

# Romans 14:16-20

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/rom/rom-14/romans-1416-20/>

*God wants believers to live harmoniously together. One way we accomplish this is by not taking part in things that other believers might see as evil.*

Using Paul's example of food and drink, even if a believer with stronger faith believes that it is okay to consume a certain food or drink, he shouldn't partake of that substance among Christians with weak faith. If we flaunt our freedom around weak believers, we may cause them to do things that violate their conscience. The reason for this is laid out in verse 17. Believers should pursue righteousness (right and harmonious living) with one another rather than arguing over opinions (verse 1). Paul seems to be primarily concerned with substances, food and drink, and he makes sure to declare that the kingdom of God is not about earthly preferences. *Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil.* There are many activities that are harmless, but some Christians' consciences or walk with God are negatively influenced by them. In a church setting, our goal is to build each other up, not to cause problems and arguments over earthly substances, *for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.* As believers, even if we think something is fine to eat or drink, we should abstain from it when around other believers who look at it as sin, as something that is evil. *For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.* That does not necessarily mean that we must personally give up things we enjoy that do not cause us to sin, but we should be mindful of how our freedoms affect other Christians' faith, specifically those who have weak faith. This is because we are to serve each other with humility (12:3), sacrificing for one another. *So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.* Fellow believers matter more than earthly substances.

In living harmoniously with each other, sacrificing for one another, we are serving Christ—which is the kind of service that is acceptable to God and men (verse 18). In abstaining from petty arguments about consuming substances that hurt another believer's conscience, we will create peace and build each other up. In this way we pursue harmonious living.

*Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense.* Paul ends this section by stating that even though all food and drink is clean and okay for believers to consume, we should not eat those substances around believers who disagree with that consumption—this is because righteous, harmonious living is what God wants from us, and arguing over these things will prevent that.

## Biblical Text

**16 Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; 17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. 18 For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. 19 So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one**

another. 20 Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense.