

# WHICH WAY, AMERICA?

Night 13

Mending the Healthcare Crisis

## 1. 1 Timothy 4:4 says, “Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused.” How can you say then that we should follow those Old Testament health laws?

**Answer:** The context of this passage is very helpful: “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving” (1 Timothy 4:1–4).

The warning against a latter-day apostasy in these verses involves a number of heresies—following devils, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from certain foods.

Perhaps the greatest misunderstanding has arisen over verse four, which states that “every creature of God is good.” This means that every created thing has been made for a need and a purpose. But some suppose that every animal is therefore good to be eaten if it is properly prayed over and blessed by the prayer of thanksgiving. However, praying over a buzzard, mole, or bat will not make it fit for food. Paul hastened to add verse five in case anyone should come to wrong conclusions from verse four. He says: “For it [the animal or the food] is sanctified by the word of God and prayer” (1 Timothy 4:5).

Ah, now we know what sanctifies it as proper for the diet. The Word of God must approve it (first factor), and then the prayer of thanksgiving will sanctify it to be eaten (second factor). Are there certain foods that the Word of God does not “sanctify”? Certainly (See Leviticus 3:17; 11:2–20; Deuteronomy 14:3–21). Will our prayer sanctify that which God’s Word has condemned and forbidden? We cannot “sanctify” that which God has explicitly forbidden.

Please note that those who “sanctify themselves” while eating unclean meats will be destroyed at Christ’s second coming (Isaiah 66:15–17).

## 2. Doesn’t the Bible state in Acts 10 that God has “cleansed” the unclean animals?

**Answer:** To use Acts 10 as an excuse for eating unclean foods is to ignore the message of the passage. The tenth chapter of Acts is not dealing with the subject of diet, but rather with an important issue that had arisen in the early church.

The Jews considered the Gentiles as being unclean. God had instructed Cornelius, a Gentile, to send men to visit Peter (Acts 10:1–8). Ordinarily, Peter would have refused to meet the servants of Cornelius

because Jewish law forbade entertaining Gentiles. But God gave Peter a vision, as a simple illustration, preparing him for this visit from the Gentiles. God specifically told Peter what the vision was about, and Peter understood. What God was attempting to teach the disciples had to do with people, not pigs.

“And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean” (Acts 10:28).

How did God show Peter that? With the illustration of the sheet with unclean animals. Please note that the verse does not say, “God hath showed me that I should not call any pig unclean.” It isn’t talking about pigs at all. God is referring to people. “Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34).

Peter understood that God was talking about persons. In the next chapter (Acts 11), the church members criticized Peter for speaking with these Gentiles. So Peter told them the whole story of his vision and its meaning. And the Bible says: “When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18).

To the superficial scholars who attempt to justify eating unclean flesh from this passage, I would ask a simple question. If God cleansed the pig, why is it still a pig?

When God gave Moses the dietary laws of the book of Leviticus, scientific evidence did not exist to show that God knew what He was talking about. People obeyed just because God said so. Today we have the evidence of science as an added reason. We don’t have to eat what is unclean unless we close our eyes to scientific evidence and disobey God at the same time. An article entitled, “Must our Pork Remain Unsafe?” was published in the *Reader’s Digest* some years ago. It states: “A single serving of infective pork—even a single mouthful can kill or cripple or condemn the victim to a lifetime of aches and pains. For this unique disease, trichinosis, there is no cure. With no drug to stop them, the worms may spread through the muscular tissues of the entire human system.

“Physicians have confused trichinosis with some fifty ailments, ranging from typhoid fever to acute alcoholism... That pain in your arm or leg may be arthritis or rheumatism, but it may be trichinosis; That pain in your back may mean a gall-bladder involvement, but it may mean trichinosis” —*Reader’s Digest, March, 1950.*

It does not appear as if God has cleansed the pig as yet. New Testament Christians can still get trichinosis from eating that which God has expressly forbidden.

### **3. Didn’t Jesus state that what goes in the mouth does not defile us? Please explain Matthew 15:11 (also Mark 7:18–19).**

**Answer:** Again the oft-overlooked context explains the intent of Christ’s words. Verse two of Matthew 15 gives the context. The Pharisees asked Jesus: “Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread” (Matthew 15:2).

Clearly the issue is NOT eating, but washing. To say that nothing you put into your mouth could possibly harm you would be to take a fanatical, extreme position which was not intended by the Lord’s statement at all.

The Pharisees were accusing Christ’s disciples for not following “the tradition of the elders.” Had the disciples been eating unclean meats, the Pharisees would certainly have accused them of disobeying

the Scriptures. With this background, let's examine Christ's statement in Matthew 15:11, and then His own explanation of what He meant.

"Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man" (Matthew 15:11).

What did Jesus mean? Peter asked him, "Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said ... Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man" (Matthew 15:15–20).

#### **4. Romans 14 states that "nothing is unclean," and "all things are pure." How can you explain this?**

**Answer:** It is well to consider the entire chapter in its context. Paul was writing about a problem of judging among the apostolic believers. Verses 4, 10 and 13 exhort against the sin of judging one another. And it was true that a serious division existed in that early church. The Gentile Christians were judging the Jewish Christians, and the Jewish Christians were judging the Gentile Christians.

What was the basis of the problem? What were they judging each other over? The Gentiles who had come into the church from paganism were offended because the Jewish Christians ate food that had been offered in sacrifice to idols. And the Jewish Christians judged the Gentile church members because they had no regard for the ceremonial days that they still observed from Judaism.

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians was written less than a year before that to the Romans.

1 Corinthians 8 and Romans 14 deal with the same issues — "Now as touching things offered unto idols..." (1 Corinthians 8:1).

According to ancient practice, pagan priests carried on an extensive merchandise of the animal sacrifices offered to idols. Paul told the Corinthian believers, converts both from Judaism and from paganism, that inasmuch as an idol was nothing, there was nothing wrong in eating foods dedicated to it (food offered to idols). However, he clarifies not all had this "knowledge" and could not, with a free conscience, eat such foods.

Some of the Gentile converts were so fearful of eating meat offered to idols that they ate only vegetables. Paul spoke of them in verses one and two. Paul elaborated on the "weak brother" further in 1 Corinthians 8:8–12 and how he esteemed the food unfit to be eaten. He counseled against becoming a stumbling block to the weak brother.

"And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ" (1 Corinthians 8:11–12).

Compare this language with Romans 14:13–15: "... That no man put a stumblingblock ... to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat ... destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died."

The food offered to idols was not unclean food (see Acts 14:13) but was only esteemed so by the Gentile converts because it had been offered in sacrifice to idols.

The issue was not over God's prohibitions concerning unclean meats. Paul is not speaking of foods hygienically harmful. He is not suggesting that the Christian of strong faith may eat anything, regardless of its effect upon his physical well-being. This would have contradicted his teachings on the importance of taking care of the body temple (see 1 Corinthians 3:16–17; 1 Corinthians 6:19–20; 1 Corinthians 10:31). The subject has nothing to do with unclean meats or the weekly Sabbath.

## 5. How can you say that alcoholic beverages are harmful, since Jesus miraculously made wine at the wedding in Cana?

**Answer:** The miracle of Jesus changing water to wine (John 2) has often been cited as a reason for the use of alcoholic drinks. There is no evidence that the wine that Jesus made was intoxicating. What He made was fresh wine. Newly-made wine isn't intoxicating until some time after the process of fermentation or decay has set in. There is not a hint that Jesus produced alcohol, which is a poison, a product of death and decay. There is nothing wrong with drinking newly made wine, the fresh juice of the grape. It is a wholesome drink.

Dr. William Patton in his book *Bible Wines* states:

The Greek word [for wine in John 2] is *oinos*... *Oinos* is a generic word, and, as such, includes all kinds of wine and all stages of the juice of the grape, and sometimes the clusters and even the vine... As the narrative is silent on the point, the character of the wine can only be determined by the ... moral influence of the miracle.... The moral influence of the miracle will be determined by the character of the wine. It is pertinent to ask, Is it not derogatory to the character of Christ and the teaching of the Bible to suppose that he exerted his miraculous power to produce, according Alvord, 126 gallons [about 477 liters], and according to Smith, at least 60 gallons [227 liters] of intoxicating wine?—wine which inspiration had denounced as “a mocker,” (Proverbs 20:1) as “biting like a serpent,” and “stinging like an adder,” (Proverbs 23:32) as “the poison of dragons,” “the cruel venom of asps,” (Deuteronomy 32:33) and which the Holy Ghost had selected as the emblem of the wrath of God Almighty (Revelation 14:10)? Is it probable that He gave that to the guests ...? (p. 89–90 -emphasis his)

Of course not! The wine that Jesus miraculously made was unfermented wine—what we refer to today as grape juice.



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