

*1But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, 2by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, 3men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. 4For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; 5for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer. 1 Tim 4:1-4*

We were looking last time at an early hymn or creed of the church (1 Tim 3). Paul was informing Timothy, a young church leader, on how to instruct *the household of God*, members of the early church plant in Ephesus, *I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth*. We talked last week of Paul's imagery of the church being a column, a common part of Greek and Roman architecture. He stated the church was to be *the pillar and support of the truth*. Then Paul began the hymn by stating that this was the *common confession*, this is what all of the church teaches and commonly believes.

*I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. 1 Tim 3:15*

*By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness. 1 Tim 3:16*

These essential truths, *this common confession*, established the early church in a what was a common faith, *the mystery of godliness, the common salvation (1 Tim 3), the faith that God has entrusted once for all time to his holy people (Jude 1:3)* So as the early church was being established, before the canon of the Bible was set down, the early church needed standard of doctrine and rule for behavior. Early on, everything was not coherent and harmonious, there were disagreements or dissent. Jude tells of false believers who had crept into the church. It seems they were attempting to say you can be saved and then do whatever you want, they were *turning the grace of God into licentiousness (unbridled lust, excess, lasciviousness, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness and insolence)*.

*3Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. 4For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. Jude 1:3-4*

Jude said this type of behavior was ungodly and denied Christ. He stated, true believers will *contend earnestly for the faith*. John wrote, true Christians will strive to live godly lives by the power of the Holy Spirit, *everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure 1 John 3:2* Jude's *ungodly persons*, false believers, were what has been termed antinomians (Greek: *ἀντί*, "against" + *νόμος*, "law").

*an antinomian is one who takes the principle of salvation by faith and divine grace to the point of asserting that the saved are not bound to follow the moral law contained in the Ten Commandments. Wikipedia*

This continues to be a major problem for the church. If being born again is from first to last a work of grace, *not as a result of works, so that no one may boast*. And we do believe that the finished work of Christ on the cross is able to save the born again believer to the uttermost, in the farthest, greatest, or highest degree, fully, to cause us to live godly lives. We also believe that God doesn't save us from

sin, from the fallen state of man, our flesh, that we lived in before coming to Christ, and then expect us to wallow in our old fleshly ways indulging in unrestrained sin. In Romans 6:1 Paul declares, *What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?* But the early church did have *ungodly persons*, as has the church through the ages, *who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.* Jude 1:3-4 Paul saw his mission to establish what was proper, satisfactory and correct behavior for the church. He wanted to protect the early church from false teachers.

*12But what I am doing I will continue to do, so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting. 13For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds. 2 Cor 11:12-15*

Jesus called these false teachers, *ravenous wolves, false prophets* who came into the fold *in sheep's clothing* (Mat 7:15), claiming to be Christians, their actions were those of the lost, those who continue to live in the flesh.

*24Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. 25For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. Roman 1:24, 25*

Here in 1Timothy 4:1 Paul states, *the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.* So, if this was an issue in the early church, how much more for us living in these *later times*.

*The Greek words here should be translated, through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies. The lies that these men utter, refer to their teaching that it was pleasing to the eye of the All-seeing Creator for men and women to avoid certain meats, and to abstain from marriage. Their hypocrisy consisted in their assumption of a mask of holiness, which holiness they considered was derived from their false asceticism and their abstinence from things which the Apostle proceeded to show were lawful.*

These false teachers were functioning as stage actors, living deceitfully, saying they have the Word of God but were in reality disseminating the lies *deceitful spirits*. They told believers to *avoid certain meats, and to abstain from marriage*. This type of behavior is called asceticism, *living a lifestyle characterized by abstinence from sensual pleasures, often for the purpose of pursuing spiritual goals.* Wikipedia This became the practice of many Christians who wished to live holy lives. They were called mystics. The Roman Church has had these throughout their history. They are called monks, brothers and sisters or nuns. These people would take vows to abstain from marriage. This is a discipline of the flesh that has been seen in many of the world's religions, but it is of man's works.

The practice of *avoid certain meats* is a common practice of Hinduism. It is very prevalent today with people choosing to be vegetarians and vegans. Many of them have a religious fervor attached to it, not wanting to harm animals or even use their products like eggs and honey. This is very real to me because when I was first seeking to become a Christian I had to deal with many Hindu beliefs I had entertained. Before I came to Christ, I accepted the belief that eating meat was wrong. It came to a head for me around Thanksgiving of 1973. My family was sitting down to a big Thanksgiving meal and I was in a bedroom holding fast to my resolve of not eating meat. I was a seeker at this point and was reading the Bible. Many things I had accepted as religious necessi-

ties were keeping me from going forward as a believer. One of these was *abstaining from certain foods*, I thought it was wrong to eat meat. In His mercy the Lord lead me to Romans 14:4, *Who are you to judge the servant of another?* Here were my parents opening their home to me, sharing their new found relationship with Jesus and I was judging them. This passage says *not to judge the one who eats meat, the servant of another.*

*2One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. 3The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him. 4Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. Rom 14:2-4*

It was as if the Lord had directed me to this passage and was speaking specifically to me. So I left the bedroom and joined my family. We enjoyed the Thanksgiving feast *with gratitude; for it was sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.*

This issue is maybe more true today because not eating meat is offensive to many even within the church. There are deceitful spirits, false teachers who have their consciences seared. They call us to *abstain from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.* The feeling that remained from my beliefs took time to overcome but I had begun to walk in line with the word. This food was *sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.* I could rejoice in this fact. Back to our passage.

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If we think of this in terms of the Jewish believer of Paul's day, they wanted to add all sorts of restriction on the behavior of new Gentile Christians. They were expecting more of Gentile believers than the council in Jerusalem had. In Acts we read,

*28"For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: 29that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell." Acts 15:28,29*

In closing we live in a worldly culture today. We need to walk in liberty but also be sensitive of weaker believers. When this book was written, much of the meat available in the markets had been sacrificed to idols. For some new believers this was a stumbling block. They might believe if meat had been sacrificed to an idol their eating it would defile their conscience.

*if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble. 1 Cor 8:13*

*All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense. 21It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles. Romans 14:21*

Things we can take to heart and apply from this passage. 1) Our faith is of grace, the free gift of eternal life through the blood of Jesus. 2) We must not to follow people who would draw us legalistic ascetism, a works base religion. 3) We must control our behavior so as not to offend another brother, cause them to stumble.

*If food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again. 1 Cor 8:13*