17:20-21-commentary
- Luke 19:11ff-commentary
- Acts 1:6-commentary
- Matthew 5:3 - commentary

<b>THE KINGDOM OF GOD/HEAVEN</b>		
<b>Internal Invisible</b>	<b>In Hearts of Believers</b>	<b>Present Age (Between 1st &amp; 2nd Comings)</b>
<b>External Visible</b>	<b>Literal On earth</b>	<b>Messianic Age (After 2nd Coming)</b>
<b>External Visible</b>	<b>Literal New Earth</b>	<b>Eternal Age (After Christ gives Kingdom to Father)</b>

1. **Internal, Invisible - in hearts of believers only** - in this present age (between Christ's First and Second Comings)
2. **External, Visible - literal earthly Kingdom** - will include both believers ("internal" aspect of Kingdom) and unbelievers - in the next age (After Christ's Second Coming)

3. **External, Visible - literal heavenly Kingdom** - only believers ("internal" aspect of Kingdom) - following age #2 (After Christ gives the Kingdom to His Father)

### Related Resources

- If you would like to read more on the **Kingdom of God** see John MacArthur's [sermon entitled "Kingdom Parables"](#) in which he gives more explanation of the **universal Kingdom** and the **mediatorial Kingdom**.
- Alva McClain - [The Universal and Mediatorial Kingdoms of God](#) (article from his book "The Greatness of the Kingdom")
- Darrell Bock - [The Kingdom of God in New Testament Theology](#)
- John Walvoord - [The NT Doctrine of the Kingdom of God-part 1, Part 2](#)
- John Walvoord - [Kingdom of God in the OT](#)

Also for more on the **Kingdom of God** see discussion of Luke 17:20-21ff...

"Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the **kingdom of God** was coming, He answered them and said, "The **kingdom of God** is not coming with signs to be observed; 21 nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!' For behold, the **kingdom of God** is in your midst."

The phrase **Kingdom of God** occurs 66x in 65v -

Matt. 12:28; Matt. 19:24; Matt. 21:31; Matt. 21:43; Mk. 1:15; Mk. 4:11; Mk. 4:26; Mk. 4:30; Mk. 9:1; Mk. 9:47; Mk. 10:14; Mk. 10:15; Mk. 10:23; Mk. 10:24; Mk. 10:25; Mk. 12:34; Mk. 14:25; Mk. 15:43; Lk. 4:43; Lk. 6:20; Lk. 7:28; Lk. 8:1; Lk. 8:10; Lk. 9:2; Lk. 9:11; Lk. 9:27; Lk. 9:60; Lk. 9:62; Lk. 10:9; Lk. 10:11; Lk. 11:20; Lk. 13:18; Lk. 13:20; Lk. 13:28; Lk. 13:29; Lk. 14:15; Lk. 16:16; Lk. 17:20; Lk. 17:21; Lk. 18:16; Lk. 18:17; Lk. 18:24; Lk. 18:25; Lk. 18:29; Lk. 19:11; Lk. 21:31; Lk. 22:16; Lk. 22:18; Lk. 23:51; Jn. 3:3; Jn. 3:5; Acts 1:3; Acts 8:12; Acts 14:22; Acts 19:8; Acts 28:23; Acts 28:31; Rom. 14:17; 1 Co. 4:20; 1 Co. 6:9; 1 Co. 6:10; 1 Co. 15:50; Gal. 5:21; Col. 4:11; 2 Thess. 1:5

Dear reader all of this ["erudite"](#) discussion on the **Kingdom of God** can obscure the most important question - **Are you in the Kingdom of God?** Jesus explained to the Jewish leader Nicodemus how one (Jew or Gentile) can gain entrance into the Kingdom of God...

Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.**" 4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" 5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.** (John 3:3-5)

Jesus tells us that the key that opens the door to the **Kingdom of God** is the **new birth**. Paul explains how we are born again by the Holy Spirit -- "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." (Eph 2:8-9-note)

Here are the uses of **Kingdom of God** in **Acts**

Acts 1:3 (see commentary) - To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the **kingdom of God**.

Acts 8:12+ But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the **kingdom of God** and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.

Acts 14:22+ strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the **kingdom of God.**"

Acts 19:8+ And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the **kingdom of God**.

Acts 28:23+ When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the **kingdom of God** and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening.

Acts 28:31+ preaching the **kingdom of God** and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.

**Kingdom of Heaven** occurs 32x in 31v and is used only in the Gospel of Matthew -

Matt. 3:2; Matt. 4:17; Matt. 5:3; Matt. 5:10; Matt. 5:19; Matt. 5:20; Matt. 7:21; Matt. 8:11; Matt. 10:7; Matt. 11:11; Matt. 11:12; Matt. 13:11; Matt. 13:24; Matt. 13:31; Matt. 13:33; Matt. 13:44; Matt. 13:45; Matt. 13:47; Matt. 13:52; Matt. 16:19; Matt. 18:1; Matt. 18:3; Matt. 18:4; Matt. 18:23; Matt. 19:12; Matt. 19:14; Matt. 19:23; Matt. 20:1; Matt. 22:2; Matt. 23:13; Matt. 25:1

## **BUT RIGHTEOUSNESS and PEACE and JOY IN THE HOLY SPIRIT: alla dikaiosune kai eirene kai chara en pneumati hagio:**

- Gal 5:22, Php 4:8, 9
- Romans 14 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Romans 14:1-15:13 Building Up One Another Without Offending, Part 1 - Study Guide \(click dropdown menu\)](#)- John MacArthur
- [Romans 14:16-23 Building Up One Another Without Offending, Part 2](#)- John MacArthur
- [Romans 14:1-15:13 Building Up One Another Without Offending, Part 2 - Study Guide \(click dropdown menu\)](#)- John MacArthur

**But (alla)** - always pause to ponder this **term of contrast**, even when it seems "straightforward," for in so doing it will slow you down and give the Spirit greater opportunity to illuminate the text.

**Righteousness** (1343)(**dikaosune** from **dike** = a judicial verdict) strictly speaking means judicial approval (a verdict of approval) and in the NT refers to divine approval, the approval of God, what He deems right after examining. **Dikaosune** is the quality of being upright. In its simplest sense **dikaosune** conveys the idea of conformity to a standard or norm and in Biblical terms the "standard" is God and His perfect, holy character. In this sense righteousness is the opposite of hamartia (sin), which is defined as missing of the mark set by God. God's approval of the believer begins with the believer receiving Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord (justification, past tense salvation - see **Three Tenses of Salvation**), which changes their status before the Lord from condemned to divinely-approved (or justified).

Paul is not referring so much to '**righteousness**' in the sense of initial right standing with God (i.e., justification - declaration of righteousness, which is a one time event) but in context of Ro 12:1, 2 (See notes [Ro 12:1-note](#), [Ro 12:2-note](#)) is referring to the daily practice of righteousness (i.e., progressive sanctification). In Romans 12-16 Paul's emphasis is on **practical holy living**. (See this meaning of dikaiosune in passages like 2Ti 2:22-note, 1Ti 6:11-note) A concerned believer who is walking in love will chose right conduct (i.e., "righteousness"), peace (harmony), and joy rather than forcing or imposing on others his own ideas about how to live the Christian life in a non-essential area (like food). This person is serving Christ (showing he is a true "**doulos**," a bondservant who is surrendering to the Spirit and submitting his or her rights to the Master, Jesus, the King of kings), is acceptable to God and is approved by men (Ro 14:18).

**Phillip Hughes** - "The spotless **righteousness** of Christ, which is graciously reckoned to us in our justification, should increasingly be approached in our daily conduct (**Ed**: Sanctification), as we walk in the Spirit. The two will coincide at the Lord's appearing when believers will be brought to total conformity to His likeness, which will be their glorification. As St. John writes in his First Epistle: 'We know that when He appears we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is,' while in the meantime 'every one who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure' (1 Jn 3:2-3-note)" (The Book of the Revelation)

**John MacArthur** - The **kingdom** is righteous living--holy, obedient, God-honoring lives conformed to God's will. My chief concern is not liberty, but holiness. That's what the watching world is looking for. I want to be filled with the fruits of righteousness (Php 1:11-note) and wear the breastplate of righteousness (Eph 6:14-note, 1Th 5:8-note). Building Up One Another Without Offending, Part 2)

Am I submitting to Christ, the King of the Kingdom, making a conscious choice to surrender my rights not just daily but even moment by moment and allowing His Spirit to cause me to walk in His statutes (Read **Ezekiel 36:27-note** - "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.")? If I am the result is His righteousness produced in us along with the fruit of the Spirit which is peace and joy.

**Wiersbe** - Not the **externals**, but the **eternals** must be first in our lives: righteousness, peace, and joy. Where do they come from? The Holy Spirit of God at work in our lives (Ro 5:1,2-note). If each believer would yield to the Spirit and major in a godly life, we would not have Christians fighting with each other over minor matters. Spiritual priorities are essential to harmony in the church. ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor](#))

**Peace** - In this context not peace with God but peace with brothers ("mutual concord among Christians" - Vincent).

**MacArthur** - The kingdom is all about having tranquil relationships with God and your fellow man. Our **peace** is exemplified by our caring and our unity. The tranquility of our relationships can have a profound testimony. When the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23-note)--including love, **joy**, and **peace**--are displayed in our lives, the watching world sees Christianity as something desirable. **Righteousness** means I seek to honor God; **peace** means I seek to have harmony with my brother. (Building Up One Another Without Offending, Part 2)

**Peace** (1515) (**eirene** from eiro = to join, to tie together in a whole) speaks first of wholeness, with all essential parts joined together. The meaning in the NT is supernatural tranquility produced by the Spirit, and which should characterize believers' relationships with God and each other. Salvation (conversion) starts with "peace with God" (divine reconciliation, Ro 5:1), out of which flows "peace from God" (cf. Phil 4:7; 2Th 3:16) which constantly operates in believers who walk in faith.

**Peace** is defined by Cremer as "a state of untroubled, undisturbed wellbeing." **Webster** defines **peace** as a state of tranquility or quiet, freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions, harmony in personal relations, a pact or agreement to end hostilities between those who have been at war or in a state of enmity, state of repose in contrast with or following strife or turmoil. **Eirene** can convey the sense of an inner rest, well being and harmony. **Eirene** is the root the English "serene" (= clear and free of storms or unpleasant change, stressing an unclouded and lofty tranquility!) and "serenity". The picture of **eirene** is reflected in our modern expression "*having it all together*." Everything is in place and as it ought to be. When things are disjointed, there is lack of harmony and well being. When they are joined together, there is both. **Peace** contrasts with strife and thus denotes the absence or end of strife. Peace for a believer is not the absence of danger but is the presence of God (cp Psalm 27:1 - [See Spurgeon's note](#)). Peace is not a hallowed feeling that comes over us in church but is the supernatural fruit of a heart set deep in God and His trustworthy Word. And so peace is the conscious possession of adequate resources for God's Name is "**I Am \_\_\_\_\_**." (Fill in the blank with your need... not your greed, but your need!) Peace rules your day when Christ (and His Word) rules your mind, because peace comes not from the absence of trouble, but from the presence of God.

I rest beneath the Almighty's shade,  
My griefs expire, my troubles cease;  
Thou, Lord, on whom my soul is stayed,  
Wilt keep me still in perfect peace.  
---Charles Wesley.

**Peace** is not self produced but Spirit produced, for "the fruit of the Spirit is love, **joy**, **peace**, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law." (Gal 5:22-23-note) Note the context of Paul's great teaching on the fruit of the Spirit -- His earlier command to walk by the Spirit (Gal 5:16-note) follows his statement "if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another." (Gal 5:15). Clearly, just as biting and devouring one another is divisive and destructive of unity in the body, so too is bickering over what is right to eat or not eat, instead of focusing on what really matters - the Kingdom of God! The believers were majoring on the minors, the non-essentials, instead of focusing on being Spirit filled and Spirit led so that they might focus on the majors!

**Joy** - This is the natural fruit of righteousness and peace just described.

**Hodges** - the joy is the joy of salvation; that joy which only those who are in the fellowship of the Holy Ghost **Ed**: And fellow believers - cp Eph 4:30 on what grieves the Spirit = Eph 4:29, 31) ever can experience.

**MacArthur** - Someone who is right with God and at peace with his brother will have **joy**. It's the personal **joy** of knowing God and experiencing forgiveness, grace, mercy, and love. It's the happy life of salvation that rejoices in everything. We want the watching world to see Christians as those who are **righteous**, at **peace**, and filled with **joy**. We will be that way when we exercise self-sacrificial love at the expense of exercising our liberties. The strong must move down to the level of the weak brother or sister and respect their weaknesses until they can be nurtured into strengths. There are things we are perfectly free to do that we must choose not to do to demonstrate to the watching world that the kingdom is not a celebration of our rights. When the world sees lives marked by righteousness--when it sees people with integrity and honesty, who are just and virtuous--that is a loud testimony to the reality of Christianity. Even in the fallenness of man there is enough of the residual image of God for the unregenerate to long for what is unobtainable to them. Peaceful relationships are foreign to the world because the world is full of chaos. **When the world sees deep, profound joy in the Holy Spirit, it sees the heart of kingdom living. Those attractive elements can bring people to Christ.** (Building Up One Another Without Offending, Part 2)

**Joy** (5479) (**chara** from the root **char-** which means (extend favor, lean towards, be favorably disposed) is part of the Spirit's fruit, and describes an abiding attitude of praise and thanksgiving regardless of circumstances. This supernatural attitude flows from one's confidence in God's sovereignty and the out working of God's power in a yielded, Spirit filled saint (Gal 5:22-note). Such supernaturally generated joy is manifest by a feeling of inner gladness, delight and rejoicing.

**Gary Hill** - While temporal happiness is external and fleeting, true **joy** is internal and eternal. Biblical **joy** will even thrive in suffering. **Joy** is completely grace-dependent and therefore circumstance-independent; earthly happiness however is circumstance-dependent. "Happiness" depends on favorable circumstances ("happenings"); joy depends only on knowing God's favor (grace). For believers, **joy** springs from personally knowing the Lord's favor (grace) – Who always inclines towards us to show His favor (equally) in every scene of life. This deep-seated, eternal joy roots in Christ's triumph so we live from (not for) victory... The two feminine nouns chara ("joy based on grace") and charis ("grace, God's favor") represent distinct types of divine favor. Both occur together (in close juxtaposition) – see Ro 15:13-15; 2Cor 8:1,2; Phil 1:2-4; 2Ti 1:2-4; 1Pet 1:8-10. Charis ("grace") is the fundamental (base) term. God's favor (infinite grace) "sacramentalizes" every scene so each can equally echo through eternity for our everlasting joy. Unlike earthly happiness, joy is internal and external and can not be extinguished by what is temporal (external) circumstances. Joy involves choice, but is accomplished only by God's grace (favor). Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Happiness in this world, when it comes, comes incidentally. If we make it the object of pursuit, it leads us on a wild-goose chase, and is never attained." Joy however results from receiving God's grace (favor). (See excellent resource The Discovery Bible to enable deeper Word Studies = <http://www.helpsbible.org> - see [reviews of "The Discovery Bible"](#))

Paul described the association of joy and the Spirit in the lives of the Thessalonian believers...

You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with **the joy of the Holy Spirit**, (Wuest paraphrases it " joy that had its source in the Holy Spirit") (1Th 1:6-note)

**Comment:** Note that these new believers in Thessalonica were experiencing joy in the face of tribulation! This is not natural! It can only be supernatural! And the lost and dying world is waiting to see if the "real Christians" will stand up? They are watching to see supernatural joy in men and women who are in circumstances that would not be expected to produce joy! Indeed, notice the effect that these Spirit filled, joy filled believers in Thessalonica had on the lost they encountered - read 1Th 1:7-10-note, note especially 1Th 1:8-note - "**the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you.**" What would happen in post-Christian America if the lost began to see men and women living this quality of supernatural "Kingdom" life?

Secular dictionaries define **joy** as the emotion evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune or the emotion evoked by the prospect of possessing what one desires. The world's definition of **joy** is virtually synonymous with their definition of happiness, for both of these "emotions" are dependent on what "happens".

Certainly there is **joy** in human life, such as joy when one experiences a victory (" We will sing for joy over your victory, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners. May the LORD fulfill all your petitions." Psalm 20:5 [Spurgeon's comment](#)) or reaps a bountiful harvest (see Isaiah 9:3), but more often the Bible speaks of joy in a spiritual sense. For example, Nehemiah declared to the down in the mouth (not very filled with joy) Jews that "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10). Similarly, David pleaded with God to "restore to me the joy of Thy salvation" (Psalm 51:12 [Spurgeon's Comment](#)). References to joy and rejoicing are found most frequently in the Psalms (about 80 references) and the Gospels (about 40 references).

**C. S. Lewis** got a bit closer to the Biblical meaning when he called joy an "unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction." That statement is a bit obtuse but Lewis then goes on to add that joy "must be sharply distinguished both from happiness and from pleasure". Ultimately Lewis' experienced joy when he discovered that Jesus was the wellspring of all joy.

**Joy** is the deep-down sense of well-being that abides in the heart of the person who knows all is well between himself and the Lord. It is not an experience that comes from favorable circumstances but even occurs when those circumstances are the most painful and severe as Jesus taught His disciples declaring...

Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned to **joy**. 21 "Whenever a woman is in travail she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she remembers the anguish no more, for **joy** that a child has been born into the world. 22 "Therefore you too now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart will **rejoice**, and no one takes your **joy** away from you. (John 16:20, 21, 22)

Believers have the Resident Source of **joy** dwelling within them in the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22-note) Emotional fluctuations cannot (or at least should not) disturb this Source of joy. Why? Because it is not natural, not based on circumstances, but supernatural, birthed by the Spirit independent of circumstances. In the epistle to the Philippians **joy** is like a golden thread Paul interweaves throughout this epistle ([Click for all 12v with "joy"](#)) As Bengel says "The whole letter is 'I rejoice,' and 'Rejoice!'"

**In the Holy Spirit** (exact phrase also in Mk 12:36; Lk 10:21; Jn 1:33; Ro 9:1; 14:17; 2Cor 6:6; 1Th 1:5; Jude 1:20; Related phrase "in the Spirit" = Mt 22:43; Lk 1:17; 2:27; Acts 19:21; Ro 8:9; 1Cor 6:11; 14:16; Eph 2:22; 3:5; 4:23; 6:18; Phil 3:3; Col 1:8; 1Ti 3:16; 1Pe 3:18; 4:6; Rev 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10) - In the sphere of, in the power of, enabled by. Dependence on the indwelling Spirit is the only way we can enjoy righteousness, peace and joy in this fallen, quickly devolving world. So let our watchword each morning be...

## YIELD!

**Stedman** - What the world ought to see (**Ed**: in citizens of an eternal Kingdom and a glorious King) is **peace**. That comes across visibly as a kind of calmness, an inner core of unflappability that is undisturbed by the minor irritations of the moment. It is that quiet and calm assurance that God is present in the situation; that He will work it out for His glory, and therefore, we need not get upset or angry, or vindictive toward someone. It is hard for the world to get that impression of **peace** and calmness if they see two people screaming at one another over what they disagree on. That does not look very calm. The important thing, therefore, is that you manifest (**Ed**: **Yielding to and being enabled by the indwelling Spirit - supernaturally, not naturally manifesting** that gift of God, which is **peace**. The third element is **Joy**. These three always go together: **righteousness, peace, and joy**. They are gifts of God. They do not come from you; they come from Him. **Joy** is that delight in life that always finds life worthwhile, even though it may be filled with problems. **Joy, in a Christian, does not come from circumstances**. I was down south a couple of weeks ago, and I met a lady who has been lying in her bed for 13 years. She has arthritis so bad that her joints are disconnected and she cannot even raise her hands. But the smile on her face, the joy that is evident in her, is an outstanding witness to the fact that joy of this kind is a gift of God. It comes out of relationship, not out of circumstance. She has a tremendous ministry to the community around her because of that... Paul is saying that if that (**righteousness, peace, joy**) is what you have discovered, if that is the center of your focus and interest, then you can easily give up some momentary indulgence in a pleasure that you enjoy and are free to participate in, if it is going to bother someone or upset someone or make them move beyond their own conscience. Sometimes, when you enter a main highway, you see a sign that says "**YIELD**." Now, I would not suggest that you steal one of those, but it would be good if you could make one and put it up in your dining room. **That is a Christian philosophy -- to yield, to give way. Do not insist on your rights under these circumstances** ([The Right to Yield](#)) (Bolding added)

**A W Pink** comments on the **Kingdom of God** in the Disciples Prayer (Mt 6:10-13)- One may ask, "Which aspect of the **Kingdom** is here prayed for as yet future? Certainly not its providential aspect, since that has existed and continued from the beginning. The **Kingdom** must, then, be future in the sense that God's reign of grace is to be consummated in the eternal glory of His Kingdom in the new heavens and new earth (2Pe 3:13). There is to be a voluntary surrender of the whole man—spirit and body—to the revealed will of God, so that His rule over us is entire. But if we are to experience and enjoy the eternal glory of God's Kingdom, we must personally submit to His gracious reign in this life. The nature of this reign is summed up in three characteristics: **the Kingdom of God is...righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost** (Ro 14:17). A person experiencing this present reign of grace is characterized by righteousness in that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to him as one who, by faith, has become His willing subject (**Ed**: **While I agree righteousness imputed necessary for entry into the kingdom of God, righteousness practiced would be good evidence to "outsiders" that one does in fact belong to the Kingdom of God rather than the Kingdom of the Devil**, cp Acts 26:18); furthermore, he also possesses the righteousness of a good conscience because the Holy Spirit has sanctified him, that is, has set him apart to a new life of holiness to the glory of God (**Ed**: **Such a sanctified conscience must be maintained by walking by the Spirit**). Such a person is also characterized by **peace**: peace of conscience toward God, peaceful relations with God's people, and the pursuit of peace with all his fellow creatures (Heb. 12:14). This personal, godly peace is maintained by (**Ed**: Spirit enabled - cp Php 2:13) attention to all the duties of love (Luke 10:27; Ro 13:8). As the result of **righteousness** and **peace**, such a person is also characterized by **joy in the Holy Spirit**, a delighting in God in all the states and vicissitudes of life (Phil. 4:10-14; 1Ti 6:6-10). ([The Lord's Prayer by A.W. Pink-Chapter 3](#))

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**What A Great Neighborhood** - Where you live has a way of making certain demands on how you live. In my neighborhood, the garbage collector comes on Tuesday mornings, so it's my responsibility to get our garbage can out to the curb the night before. Letting the trash pile up on the curb for days before doesn't make for happy neighbors. And we have lots of children playing outside, so signs are posted everywhere reminding drivers to slow down. That means I drive slowly and watch for little ones who, without looking, chase wayward balls into the street.

It's important to remember that God has placed us into the "kingdom of the Son" (Col. 1:13). Living in His neighborhood means there are life-transforming behavior patterns that should clearly reflect our spiritual location. This is why Paul reminds us that God's kingdom is not about arguing and bickering over earthly stuff but about "righteousness and peace and joy" (Rom. 14:17). Living by God's right standards, living to be a peacemaker, and living to be a source of joy in our relationships are what kingdom life is all about. And, when we live like this, our lives please God and bless others (v.18). ([Our Daily Bread](#))

Sounds like the kind of neighborhood anyone would love to live in!

The world gets a glimpse of God  
When those who claim to be  
The followers of Jesus Christ  
Are living righteously.  
—Sper

**If you're part of the kingdom of God,  
it will make a difference in how you live.**

**Romans 14:18** For he who in [this way](#) [serves Christ](#) is [acceptable](#) to [God](#) and [approved](#) by [men](#). ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** o gar en touto douleuon (PAPMSN) to Christo euairetos to theo kai dokimos tois anthropois

**Amplified:** He who serves Christ in this way is acceptable and pleasing to God and is approved by men. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**NLT:** If you serve Christ with this attitude, you will please God. And other people will approve of you, too. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** If you put these things first in serving Christ you will please God and are not likely to offend men. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** for the one who in this serves the Christ is well pleasing to God, and because having met the specifications is approved by men.

**Young's Literal:** for he who in these things is serving the Christ, is acceptable to God and approved of men.

**FOR HE WHO IN THIS WAY SERVES CHRIST: o gar en touto douleuon (PAPMSN) to Christō**

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## **ACCEPTABLE SERVICE TO THE KING**

**For (gar)** - see discussion of this **term of explanation**

**In this way** - emphatic in the Greek text.

**Serves (1398)**(**douleuo** from **doulos** = slave or one who is in bondage or bound to another, in the state of being completely controlled by someone or something) means to be in bondage or in the position of servant and to act accordingly, dutifully obeying the master's commands. **Douleuo** is used of believers giving their unqualified service (and rights) to the Lord. The slave's will is altogether "swallowed up in the will of another" (Trench). The Christian is a willing slave of Christ, living in joyful surrender (total submission) – giving complete loyalty to the Master Christ Jesus.

The **present tense** signifies this is one's lifestyle (continually serving as a doulos) and **active voice** indicates that this individual has made the willful choice to submit themselves to Jesus.

Paul used **douleuo** instead of **diakoneo** because **douleuo** focuses on the fact that the slave belongs to the Master, Christ Jesus, whereas **diakoneo** emphasizes the service a servant renders for another. Thayer adds that **diakoneo** stresses the servant's activity (work, service) whereas **douleuo** emphasizes the relation of the slave to his Master. For the believer, **douleuo** focuses on belonging to the Lord and serving Him in total (willing) submission.

He who gives up his liberty in a good thing that heretofore his partaking of had resulted in slanderous speech... the one who does this is the one is truly a bondsman, serving his Master Christ, submitting his will to that of His Master and like His Master walking in love (which includes laying down one's rights for the sake of the higher good of the other brother). This will result in a righteous, peaceful and joy filled walk which pleases the Father and men will see and deem to be a worthy walk, a genuine walk. This is surely "love without hypocrisy" (Ro 12:9).

- 2Co 4:2,5:11, 8:21, 1Th 1:3,4, James 2:18-26, 1Pe 3:16
- Romans 14 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
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- [Romans 14:1-15:13 Building Up One Another Without Offending, Part 2 - Study Guide \(click dropdown menu\)](#)- John MacArthur

God judges the inward motives. Man sees the outward effects. If righteousness, peace and joy are being progressively manifest in our life, this could only come from a heart surrendered to God, the "branch" bearing fruit because he or she is abiding in the Vine, walking in obedience to the truth, in context not holding on to his or her rights concerning **external**, non essentials but laying down his or her rights for the sake of **eternal** lasting fruit.

**MacArthur** - One who serves Christ with righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit is pleasing to God.

**Acceptable** ([2101](#))(**euairestos** from **eu** = good, well + **airestos** = pleasing, desirable, proper, fit, agreeable from **airesko** = to please or be pleasing/acceptable to) means well-pleasing (gratifying) because it is fully acceptable. Euairestos is that which causes someone to be pleased. It is something which is well approved, eminently satisfactory, or extra-ordinarily pleasing. **Euairestos** was used earlier in Romans (Ro 12:1 referring to our bodies as an acceptable sacrifice and Ro 12:2 referring to the will of God as that which is acceptable).

**Euairestos** is used 9 times and clearly is predominantly a "Pauline" word - Ro 12:1-2; 14:18; 2Co 5:9; Eph 5:10; Phil 4:18; Col 3:20; Titus 2:9; Heb 13:21

**MacArthur** - Verse 18 says the church is to be "approved of men," a reference to people in general, not just to believers. The world is watching us, and it is important that we set aside our liberties for their sake, too. 1Peter 2:15 says, "So is the will of God, that with well doing [goodness of life and character] ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." That means you shut the mouths of those who criticize your faith. How do you do that? 1Pe 2:16 says, "As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness." If you want to silence the critics by your good life, you can't abuse your freedom, and you certainly can't use your freedom as an excuse to cover your sin. (Building Up One Another Without Offending, Part 2)

**Approved** ([1384](#)) (**dokimos**) (related verb **dokimazo** in Ro 14:22) conveys the idea of approval after testing and was commonly applied in the Greco-Roman world to the practice of assessing the genuineness and value of precious metals like gold and silver. The metal was given a fiery test and if it came out "persevering and enduring", the metal was judged to be "proven", "authentic" or "genuine." This word group is also found in an early manuscript, referring to the action of an examining board putting its approval upon those who had successfully passed the examination for the degree of Doctor of Medicine.

**Dokimos** - 7x in NT: Ro 16:10, 1Co 11:19, 2Co 10:18, 2Co 13:7, 2Ti 2:15-note, Jas 1:12-note

One gets an added sense of the "**dokimos**" by studying several secular uses of the antonym "**adokimos**" (G96) (unapproved) which was used to refer to a COUNTERFEIT COIN that had been tested and found to be below the standard weight and thus was rejected, to a COWARDLY SOLDIER who had failed the test in the hour of battle, to a REJECTED CANDIDATE for office whom the citizens regarded as useless, to a building STONE which the builders rejected because on examination the stone was found to have a flaw which if used might jeopardize the structural integrity of the building. Such stones were marked with a capital "**A**" (for Adokimos) and were discarded, having been deemed unfit to be utilized in the construction of the building.

Ponder the practical application these pictures conger up in your mind for us as believers who are as approved "living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1Pe 2:5-note).

We may be the "only Bible" many in the skeptical world will ever read as they "read" how we live with and treat one another over Christmas trees and length of hair and color of the carpet in the sanctuary, etc, etc. **How vital and eternally important to our witness is our proper conduct in these "little" non essential externals!**

**MacArthur** - The true servant is also approved by men. In Titus 2:10 Paul says we should "adorn the doctrine of God." We are to live lives that make God and His gospel attractive. Titus 2:5 speaks about women being "discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed." How we live together in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit is essential to our testimony. The Greek word translated "approve" in Romans 14:18 is dokimos. It means "to be

approved after close examination." We are under the scrutiny of the world, and it needs to see our love. We don't want to cause a brother to stumble, grieve, or be devastated and end up forfeiting our witness. (Building Up One Another Without Offending, Part 2)

Ponder **Jesus'** challenging declaration that "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (Jn 13:35)

Paul's similarly gave us a challenging command to **Do** (present imperative - the only way to fulfill this is to yield to the filling and empowering of the indwelling Holy Spirit - cp same thought in Php 2:13-note) ALL things WITHOUT grumbling or disputing that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world". (Php 2:14, 15-note)

Donald Barnhouse has this helpful note on **dokimos**: "In the ancient world there was no banking system as we know it today, and no paper money. All money was made from metal, heated until liquid, poured into molds and allowed to cool. When the coins were cooled, it was necessary to smooth off the uneven edges. The coins were comparatively soft and of course many people shaved them closely. In one century, more than eighty laws were passed in Athens, to stop the practice of shaving down the coins then in circulation. But some money changers were **men of integrity**, who would accept no counterfeit money. They were **men of honor** who put only genuine full weighted money into circulation. Such men were called "**dokimos**" or "**approved**".

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**F B Meyer** writes (**Our Daily Homily**) - Dean Howson renders this verse thus: "He who lives in these things as Christ's bondsman is well-pleasing to God, and cannot be condemned by men." There are two rules, therefore, to be observed by us when we consider our behaviour in that great borderland which lies between the dark and light, the clearly wrong and clearly right. We are all conscious of habits and tastes, of inclinations towards certain forms of amusement and recreation, of methods of life, which do not contravene any distinct law of God, but are certainly open to question. It is such things that fall within the scope of these two principles.

First, we must always remember that we are Christ's bondservants. — Let us look then, every day and hour, and as to the mental habit, every moment, upon Jesus Christ as our Master. Sainly George Herbert chose that to be, as it were, his best — beloved aspect of his Savior; "My Master, Jesus." "An oriental fragrancy, my Master." Let us do the same. Let us wear the word next the heart, next the will; nay, let it sink into the very springs of both, deeper every day. And as each fresh question arises in our life, let us stand close beside Him, noticing the expression of His face, asking Him what He would desire, and always reckoning that the least suggestion of his preference is law. "None of us liveth to himself for, whether we live, we live unto the Lord."

Second, we must always bear in mind the spiritual life of others. — We are to put no stumbling block, or occasion for falling, in another's way. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor drink wine, nor to do any other thing, whereby our brother is made to stumble. Let us each of us please his neighbor for good ends, to build him up; for Christ pleased not Himself.

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**Steven Cole** - Stephen Covey and Roger and Rebecca Merrill begin their book on time management, *First Things First* [Fireside/Simon & Schuster], with a chapter titled, "How Many People on Their Deathbed Wish They'd Spent More Time at the Office?" The subtitle is, "The enemy of the 'best' is the 'good'" (p. 17). Toward the end of the book (p. 301, italics his), Mr. Covey writes, "I deeply believe that if we attend to all other duties and responsibilities in life and neglect the family it would be analogous to straightening deck chairs on the Titanic."

One of the most poignant books that I have read is [Days of Glory Seasons of Night](#) [Zondervan, 1984], by Marilee Pierce Dunker. It's the story of her father, Bob Pierce, who founded the well-known Christian relief organization, World Vision. He was a successful evangelist, seeing thousands make professions of faith at crusades that he held in the Far East. He was highly respected in Christian circles as a great leader. He raised millions to help the needy in Asia. And yet he abandoned his family for the ministry. One daughter committed suicide. He and his wife eventually divorced. And World Vision, the organization that he founded, had to fire him because of his explosive temper and his refusal to work well with others. He was very successful at some good things, but he failed at the main thing.

Many other Christians have done the same thing: succeeded in their careers, only to fail at home. Some have built hugely successful ministries, only to succumb to pride or immorality. They failed to keep their relationship with God as the main thing. Even in less dramatic ways, it's easy in the local church to get enamored with numbers, but to run roughshod over people. It's easy to get into a battle over some minor issue and forget the cause of the gospel.

In the Roman church, some were flaunting their liberty in Christ to eat whatever they wanted to eat, but they were not sensitive about how their actions affected their weaker brothers, who had not let go of the food regulations in the Law of Moses. The stronger brothers were putting their liberty above love, which should have been the main thing.

So Paul appealed to the stronger brothers not to hurt their weaker brothers by causing them to violate their consciences by eating food that they believed was wrong to eat. In Romans 14:16, he says, "Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil." In other words, don't let your liberty in Christ (a good thing) be the cause of your brother's spiritual downfall. Then (Ro 14:17-18), he explains, "For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men." He's saying,

God's kingdom is the main thing and it centers not on external matters, but on our relationship with God and with others.

Paul is saying, "Keep the main thing as your main thing." He gives us this warning because ...

### **1. It's easy to focus on external matters and neglect the main thing.**

Ray Stedman in one of his books said that he once heard of a church that got into an argument over whether they ought to have a Christmas tree at their Christmas programs. Some thought a tree was fine and they understood it in a Christian sense. Others thought no, Christmas trees are of pagan origin and you should not have any Christmas trees. And so when the time came for the party, one group brought in a Christmas tree. The other group dragged the tree out. The first group dragged it back in again. They got into a squabble and finally actually some fist fights broke out at the Christmas party over the Christmas tree. Eventually, the whole thing was in the newspapers because they ended up suing each other. Ray said, "What else could non-Christians conclude but that the gospel consists in whether you have a Christmas tree or not?" (From a sermon by S. Lewis Johnson, "No Stumbling Blocks," on Romans 14:13-23, sljinstitute.net)

The Pharisees in Jesus' time are a classic example of focusing on secondary matters and missing the main thing. Jesus reamed them out (Mt. 23:23-24), "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!" The law commanded tithing, but these men had gotten so carried away with tithing that they even counted out a tenth of their table spices! All the while, Jesus says, they neglected the heart of the law, which was justice, mercy, and faithfulness.

The apostle John brings out the same contradiction with exquisite irony when he points out (John 18:28) that when the Jewish leaders led Jesus to Pilate so that they could crucify Him, they would not go into the Praetorium so that they would not be defiled, because they wanted to eat the Passover! Here they were, crucifying the sinless Son of God, but they didn't want to defile themselves by walking on Gentile ground so that they could observe their religious ritual!

Of course, Paul himself had been the same way. He was so zealous for the Law that he was persecuting anyone who was a Jewish follower of Jesus. He was imprisoning and even killing Christians in the name of religion, but he had missed the main thing, which is to know Jesus Christ (see Phil. 3:4-11).

What are some ways that we're prone to focus on secondary matters and neglect the main thing? I've seen some who are at church every time the door is open. They give hours every week to serving, which is a good thing. But their personal walk with God is virtually non-existent. Often there are serious problems in their families, which they dodge by serving at church.

Others are hung up on external matters to the neglect of a person's relationship with God. I read of a father who would brag to his friends about how his three daughters didn't drink, smoke, dance, play cards, or go to movies. But there was severe conflict between the man and his daughters, because they felt like he was forcing them to be freaks. They weren't abstaining from these things because they loved God and wanted to honor Him. That dad was majoring on the minors, but missing the main thing. As soon as the girls were old enough, they rebelled and left the church.

I knew another father who forced his adopted teenage daughter to have a daily quiet time. It's a good thing to have a daily quiet time, if you're motivated by the desire to know Christ better. The dad meant well, but in effect, he was making a secondary thing the main thing. The daughter hated being forced to have a quiet time, along with all the other rules that her parents laid on her. Eventually she sued her parents and the state took her away from them. The parents were on a Focus on the Family program telling of how the state was usurping parental rights. I think that the crisis could have been averted if they had kept the main thing as the main thing. So, what is the main thing?

### **2. The main thing is God's kingdom, which centers on our relationship to God and to others.**

This is Paul's only reference to God's "**kingdom**" in Romans. He only uses the word 14 times in all of his letters (here; 1Cor. 4:20; 6:9, 10; 15:24, 50; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5; Col. 1:13, 4:11; 1Th 2:12; 2Th 1:5; 2Ti 4:1, 18). Here Paul is saying that the main thing is not exercising your liberty in Christ or your rights. The main thing is God's kingdom. But what does he mean by "**the kingdom of God**"?

### **A. GOD'S KINGDOM IS THE REALM WHERE HE RULES AND I SUBMIT.**

George Ladd wrote (Evangelical Dictionary of Theology [Baker], ed. by Walter Elwell, p. 608), "**The 'kingdom of God'** means primarily the rule of God, the divine kingly authority." In the New Testament, he explains (ibid.), "**The kingdom of God** is the divine authority and rule given by the Father to the Son (Luke 22:29). Christ will exercise this rule until he has subdued all that is hostile to God. When he has put all enemies under his feet, he will return the kingdom—his messianic authority—to the Father (1Cor. 15:24-28)."

A kingdom has a king, and Jesus is God's anointed King (Ps. 2:6-7). We are either in Satan's domain of darkness (Matt. 4:8; 12:26) or in God's kingdom, subject to His King. Paul said (Col. 1:13), "For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Jesus said that we can only enter God's kingdom through the new birth (John 3:3, 5). Thus He preached (Mark 1:15), "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." The gospel (good news) is that God sent His only Son to bear the punishment that we deserve for our sins. He forgives all our sins and imputes the righteousness of Jesus Christ to those who believe in Him. As we've seen, the gospel of God is the main theme of the book of Romans (Ro 1:1, 16, 17). So God's kingdom exists now wherever Jesus reigns in the hearts of His people who submit to His rule.

But Jesus also spoke about His kingdom that would come in fullness in the future when He returns. He taught us to pray (Mt. 6:10), "Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." As He gave them the cup, Jesus told the disciples at the last supper (Matt. 26:29), "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." That kingdom will come when Jesus comes again bodily, in His glory. Some (amillennialists) believe that Jesus' Second Coming will usher in the new heavens and new earth, also called the eternal state. They view the 1,000 years in Revelation 20:1-10 as symbolic for this age when Christ reigns over the church. Others (pre-millennialists, I am of this persuasion) believe that Jesus will reign on earth for a thousand years in fulfillment of God's promises to Israel.

So I understand God's kingdom to be an already, but not yet, sort of thing. It already exists wherever people surrender to Jesus Christ as Lord. We experience a taste of His kingdom rule now. But when He returns in power and glory, He will subdue all of His enemies, including Satan, who will be bound and cast into a pit for the 1,000 years (Rev. 20:2). During that time, Jesus will rule the nations with a rod of iron (Rev. 19:15). God's kingdom will then reign on earth through Jesus in its fullness. At the end of the 1,000 years, Satan will be released for a final rebellion. He will then be finally defeated and thrown into the lake of fire, along with all who have not submitted to Christ (Rev. 20:7-10). Then will come the new heavens and earth, in which righteousness dwells (Rev. 21:1; 2 Pet. 3:13).

So the crucial question is, "Are you in God's kingdom right now?" Have you trusted in Jesus Christ as your Savior? Are you in submission to Him as your King, or Lord? That's the main thing! Don't major on the minors. Keep the main thing as the main thing. Make sure that your life, beginning on the thought level, is subject to Jesus Christ as your King!

### **B. GOD'S KINGDOM CENTERS ON OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM AND WITH OTHERS.**

Romans 14:17, "For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Godly scholars divide into two camps over the interpretation of these three qualities, righteousness, peace, and joy. Is Paul describing our standing or position in Christ, or is he describing practical righteousness, relational peace, and the joy we experience with one another as we live in harmony? I agree with Leon Morris (The Epistle to the Romans [Eerdmans/Apollos], p. 489) who writes, "It seems likely that Paul is not differentiating sharply between these two views and that he is using the expression in a way that suggests both." He also thinks that the concluding words, "in the Holy Spirit," apply to all three qualities, not just to "joy."

Here's why I agree with Morris: First, earlier in Romans, Paul emphasizes that the gospel is all about the righteousness of God being imputed to those who believe in Jesus as the sacrifice for their sins (Ro 1:16-17; 3:21-26; 4:1-25). In Ro 5:1-2, Paul mentions these three qualities: "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God." To be "justified by faith" is to be declared righteous by God. This brings us into peace with God, leading to our exulting ("joy") in the hope of the glory of God. Since all three qualities are produced by (or in the sphere of) the Holy Spirit and are characteristic of God's kingdom, they must at least in part refer to our relationship with God.

But our relationship with God necessarily affects our relationship with our fellow members in His kingdom. Because of our new standing as righteous before God, we seek to practice righteousness (Ro 6:13, 18; 1 John 2:29; 3:7). Because we have peace with God, we are to pursue peace with others (Rom. 14:19; Eph. 2:14-22). Because we know the joy of God's salvation, we love to share our joy with others who enjoy the same blessings. Also, verse 18 argues for these three terms applying both to our standing before God and our relationships with one another: "For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men." We are acceptable to God because He has imputed Christ's righteousness to us. We are approved by men as they see our practical righteousness, our desire for peace, and our joy in the Holy Spirit. So I think that Paul is saying that our righteous standing before God through faith in Christ, the peace that we enjoy with God because of being reconciled to Him, and the joy of our salvation are the basis for our righteous deeds, our peace with our brothers and sisters in Christ, and our shared joy in the Lord.

So these three qualities serve as a summary of being in God's kingdom: we are rightly related to God and to one another, which are the two great commandments. These qualities are a benchmark by which you can evaluate whether you are focused on the main thing. Do you know that you are in right standing with God, that all of your sins are forgiven, and that you are clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ? Do you know that you are at peace with God? The answer to these questions is another question: Have you let go of the pride of trying to establish your own righteousness and instead trusted in Christ alone (Rom. 9:30-10:4)? As Paul states (sness to everyone who believes.)

If you have trusted in Christ, then ask yourself, "Am I consistently experiencing the joy of my salvation?" If not, there could be a number of reasons. You may not be spending enough time thinking about God's abundant grace that you received in the gospel. You may not be processing your trials through the lens of the hope of the gospel (Rom. 5:1-5; James 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 1:3-9). Or, you may be yielding to temptation and sin, which always robs you of joy in your relationship with God. But your relationship with God as a subject of His kingdom is the main thing. Follow the practice of the godly George Muller, who used to make the first business of every day to seek to be truly at rest and happy in God (George Muller of Bristol, by A. T. Pierson [Revell], p. 257).

Then evaluate your relationships with others, especially with your brothers and sisters in God's kingdom. Are you practicing righteousness in your relationships? Do you think of others' needs and how you can serve them? Are you at peace with others? If you have offended or wronged someone, have you sought to make it right? Have you asked forgiveness for your wrongs and granted forgiveness to those who have wronged you? Do you enjoy sharing in the things of God with His people?

All of these qualities grow in us as we walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. Righteousness (overcoming sin) is the opposite of the deeds of the flesh and is promised to those who walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-21). Love, joy, and peace are His fruits (Gal. 5:22). All of the fruits of the Spirit have a relational dimension. To walk in the Spirit is to yield to the Spirit on a moment by moment basis. It is to trust in the Spirit's power for victory over sin.

Having healthy, godly relationships that flow from our relationship with God is the main thing. You can win arguments about theology, but shred relationships. You're off track. You can prove that you're right and your mate is wrong, but you're off track. You can take pride in what you do for the Lord, but you're off track. The main thing is God's kingdom, where He rules and you submit. God's kingdom centers on your relationship with Him and with others. Keep that as the main thing!

### **C. GOD'S KINGDOM IS ABOUT SERVING CHRIST, HAVING GOD'S ACCEPTANCE, AND MAN'S APPROVAL.**

Romans 14:18: **"For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men"** "This way" refers to the way that Paul has just described in Ro 14:17: You serve Christ by focusing on righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. To serve in a way that is "acceptable to God" goes back to Romans 12:1-2, **"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."**

To be **"approved by men"** stands in contrast to Ro 14:16, where others speak evil of those who have hurt their brothers by flaunting their liberty. But how can we be approved by men? Jesus said that the world will hate us because we're not like them and because He chose us out of the world (John 15:18-19). He told us to expect opposition from the world (John 16:2). So how do we harmonize this with being approved by men?

Paul seems to mean here that if we lay aside our rights and demonstrate genuine concern and love for our brothers and sisters in Christ, the world must at least acknowledge that we are genuine. They won't be able to accuse us of being hypocrites. It's the same

as Paul said of elders, that they must have a good reputation with those outside of the church (1Ti 3:7). If he is a businessman, he must have a reputation for being honest. He must treat others with respect and kindness. Even if they don't agree with your Christian faith, they must admit that you treated them rightly (see 1 Cor. 10:32-33).

Years ago, Donald Grey Barnhouse was teaching about Christians being in the world, but not of the world. He concluded by saying, "You may be sure that if nobody thinks you are strange and out of step, you are not a good Christian." After the message, a friend who had been present added wisely, "However, you should also say that if everybody thinks you are strange and out of step, you are not a good Christian" (told by James Boice, Romans: The New Humanity [Baker], 4:1784).

**Conclusion** - So don't spend your life arranging deck chairs on the Titanic. Keep the main thing as your main thing. God's kingdom is the main thing and it centers not on external matters, but on our relationship with Him and with others.

### Application Questions

- 1 What are some minor issues that in the past have gotten you distracted from the main issue of God's kingdom?
- 2 There are well over 20,000 denominations in the Protestant world. Are the matters that divide us major or minor? When (if ever) should churches divide and form new denominations?
- 3 When is it right to debate secondary theological issues with another Christian? What guidelines apply?
- 4 Some have used Luke 14:26 to support putting the ministry above commitment to family. Is this right? Why/why not? ([Keep the Main Thing the Main Thing Romans 14:17-18](#))

**Romans 14:19** [So then](#) we [pursue](#) the things which make for [peace](#) and the [building](#) up of [one another](#) ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** Ara oun ta tes eirenes diokomen (1PPAS) kai ta tes oikodomes tes eis allelous

**Amplified:** So let us then definitely aim for and eagerly pursue what makes for harmony and for mutual upbuilding (edification and development) of one another. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**NLT:** So then, let us aim for harmony in the church and try to build each other up. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** So let us concentrate on the things which make for harmony, and on the growth of one another's character. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** Accordingly, therefore, the things of peace let us be eagerly and earnestly seeking after, and the things which edify, which edification is with a view to the edification of one another.

**Young's Literal:** So, then, the things of peace may we pursue, and the things of building up one another;

**SO THEN LET US PURSUE THE THINGS WHICH MAKE FOR PEACE: Ara oun ta tes eirenes diokomen (1PPAS):**

- Romans 14 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Romans 14:1-15:13 Building Up One Another Without Offending, Part 1 - Study Guide \(click dropdown menu\)](#)- John MacArthur
- [Romans 14:16-23 Building Up One Another Without Offending, Part 2](#)- John MacArthur
- [Romans 14:1-15:13 Building Up One Another Without Offending, Part 2 - Study Guide \(click dropdown menu\)](#)- John MacArthur

## TWO GODLY PURSUITS

**Phillips** paraphrase - So let us concentrate on the things which make for harmony, and on the growth of one another's character.

**So then (See term of conclusion)** - This phrase is frequent in Paul's writings and means in essence "therefore then" which draws a conclusion -- therefore motivated by these worthy goals of being acceptable to God and approved by men we (note here Paul uses "we" thus including himself) are to "... pursue the things which make for peace..."

Because of the great "benefits", Paul is exhorting all believers to have more than a slight interest in these "things". Webster's 1828 Dictionary definition of "**pursue**" gives us a sense of Paul's zeal here --

"o follow with a view to overtake; to follow with haste; to chase; as, to pursue a hare. To seek; to use

measures to obtain. To endeavor to attain to; to strive to reach or gain."

**Pursue** (1377) (**dioko**) (4 other uses in Romans: Ro 9:30, Ro 9:31, Ro 12:13, Ro 12:14) means "to run swiftly in order to catch some person or thing, to run after, to pursue," to doggedly pursue, to chase, to follow. Metaphorically, dioko means to seek after eagerly, earnestly endeavor to acquire. **Dioko** is used positively ("earnestly pursue") and negatively ("zealously persecute, hunt down"). In both positive and negatives sense, dioko means to pursue with all haste ("chasing" after), earnestly desiring to overtake or apprehend). **Dioko** is often translated "persecute" in NT but here **dioko** means press hard after with earnestness and diligence in order to obtain a godly objective. The picture is to aggressively chase, like a hunter pursues his catch (prize).

Go after with the desire of obtaining, like a runner in a race running and exerting with every fiber to reach the goal. And in the **present tense** the idea is to continually press hard after = let this be your lifestyle. Not perfection but direction! The pattern of your life is to be in "hot pursuit" of godly objectives - things that make for peace with our brethren and which contribute to their being built up not torn down.

For added insights compare similar uses of **dioko** in 1Co 14:1, Php 3:12, Php 3:14, 1Th 5:15, 1Ti 6:11, 2Ti 2:22, Heb 12:14, 1Pe 3:11. Believers should have the determination of an avid hunter, causing them to chase after with zealous diligence godly objectives such as "righteousness, faith, love and peace" (2Ti 2:22-note) and "peace with all men and holiness (sanctification)" (Heb 12:14-note). **Dear reader, are you running with endurance, or lazily jogging, or slowly walking, or simply coasting, or sadly sitting, etc? Or are you pressing on** (Php 3:12-note)? **And specifically are you pressing "on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."** (Php 3:14-note)

**Only one RACE twill soon be past,  
Only what's yielded to and done for and by Christ will last.**

What "things" is Paul speaking of? In context the things which make for peace have been clearly delineated: accepting of one another, giving up our rights so that we don't cause a brother to stumble or ruin him, not holding him in contempt, not judging our brother in those areas where the Bible is silent, and doing so with the full realization that we all have a Master and He alone is the Judge Whom we shall all stand before to give an accounting for our stewardship of those truths which when practiced bring forth the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

**Solomon** an old man whose done it all and found most of what he did meaningless, meaningless, like chasing after the wind gives us this wise exhortation - "The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil." (Eccl 12:13, 14)

**MacArthur** - Humility produces peace because someone with humility doesn't care about his own rights; he is more concerned about another's rights. Meekness, unselfishness, and love are the things that make for peace (cp 2Co 13:11, Eph 4:3) Peace is part of our testimony, so let's learn to pursue the things that make for peace. If you find a weaker brother in the fellowship who doesn't understand his liberty, reach down to where he is and make peace with him. Don't flaunt your liberty, especially knowing that unbelievers are watching you. (Building Up One Another Without Offending, Part 2)

**Peace** (1515) (**eirene**) from verb **eiro** = to join or bind together that which has been separated) literally pictures the binding or joining together again of that which had been separated or divided and thus setting at one again, a meaning convey by the common expression of one "having it all together". It follows that peace is the opposite of division or dissension. Peace as a state of concord and harmony is the opposite of war. Peace was used as a greeting or farewell corresponding to the Hebrew word shalom - "peace to you".

**Ray Stedman** - Whenever you are doing something that threatens the **peace** of a community, or a church, or a group, or an individual, so that they cannot handle it, so that they become angry and upset, then back off. You who are strong, bear that burden. Do not insist on your rights. Some Christians get so intent on having their rights that I have seen them indulge in the very presence of people they knew would be highly offended by what they did, simply because they wanted to show how free they were. Paul says that kind of thing is absolutely wrong. ([The Right to Yield - Romans 14:13-23](#))

**J C Philpot** devotional - What a sweetness is contained in the word "peace." Bunyan well represents this in his Pilgrim's Progress, where he speaks of Christian, after having been entertained in the "house Beautiful," going to sleep in the chamber called "Peace." And what blessed sensations are couched in that word "Peace!" It was the legacy that Jesus left to his Church. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world gives, give I unto you;" and the Apostle says of it that it "passes all understanding." Now many even of the Lord's people seem as if they wanted and were expecting raptures. There is, I believe, a vast deal of enthusiasm in the natural mind of man, as is evident from what I may call its religious history in all ages; and this leads many who, in other points, seem rightly taught to look for wonderful visions, ecstasies, and raptures, things which nature can imitate, or Satan, as

an "angel of light," counterfeit to delude souls. But I believe Satan cannot speak gospel peace to the conscience; he cannot bring a holy calm into the soul. He could lash the waters of Gennesaret into a storm; but there was only One who could say to them, "Peace, be still." Satan may raise up a storm in our carnal mind, but he cannot allay it; he cannot pour oil upon the waves; nor calm the troubled breast, and enable it to rest upon God. Of all spiritual blessings, none seem preferable to peace; and I believe that it is what a child of God covets more than anything. For, O how much is implied in the word "peace!" Is not man by nature an enemy to God? Then to be saved he must be reconciled; and that implies peace. Is not his heart often troubled, as the Lord said, "Let not your heart be troubled?" Then he needs peace. And is not his mind often agitated and tossed up and down by conflicting emotions? Then he needs peace to calm it. And when he has to lie upon his dying bed, O, if he can but lie there in peace, peace with God through Jesus Christ, and a holy calm comes over his soul, flowing out of manifested mercy and felt reconciliation, it will beat all the raptures in the world! To be blessed with peace, through the blood of sprinkling, before the soul glides out of its earthly tabernacle to enter into the haven of peace above--this indeed will make a death-bed happy, this will extract every thorn from the dying pillow, and enable the departing believer to say, with holy Simeon, "Lord, now let you your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen your salvation." (J. C. Philpot. Daily Portions)

## AND THE BUILDING UP OF ONE ANOTHER : kai ta tes oikodoms tes eis allelous:

- 1Th 5:11, Acts 20:32
- Romans 14 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### BUILDING UP NOT TEARING DOWN

**MacArthur** - We should pursue the kinds of things that will bring about spiritual strengthening in a brother. In 1 Corinthians 14:12 Paul says, "Forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church." Seek the things that will build up your weaker brother, not that which will cause him to stumble, grieve, and be devastated. (Building Up One Another Without Offending, Part 2)

**Building up** (3619) (**oikodome** [word study] from **oikos** = dwelling, house + **doma** = building or **demo** = to build) is **literally** the building of a house and came to refer to any building process. **Oikodome** can refer to the actual process of building or construction. Another literal meaning is as a reference to a building or edifice which is the result of a construction process (Mt 24:1, Mk 13:1, 2 are the only literal uses of **oikodome** in the NT). (See sermon by [Alexander Maclaren entitled "Edification"](#))

**Oikodome** is also used by Paul in Ro 15:2-note (Compare similar uses in 2Co 13:10, Eph 4:12-note, Eph 4:16-note, Eph 4:29-note)

When used literally **oikodome** refers to the building of a house and when used figuratively as Paul does in this verse **oikodome** refers to the spiritual edification of one another which includes what we say to one another in regard to non essentials.

Note Paul's admonition - Let "no unwholesome ("rotten") word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for **EDIFICATION** (**oikodome**) according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear." (Eph 4:29-note)

Webster's dictionary says our English "**edify**" is derived from the Latin aedificare to instruct or improve spiritually, in turn from Latin, to erect a house, in turn from aedes temple, house. What a picture of the power of our words in regard to non-essentials.

**Do my words tear down a brother, either because I despise his ignorance of his liberty or because I judge him for what I perceive as abuse of his liberty?** Or do I build up my brother with words that are good for edification according to the need of the moment" (Eph 4:29)? This chapter is incredibly convicting isn't it?

In (1Cor 8:1) Paul warned the Corinthian church that KNOWLEDGE makes one arrogant (and predisposes them to causing another brother to stumble or be ruined in these "grey" areas) but LOVE edifies or builds up. Considering that scripture is the best commentary on scripture, examine Paul's parallel thoughts in (1Cor 8:1-13) where he instructs us on how to handle the "do's, don't and differences".

**Love** says I know that I have the liberty to act in this "grey" area but I will chose not to do it because it might stumble or ruin my brother who is watching me "indulge". This then is walking in love w/o hypocrisy (Ro 12:9), being fully devoted to one another in brotherly love, thoroughly giving preference to one another in honor (Ro 12:10-note), continually owing nothing but love to one another (Ro 13:8-note) and so doing with the realization that "the Judge is standing right at the door" (James 5:9), that "the night is almost gone and the day is at hand" (Ro 13:12-note) and that we all have an appointment on our "day timer" to appear at the Bema seat of Christ (Ro 14:10, 11, 12-note, 2Co5:9,10).

The **Disciple's Study Bible** has this note " Paul's teaching here is of supreme importance as one of the building blocks for a consistent approach to Christian decision-making. Though Paul claimed his freedom in Christ, he still (1Co 9:1,19, 10:25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33) highlighted the need to be sensitive to others' consciences. Our conscience may not be violated by a particular action, but such an action may be perceived as immoral by other individuals living out of another level of ethical maturity. For them moral confusion may set in. Does one live life, then, continually bending to the dictates of others' consciences? Yes, when the motivation is to nurture others in the understanding of the kingdom of God and to bring honor to God. No, when the bending limits or alters our own sense of maturity in God. A fragile balance results, and constant vigilance to such a tension is necessary. We must avoid an attitude of condemnation and a feeling of guilt. We must seek to mature and help others mature. Above all, we must seek to avoid quarrels and divisions in God's church. Church unity is more important than my freedom. ([Disciple's Study Bible](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** - Our desire must not be to get everybody to agree with us; our desire must be to pursue peace (Ro 12:18)note "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men", not cause others to stumble, and help others to mature in Christ. What starts as **grieving** (Ro 14:15) can become **offending** (Ro 14:21), and **causing others to stumble and fall** (Ro 14:13, 21). The result might be **destroying** a brother's or sister's faith (Ro 14:15, 20). Is destroying another just to have your own way worth it? ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor](#))

**One another** ([240](#)) (**allelon**) means each other and speaks of a mutuality or sharing of sentiments between two persons or groups of persons. **Allelon** is a reciprocal pronoun which denotes that the encouragement and edification is to be a mutual beneficial activity. As each submits, encourages, loves, etc, the other members benefit. This is the God's description and prescription for a body of believers.

**One another** is a common NT phrase (especially in Paul's letters) with most uses relating to the building up of the body of Christ. As such the "**one anothers**" in the NT would make an excellent Sunday School study (or topical sermon series), taking time to meditate on each occurrence, asking whether it is being practiced (in the Spirit-note) in your local church and seeking to excel still more (cp Php 1:9, 10, 11 -notes; 1Th 3:12-note, 1Th 4:1-note, 1Th 4:10-note). Below is a list of the NT uses of **one another** (be sure to check the context for the most accurate interpretation).

Ro 12:10, 16; 13:8; 14:13, 19; 15:5, 7, 14; 16:16; 1Co 6:7; 7:5; 11:33; 12:25; 16:20; 2Co 13:12; Gal 5:13, 15, 26; Ep 4:2, 25, 32; 5:19, 21; Php 2:3; Col 3:9, 13, 16; 1Th 3:12; 4:9, 18; 5:11, 13, 15; 2Th 1:3; Heb 3:13; 10:24, 25; James 4:11; 5:9, 16; 1Pe 1:22; 4:8, 9, 10; 5:5, 14; 1Jn 1:7; 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11, 12; 2Jn 1:5

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**Steven Cole** - As Christians, we should pursue godly relationships, preserve godly priorities, develop godly convictions, and maintain a good conscience. **1. As Christians, we should pursue godly relationships** (Ro 14:19).

Romans 14:19: "**So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another**" In the context, Paul is mainly addressing the need for Gentile and Jewish believers to get along so that the church would not be fragmented along racial lines. The Jewish believers tended to cling to the Law of Moses, including its regulations about clean and unclean foods. It was difficult for them to let those things go. But the Gentile believers, coming to Christ out of paganism, didn't understand why there was all the fuss over food. They had no problem eating a steak that had been offered to an idol in the pagan temple before it showed up at the meat market. So the Gentile Christians tended to look with contempt on the Jewish believers for being legalistic, whereas the Jews tended to judge the Gentiles for being licentious.

The problem had two ramifications. First, if a Jewish Christian saw a Gentile Christian eating what to the Jew was "defiled" meat, it could lead to a break in their relationship. The Jew might think, "I'm not going to have anything to do with a so-called Christian who is so licentious!" Or, the Gentile believer might think, "I'm not going to be friends with a person who is hung up over such legalism. He needs to grow up!" And so their personal relationship would be ruptured.

In a worst case scenario, the entire church could be divided along the lines of the meat eater faction and the vegetarian or kosher meat only faction. But for Paul, it was central to the very concept of the church that it was composed of "Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman," with Christ as "all and in all" (Col. 3:11). To divide over secondary matters would send the wrong message about the power of the gospel and the testimony of Christ to the watching world.

By the way, this is one reason that I refuse to divide up the church into a "traditional" (sometimes called, "classic") service and a "contemporary" service. This effectively divides a church along age lines. The older folks were raised on the traditional hymns, accompanied by the organ and piano. It warms their hearts to sing the familiar old hymns. So they all flock to the traditional service. Younger believers who were not raised in the church can't relate to the old hymns. They sound archaic to them. So they flock to the service with newer music. And so the church is divided.

But I think that God wants the church to be like a family, where there are grandparents, parents, and grandkids all coming together to enjoy one another's company and learn from each other. The younger people can benefit by learning some of the great hymns. Granted, some of those old hymns need to be put to rest, but some of them need to be passed on to the next generation. Perhaps the tunes need to be updated, but the words are rich and spiritually nourishing. And the older people should rejoice when they see young people coming to Christ and let their youthful zeal warm their hearts afresh with the power of the gospel. So we need to yield to each other and be committed to preserving "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). But especially the stronger, more mature believers need to yield their rights to the younger saints. That is the thrust of Romans 14:13-23.

The second aspect of the problem was that if a Jewish Christian saw a Gentile Christian eating "defiled" meat and because of this the Jewish Christian went against his conscience and ate the same meat, he would be sinning. Also, the Gentile Christian would be sinning by influencing his weaker brother to violate his conscience. Since sin always has devastating consequences, Paul does not want either side to fall into sin.

So Paul gives this exhortation (Ro 14:19): "So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another." "Pursue" is not a passive concept. You don't pursue something accidentally. It takes deliberate effort and persistence. "Pursue" is the same word that is sometimes translated "persecute." We saw the word used in the two senses in Romans 12:13-14, where Paul said (literally), "pursuing hospitality," and then, "Bless those who persecute you." We are to go after hospitality with the same determination that a persecutor goes after his victim. Here (Ro 14:19) we should determine to go after the things that make for peace and the building up of one another. We aren't to be laid back about it, thinking, "Well, if it happens, that's cool!" Rather, we are to go after these things with determined zeal.

A mother with a scout troop said to her son, "I will not take any of you to the zoo if you don't forgive Billy for stealing your candy bar."

"But Billy doesn't want to be forgiven," her son complained. "He won't even listen."

"Then make him," his irate mother demanded.

Suddenly, her son chased Billy, knocked him to the ground, sat on him, and yelled, "I forgive you for stealing my candy bar, but I'd sure find it easier to forget if you'd wipe the chocolate off your face!" (Josephine Ligon, "Your Daffodils are Pretty," Christianity Today [3/2/1979], p. 18)

Well, we aren't to be that aggressive in pursuing peace, but we are to pursue it! Do you do this? Do you do all that you can to try to make peace with your brother or sister in Christ when you're at odds? Before you speak, do you pause to consider, "What will build him (or her) up in Christ?" As Paul says (Eph. 4:29), "Let no unwholesome [lit., rotten] word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear." What about with your mate? If husbands and wives would pursue the things that make for peace and the building up of one another, the air in our homes would be filled with the fragrant peace of Christ!

You may be thinking, "Yeah, but if you only knew how rude he was to me!" "If you had heard what he said to me!" "If you knew how she nags me and snaps at me!" "Don't I have a right to be treated with some kindness and love?"

But the Bible doesn't give us those kinds of loopholes: "Pursue peace and building up one another, except when you've been treated wrongly!!" "Go after peace and building up the other person except when he deserves the silent treatment!"

Maybe you're thinking, "Am I just supposed to be a doormat? Am I just supposed to absorb his abusive speech? If I don't fight back, I'll get trampled!" The biblical answer is that sometimes you are supposed to just absorb it. I'm not talking about physical abuse, but about times when someone is rude or mean or insensitive. At other times, especially in marriage, you should try to talk about it in a way that will not lead to more conflict. Approach it from the standpoint of, "I love you and I want our relationship to be all that God wants it to be. But when you say such and such or you treat me like that, it makes me want to pull away from you. So could we communicate in a way that builds up one another?" Here are God's inspired commands (1Pet. 3:8-12):

To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. For, 'The one who desires life, to live and see good days, must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. He must turn away from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.'

In other words, if you seek peace and pursue it when you're wronged, the Lord notices. He will listen to your prayers. He will take up your cause against those who have wronged you. But your job is to pursue peace and the things that build up the other person. This does not mean "peace at any cost," because often that does not build up the other person. If the other person is sinning or is embracing seriously wrong doctrine, you are not building him up to ignore his behavior. But, our aim should be to pursue godly relationships. Love for one another is the second greatest command in God's kingdom. ([One More Time Romans 14:19-23](#))

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**The Campaign** - Each year young people in our community participate in a "Be Nice" campaign spearheaded by a mental health organization. In one of the events in 2012, 6,000 students spelled out the words BE NICE with their bodies on their schools' sports fields. One principal said, "We want students to come to school and learn without the distraction of fear or sadness or uneasiness around their peers. We are working hard to make sure students are lifting each other up, rather than tearing each other down."

Paul desired that the people in the church at Rome would have an even higher standard of love. Both the strong and weak in the faith were judging and showing contempt for each other (Ro 14:1-12). They despised one another as they argued about what foods were permissible to eat (Ro 14:2-3) and what holidays they should observe (Ro 14:5-6). Paul challenged them: "Let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another" (Ro 14:19). He reminded them that their hearts should be concerned with pleasing others, not pleasing themselves. He said, "Even Christ did not please Himself" (Ro 15:3); He served. ([The Campaign - Our Daily Bread](#))

Join the campaign that loves others despite our differences—you'll bring praise to God (v.7).

Dear Lord, I want to be a person who is  
kind and loving to others. Please help me  
to use words that will build others up  
and bring praise and glory to Your name.

**Kindness is simply love flowing out in little gentlenesses.**