

1 Timothy 4:1-5

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1 Timothy 4:4

For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving

Another example of Scripture which is quoted out of context in order to approve the eating of unclean things, is 1 Timothy, Chapter 4, verse 4. Those who quote this verse insist that God is telling us to eat everything that He created. In order to interpret 1 Timothy 4:4 in this way, we must reject the clean and unclean laws of God, as well as endorse cannibalism! If we believe that God is telling us to eat poisonous snakes, rats, worms, spiders and each other, then God would be contradicting His word and would not be the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8)! The Word of God is consistent and carries a continuity and therefore, 1 Timothy 4:4 must have another interpretation which is consistent with the clean and unclean laws.

THE FOODS OF GOD

Paul, is the author of 1 Timothy and he is not making a distinction between creatures God created and those He did not create, for God created every creature. Every animal, every fish, every bird and every creeping thing is good because it was created by God. But not everything God created was created to be eaten!

FALSE DOCTRINE

We can avoid the “spirit of error” (1John 4:6) or false doctrine only by relying on the Scriptures as our final authority. The problem of false doctrine is the reason that Paul is discussing creatures we may eat in 1 Timothy chapter 4. In order to fully understand why Paul has brought up the issue of eating animals, 1 Timothy 4:4 must read in its context, starting at the beginning of the chapter:

1 Timothy 4:1-3

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

Some people in the church of the first century were “departing from the faith” teaching false doctrines. These people were advocating celibacy (forbidding to marry) and vegetarianism (abstaining from certain foods or meats). This teaching or doctrine was forbidding activities that God desires His children to do. The Lord certainly ordained for us to marry and He created certain clean foods “to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.” (Psalms 119:142) Those who believe and know the

truth? The truth contained in the Scriptures which is our guide to correct doctrine. Being armed with the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17), we are not likely to be deceived by a doctrine of demons. Deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons will contradict the Word of God and 1Timothy 4:1-5 warns us not to believe a doctrine which tells us not to eat foods that God has permitted for us to eat.

Now we understand that the purpose of the first part of 1Timothy chapter 4 is to address a false teaching related to marriage and eating. If we believe and know the Word of God, such false doctrine would find no place in us. Paul finishes this discussion of the foods that the Lord created and sanctified (set apart) for us to eat by directing us back to His Word:

1Timothy 4:5

For it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer

Paul is actually confirming to us in 1Timothy 4:5 that we should eat only those creatures God has sanctified in His Word. The “it” refers to those edible creatures that are “set apart” for us by God in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. God’s word is exact and precise so that the children of God may “distinguish between the unclean and the clean, and between the animal that may be eaten and the animal that may not be eaten.” (Leviticus 11:47)

FOOD SANCTIFIED BY PRAYER

Since Yeshua (Jesus), a first century Hebrew, was eating only those foods that were clean, pure, and edible according to the Word of God; therefore, He never needed to ask God to bless His food. The food was already blessed by God. The only blessing required was to bless and thank God for His provision.

Deuteronomy 8:10

When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you.

At the Lord’s Supper, Yeshua (Jesus) took bread and blessed. He probably spoke this ancient Hebrew prayer that is still used today at mealtimes:

“Blessed Art Thou, Oh Lord, our God, King of the Universe, who brings forth food from the earth.”

There is an important difference between this traditional Hebrew blessing and the modern Christian dinner prayer that says something like, “Bless this food to our bodies”. God’s Word does not sanction the eating of a cobra cocktail, a rat roast, or a pig pie and all the well-meaning prayers said at the dinner table cannot change the Word of God. On the contrary, our dinner prayers should bless God and be thankful to Him for setting apart (sanctifying) by His Word, foods which have been created to keep us healthy.