

## RIGHTEOUSNESS, PEACE AND JOY

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**Scripture:** Romans 14: 12-18

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*<sup>12</sup> So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.*

*<sup>13</sup> Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way. <sup>14</sup> I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. <sup>15</sup> For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died. <sup>16</sup> Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; <sup>17</sup> for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. <sup>18</sup> For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. <sup>19</sup> So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.*

This 14<sup>th</sup> chapter is like a case that Paul is building. he starts by pointing out all the secondary things that they were worried about – what can be eaten, what cannot be eaten, people who watch it are judging them. Then he talks about the fact of not being a stumbling block to people. Be responsible for everybody because the same brother or sister that you're criticizing is the one who has been purchased by the same blood that purchased you. So, everybody is the same and you owe it to God to be responsible for one another.

So, while you may have a certain understanding of what may be permissible or not, you still have a responsibility to a brother or sister who hasn't understood that; hence, live in that manner. So, that's how he's progressing through.

*Verse 12 and he says, "So then, each one of you will give an account of himself to God."* One day we will all stand before God and we have to tell God what we did and how we responded to the things that we were engaged in.

*<sup>13</sup> Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this – not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.* And this is something that Paul is beginning to hone in on, because the early church was filled with both Gentiles and Jews, and they were all bringing their past rituals and things that they were used to into the area of worshipping together. Thus there was a lot of conflict that was happening about whether this was right, whether this was okay, permissible or not. and because of that, there was a lot of judging that was going on, and people were being put down. Paul is saying, "Listen, every one of you has been bought by the precious blood of Jesus. And you owe it to each other not to be a stumbling block.

So don't just live the Christian life for yourself, but live it as if you're accountable to God for the responsibility that He has placed around you as well. this is kind of a new thought that he is bringing in, that we are also responsible for our behavior, for the way others may perceive us. so that when people look at us and say: That person is a Christian. By the way, I saw them do this or that. And you may think and know that it is perfectly okay to do that; but they may not understand it. and their view of what it is to be a Christian gets corrupted. And Paul is saying, "You have a responsibility to live your life in such a way that even when others with maybe a lesser understanding of scripture look at you, they will not in any way lose hope." That's the responsibility, that's the key.

Then he goes on and says, *“Therefore, don’t let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil.”*

Why? Because, he says, *the kingdom of God is not about eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.* That’s what we must be about. The kingdom of which all of you are citizens is not about eating and drinking. Those are secondary things. The main thing, if you get the primary things right, the secondary things will take care of each other. What’s the primary thing? He says, *“Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. That’s what the kingdom of God is all about.*

So, I want us to just focus on these three: righteousness, peace, and joy; what it means for them to emanate from the Holy Spirit, and then, how can we make sure that is happening in our lives.

## **RIGHTEOUSNESS**

Righteousness refers to the fact that we’re living in a way that aligns with God’s purposes. A couple of weeks ago, I shared that if we live every moment in the will of God, as we move along if we are in sync with God’s will, we are living a holy life. That’s what righteousness is. We are in right living with God. So, we make sure that we are in right living with God, then automatically right living with ourselves, and then with others.

**Abraham’s** faith and obedience is a good example of that. His faith in God’s promise, despite his old age and Sarah’s barrenness, exemplified righteousness through trust and obedience. As we try to be righteous, it comes out of trusting God and being obedient to Him.

**Daniel’s** integrity, as seen in Daniel 6. They could find no corruption in him because he was trustworthy, and neither corrupt nor negligent. His commitment to his faith even under threat of death in the lion’s den, highlights his righteous career.

And then **Jesus’s** own teaching on righteousness: Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Jesus emphasizes the pursuit of righteousness as a core aspect of living in God’s kingdom.

## **PEACE**

In this context, peace means more than just the absence of conflict. It signifies harmony within the community of believers and within oneself. A sense of harmony and equilibrium that settles upon us in spite of the fact that things around us may not be going well, we still have this peace that passes all our human understanding.

Paul says in Philippians 4:7 *And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

What a wonderful thing to know that God’s peace guards us. And he says that this is a peace that settles upon you when everything around you seems to be going against what you hope it would. When things are not going well, when situations are not going well, circumstances threaten to overwhelm you. This peace will settle upon you.

Isaiah 26:3 *“Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you.”* In the midst of all that we are going through, to make sure that our hearts are connected with God. And God’s peace then settles upon us.

## **JOY**

Joy is this deep abiding sense of gladness that comes from the Holy Spirit. That joy, too, transcends everything that is going on around us.

**David's** joy in worship. In Psalm 16 we read, *"You make known to me the path of life; You will fill me with joy in Your presence, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand."* And so as we worship God, we feel the sense of joy that settles upon us.

**Paul** and **Silas** singing in prison. Can you imagine? They are in prison. They should be feeling sad, sorry for themselves. Yet, there they are worshipping God. They are having a good time, just filled with joy. They weren't bothered about their situation or their circumstances.

So, righteousness, peace and joy in terms of just definitions for them. But Paul goes on to say that all of them find their root in the Holy Spirit. So we need to look at it and say: **What does the Holy Spirit have to do with righteousness, peace and joy?**

1. **The Holy Spirit transforms the believer.** The key here is to understand that, when righteousness, peace and joy take place in our lives, it happens because of a transformation that comes from the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the One who transforms. Righteousness, peace and joy are not self-generated. They are divine qualities that originate from God Himself, and are imparted to believers through the Holy Spirit. So it doesn't come out of our own human efforts.

Zachariah 4:6 says, *"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the Lord Almighty.* Transformation is the key. That's what the Holy Spirit does. The Holy Spirit is the source of righteousness, peace and joy.

2. **The Holy Spirit empowers believers to live righteously.** The empowerment to be a righteous person comes from the Holy Spirit. Righteousness is a gift received through the Spirit.

Romans 8:2 *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.* So the Holy Spirit empowers us to live this kind of righteous living.

3. **The Holy Spirit produces peace in the believer.** Not only is He the source and the empowerment, but He is also the one who produces peace. peace is the fruit of the Spirit. True peace especially in the face of life's challenges, is something the Holy Spirit cultivates within believers. This peace goes beyond mere absence of conflict.

Romans 8:6 *The mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.* When believers live under the Spirit's influence, they experience a profound peace that affects their minds and hearts.

4. **The Holy Spirit fills a believer with joy.** He is the source, He empowers, He produces, and He fills us with joy. Joy is deeply rooted in the Spirit's presence. Joy, again, is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13 *"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."*

The Holy Spirit produces this kind of joy.

5. **The Holy Spirit does a transforming work in our lives.** this Holy Spirit leads and helps us in transformation. We cannot take knowledge and be happy about knowledge without allowing that knowledge to change us. that is always the key – that knowledge must change us.

**How do I allow this transformation to work in me?**

We need to aspire to that. We need to say: How can that happen in my own life? or else it's of no use. So we look at the how. How am I to be transformed? I want to give you eight points which I think are crucial.

1. **Surrender to God's will.** Yield control. Transformation begins with a willingness to surrender our lives to God, allowing the Holy Spirit to guide, correct and shape us according to God's purposes. And this involves submitting every aspect of our lives to Him – our thoughts, our desires, our actions and decisions, all under God's divine authority.  
Romans 12:1 says, *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship."*
2. **Make sure that your mind is renewed,** that the Holy Spirit is able to change thought patterns. The Holy Spirit transforms us by renewing our minds, helping us to think differently about God, ourselves, and the world. So often we find that there are triggers in our lives that come from the past or situations we've been in. and as we respond to them, we find that we are responding in a very unchristian manner, that our thoughts are going on a different line. And we need to constantly renew our minds and say: I need to make sure that every time I get a trigger, that the point of that trigger is to create a path of holiness in me.  
Romans 12:2 *"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."*
3. **Cultivate the fruit of the Spirit, develop Christ-like character.** The Holy Spirit works within us to develop godly character, traits that are known as the fruit of the Spirit in our lives – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. And if you ever want to kind of do a litmus test and see – Am I walking in the will of God? Am I cultivating the fruit of the Spirit?  
  
This is a good checklist. Look at it and say: am I filled with love, or joy or peace? Am I patient, am I kind, am I faithful, am I gentle? Do I have self-control? And we find that if we have question marks on anything, then that's a good reminder to us that, in that particular area, we haven't submitted to the will of God. So we need to say: Lord, would You take this? I find that I'm so impatient. I find that I don't have self-control. Would You help me? Would You allow the fruit of Your Spirit to come in and take charge of that area?
4. **Live in obedience to God's word.** God's word is not a buffet table that we come and take what we want and leave the rest. We need to take the whole counsel of God and say, "That's what is going to inform my life." We need to apply God's truth. transformation happens when we not only hear the Word, but also do and follow the Word.  
James reminds us, *"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. do what it says."*
5. **Walk in step with the Spirit of God.** Daily dependence on the Spirit of God. Being transformed involves walking closely with the Holy Spirit, seeking His guidance, being sensitive to His prompting in our daily lives. this means that we consistently turn to the Spirit in prayer, relying on His Strength, and allowing Him to direct our paths. So often we read in the Old Testament that they inquired of the Lord. We need to be inquirers of the Lord. Lord, what do You want me to do in this situation? How do You want me to react in this situation? Lord, what is the best way forward in this situation?

6. **Confession and repentance.** We need to be able to turn away from sin. The songwriter says, "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it; prone to leave the God I love." So often, we find ourselves moving away from the path that God has for us. And that's why we have a verse that we use so often at the table as we come. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." So, we walk in that reality that we're constantly saying, "If there is anything that's out of sync in my life, Lord, I'm sorry. I confess it. Lord, would You forgive me? Would You cleanse me? And would You let me then walk on again in holiness?"
  
7. **Embrace spiritual growth through trials.** Sometimes we look at trials and tribulations, difficult situations, and think: Why am I going through that? I'm a child of God. And yet God says, "I'll take you through them, and I'll refine you. I'll make you better because of that trial." So, go through it, trusting God, never letting go of His hand.  
*James 1:2-3 "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance."*  
So, embrace the difficult paths that you may be walking on.
  
8. **Make sure you're in fellowship with other believers.** We're not meant to be by ourselves. Iron sharpens iron. We come together, we are encouragers, we laugh together, we share things with each other, we pray for each other. All that happens in community. And it must happen for each one of us.  
*Hebrews 10:24 "And let us consider how may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."*

So these are the eight points that I want to just lay before us as we look at answering the question: How do I allow the Holy Spirit to birth righteousness, peace and joy in me so that I can demonstrate this as a citizen of God's kingdom, which is the primary thing that Paul is saying is important for us as Christians.

Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, that's what the kingdom of God is all about. He says: Don't get caught up with secondary things. It's like you look out of your window in the evening and you see the beautiful colors of twilight that just fill the sky. And you think, what a wonderful God we have! Look at those magnificent hues. And then we see a speck of dust on the window pane, and we focus on that. We've lost the big picture. Or we look up at the night sky and see a galaxy of stars, and the wonderful canopy that God has set, and all of a sudden, a firefly goes by, and we follow it. And we've missed what God has kept for us.

The big picture, Paul reminds us, is righteousness, peace, and joy. If we go after that, all the secondary things will get taken care of, and the kingdom of God gets enhanced and people look at it and they marvel at God's kingdom because we are living as true citizens of His kingdom. That's the call, that each one of us has to be able to seek. Make sure that righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit is what the kingdom of God is all about.

Amen.