

Romans 14:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

Analysis

For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men—Ho gar en toutō douleuōn tō Christō euarestos tō theō kai dokimos tois anthrōpois (ὁ γὰρ ἐν τούτῳ δουλεύων τῷ Χριστῷ εὐάρεστος τῷ θεῷ καὶ δόκιμος τοῖς ἀνθρώποις). En toutō (in these things) refers back to righteousness, peace, joy (v. 17)—kingdom realities. Douleuōn tō Christō (δουλεύω τῷ Χριστῷ, serving Christ) uses slave language—total devotion. Pursuing kingdom priorities (not food debates) renders one euarestos tō theō (well-pleasing to God).

Dokimos tois anthrōpois (δόκιμος τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, approved by men) doesn't mean people-pleasing but earning respect through Christlike character. Dokimos means tested, approved—like refined metal passing assay. Christians focused on kingdom essentials (righteousness, peace, joy) win both God's approval and human respect. Conversely, those obsessed with dietary disputes or externals earn neither—God sees misplaced priorities, humans see hypocrisy or irrelevance. Paul calls believers to what matters eternally and witnesses effectively.

Historical Context

Early Christians were known for righteousness (moral purity in pagan culture), peace (reconciliation across ethnic/class barriers), and joy (even in persecution). Tertullian wrote, 'See how they love one another'—pagan amazement at Christian community. This witness was more powerful than doctrinal disputation. When Christians fought over food laws or calendar observance, they forfeited credibility.

Paul's emphasis on being 'approved by men' isn't compromise but effective witness: demonstrate kingdom realities, not petty squabbles. This principle applies perennially: churches known for infighting over non-essentials lose cultural credibility.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does 'serving Christ' (douleuōn tō Christō) in kingdom priorities differ from serving cultural Christianity or tribal identity?
2. Are you more concerned with being 'acceptable to God' (euarestos tō theō) or 'approved of men' (dokimos tois anthrōpois)—and how do both relate?
3. What would change if your church prioritized kingdom realities (righteousness, peace, joy) over disputable matters in both internal culture and external witness?

Interlinear Text

ὁ	γὰρ	ἐν	τούτοις	δουλεύων	τῷ	Χριστῷ
G3588	For	he that in	these things	serveth	G3588	Christ
	G1063	G1722	G5125	G1398		G5547
εὐάρεστος	τῷ	θεῷ	καὶ	δόκιμος	τοῖς	ἀνθρώποις
is acceptable	G3588	to God	and	approved	G3588	of men
G2101		G2316	G2532	G1384		G444

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 8:21 (Parallel theme): Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

2 Corinthians 5:11 (References God): Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

1 Peter 2:5 (References Christ): Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:20 (References God): For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

Romans 16:18 (References Christ): For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.