

Prayer:

Slide # 1

Romans

Theme: The Righteousness of God – The Gospel of God

Outline:

- **Prologue:** 1:1-17
- **Doctrinal:** 1:18-8:39
God’s holiness – man’s sinfulness – 1:18-3:20
Justification by grace through faith – 3:21-5:21
Sanctification of the believer – 6:1-8:39
- **Dispensational:** 9:1-11:36 (The place of Israel and the church)
- **Practical: 12:1-15:33** (Duties and privileges of the believer)
- **Epilogue:** 16:1-27

A major theme in the book of Romans is HOW the righteousness of God is acquired – and that is by faith alone. In the letter, Paul emphasizes the obedience of faith. The obedience of faith appropriates the truth of Christ for WHO He is as Lord and Savior, and Paul in the book places the emphasis on the LORDSHIP of Christ.

Slide # 2

Romans 10:9 (LSB)

9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

Romans 10:13 (LSB)

13 for “WHOEVER CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.”

This faith in Christ as Lord and Savior is REVEALED from faith to faith as Paul says in Rom. 1:17. “From faith” refers to the initial act of faith and “to faith” refers to the life of faith that results.

Believing on Christ as Lord results in a changed life. That is true no matter one’s level of maturity. Belief in Christ forever alters how one sees Christ which in turn alters how one lives.

In Romans 14 Paul is speaking to Christians of varying levels of maturity and knowledge. He addresses them in terms of the weak and the strong – referring to the immature and the mature. But one thing is clear, BOTH the weak and the strong recognize Jesus as LORD. In Romans 14 which deals with “doubtful things” (or matters of opinion) the Lordship of Christ is prominent.

Slide # 3

Romans 14:4-14 (Lord – 10x)

- v. 4 ...own master
- v. 6 ...to the Lord
- v. 6 ...to the Lord
- v. 6 ...to the Lord
- v. 6 ...to the Lord
- v. 8 ...to the Lord
- v. 8 ...to the Lord
- v. 8 ...we are the Lord's
- v. 9...Lord of both the dead and the living
- v. 14 ...the Lord Jesus

Both the weak and the strong believer are BOTH serious about Jesus as Lord. They both live as to the LORD. They are BOTH wanting to please the Lord. But they have differing levels of understanding. And that can lead to tensions. Paul teaches that in secondary matters of importance we need to agree to disagree. There is an allowance for disagreement when it comes to non-essentials. In such cases Paul says, “Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.” There is a place to “live and let live” – properly understood.

When it comes to essential doctrine or gospel truth we must agree on that. There is CORE truth that all believers agree on, and this is the CORE basis of our fellowship.

Slide # 4

Galatians 1:8–9 (NKJV)

8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

There is no wiggle room when it comes to gospel truth. However, the situation Paul is dealing with does not involve essential doctrine. As already shown, these believers (both the weak and the strong) all agree on the LORDSHIP of Christ. What they disagree over is how this works its way out in the life.

And we must always consider the context that Paul is addressing. When he is addressing the issue of false teachers who are trying to teach Jesus plus legalism for either salvation or sanctification, as in the case of Galatians and Colossians, he is very hard on them. He doesn't give space to false teachers. However, that is not who he is dealing with here. Here the issue is clearly a brother – a weaker brother. He is patient and gracious in that case.

Paul, in the chapter, brings forth two examples, that of diet and that of days.

Some converted Jews may bring forth baggage from being under the law.

Some converted Gentiles may bring forth baggage from years of idolatry and, therefore, think it wrong to eat anything sacrificed to an idol. These are matters of conscience based on one's level of understanding. These are the types of things Paul in context was dealing with.

Slide # 5

The Right Attitude...

- 1) Accept each other as brothers/sisters.
- 2) Agree to disagree (not have a critical spirit) – v. 5.
- 3) Act in light of the Lordship of Christ Who is LORD - Judge of all.

Slide # 6

Rom. 14:1-12 – Exhortations to both the strong and the weak

Rom. 14:13-18 – Exhortation mainly to the strong/mature

Paul addresses both the weak and the strong but as he goes along the emphasis becomes more directed to the strong who have the greater responsibility as those who are mature. They are to be especially sensitive to the weak (cf. Rom. 15:1).

Paul has emphasized that in secondary matters we should not judge one another. God knows the motives of all people and He alone is the final Judge. We left off our study at Romans 14:12 where Paul says in the end each one of us “*shall give account of himself to God.*” Our concern should first and foremost be ourselves in regard to how we treat our fellow brother.

On judgment day when it comes to secondary matters the great issue will not necessarily be who had the most accurate view, but rather who was the most Christlike.

Romans 14:13–18 (NKJV)

13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way.

Therefore – in view of coming personal judgment on how we have treated one another – in light of this Paul says “let us not judge one another anymore”. Again, he is not saying don’t be discerning at all. Of course, we call out flagrant sin – both doctrinal and practical. But again, in the matter of secondary things we are not to have a judgmental (critical) spirit. Judgment day is coming!

Instead, on a play on words, Paul says “rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way.” Instead of playing judge with your brother, judge (or determine) to do this. Instead of being critical, determine not to put a stumbling block in his path.

A “stumbling block” (Gk. *proskomma*) is something one might trip over. “A cause to fall” (Gk. *skandalon*) is literally a trap or a snare. Setting a trap is something done deliberately. Don’t cause your brother to stumble and don’t be responsible for him getting ensnared in sin.

The idea is “Don’t be responsible for anything that causes a brother to fall into sin.” In that sense we are our brother’s keeper (cf. Gen. 4:9).

Slide # 7

1 Corinthians 8:9 (NKJV)

9 But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak.

In verse 4 Paul says God is able to make the believer stand, but here he warns against being a stumbling block. In the end God will make all believers to stand but to a certain extent we can stumble them. That is the warning here!

It is not enough for a Christian that a certain course is not wrong; he must also consider its effect on other people, specially on his brother, one bound to him by close ties. – **Leon Morris**

We not only have a responsibility for ourselves, we are also responsible for one another! The goal of a Christian should be to help, not hurt a brother, to be a “stepping stone” - not a “stumbling stone”.

14 I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

Paul says something very IMPORTANT here! He says he KNOWS and is CONVINCED that there is nothing unclean of itself. But how did he arrive at this conviction? Well, he says, he was “convinced by the Lord Jesus” (cf. Gal. 1:12). This is how it happened with Peter as well.

Slide # 8

Acts 10:13–14 (NKJV)

13 And a voice came to him, “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.”

14 But Peter said, “Not so, Lord! For **I have never eaten anything common or unclean.**”

As a matter of conviction Peter held strictly to the law regarding a holy diet. What could possibly change his mind – after all he had 1500 years of history behind him and the sacred Word of God.

Slide # 9

Acts 10:15 (NKJV)

15 And a voice spoke to him again the second time, “**What God has cleansed you must not call common.**”

In the case of both Paul and Peter, direct revelation may have been involved as they were both apostles. The Lord Himself convinced them!

This is how people need to be convinced! We are not to cajole or try and force people into a right position when it comes to secondary matters. Rather we want the Lord to convince them. And how does that happen now that direct revelation is no longer happening? Well, it happens through the Word of God.

We are not to forcefully press a weaker brother to go along with our liberated view, rather we are to graciously teach and lead them into the truth of the Scriptures. I think the spirit of what Paul is saying in another context would have application here.

Slide # 10

2 Timothy 2:24 (NKJV)

24 And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient,

We wisely and gently want to lead them into the full truth of Word. Note Paul in a way was doing this even here. Realize this was an open letter that would be read by both the weak and the strong. And clearly Paul here was siding with the strong saying that he knew and was convinced by the Lord Himself that there is nothing unclean of itself. That is not so subtle as to what the right view really is (cf. 1 Cor. 8:8; 1 Tim. 4:3-5).

Slide # 11

Philippians 3:15 (NKJV)

15 Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.

Note that in matters where people think differently, Paul definitely left space for God to reveal truth to them. He didn't force it. Yes, in essential matters, there was to be no compromise, but in secondary matters of maturity, he gave space. Yet, also note that he did think that God would bring them along – which is always the goal.

But while Paul knew the truth that nothing was unclean in terms of diet and what was permissible to eat, yet he realized that others did not yet realize this. He says, ***“but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.”***

This is interesting. We might expect Paul to say, “Well, truth is truth and if it is clean that settles it.” But he take a different approach. He was a master at working with people. It was part of his giftedness. He knew the lines well. He knew where to take a stand on primary truth, but he also realized there are some secondary issues where you need to give space and let God work. And he tells us why.

If a converted Jew raised in Leviticus knew it was wrong to eat bacon then to do so would violate his conscience. For him to knowingly violate his conscience would be SIN! That is what Paul is dealing with.

These people were serious about Jesus as Lord, but they were still weak in their understanding. They didn't understand all the implications of being under the New Covenant and how this completely did away with the old.

Paul is here dealing with the matter of conscience. A right conscience is governed by truth, but if one is weak, he doesn't yet understand the liberty he has in Christ. He needs to be taught. But Paul's point is that this needs to be done in such a way that the strong doesn't run roughshod over his conscience. We need to let the Lord convince Him through His Word.

Martin Luther at the Imperial Diet of Worms in 1521 was exhorted by the Emperor and the church to recant his teachings. His response was this!

Slide # 12

Unless I am convinced by proofs from Scriptures or by plain and clear reasons and arguments, I can and will not retract, for it is neither safe nor wise to do anything against conscience. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen. – **Martin Luther**

I can't go along with Luther's baptismal regeneration but I fully concur with this statement! It is neither safe nor wise to do anything against conscience. Now the conscience can be educated by the Word but it must not be violated!

If we are mature, we now understand there is no such thing as "ceremonial uncleanness" like there was under the old system. Paul is very clear in 1 Timothy 4:3-5 that "**nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.**" Yes, in principle, the strong, liberated believer is technically right! Nothing is inherently unclean (cf. Mt. 15:10-11, 16-20; Mk. 7:14-23; Acts 10; 1 Tim. 4:3-5; Titus 1:15).

And yet as Paul will show you can be right and yet at the same time be wrong in terms of your actions. There is more to think about than just you and your liberty. There is also the spiritual welfare of your brother to consider.

15 Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.

Again, Paul emphasizes this is an issue regarding a fellow “brother,” and clearly, he is shown to be a weaker brother because of his religious scruples concerning eating so-called “unclean” foods, which were prohibited in the OT. He has not yet made his way to a “grace diet” consistent with the New Covenant.

But because he has a conscience problem pressuring him to eat would result in him being grieved. The word “grieved” (Gk. lypeitai) means “to hurt” or “be distressed”.

Have you ever had a situation where you knowingly violated your conscience as a believer? That hurts! That is not fun! That is miserable! As a believer, that is very hard to live with.

By the way, the word “grieved” in verse 15 is the very same word used in Eph. 4:30.

Slide # 13

Ephesians 4:30 (NKJV)

30 And do not **grieve** the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

To grieve your conscience and to grieve the Holy Spirit are very closely related because it is never right to violate your conscience. In doing so, we experience “grief”.

Paul here, in effect, says, “Don’t pressure your brother to violate his weak conscience. Give him space.” To force it or push recklessly is the opposite of walking in love. And right here is the overriding issue. It is an issue of LOVE.

The Greek word here for love is “agape” which is the intense word for love in the NT. It is the word most commonly used for God’s kind of love. It seeks the other person’s highest good. It is not self-oriented but rather other-oriented. It gives of self for the good of the other. In this case it is willing to set aside personal liberty for the sake of the brother’s spiritual good. Love seeks to edify (build up) the other person.

Slide # 14**1 Corinthians 8:1 (NKJV)**

1 Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. **Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.**

Paul is very concerned about the conscience of the weaker brother. He is serious about the LORD, but he is weak. He does not yet understand the liberty that he has in Christ concerning secondary matters.

This person must be worked with. He needs gentle guidance. He needs to be educated graciously and his conscience brought along to where he sees for himself from the Scriptures the liberty that he now has in Christ. And the reason this is so serious is because if a person as a believer learns to violate their conscience it can do great spiritual harm.

The man who violates his conscience on a little thing will soon be violating it on a big thing. – ***Alva McClain***

The conscience is the moral faculty of the mind. It can be educated by God through the Holy Spirit, but we must never teach anyone to go against his conscience. – ***HCSB***

And so Paul says, “***Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.***”

The word “destroy” (Gk. apollumi) is a very strong word. It is often used in reference to the eternal destruction of unbelievers (cf. Mt. 10:28; Lk. 13:3; John 3:16; Rom. 2:12). However, it can also mean more generally “to bring to ruin”; “to damage” or “to devastate” (cf. Mt. 9:17; Lk. 21:18; James 1:11).

Now, obviously, a fellow believer cannot destroy a brother in the sense of causing him to go to hell. Jesus used this same word (destroy), which is translated as “perish” in John 10:28.

Slide # 15**John 10:28 (NKJV)**

28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall **never perish**; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

In the Greek John 10:28 presents a double negative making it as strong as possible. It is emphatic! You could translate this “and they will never perish – ever!” The idea is they will “never never” perish! The emphasis is emphatic!

Clearly true believers are NEVER in danger of perishing because Christ has once for all saved them for all eternity. Hebrews 10:14 says of Christ, “by one offering He has perfected forever”. The very definition of eternal means eternal life can never come to an end. If you have eternal life through faith in Christ, then it is eternal. That is NEVER in jeopardy!

However, a messed up conscience can result in a ruined life in the sense of fruit! The opposite of “destroy” in this context is to “build up” or “edify” (cf. Rom. 14:19; 15:2).

In 1 Cor. 3:15 Paul showed there is such a thing as serving in such a way that one “will suffer loss”. In 2 John 8 the apostle said it is possible “to lose those things we worked for”. You can lose your reward!

Slide # 16

Revelation 3:11 (NKJV)

11 Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, **that no one** may take your crown.

Isn't it interesting how Jesus put this – “that no one may take your crown.” This shows that others may influence a person to where they lose their crown of reward. They can suffer “eternal damage” in the sense of missing out on their eternal reward. I think this is the idea in view here in Romans 14:15.

It is the idea of damaging them spiritually to where their conscience is messed up and it causes them to go astray spiritually. To cause this to happen to a brother is to destroy them in terms of their walk – in terms of being fruitful – in terms of reward. This is a most serious consequence, and therefore, very strong language is used.

Slide # 17

1 Corinthians 8:11–12 (NKJV)

11 And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother **perish**, [suffer ruinous loss] for whom Christ died?

12 But when you thus sin against the brethren, and **wound their weak conscience**, you **sin** against Christ.

The life of the believer is so valuable. Christ died for them. This is what Christ did to save them – the least we can do is be sensitive to their religious scruples and wisely bring them along.

Christ gave up His life for them – can't we give up a food preference for their spiritual good? Christ died for his ultimate good – we, too, should act for his ultimate spiritual good! To act in such a way that the weak believer violates his conscience is flat-out SIN!

Love is sensitive regarding the conscience of the weaker brother. It cares about him. He has great value. He matters infinitely to God. We want to work with him in a way that is for his spiritual good instead of (in effect) teaching him to violate his conscience to his spiritual detriment.

16 Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil;

“Your good” here is your liberty – your freedom to eat whatever you want with no stipulations. Paul emphasizes that the strong should use their freedom wisely. They should not flaunt it in a way that causes others to stumble – that is, to their spiritual harm.

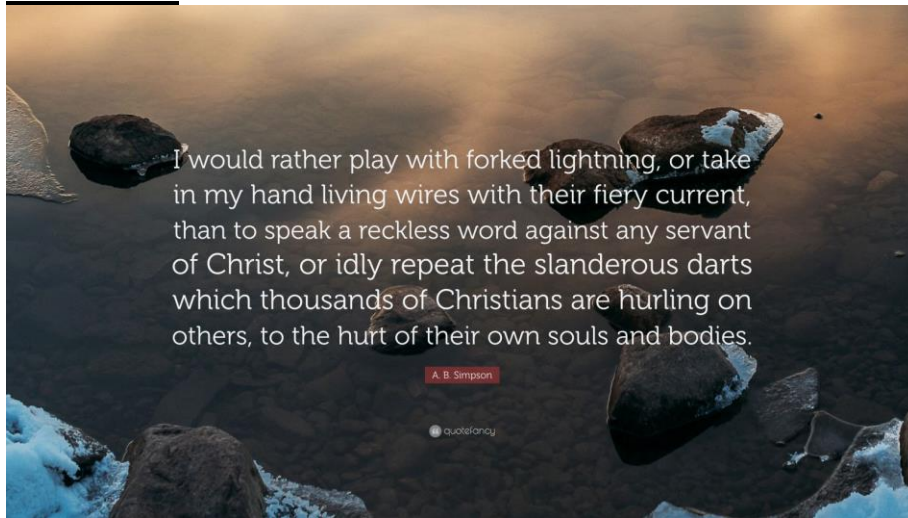
Yes, by all means we have liberty but liberty is to be governed by love. And love thinks about the spiritual good of the other person.

If the strong brother forces what he knows to be true on the weaker brother, what is going to happen is that the weaker brother is going to be spiritually damaged and the word will then be how he was harmed by the stronger brother. In this case their “good” (liberty) would be spoken of as evil. It is not seen as a good thing but rather as evil.

Of course, the liberty itself is not evil, but if one uses it wrongly – this wrongful use of it can be sin – can be evil. Paul in effect, speaking to the stronger brother, says, “Don't put yourself in that position.”

The phrase “spoken of as evil” is the translation of one Greek word (*blaphemeistho*) which means “blasphemed”. To blaspheme is to speak irreverently or to speak evil of. This really speak BADLY of the person – all because they were foolish in flaunting their freedom.

Indeed, knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. It's not how much you know, but how much you love. Love wisely uses knowledge. Love always seeks the spiritual good of the other person. Love says, “It's not about me.”

Slide # 18**17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.**

This is the first and only place Paul inserts the idea of “kingdom” in the letter of Romans. Paul does not often use the word “kingdom” in his writings. In total, he uses a direct reference to “kingdom” 14 times in his letters (Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 4:20; 6:9, 10; 15:24, 50; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5; Col. 1:13; 4:11; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Thess. 1:5; and 2 Tim. 4:1, 18).

Almost always, Paul speaks of the kingdom in reference to the future. Paul here in Romans does not define what he means by “kingdom” but assumes the reader understands. He emphasizes here kingdom values and what is to define kingdom people, but that’s it! He does not say we are in the kingdom!

When it comes to “kingdom theology,” many commentators traffic in eisegesis (reading into the text) instead of practicing exegesis (taking out of the text what is there).

When it comes to the kingdom we need to understand the difference between positional truth and functional reality. Let me give you another example of this.

Slide # 19**Ephesians 2:6 (LSB)**

6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

In Christ, this is our position right now. Right now, positionally, we are seated with Christ in heavenly places, but we are not actually there yet. This is also true in relation to the kingdom. Positionally, we, as God's people, are kingdom people. That defines us, but we are not there yet.

Slide 20

1 Thessalonians 2:12 (NKJV)

12 that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

We have a kingdom calling and therefore we are to walk worthy of it, but we are not there yet. This is a yet FUTURE reality.

The Moody Handbook of Theology notes:

The basic meaning of kingdom involves three things: a ruler, a people who are ruled, and a territory over which they are ruled. There are two basic forms of the kingdom. (1) The universal kingdom. This form of the kingdom exists throughout all times (Lam. 5:19)...The universal kingdom is God's sovereign rule from eternity to eternity. (2) The mediatorial kingdom. This is (a) the rule of God through a divinely chosen representative [which is fulfilled in the] Messiah, who [will] come to rule on earth at the end of the age.

The church is not the kingdom. The church exists in this present age, whereas the kingdom, which is the future, will be inaugurated at the second coming of Christ. ...The terms church and kingdom are never used interchangeably in Scripture. Of the 114 occurrences of the word church (Gk ekklesia), it is never equated with the kingdom. Jesus came to offer the kingdom to the Jewish nation, hence, the proclamation, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). When the kingdom was rejected, it was held in abeyance, to be introduced at the second advent (Matt. 13). Jesus announced He would build His church after the offer of the kingdom was rejected (Matt. 16:18). (p. 368)

What will define the coming kingdom is God's new arrangement with His people on earth – which is defined as a "New Covenant" relationship. But here is the deal – we as the church today tap into the New Covenant even now – even now we know the spiritual blessings of the New Covenant of which the Holy Spirit is the catalyst. It has been well stated that the fruit of the Spirit could rightly be called "the fruit of the kingdom". That is the idea here in Romans 14:17.

As believers we have a present relationship to the kingdom even before it arrives by virtue of our New Covenant Relationship with God.

Slide # 21

Christians are positionally transferred to Christ's kingdom but the actual establishment of the kingdom with the actual reign of Christ awaits His second coming. – ***Dr. Michael Vlach***

The flow of thought goes like this. "Don't destroy the spiritual life of fellow believer. That is not in keeping with kingdom values."

The kingdom of God is not about eating and drinking. Now, we know from various Scriptures that in the kingdom, we will eat and drink, but the point is that is not the defining spiritual reality. That is not really what it's all about. Kingdom values are not about a bunch of outward regulations; it's not about externals. Rather, what will define God's people is inward spiritual realities such as righteousness, peace, and joy. This is the stuff of kingdom living.

Slide # 22

Jeremiah 23:5 (NKJV)

5 "Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and **righteousness in the earth**."

Slide # 23

Isaiah 9:6–7 (NKJV)

6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace**.

7 Of the increase of His government and **peace** There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Slide # 24

Isaiah 65:18–19 (NKJV)

18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, And her people a joy.

19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem, And joy in My people; The voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, Nor the voice of crying.

Joy is contagious! It is refreshing! It is encouraging. It is edifying. It is part of the fruit of the Spirit. In fact, it is mentioned second – right behind love (Gal. 5:22). In Phil. 4:4 Paul says, “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” Joy is the celebration of God in our soul! It is the disposition of the soul that rejoices in God – all that He is – all that He provides.

And get this, he says this is *“in the Holy Spirit.”* Essentially, what he is describing is very similar to the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). This is what will define the kingdom. These are kingdom values. They are Spirit-filled values.

This is what is appropriate for kingdom citizens. This is how we should live. This is living worthy of the kingdom to which we are called. In light of verse 18 it is clear he is speaking practically in terms of what is to define how we live.

Therefore, “righteousness” speaks of “righteous conduct”, “peace” emphasizes living in harmony – like we will do in the kingdom. “Joy” emphasizes celebrating God versus living for self.

Instead of “destroying” a fellow believer, which in effect results in the loss of a right walk, the loss of peace, and the loss of joy, we should walk in keeping with the kingdom values that promotes righteousness, peace, and joy. This is fitting for kingdom people! This builds people up instead of tearing them down!

Are we kingdom people? If so, we should act like it. We should live like it. We have been given the Holy Spirit to that end! This is our calling!

Paul is emphasizing that it's really not about the physical food, it's rather about the spiritual fruit – the fruit of the Spirit – the fruit of kingdom living.

18 For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men.

Serving Christ in these things refers back to righteousness, peace, and the joy mentioned in verse 17. This clearly shows that he is talking about practical living and that we should live these things out in relation to one another.

The whole of life is a service to God (cf. Rom. 12:1-2). Our very attitudes and how we carry on is a service. Right living is a service. Living out peace and harmony is a service. Walking in joy is a service.

The word “serves” is a form of the word for “slaves”. This emphasizes living for Jesus instead of self. It emphasizes wholehearted commitment (cf. Rom. 12:1-2). We are to serve as those who belong to Him. He is our Master! He bought us with His blood.

Note the emphasis here. Paul does not say the one who eats or doesn't eat. He doesn't even say the one who is considerate of his brother. Rather he emphasizes that all is in relation to Christ. It's all about HIM!

The Christ focus changes everything.

Slide # 25

Colossians 3:23–24 (NKJV)

23 And whatever you do, do it **heartily, as to the Lord** and not to men,

24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for **you serve the Lord Christ**.

How wonderful and edifying it is when God's people walk in righteousness, peace, and joy.

In contrast are those who claim to be Christian but drama constantly follows them. They tend to be “troublemakers” in the body. Sometimes it seems they almost work at being a stumbling block. They love to argue. They constantly make it about them. They are never happy. They have a critical spirit. And in their supposed “strength,” they run roughshod over others and trample down the weak. Isn't that a fine mess?

I am not saying they are not Christians, but they definitely are not living like they are headed for the kingdom. At the very least they need a heart adjustment!

Slide # 26

Proverbs 22:10 (NKJV)

10 Cast out the scoffer, and contention will leave; Yes, strife and reproach will cease.

In contrast to the drama makers God's people are to live right which emphasizes living for God instead of for self. They are to live out peace.

Matthew 5:9 (NKJV)

9 Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.

Ephesians 4:3 (NKJV)

3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

God's people are to be those who bring the JOY! They are a blessing to be around. They find joy in the little things. They see God's hand in everything. Instead of being chronic complainers or chronic critics they are constantly giving thanks out of a joyful heart. What a difference a Spirit-filled attitude makes.

The person who serves Christ in righteousness, peace, and joy is acceptable to God. The person who consistently lives this way pleases God. This is the person who will one day hear God says, "**Well done good and faithful servant.**"

And people notice too. It is the life that gets noticed! God is pleased with them and people approve. Approved means to be proven by testing! This is a life that stands up under testing! This is a life that is respected! It is a life well lived!

Someone has well said, "**Show the world the fruits of Christianity and it will applaud; show it Christianity and it will oppose it vigorously.**" "Approved by men" is the exact opposite of having "your good be spoken of as evil" (v. 16).

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).

There is a balance in most things!

Satan does all he can to bring about division in the family of God, but the fruit of the Spirit, the fruit of the kingdom, promotes edification and unity.

For many years, playing my trombone was not just a hobby - I was a serious musician, and perfectionism drove me to excel. One December, while practicing with my college wind ensemble, I became distracted by an incorrect rhythm that was repeated not once, but several times, in the woodwind section.

It was the band director's job to point out mistakes so that they could be corrected, but he didn't stop the ensemble right away to correct the problem. I thought that he ought to intervene immediately. He had other plans.

My distraction turned to irritability as I wondered when he would call attention to the wrong rhythms being played by others in the band. Irritation escalated to obsession. My pulse increased in tempo and my foot started tapping out the downbeats in an effort to get the erring woodwinds back on track.

I became so concerned with the performance of other band members that I began playing my own part by memory instead of paying attention to my music. My eyes drifted off the director and away from my own music stand to the music of other band members.

I concentrated so hard on the other people's mistakes that I had missed an entrance, and promptly blared several mistakes of my own.

That memorable "music lesson" became a lesson in my life. When I become more concerned about someone else's mistakes or sins, I take my eyes off the Director, Jesus Christ, and it becomes easy for me to fall into sin too. – **Clark Cothorn**

It's easy to put our eyes on others in a sinfully critical way – in a judgmental way, but the first thing we need to do is keep our eyes focused on Jesus our divine Director and mind our own spiritual business and then, as kingdom citizens we serve Christ faithfully by loving each other in keeping with righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit!

As kingdom citizens may God help us to live it out!

The kingdom is about to come into full view – Live Ready!