

GOD'S WORD IS LIFE

Key Greek Terms

Romans 14:1-23

Introduction: Embracing Unity Amidst Diversity

In Romans 14, Paul guides us through the delicate business of living together in Christian community despite differing convictions. He emphasizes the need for unity, mutual acceptance, and avoiding judgment over disputable matters. Here, Paul lays down a path for honoring God through fostering peace among believers.

Purpose

Paul's aim in Romans 14 is to encourage Christians to live harmoniously, even when they disagree on certain practices. He stresses that the kingdom of God is not about external observances but about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Believers are encouraged to welcome one another and to avoid causing others to stumble in their faith.

Themes

- Embracing one another
- Abstaining from judgment on debatable matters
- Unity in love honors God
- Promoting peace and mutual edification
- The essence of God's kingdom

Objective

To comprehend how Christians can maintain unity and love within the church by respecting diverse convictions and focusing on the core aspects of faith, which are righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

1. ἀσθενέω (astheneō) - "weak" (Romans 14:1-2)

Paul starts by talking about those who are "weak" in faith. This term, ἀσθενέω, means lacking strength or being weak. Here, it refers to believers who might adhere to stricter practices out of a sincere desire to honor God. Paul calls for the community to accept these individuals without quarreling over opinions. This acceptance fosters unity and love.

2. διακρίνω (diakrinō) - "to judge" or "to make a distinction" (Romans 14:1, 3, 10)

Next, Paul uses the term διακρίνω to address judgment among believers. This word means to judge or make a distinction. Paul admonishes believers not to judge or look down on one another over disputable matters. The point here is to avoid critical evaluations that can divide the community.

3. κρίνω (krinō) - "to judge" (Romans 14:3, 4, 10, 13)

The term κρίνω appears multiple times and carries even more weight, reinforcing Paul's message against judgment. This broader term for judging highlights the need to refrain from passing judgment on others' actions or character. Paul emphasizes that judgment belongs to God alone, urging believers to live humbly and recognize God's ultimate authority.

4. ἐσθίω (esthiō) - "to eat" (Romans 14:2, 3, 6, 20, 21, 23)

Paul addresses disputes over dietary practices using the term ἐσθίω, meaning "to eat." The ordinary act of eating can become a point of contention. Paul teaches that the significance of eating lies not in what one eats, but in the consideration one shows for the neighbor. Using Christian freedom to cause others to stumble does not promote unity and edification.

5. κυριος (kyrios) - "Lord" (Romans 14:4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 14)

The term κυριος, meaning "Lord," is central to Paul's argument. By repeating this term, Paul underscores Jesus' sovereign authority over all believers. Jesus is the Lord of both the living and the dead, and we live, in faith, to honor Him. This recognition of Christ's lordship fosters humility and unity, as each believer is ultimately accountable to Him.

6. καθαρὸς (katharos) - "clean" (Romans 14:20)

Paul uses καθαρὸς to declare that all food is clean. This term, meaning "pure," reflects Jesus' teaching that it is not what enters a person that defiles them, but what comes from the heart. This understanding frees believers from dietary restrictions and focuses on living in a way that promotes peace and edification within the community.

7. δικαιοσύνη (dikaiosynē) - "righteousness" (Romans 14:17)

Finally, Paul places δικαιοσύνη, or "righteousness," at the heart of the kingdom of God, along with peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. This term underscores that all ethical and moral dimensions of the believer's life are held in the righteousness of faith reflecting God's righteousness in Christ. It shifts the focus from external practices to that one righteousness, apart from the law, by which all Christians are justified.