



## Ralph Woodrow Evangelistic Association

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### **RIGHTEOUSNESS, PEACE, AND JOY**

***“The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17).***

The Christians at Rome to whom Paul wrote had come from two different backgrounds: Jewish and Gentile (Rom. 2:17, 4:1, 7:1, 9:24, 11:13, etc.).

The Gentiles believed whatever was wholesome and nutritious, whether vegetables or meat, may be eaten by every Christian. Those who were Jewish—probably newly converted to the Christian faith, described as being “weak” in the faith—supposed they were still under the Mosaic law of clean and unclean. Living in a Gentile city without kosher meat markets, they could not know whether meat was clean or unclean, whether it had been offered to idols, or if the blood had been removed according to Jewish custom. In order not to be defiled, they avoided meat and ate only vegetables (Rom. 14:2).

There was no question in Paul’s mind about this: “I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself” (Rom. 14:14). On what statement of the Lord Jesus did he base this? In Mark 7:18-23 Jesus taught that uncleanness involves the heart, *not* the foods that pass through the stomach. By this teaching, as we are plainly told in verse 19, “Jesus declared all foods ‘clean’.” (NIV; or see *any* translation; all make the same point.)

There are still some today, though believers in Jesus, who suppose we should go back to Judaism, including the law of the clean and unclean. In listing those meats that are “unclean” they commonly zero in on pork and shrimp. But the list of meats that were “clean” includes the locust, beetle, and grasshopper. I have yet to meet any who eat these!

In Paul’s view, the kingdom of God was not meat and drink. The emphasis was to be on spiritual things: righteousness, peace, and joy. Since God had accepted those on both sides, they were to accept one another—not reject one another.

I knew of a man years ago who wrote a booklet “What is Wrong with the Churches?” In it he told all the things he *disagreed* with. It was negative, one-sided. A reader could have easily concluded that the real problem in the world is the *church*! Whatever valid points he had, would have been more effective, more honest, had he also mentioned points of agreement.

When we were younger, spiritually and otherwise, we may have supposed minor differences among Christians were of great importance. But in time it becomes evident that all Christians agree on more than they disagree on. Often some common ground can be attained as we focus on *cooperation* instead of *confrontation*. When there are *differences*, we need not be *difficult*.

Let’s assume we are right on some doctrinal point, and the other person is wrong. Will we help him by building a wall? Will we help him by misrepresenting his belief, ridiculing him, putting him down? One should ask: Do we emphasize differences because they are important, or does it boost *our* religious ego? WE are right! WE take the Bible just as it is written! WE are the *true* church!

Had we lived back in the first century and visited the Corinthian church, their meetings were so disorderly, we might have never gone back! (cf. 1 Cor. 14:23, 40). Yet, they were the *church of God* at Corinth. Everyone within the body of Christ is not at the same level of understanding. We cannot expect babies to know as much as those who have grown to maturity (Heb. 5:13, 14). Still, they all belong to the family of God, and should be received, not rejected. God looks on the heart.

To encourage unity, Paul said, in effect: “Do you have a belief, a personal conviction? Have it to yourself before God” (Rom. 14:22). One does not need to go against his own conscience, but there is no need to force it on someone else.

Suppose a pastor decides to quit drinking coffee. And, if it is wrong for him, he reasons, it must be wrong for others. He starts preaching against coffee. A man in the church who drinks coffee does not want to be a hypocrite, so he quits the church. For others this teaching brings confusion and division. An over-emphasis on a non-essential point could do more harm than the coffee itself! Is the kingdom of God righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit—or is it preaching against coffee?

Years ago, a pastor I knew quite well in Riverside (California), drank a lot of coffee. He even had a coffee maker in his office. Teasing him a bit, I said, “You know, coffee is not good for a person.” He replied: “I know it’s not. In fact, drinking coffee killed my grandfather!” After a pause, he went on to say: “He was one-hundred-and-five years old when he died—coffee finally got him!” ☺

A friend of mine once told me about a pastor who preached against drinking carbonated beverages. He accompanied him on a missionary trip to a Caribbean island. There, at a restaurant, they were served a carbonated drink similar to 7-UP. But the waitress, in broken English, called it “lemonade.” There, *any* soft drink was called “lemonade”! The preacher not only drank it—and liked it—he ordered additional glasses of “lemonade”!

Inconsistencies like this commonly accompany those who major on minors.

I knew a young man who felt the Lord wanted him to quit eating candy bars. If this was his conviction, fine. But he felt compelled to tell others they must quit eating candy bars. This put him crossways with people. When he spoke at a church-related group meeting, he could not resist the temptation to preach against candy bars. Did he not have anything better to preach?

While the kingdom is not meat and drink, obviously if one knows a food is not good for him, if he cannot tolerate sugar, if he is allergic to certain things, he should act accordingly. Certainly drunkenness and gluttony are contrary to kingdom principles (1 Cor. 6:10-12; Pro. 23:21; Lk. 21:34).

Today, some of the “meat and drink” issues—which the kingdom of God is *not*—may take a different form. Some strict groups make rules like: “Except a woman quits wearing jewelry and makeup, she cannot be saved!” Teachings like this confuse, distract, and divide.

They talk about Jezebel painting her face: “And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she *painted her face*, and tired [attired] her head, and looked out at a window” (2 Kings 9:30).

The word here translated “face” (KJV) is the common word for *eyes* and is so translated hundreds of times. The marginal rendering says: “put her eyes in painting”; Goodspeed: “painted her eyelashes”; Moffatt: “painting her eyes”; Lamsa: “painted her eyelids with kohl”; Rotherham: “set her eyes in stibium”; Amplified and NIV: “painted her eyes”; etc. We note there is no mention of lipstick here.

It was a very common practice in ancient times for women to darken the area around the eyes to make them look larger. It was not regarded as sinful. Job even named one of his daughters Keren-huppuch (Job 42:14), a name linked with a vessel made of horn containing eye paint. Various concordances and Bible dictionaries use terms like “horn of cosmetic,” “horn of eye-paint,” etc. If such had not been highly regarded, Job would not have chosen this name for a special daughter.

When Jezebel painted her eyes, she also combed her hair, and looked out a window. Taking *part* of this passage as an argument against makeup, is not very strong. Luke tells about a woman with *long hair* whose sins were many (Lk. 7:37-47). Would this suggest that *all* women who have long hair are sinners? Would the fact that Proverbs 7:17 mentions a harlot using perfume, prove that *all* women who use perfume are harlots? Would the fact that an unfaithful wife wore jewelry (Hosea 2:13), prove that *all* women who wear jewelry are unfaithful? We know better, of course.

The idea that a woman should not wear *any* jewelry is contrary to scripture. Verses like Isaiah 61:10—“a bride adorns herself with her jewels”—and many more, use jewelry in a *good* sense (Ezek. 16:11,12; Isa. 49:18; Jer. 2:32; Gen. 41:42; Dan. 5:29; 2 Sam. 1:24; Song of Solomon 1:10; Pro. 25:12; Matt. 7:6; Lk. 15:22).

Two passages of scripture that *seem* to say otherwise (1 Tim. 2:9,10; 1 Peter 3:3,4) actually use an idiom that some fail to recognize. (For those who want to pursue the many biblical examples of this idiom, let me know and this information will be sent by mail or email.) When the idiom is properly understood, 1 Peter 3:3-4 would read:

“...whose adorning let it not be (only) that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel, but (also, rather) let it be the...ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.” The use of the idiom places the emphasis on the inward adorning, but the outward adorning is not eliminated.

If this passage does not contain an idiom—if, as some suppose, it means a woman is not to wear *any* jewelry—then it would also mean a woman *should not wear any apparel!*

Peter continues, speaking of the inward adornment: “For after this manner in old time the holy women...adorned themselves,” Sarah honored her husband Abraham, etc. These women were examples of having the *inward* adornment, but did this mean they wore no jewelry? To the contrary, when Abraham’s servant was sent to seek a wife for Isaac, he presented to Rebekah “a golden earring... and two bracelets for her hands...jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment” (Gen. 24:22, 47, 53).

*Halley’s Bible Handbook* (p. 594) rightly says: “We do not understand [1 Peter 3:3,4] to prohibit a woman’s desire to be attractive in personal appearance, but rather a caution against *overdoing* it, remembering that no amount of finery can be a substitute for a gracious Christian personality.”

Too much jewelry could detract from the inner beauty and appear overdone—even silly. On the other hand, God does not require a drab and dull appearance. Why shouldn’t a woman try to look nice? If the motive of her heart is right, her efforts are not wrong.

Over the last decades, as more and more women began to wear slacks—even to church!—there were those who insisted that *only a dress* is appropriate for a woman. Anything else was an “abomination.” This was *supposedly* based on Deuteronomy 22:5: “The woman shall not wear that which pertains unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment: for all who do so are abomination unto the Lord.” But when those words were written, men and women both wore robe-type garments. The distinction was not between skirts and trousers.

Suppose the long prevailing custom had been for women to wear slacks. Then some started wearing a skirt, exposing their legs up to their knees! Some would have surely railed against this!

I know of a church that had a mark on the altar bench. If a woman’s skirt was above this mark, her hemline was too short,

and she was disqualified for membership. Apparently the fact that some women are taller than others was not considered! But such are the inconsistencies of man-made rules, even though often well-intended. Common sense should tell us that a skirt too short, or neckline too low, is inappropriate for a Christian woman.

While we believe a woman should look like a woman and a man like a man, in my book *Women's Adornment—What Does the Bible Really Say?* I show that Deuteronomy 22:5 has been taken out of its proper setting and sadly misapplied. See advertisement at end of article.

The kingdom of God does not require us to wear a certain clothing style, a skull cap, a bonnet, face covering or Jewish phylactery. All believers may dress according to the custom of their time and place, providing the exterior adornment is not overdone or so extreme it overrides what we stand for, the inner person, the Christian personality.

I have heard that when women began to wear open toe shoes, some preached against this. But since Jesus and the disciples wore sandals, were they not open toed?

I was in a meeting one time when a speaker taught that women who have their ears pierced make an opening whereby demons can enter! The supporting scripture, *supposedly*, was Deuteronomy 15:17.

Some oppose saluting the flag, an idea *supposedly* based on the incident when Jews in Babylon refused to worship Nebuchadnezzar's golden image (Dan. 3:1-30).

I have known people who will not allow their photograph to be taken. Beliefs like this put them crossways when obtaining a driver's license and in other ways. Their idea is *supposedly* based on the scripture that says not to make an image (Exod. 20:4).

Some have thought a child should not have a doll, *supposedly* because the Bible says not to have idols (1 John 5:21).

There are those who preach against blood transfusions because the Bible says not to eat blood (Lev. 7:27). The fact that two entirely different situations are involved does not seem to make any difference to them.

For some, instead of the kingdom of God being righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, it consists of "arguments over words" (1 Tim. 6:4; 2 Tim. 2:14).

A woman told me once I should not use the word "Amen" because that was the name of a pagan deity! There are people who will not use the word "grace" because there once was an obscure pagan deity named Grace. In mythology there were the Three Graces! This kind of reasoning is fruitless. As I write, this is the month of June, generally believed to have been named long ago after the goddess Juno. But our usage of the word does not make us Juno worshippers.

Must we refrain from using the word "janitor" because it stems from the god Janus, god of doors and hinges? Should we not say "cereal" because Ceres was the goddess of fruits and grains? Should we waste time trying to reinvent the English language?

There are some who suppose it is *more spiritual* to use Jewish sounding words and names. Alright:

*Baruch atta Elohinoo, Melech, haolam, ha motes Lechem min haarets.*

Such is a fine Jewish blessing, but how meaningful are words we do not understand? Suppose we learned Hebrew, read from right to left, instead of left to right, and liberally sprinkled our conversations with Hebrew words. Would this bring about genuine revival or trigger an outpouring of God's blessing? Usually, based on my observations over the years, an over-emphasis on technical points does just the opposite.

How *refreshing* to know that the kingdom is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit!

Finally, some concluding words about righteousness, peace, and joy:

When Paul used these terms, he was on solid biblical ground. The scriptures link Christ's kingdom with *righteousness* (Matt. 5:10); with *peace* (Isa. 9:7); and with *joy* (Matt. 13:44).

*Righteousness* and *peace* are linked together in numerous verses (Isaiah 60:17; Psa. 72:3; James 3:18). "*Righteousness* and *peace* have kissed each other" (Ps. 85:10). *Peace*, in turn, is linked with *joy* (Isa. 55:12; Gal. 5:22; Zech. 8:19). And, of course, righteousness, peace, and joy are all linked in scripture with the Holy Spirit.

## RIGHTEOUSNESS

The Bible says: "Awake to *righteousness*, and sin not" (1 Cor. 15:34). "*Righteousness* exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34).

*Righteousness*, a fruit of the Spirit (Eph. 5:9), is also a vital part of the Christian armor (6:14).

We are instructed in *righteousness* from the scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16); a crown of *righteousness* will be given to all who love Christ's appearing (2 Tim. 4:8).

*Righteousness* is attributed to those Faith Chapter heroes (Heb. 11:33), who, as Abraham, believed God, and it was counted unto him for *righteousness* (Gen. 15:6).

"[Christ] became sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the *righteousness* of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21).

## PEACE

"*Peace*" was a common greeting among Christians (John 20:19, 26) and was a word used by Paul at the beginning of all his epistles (1 Cor. 1:3, Gal. 1:3, Col. 1:2).

"The Lord will bless his people with *peace*" (Ps. 29:11). He has promised *peace* in abundance (Ps. 37:11), *peace* like a river (Isa. 66:12), perfect *peace* (Isa. 26:3).

Our Lord is the "God of *peace*" (Rom. 15:33; 16:20; Heb. 13:20).

Jesus, who spoke *peace* to the troubled sea (Mk. 4:39), can speak *peace* to us in life's storms. He says, "My *peace* I give unto you... let not your heart be troubled" (John 14:27). "He is our *peace*" (Eph. 2:14).

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have *peace* with God" (Rom. 5:1).

## JOY

Years ago I heard a preacher say: “Some people have a face *so long* they could suck marbles out of a gopher hole!” He went on to explain: “Long faces are OK on mules in Missouri, but no good on Christians in California!”

The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit *and joy* (Acts 13:52; 1 Thess. 1:6). In the presence of the Lord is fullness of *joy* (Psa. 16:11). His *joy* is everlasting (Isa. 35:10); he gives “the oil of *joy* for mourning” (Isa. 61:3).

“The *joy* of the Lord is your strength” (Neh. 8:10).

Preaching the gospel brings “great *joy*” (Lk. 2:10; Acts 8:8); “*joy* unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8), even in the midst of intense persecution. “Weeping may endure for a night, but *joy* comes in the morning” (Psa. 30:5).

“With *joy* shall you draw water out of the wells of salvation” (Isa. 12:3). A gospel chorus from years ago worded it this way:

If you want *joy*, real *joy*, wonderful *joy*,  
Let Jesus come into your heart.  
Your sins he’ll wash away,  
Your night he’ll turn to day,  
Your life he’ll make it over anew,  
If you want *joy*, real *joy*, wonderful *joy*,  
Let Jesus come into your heart.

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For further study the following two books by Ralph Woodrow are recommended:

### Women’s Adornment—What Does the Bible Really Say?

### “In” the World, Not “of” the World

Each book is 64 pages. Suggested price for each is \$5 plus \$2 for postage—or an offering in *any* amount.

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Ralph and Arlene Woodrow

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