

2013 End-of-Year Camp Meeting

Sabbath School Lesson

A Calling to Perfect Holiness

By

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Introduction:

“Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts”

¹ In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple.

² Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

³ And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory.

⁴ And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

⁵ Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

⁶ Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

⁷ And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged (Isa. 6:1-7).

Our King, the LORD of hosts, requires holiness of the believer; He desires to share His holy nature with us, and in a holistic, all-encompassing manner. He commands us to be holy in **all** our conduct (1 Pet. 1:15). Yet the stark reality of our human condition is that we cannot by

ourselves attain holiness. As the descendants of fallen Adam, we are conceived in sin (Ps 51:5) and live in the filth of sin (Rom. 5:12).

But it's not all bad news. The blood of Jesus by grace grants effective cleansing to everyone who comes to Him by faith and repentance. But does that take away all personal obligation to be holy in our personal and family life? Does the cleansing by Jesus' blood mean we can behave, talk, dress and eat anyhow and will never be made unclean (again)?

Beloved, it's a non-negotiable requirement that we be holy as the children of the Holy Father God or we are not His children; it's a sine qua non. Two scriptures give a sobering warning:

Rev. 3:4-5

⁴ Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy.

⁵ He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels.

Eph. 5:3-6

³ But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;

⁴ Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

⁵ For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

⁶ Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

A life of holiness is necessary for admission into the Kingdom of God. And there's an element of personal responsibility in our Christian life of holiness so far as we are required to "walk" or conduct ourselves in "white".

But how do we know what to do to keep ourselves holy? What does the holiness to which we have been called entail?

That's the reason for this book. Scripture teaches us in clear terms the holiness God enjoins on His saints. We examine it here.

So come join us, the Assembly of the redeemed, sanctified saints of God marching into the Kingdom on the highway of holiness where the unclean shall not walk:

⁸ And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.

⁹ No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there:

¹⁰ And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away (Isa. 35:8-10). Halleluiah!

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Golden Text:

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord (Heb. 12:14).

Holiness is a Product of Redemption

Holiness is one of the core fruits of redemption; it is a condition which necessarily results from our fellowship with God. The LORD puts forth a simple logic: Because He is holy, we too must be holy:

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy (Lev. 19:2).

But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;
Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy (1 Pet. 1:15-16).

However, holiness is neither defined by us nor derived from us. The God who redeems is the source and quintessence of all holiness (1 Sam. 2:2; Rev. 4:8). He redeems to make holy. The two are intertwined; one does not exist without the other. Holiness is His way of saying, 'now that I have brought you to Myself (redemption), I want you to be like Me'. Holiness is the badge of the redeemed, a privilege of grace to be like God in character and spirit. Without it, true redemption in the sense of RESTORATION to God in His likeness and values has not happened. Thus when Yahweh redeemed the children of Israel from Egypt, "the house of bondage", He told them to obey His voice and keep His covenant and "ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation" (Ex. 19:4-6).

By His very act of redemption, God had ordained Israel to holiness! As He sent Moses on a mission of redemption to the Israelites, God already considered Israel His "firstborn" (Ex. 4:22). The term "firstborn" denotes dedication and set-apartness:

Sanctify unto Me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is Mine (Ex. 13:2).

The word “sanctify” in the text was translated from the Hebrew verb *qadash* which means “to be set apart, to be holy, to show oneself holy, to be treated as holy, to consecrate, to treat as holy, to dedicate, to be made holy, to declare holy or consecrated, to behave, to act holy, to dedicate oneself. The verb, in the simple stem, declares the act of setting apart, being holy (i.e. withdrawing someone or something from profane or ordinary use)” (*Strong’s Complete Word Study Concordance* AMG Hebrew Dict. 6942, p. 1958).

So Israel by her calling and covenant destiny was to be holy to the LORD. The LORD recalls her early days in the wilderness through the prophet Jeremiah:

I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved Me and followed Me through the desert, through a land not sown.

Israel was holy to the LORD, the firstfruits of His harvest; all who devoured her were held guilty, and disaster overtook them (Jer. 2:2-3 NIV).

In the New Testament, the calling of believers is similarly a “holy calling” (2 Tim. 1:9), “For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root [Israel] be holy, so are the branches” (Rom. 11:16; cf. Acts 3:25-26; 1 Cor. 10:1). Indeed, “God hath not called us [NT believers] unto uncleanness, but unto holiness” (1 Thess. 4:7) in fulfilment of His predetermined purpose that “we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Eph. 1:4).

Holiness is the defining characteristic of our relationship with God. God has revealed Himself to man so that we can share in His holiness and ultimately His eternal life. In Rom. 6:16-23, the Apostle Paul teaches that after we have been freed from enslavement to sin and made slaves of righteousness through obedience to the truth, we bear the fruit of righteousness which leads to eternal life, a gift from God. Whereas no one has the power to access eternal life, God is the only One who has the prerogative to grant eternal life to whoever He wishes, and He chooses to give it *as a gift* to those who through faith of obedience produce the fruit of holiness. Hence “the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”.

It’s a free *gift*, but it’s clear from the text that God has reserved this free gift of eternal life for only those who through faith in Christ live a holy life. The eternal life from God does not go with just any lifestyle but the holy life in Christ, the Redeemer.

There are three main ways by which God makes us holy, all equally important. They are as follows:

- (1) Sanctification by the Blood which comes through faith in Christ, that is justification (Rom. 3:24-25; Heb. 13:12, 9:22).
- (2) Sanctification by the Spirit which refers to how God chooses and sets apart believers (even before conversion) “unto obedience” (1 Pet. 1:2; 2 Thess. 2:13).
- (3) Sanctification by the Word through obedience to God’s word (John 15:3; Ps 17:4; 119:9-11; 1 Pet. 1:22; Ex. 31:13; Ez. 20:12).

So then, God sends His redemption while we are still sinners (Rom. 5:8), but we do not continue to be sinful and impure when redemption has come our way. The Redeemer redeems us from all lawlessness and by so doing purify to Himself a special people, “zealous of good works” (Tit. 2:14; cf. Matt. 1:21).

The Book of Leviticus, which comes after the Exodus redemption story of Israel, is devoted to holiness to teach us the state of holiness in which all the redeemed people of God must be. It not only describes “the manner of access to God” (*then*, the blood of sacrificial animals; *now*, the blood of Christ), but also “the holiness which is the result of that access” (Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*, p. 224). This holiness covers all aspects of life. Thus God’s redeemed people “must be clean – personally (Lev. 11), in their family – life (12; 18) and as a congregation (13-15)”. Also treated is “holiness in social relations” (19-20) (ibid. p. 225).

God’s people are not only called to holiness; we are also called to live it! That is sanctification by the Word.

The Redeemed Take Hold of God’s Holiness through Obedience

Holiness is the reason why God gives His redeemed people His holy laws meant to preserve their holy state. The two are inseparable. Because we are a holy people by His grace, we must be holy in all our way of life.

The apostle Paul emphasizes this point in the second chapter of his letter to Titus:

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,
Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and
godly, in this present world;
Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour
Jesus Christ;
Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a
peculiar people, zealous of good works (Tit. 2:11-14; see also Luke 1:72-75).

The word “ungodliness”, in Greek *asebia* (Strong’s 763), is related to another Greek word *anomia* (Strong’s 458) which means “illegality, violation of law, wickedness.” So Paul is, in effect, telling us that the grace of God requires us to forsake the transgression of God’s law which is what our redemption in Christ means. What remains for the believer then are the godly deeds that come from obedience to God’s law.

In his commentary on Titus 2:14, Craig S. Keener writes in his *IVP Bible Background Commentary (New Testament)*:

Judaism strongly praised “zeal” for God. Although zeal was associated particularly with the zealots [a first-century Jewish resistance group] in this period, it is doubtful that Paul would intend an allusion to that group which was probably unknown to the Cretans. He probably uses it in its more general sense of uncompromising zeal for the law or for God” (p. 639).

The state of grace presupposes holiness, not unholiness (Rom. 6:1-2). That is why again the apostle Paul urges us:

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove [or show] what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Rom. 12:2).

When our minds are renewed by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:23; John 16:13) to know and appreciate the “good and acceptable and perfect will of God”, we are to walk in it. The Jews call this ‘walking’ *halakah*, a way of behaving based on God’s law (Lev. 26:3; Ps 101:6; Zech. 3:7). The apostle Paul uses the term twice in Galatians chapter 5:

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh (Gal. 5:16).
If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:25).

It’s a call to “walk” in the spiritual law of God, even “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:2; 2 John 1:6; 3 John 1:3-4; Ez. 33:15). In 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul elaborates on this spiritual walk to mean ‘walk in holiness’:

1 Thess. 4:1-8

¹ Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.

² For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

³ For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:

⁴ That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;

⁵ Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:

⁶ That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.

⁷ For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.

⁸ He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us His Holy Spirit.

The Christian life they ought to live to please God as they had been taught was broadly at odds with the sensual lifestyle of “the Gentiles who know not God”. The holy life enjoined by the commandments of the Lord Jesus is expressly the will of God for us—“even our sanctification”: That our bodies should be kept holy and honourable, particularly by abstaining from fornication. Should any despise the command to keep holiness, it’s not man he despises but God who has given us and indeed lives in us by His Holy Spirit. He commits a sin of contempt against God’s Holy Spirit living within him!

That’s why the apostle calls for a break with the Gentile way of life. As he points out elsewhere, Gentiles, as a result of their ignorance of God’s law, walk “in the futility [Grk *mataiotes* i.e. “moral depravity”, “vanity”, “folly”, “perverseness” wickedness] of their mind”, unlike the Jews who know God’s law (Rom. 3:1-2; 9:4-5; Eph. 2:11-13):

¹⁷ This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, ¹⁸ having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; ¹⁹ who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

²⁰ BUT YOU HAVE NOT SO LEARNED CHRIST, ²¹ if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: ²² that you put off, concerning your former [Gentile] conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, ²³ and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴ and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4:17-24 NKJV, Emphasis mine).

Keener observes in his commentary on Ephesians 4:17-19:

What is significant is that Paul refuses to call ethnically Gentile Christians ‘Gentiles’ any longer; **THEY MAY BE ETHNICALLY GENTILE, BUT THEY ARE TO BE ETHICALLY JEWISH.** Premarital sex, homosexual intercourse and idolatry were typically Gentile sins from which nearly all Jews abstained. By contrast, pagans were raised this way; many Greek boys were ushered into ‘manhood’ by an older man’s molestation (*The IVP Bible Background Commentary New Testament*, p. 548. Capitals mine).

On the 24th verse, he notes:

Paul probably alludes to the way God originally made Adam and Eve in His image, and says that *the new person that a Christian has become is equipped with moral purity because he or she is made like God morally.* Thus, he points out, one should live like it—as blamelessly as Adam and Eve did before they disobeyed (ibid. Emphasis mine).

Having established the truth that God has created believers anew in His holy image or character, Paul carries on his exhortation to his readers to live “the life of God” all through verses 25 to chapter 5, stating in verses 5-8:

⁵ For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

⁶ Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

⁷ Be not ye therefore partakers with them [the children of disobedience/unconverted Gentiles].

⁸ For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light (Eph. 5:5-8 KJV).

The Christian life is a life that conforms to the holy character of God as found in His “holy, righteous and good law” (Rom. 7:12). To walk like a Gentile is therefore to walk (live) contrary to this law which embodies God’s character. Notice another incisive comment in *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*:

Jewish people viewed nearly all Gentiles as sexually immoral (later rabbis argued that one could not assume the virginity of a Gentile woman over three years and one day old); most Gentile men were immoral. Although many of Paul’s readers are ethnically Gentiles, he expects them to recognize that they are spiritually non-Gentiles by virtue of their conversion to the Biblical faith (cf. Rom. 2:29) (p. 591).

The Law of God is clearly implied here. Because Christians are called to holiness, they must live as such. This holy life is what God’s law teaches us to live when through the fear of God we keep His commandments. The connection is obvious in Paul’s instruction to the believers in Corinth to eschew uncleanness:

^{6:17} Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.

^{6:18} And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

^{7:1} Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (2 Cor. 6:17-7:1).

The following Bible versions render 2 Cor. 7:1 as follows:

Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God (English Standard Version ESV).

Therefore, my dear friends, since we have these promises, let us purify ourselves from everything that can defile either body or spirit, and strive to be completely holy, out of reverence for God (Complete Jewish Bible CJB).

Therefore, dear friends, since we have such promises, let us cleanse ourselves from every impurity of the flesh and spirit, completing our sanctification in the fear of God (Holman Christian Standard Bible HCSB).

[¹Therefore] Dear friends [²Beloved], we have these promises from God, so we should make ourselves pure—free from anything that makes body or soul unclean [³every defilement of flesh and spirit]. We should try to become holy in the way we live [*or ...and in this way bring our holiness to completion/perfection*], because we respect [⁴out of reverence for; in the fear of] God (Expanded Bible).

Therefore, since these [⁵great] promises are ours, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that contaminates *and* defiles body and spirit, and bring [⁶our] consecration to completeness in the [⁷reverential] fear of God (Amplified Bible).

In so far as the fear of God is synonymous with the keeping of God's commandments (Eccl. 12:13; Ps 111:10), we only *bring holiness to completion* when we demonstrate the fear of God through the keeping of His holy commandments.

In his call for believers to be holy like God, the Apostle Peter combines three powerful arguments to make his point: (1) we must be holy as an expression of our godly fear; (2) we must be holy because we have been redeemed from our empty way of life with the precious blood of Christ, and (3) we must be holy because we have been purified and born again by the Word:

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours* in your ignorance,¹⁵ but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior;¹⁶ because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."

¹⁷ If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay *on earth*;¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers,¹⁹ but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood* of Christ.²⁰ For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you ²¹who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

²² Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,²³ for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God (1 Pet. 1:14-23 NASB).

This is how God ensures that His "obedient children" become holy like Him, their "Father" (v. 14, 17). Our part is to "conduct ourselves in fear" through the keeping of His commandments so that we will be purified by the Word. That is why the apostle chastises the false ministers who deceive Christians to depart from "the holy commandment delivered unto them" after they have known Christ and been redeemed from the defilements of the world:

¹⁷ These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.

¹⁸ For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.

¹⁹ While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.

²⁰ For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

²¹ For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

²² But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire (2 Pet. 2:17-22).

The message is clear: We only *continue in* the holiness freely granted us by God (via justification and the Spirit of holiness) when we through the fear of God obey Him to guard against behaviour that will make us unclean (again)! The otherwise ‘redeemed’ believer who refuses to obey God’s holy law is like “the dog [that] is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow [pig] that was washed to her wallowing in the mire”.

God’s Law, Our Instruction in Holiness

Many modern ministers are sadly ignorant of the role of God’s commandments. Contrary to what they say, commandment-keeping Christians do not keep God’s laws to earn salvation (a free gift) but AS A RESULT of salvation, and yet if we don’t, we won’t be worthy of this free gift! Why? Because we will be rendered unclean, and God will not bless what is unclean with His eternal life. That’s why the Bible exhorts us to be worthy of our holy calling (Eph. 4:1; Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 4:1).

By grace through faith are we saved; it’s not by works or human effort. However, our status as God’s redeemed people means we must be holy; that status makes us “His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:8-10). The *IVP Bible Background Commentary* gives another beautiful exposition on the text:

Good works flow from what God does in us, rather than God’s work in us flowing from our works. God redeemed Israel before he gave them commandments (Ex. 20:1); IT WAS ALWAYS HIS PURPOSE FOR GOOD WORKS TO FLOW FROM HIS GRACE, even if Israel (like many people today) did not always grasp that point (Deut. 5:29; 30:6, 11-14) (p. 544 Emphasis/Capitals mine).

Thus now that we have been saved by grace through faith, it behoves us to know how we ought to behave in “the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). The seeming ‘contradiction’ between receiving the free gift of salvation and the need to walk worthy of it is resolved when we see that although many have responded

to the call to salvation, only a few worthy ones are chosen (Matt. 22:14). The invitation to come to Christ for salvation is free, but we must be worthy—our garment or body must be undefiled and unsoiled—if He will walk with us:

⁴ Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy.

⁵ He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels (Rev. 3:4-5).

The colour “white” symbolizes righteousness (Rev. 19:8), the make-up of God’s law: “All His commandments are righteousness” (Ps 119:172; Rom. 7:12). This is the exact purpose of God’s law—to instruct us in righteousness or right living; it’s to keep us in right standing with God.

People misconstrue the role of God’s law chiefly for two reasons. The first is what the apostle Paul diagnoses: The carnal mind is hostile to God and does not and cannot submit to God’s law (Rom. 8:7). Another is the wide acceptance of the Greek concept of law (*nomos*). ‘Nomos’ essentially means a (restrictive) code of do’s and don’ts in contrast to the Jewish concept of the law (of God) as divine direction or instruction (*Torah*). The Psalmist shares the latter view: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Ps 119:105). In Ps 119:35, David prays, “Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments; for therein do I delight” (see also Ps 119:133 and Prov. 6:23 & 4:18).

God’s commandments are not a burden (1 John 5:3); they rather direct us in the holy paths of God: “In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death” (Prov. 12:28).

Without exception, all the routes – grace, faith, obedience, godly fear – lead to the same destination: holiness! The New Testament scriptures do not downplay the doctrine of holiness at all. Instead, they state with all clarity and emphasis that “God has not called us to uncleanness but to holiness”, and again that we Christians should not touch “the unclean thing”.

To not touch the unclean thing presupposes that we should know what things are unclean. As we all know, it’s only the holy God who can define what is unclean or clean (Job 14:4). So, where can we find the specific things God has declared to be clean or unclean?

It’s mainly in the Old Testament scriptures which (like the N.T.) are “God-breathed” for “doctrine [or teaching], for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good work” (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

Three Main Areas of Holiness

God wants to see His people reflect His holiness in three main areas of their lives: personal life, family life and social life.

Personal holiness encompasses both moral/spiritual purity and physical purity. The Ten Commandments mainly deal with the moral aspects of holiness. They were proclaimed by God Himself out of the midst of fire on Mount Sinai soon after He redeemed the children of Israel from Egypt:

I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Thou shalt have no other gods before Me (Ex. 20:2-3; see also Deut. 4:12-13; 33:2-3).

The Ten Commandments are a law with a difference; they are unrivalled to date! Although given in antiquity, they continue to function as the primary ethical law of human society. Authors James D. Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe state in their book *What If The Bible Had Never Been Written?*

No other collection of rules, whether written by man or inspired by the 'gods', has had so profound an impact in the realm of law as those laws have (p. 44). (See Deut. 4:5-8).

That the Ten Commandments are timeless in relevance is a fact even nominal (and often antimonian) Christianity cannot refute. King David praised God's law:

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes (Ps 19:7-8).

It's the Ten Commandments that reveal the character of God, and He specifically gave His people these 'Ten Words' to mould us into His character. In describing the nature of God's law, the apostle Paul essentially describes God's character because the former is a reflection of the latter: "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just [righteous], and good" (Rom. 7:12; also Ps 119:172; Deut. 32:4).

Beyond the moral law of the Ten Commandments come those laws of God which emphasize holiness in the spiritual life, family life and social relations of God's people. These have not been abolished in so far as Christ did not come to "destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matt. 5:17).

The word "fulfill" was translated from the Greek word *pleroo* (Strong's #4137) and it means:

- 1) To make full, to fill up, i.e. to fill to the full 1a) to cause to abound, to furnish or supply liberally 1a1) I abound, I am liberally supplied 2) to render full, i.e. to complete 2a) to fill to the top: so that nothing shall be wanting to full measure, to fill to the brim 2b1) to make complete in every

particular, to render perfect 2b2) to carry through to the end, to accomplish, to carry out (some undertaking) 2c) to carry into effect, bring to realization, realize 2c1) of matters of duty: to perform, execute 2c2) of sayings, promises, prophecies, to bring to pass, ratify, accomplish 2c3) to fulfill, i.e. to cause God's will (as made known in the law) to be obeyed as it should be, and God's promises (given through the prophets) to receive fulfilment.

Pleroo does not remotely suggest Christ came to do away with the law of God, to uproot or to render it ineffective. He came to show proper obedience to God's holy commandments in fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy that "The LORD is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will MAGNIFY THE LAW, AND MAKE IT HONOURABLE" (Isa. 42:21).

The bottom line is that God's desire to have a relationship with His people will always mean that His people must be holy. There can be no other way! Uncleanness creates a wall of separation between God and His people. The only condition under which God will have a meaningful relationship with us is to be holy as He is holy. He sums it up in a sentence: "Be holy for I am holy".

The word "be" (in Hebrew *hayah* Strong's #1961) is an action verb which means "to become, occur, come to pass, be". It implies action on our part to be holy like God, to take hold of His holiness and to preserve the state of holiness into which He has called us.

Clean Food for God's Holy People

As far as personal holiness is concerned, one thing God's holy people cannot ignore is food. Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, states a direct relationship between the foods He has declared clean for His people and holiness. He told the redeemed people of Israel in Ex. 22:31:

And ye shall be holy men unto Me: neither shall ye eat any flesh that is torn of beasts in the field; ye shall cast it to the dogs.

But actually God's food law predates Moses and goes all the way back to Eden where the LORD created man in utmost purity:

And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat (Gen. 1:29).

After the flood, God gave man permission to eat animal meat in advance of which He had revealed to Noah, the head of the post-diluvian human family, what animals were clean for consumption and those unclean:

Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat [food] for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.

But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat (Gen. 9:3-4).

The text mentions “every moving thing” and “all things”. The cursory reader is likely to jump to the conclusion that God did not distinguish between what animal meats man could eat and those he could not eat. But just as Yahweh’s blanket statement that He has given man “every herb” as food does not make all herbs edible and none poisonous, so “every moving thing” and “all things” does not necessarily mean all living things are fit for human consumption. The fact of the matter is that Noah and his immediate descendants already knew what animals were clean and therefore permissible for man to eat as per His post-flood instruction authorizing the use of animal flesh for food. Just before Noah entered the ark with his family, God had commanded him:

² Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female.

³ Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth (Gen. 7:2-3; see also Gen. 8:19-20).

Because Noah and his family already knew those animals that were clean, God didn’t have to repeat Himself in Genesis 9 where He actually gave man permission to eat animal flesh. He only cautioned against eating the clean animals together with their blood, a practice which would make an otherwise clean meat ‘common’ or ‘defiled’ (Heb. *khol* as opposed to *tame*, unclean). In the light of God’s earlier revelation, therefore, God meant Noah and his descendants could eat every clean animal but not the blood, either separately or together with the flesh because the blood had not been drained out (see Lev. 17:13-14; Acts 15:20).

To apply the text in its ‘widest sense’ to mean man could eat any living thing whatsoever would give man the right to eat his fellow man and even poisonous animals. To arrive at the truth, scripture should be used to clarify and interpret other scripture (Isa. 28:10, 13).

That what God purposely meant was that man could eat the meat of every clean animal is reinforced in His instructions to Moses 800 years later concerning what animals the redeemed children of Israel may eat. He mentions the same clean animals revealed to Noah, only this time with details of their names and family groups (kinds). Again, holiness is the underlying reason:

²⁴ But I have said unto you, Ye shall inherit their land, and I will give it unto you to possess it, a land that floweth with milk and honey: I am the LORD your God, which have separated you from other people.

²⁵ Ye shall therefore put difference between clean beasts and unclean, and between unclean fowls and clean: and ye shall not make your souls abominable by beast, or by fowl, or by any manner of living thing that creepeth on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean.

²⁶ And ye shall be holy unto Me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be Mine (Lev. 20:24-26).

He reiterates the same reason in Deut. 14:2-3:

² ... thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto Himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.

³ Thou shalt not eat any abominable thing.

The LORD lists the clean and the unclean animals by categories to Moses in Leviticus chapter 11 and Deut. 14. The categories range from mammals (animals which give birth to live babies, instead of laying eggs) to insects.

Mammals

Lev. 11:2-8

² Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, These are the beasts which ye shall eat among all the beasts that are on the earth.

³ Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is clovenfooted, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts, that shall ye eat.

⁴ Nevertheless these shall ye not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the hoof: as the camel, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you.

⁵ And the coney, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you.

⁶ And the hare, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you.

⁷ And the swine, though he divide the hoof, and be clovenfooted, yet he cheweth not the cud; he is unclean to you.

⁸ Of their flesh shall ye not eat, and their carcase shall ye not touch; they are unclean to you.

The list is clear. Only animals that have BOTH split hooves and chew the cud are acceptable for food. Among them are ruminants like sheep, goats, deer, cattle, buffalo and antelope. Pigs, dogs, cats, rabbits, squirrels, rodents, bears and horses, on the other hand, are forbidden to be eaten. However, the ban does not extend to the keeping of domestic pets like cats or dogs or the use of horses or camels for farm work or riding.

Water Creatures

Lev. 11:9-12

⁹ These shall ye eat of all that are in the waters: whatsoever hath fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, them shall ye eat.

¹⁰ And all that have not fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers, of all that move in the waters, and of any living thing which is in the waters, they shall be an abomination unto you:

¹¹ They shall be even an abomination unto you; ye shall not eat of their flesh, but ye shall have their carcases in abomination.

¹² Whatsoever hath no fins nor scales in the waters, that shall be an abomination unto you.

Again, the clean water creatures are clearly identified: Only those with BOTH fins and scales are permitted for food. But note that sea life such as catfish, shark, dolphin, and whale do not have true scales. Also all shell fish like crab, lobster, and shrimp are unclean and forbidden for food.

Fowl

Lev. 11:13-19

¹³ And these are they which ye shall have in abomination among the fowls; they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, and the ossifrage, and the ospray,

¹⁴ And the vulture, and the kite after his kind;

¹⁵ Every raven after his kind;

¹⁶ And the owl, and the night hawk, and the cuckow, and the hawk after his kind,

¹⁷ And the little owl, and the cormorant, and the great owl,

¹⁸ And the swan, and the pelican, and the gier eagle,

¹⁹ And the stork, the heron after her kind, and the lapwing, and the bat.

We will notice that unlike with the mammals and fish, the Bible does not give us a specific set of characteristics of clean birds. It only names the unclean birds unsuitable for consumption by God's holy people. The problem, however, is that not all the named unclean birds are easily identifiable today. Nevertheless, Bible experts have identified six characteristics of clean birds: *(1) they have a crop; (2) they have a gizzard with a double lining that can be separated easily; (3) they do not prey on other birds; (4) they do not devour their food while flying, but catch it in the air and then land and divide it with their beaks; (5) their hind toe and middle front toe are both long, and (6) when perching, the three front toes are on one side of the perch and the hind toe is on the opposite side* (Richard C. Nickels, *Biblical Health and Healing*, p. 25).

Birds that fall into this category include chicken, pigeons, turkey, quails, and guinea fowl. Those of the unclean category include marsh birds like the heron, swan, duck, and goose which wade in putrid stagnant waters and generally all birds of prey (the eagle, the vulture, the crow, the hawk, etc).

Flying Insects

Lev. 11:20-23

²⁰ All fowls that creep [flying insects], going upon all four, shall be an abomination unto you.

²¹ Yet these may ye eat of every flying creeping thing that goeth upon all four, which have legs above their feet, to leap withal upon the earth;

²² Even these of them ye may eat; the locust after his kind, and the bald locust after his kind, and the beetle after his kind, and the grasshopper after his kind.

²³ But all other flying creeping things, which have four feet, shall be an abomination unto you.

One difficulty with the above passage is that all insects have six, not four, legs. The explanation traditionally given is that the insects use four legs for walking and the other two for jumping, even though other insects like spiders have eight legs.

As with fowls, “it is difficult to discern exactly what types of insects are ‘clean’ based on the four names given. The generally accepted definitions are: ‘arbeh’ – locust; ‘solam’ – destroying locust (bald locust in KJV); ‘kahgahb’ – grasshopper” (Dean Wheelock, “To Eat or Not to Eat?” *Hebrew Roots*, August/September/October, 2002, p. 4).

It’s generally believed that John the Baptist lived on a diet of locusts:

And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey (Matt. 3:4).

However, the “locusts” could have referred to the locust tree whose pods contained edible seeds. Once ground up, the seeds could be eaten with honey.

Unclean Land Quadrupeds

Lev 11:27

²⁷ And whatsoever goeth upon his paws [like the lion], among all manner of beasts that go on all four, those are unclean unto you: whoso toucheth their carcass shall be unclean until the even.

Unclean Creatures that Crawl on the Earth

Lev 11:29-31

²⁹ These also shall be unclean unto you among the creeping things that creep upon the earth; the weasel, and the mouse, and the tortoise after his kind,

³⁰ And the ferret, and the chameleon, and the lizard, and the snail, and the mole.

³¹ These are unclean to you among all that creep: whosoever doth touch them, when they be dead, shall be unclean until the even.

It’s pretty easy to have a general idea of what those unclean crawling creatures are. Creatures of the lizard family, frogs and mice are all forbidden to be eaten. They are not only forbidden to be eaten, but their very carcasses are not to come into contact with our food containers to avoid contamination:

Lev 11:32-35

³² And upon whatsoever any of them, when they are dead, doth fall, it shall be unclean; whether it be any vessel of wood, or raiment, or skin, or sack, whatsoever vessel it be, wherein any work is done, it must be put into water, and it shall be unclean until the even; so it shall be cleansed.

³³ And every earthen vessel, whereinto any of them falleth, whatsoever is in it shall be unclean; and ye shall break it.

³⁴ Of all meat which may be eaten, that on which such water cometh shall be unclean: and all drink that may be drunk in every such vessel shall be unclean.

³⁵ And every thing whereupon any part of their carcass falleth shall be unclean; whether it be oven, or ranges for pots, they shall be broken down: for they are unclean, and shall be unclean unto you.

The instruction is in line the divine command to be holy in all our conduct (1 Pet. 1:15). All uncleanness is to be avoided, both direct and indirect. God detests seeing abominable things in our cooking utensils (Isa. 65:3-4).

However, where contamination inadvertently occurs through contact with the carcass of an unclean animal, God provides the following remedy:

Lev 11:27-28

²⁷ And whatsoever goeth upon his paws, among all manner of beasts that go on all four, those are unclean unto you: whoso toucheth their carcase shall be unclean until the even.

²⁸ And he that beareth the carcase of them shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: they are unclean unto you.

Of the carcass of a clean animal which dies of itself, the remedy is the same:

Lev 11:39-40

³⁹ And if any beast, of which ye may eat, die; he that toucheth the carcase thereof shall be unclean until the even.

⁴⁰ And he that eateth of the carcase of it shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: he also that beareth the carcase of it shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even.

There is no danger of permanent contamination or uncleanness. The same Word which teaches us the doctrine of holiness also shows us how to keep ourselves pure.

Snakes and other Reptiles Forbidden for Food

Lev 11:41-42

⁴¹ And every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth shall be an abomination; it shall not be eaten.

⁴² Whatsoever goeth upon the belly [like the snake, crocodile, lizard], and whatsoever goeth upon all four, or whatsoever hath more feet [millipedes, etc] among all creeping things that creep upon the earth, them ye shall not eat; for they are an abomination.

As He concludes the instruction on the clean (edible) and unclean (inedible) animals, the LORD drives home His primary reason for commanding abstinence from unclean meats:

Lev 11:43-47

⁴³ Ye shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creepeth, neither shall ye make yourselves unclean with them, that ye should be defiled thereby.

⁴⁴ For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

⁴⁵ For I am the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.

⁴⁶ This is the law of the beasts, and of the fowl, and of every living creature that moveth in the waters, and of every creature that creepeth upon the earth:

⁴⁷ To make a difference between the unclean and the clean, and between the beast that may be eaten and the beast that may not be eaten.

Our holy God has made Himself clear. His holy people must not eat meats He has declared unclean if they are to stay holy for Him. In the Bible culture, the culture of God, the named and/or identified clean animals together with the edible herbs and fruits earlier given to man constitute the Bible food. Any animal or tree or herb outside this list is not 'food' in the sight of God. Nor recognized as such by the Bible. It's something else not made for food, perhaps a scavenger to clean up the environment, etc.

God's holy people must eat clean, holy diet. He states unambiguously: "And the LORD spake unto Moses and to Aaron, saying unto them, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, These are the beasts which ye shall eat among all the beasts that are on the earth" (Lev. 11:1-2).

Now, how do many of today's preachers view God's law of food? Do they endorse it or denounce it? Is God's law of food still part of the basis for holy living? What is the New Testament perspective on the law of clean and unclean? Does it abrogate it?

The New Testament Position on the Law of Clean and Unclean

The Psalmist wrote of the eternal validity of God's truth:

Ps 100:5

For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His truth endureth to all generations.

Ps 111:7-8

⁷ The works of His hands are verity and judgment; all His commandments are sure.

⁸ They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8).

So the question is, is God's law of clean and unclean still valid under the New Covenant? For Old Testament saints like Daniel and Ezekiel, the accepted truth was that the eating of unclean meats defiled the soul (Dan. 1:8; Ezek. 4:14; cp Lev. 20:25). Does this 'truth' still hold true for the New Testament believer today?

Many modern-day preachers raise objections to God's food laws based on certain New Testament scriptures which supposedly teach the abolition of the law of clean and unclean. Those scriptures are Mark chapter 7, Acts chapter 10, Romans chapter 14, 1st Corinthians chapters 8 & 10, 1 Timothy chapter 4 and Col. 2:16. We will carefully analyze each of these scriptures as "a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2

Tim. 2:15). We need to find out if God has changed His mind about His law of clean and unclean or if indeed He now declares all things clean for His people.

In doing this, context (the occasion and subject matter) will take centre stage, while keeping in mind that Christians have been redeemed to stay holy in godly fear.

Mark 7: Eating with Unwashed Hands does not Defile a Man

Christians who disregard God's law of clean and unclean find great solace in Jesus' statement in Mark 7:18-19 that "Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats?"

The usual interpretation is that Christ by this statement abolished the law of clean and unclean foods. A closer examination of the text, however, reveals that the Lord has been quoted out of context!

The subject matter was eating food with unwashed hands contrary to "the tradition of the elders" which established strict rules for hand washing before eating. This was what Jesus rejected because it was not scriptural, yet the Pharisees found occasion to criticize His disciples for neglecting this tradition.

Mark gives us the full background information explaining what the hand-washing tradition of the Jewish elders entailed:

¹ Then came together unto Him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem.

² And when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault.

³ For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders.

⁴ And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables.

⁵ Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? (Mark 7:1-5).

Jesus' reply strongly affirmed that God's commandments rather than the commandments of men are to be kept:

⁶ He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.

⁷ Howbeit in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

⁸ For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.

The Lord Jesus lambasted the Pharisees for putting “the commandments of men” above the commandments of God by teaching and insisting on a tradition God commanded nowhere in His word (such as the ritual washing of pots and cups, not abstinence from the meats of unclean animals!). Such approach to worship, Christ pointed out, brought no spiritual virtue; such worship, based on human rules, was empty!

But did Christ mean we shouldn’t wash our hands at all before we eat?

The hand washing the Pharisees referred to, and about which Christ argued with them, was no ordinary hand washing which is necessary for personal hygiene but was part of a man-made ritual purity:

The Pharisees were scrupulous about washing of their hands as part of ritual purity, though this rule was not found in the Old Testament and may have originated from Greek influence... Washing the hands [they believed] removed partial ceremonial impurity picked up in the marketplace; hands were apparently immersed up to the wrist or purified by having water poured over them from a pure vessel. The Pharisees also had rules about immersing vessels to remove impurity (*The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, pp. 152-153).

This is the human tradition Christ called “vain” but which was held in high regard by the Pharisees, especially the School of Shammai, the stricter of the two Pharisaic schools of thought which operated in the days of Jesus. The other school was the School of Hillel.

The book *Manners & Customs of the Bible* provides additional information on the hand-washing tradition of the Pharisees:

How “diligently” the “traditions of the elders” required the Pharisees to wash is illustrated by Lightfoot in extracts from Rabbinical writers. He states that they make mention “of the quantity of water sufficient for this washing—of the washing of the hands, and of the plunging of them; of the first and second water; of the manner of washing; of the time: of the order, when the number of those that sat down to meat exceeded five, or did not exceed; and other such like niceties.” Not content with the ordinary usage of washing after eating, they carefully washed before eating, lest they should be injured by *Shibta*, “an evil spirit which sits upon men’s hands in the night; and if any touch his food with unwashen hands that spirit sits upon the food, and there is danger from it” (Entry 739, p. 400).

Surely, an exquisite ritual so steeped in superstition that Christ couldn’t help but soundly condemn it!

As further example of how the Pharisees perverted the commandments of God in order to follow their man-made traditions, Christ cited their abuse of the otherwise godly vow of “Corban”:

⁹ And He said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.

¹⁰ For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death [Ex. 21:17]:

¹¹ But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free.

¹² And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother;

¹³ Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

Manners & Customs of the Bible explains the law of Corban and how some of the Pharisees abused it:

The “Corban” was an offering of any kind consecrated to God. It was right to make such offerings because God had commanded them [in Num. 30:2; Deut. 23:21-23]; but the Saviour charges the Pharisees with placing their traditions above the Divine commands. For instance, God ordained honor and obedience to parents; but the Pharisees, by their traditionary explanation and abuse of the law of “corban”, completely nullified the law of parental honor. Their traditions taught that whatever was “corban”, that is, a gift consecrated to God, could not be alienated for any other purpose; but in the application of this principle, which in itself is correct enough, they manifested a wonderful ingenuity of perversion. If, for instance, parents desired help, and the son should say ‘My property is corban’, it released him from all obligation to sustain his parents; nevertheless, strange to say, it did not bind him to consecrate his substance to sacred uses. He could use it for his own purposes, or give it to whom he pleased, except to those to whom he had said, “It is corban”. No wonder the Saviour charged the Pharisees with “making the word of God of none effect” through their tradition (pp. 400-401).

Having made His point that human traditions have no spiritual value and, in fact, usurps the authority the word of God is supposed to have in people’s lives, Christ responded more directly to the criticism of the Pharisees in the matter of hand washing as laid down in their tradition:

¹⁴ And when He had called all the people unto him, He said unto them, Hearken unto Me every one of you, and understand:

¹⁵ There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.

¹⁶ If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

¹⁷ And when He was entered into the house from the people, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable.

¹⁸ And He saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him;

¹⁹ Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats?

²⁰ And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man.

²¹ For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

²² Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:

²³ All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

In the footnote of my *King James Version*, the alternative rendering for the phrase “purging all meats” is “eliminating all food”. In other words, Christ meant food eaten with hands not washed according to the traditions of the Pharisees could not defile a man as it did not enter the heart but went into the stomach and thence was expelled when one attended nature’s call.

The *Hebraic Roots Bible* correctly renders Mark 7:19 as this:

This is because it does not enter into his heart, but into the belly, and goes out into the waste-bowl, purging the food.

As the footnote commentary explains, the twisting of the idea of the digestive system “purging (eliminating) all foods” eaten to mean “making all foods clean” as found in many English Bibles is an interpolation into the text. Those were neither the words nor intent of Jesus as captured in the Greek text:

Some English translations have added the words “*making all foods clean*”, which are **NOT** in any original manuscript, Aramaic or Greek. In the first century pork was not even considered food, and it is unthinkable in a completely Jewish environment to think that Yahshua is telling His disciples that they can eat pork and the Pharisees would simply let it pass and not even condemn Him for it. It is clear from the context and also the cross reference of Math 15:16-20 that the subject is eating without washing according to Rabbinical tradition and not even about meat at all (*Hebraic Roots [Study] Bible*, PDF edition, p. 1237).

The James Murdock translation conveys the sense even more forcefully:

For it doth not enter into his heart, but into his belly, and is thrown into the digestive process, which carries off all that is eaten (*James Murdock New Testament*).

This is the very idea communicated in the parallel passage in Matthew chapter 15:

¹⁶ And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding?

¹⁷ Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught [waste bowl]?

¹⁸ But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.

¹⁹ For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:

²⁰ These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

So then, the point of Christ is that even if one eats with unwashed hands, the eventual destination of the dirt or impurity, along with the waste from the food itself, is the waste bowl. No spiritual defilement is incurred. The more serious defilement, He pointed out, was the defilement of the mind—“that which cometh out of man”.

But even here, Christ didn't mean anything from outside of a person could not harm him. He was specific that it was hands not washed according to the ritual cleansing of the Pharisees that could not defile a man. For the truth is that poison, when ingested, can make a person sick and even kill him. So too substances like tobacco and narcotic drugs. By the perverse reasoning of those who will have Christ rule that EVERYTHING AND ANYTHING is welcome into the HUMAN SYSTEM, narcotic drugs like cocaine and heroin may be taken in without scruple. It's outside of a man and cannot possibly defile or harm him! What deadly theology!

The point of contrast in the Master's statement is not between the divine food laws and the impurities of the unregenerate mind. The subject of discussion is eating with unwashed hands, a topic triggered by the Pharisees' criticism of Jesus' disciples for not observing the tradition of the elders in table hand washing. In exposing the hollowness of the ceremonial hand washing of the Pharisees, Christ affirmed the superior importance of the commandments of God which should ideally inform the thoughts and actions of people, keeping them pure.

Now, is the law of clean and unclean not part of God's commandments? To break it not only defiles the soul but also amounts to coveting or lusting after flesh which God did not create or sanctify in His word for food, thus breaking the 10th commandment of the Decalogue (commonly called the Moral Law).

But often people read into the text to make Christ say all unclean foods are now clean! Mind you, the law of clean and unclean is not a “tradition of the elders” but a law of God.

The audience of observant Jews whom Christ was addressing already knew what meats were clean and permissible for man to eat. Christ was not teaching them to break this law, but to do away with the human regulations that enjoined unbiblical ritual hand washing before the eating of clean food. The Saviour did not come to destroy the law or the prophets but came to make the law of God honourable (Matt. 5:17-18; Isa. 42:21).

In Matthew 13:47-48, His endorsement of the law of clean and unclean is apparent:

⁴⁷ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind [i.e. clean and unclean fish]:

⁴⁸ Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good [or clean] into vessels, but cast the bad [unclean] away.

Besides, there is no record of Jesus, or accusation from His detractors, that He ever ate unclean meat while on earth. Indeed, some twenty years after His resurrection and ascension, the apostle Peter, one of His closest disciples, stoutly protested when asked to “Rise, kill and eat all manner of four-footed beasts ... and creeping things, and fowls of the air”. His trenchant reply was, “Not so, Lord; for I have NEVER eaten any thing that is common or unclean” (Acts 10:12-14).

What occasioned this loud protest, and what did his vision of the vessel of unclean beasts signify?

Acts 10: Call No Man Unclean

The tenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles presents two visions by two men—one by Cornelius, a Roman military officer and a God-fearer (a Gentile believer in the God of Israel but not yet a full proselyte because not yet circumcised), and the other by Simon Peter, an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Cornelius’ vision, he was told by an angel to send for Simon Peter from Joppa for, as the angel explained, “Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do” (vv. 1-6).

Subsequently, Cornelius sent three of his lieutenants, two domestic servants and a trusted soldier, to Peter at Joppa.

In Peter’s vision, he was told to eat “all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air”. When he objected to eating those meats, a voice spoke from heaven, saying, “What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven” (vv. 9-16).

Is there any relationship between the two visions? More significantly, how did Peter come to understand his vision?

We discover that the subject matter is not about food at all but rather the remarkable conversion of a Gentile (a non-Jew) to Christ; in fact, the first Gentile to do so. Although he was hungry at the time of the vision and his food was being prepared, the apostle Peter knew the vision couldn’t be a straightforward order to eat unclean “four-footed beasts” like dogs, rats, mice, foxes and horses or “creeping things” like snakes, lizards, beetles and cockroaches. The vision must have a symbolic meaning and so he “doubted [questioned] in himself what this

vision which he had seen should mean” (v. 17a). Just then the *three* men from Cornelius (presumably Gentiles as well) arrived at the house, and the Spirit cut short his anxiety giving him an inkling of what the vision could mean:

While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, DOUBTING NOTHING: FOR I HAVE SENT THEM (vv. 19-20).

God by the vision of the sheet of unclean beasts used a very powerful symbol to drive home His message to Peter: Although unclean (as symbolized by the unclean beasts), Gentiles should be accepted into the Christian fellowship WITHOUT RESERVATIONS because He God had accepted them. Because Cornelius would send *three Gentiles* to Peter, the heavenly voice which insisted that God had cleansed the sheet of unclean beasts came *three times* and then was received up into heaven.

As Peter socialized with the household of Cornelius in preparation to preach the gospel to them, the point of the vision was fully borne in on him:

Then he said to them, ‘You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. ‘Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?’ (vv. 28-29).

So then, *the vision of Peter is what he says it means*: Call no man unclean! For “God is no respecter of persons”, he continued. “But in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him” (Acts 10:34-35). It should not be stretched to mean anything different than what the Holy Spirit of God opened the mind of the Apostle Peter to understand, for example that it gives believers permission to eat unclean meats. In fact, twenty years or so after the ascension of Christ, Peter and the early Church considered meats identified as unclean in the word of God as still unclean. Thus God used a current and enduring symbol of uncleanness to depict “sinners of the Gentiles” (Gal. 2:15) to whom He was now opening His door of salvation in accordance with the prophetic word (see Isa. 11:10; 42:1-4, 6).

Romans 14: Controversy between Vegetarians and Meat Eaters

The author, the apostle Paul, states the subject matter early in the text:

¹Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things.

²For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables.

³Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.

⁴Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand (Rom. 14:1-4 NKJV).

In this chapter, the apostle Paul addresses an issue splitting the Assembly in Rome down the middle: A controversy between vegetarians and meat eaters with each side claiming their choice of diet is the right one to follow. Paul urges them not to judge each other whether one eats "only vegetables" or "all things", i.e. meat plus vegetables. This is because it's not a straightforward Bible doctrine but a matter of personal preference or opinion and as such one of those "doubtful things" believers must not argue over.

As the church in Rome, which was composed of Jews and Gentiles, had been taught the "good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2), they would definitely know God's law of clean and unclean as the apostle Paul did not shun to declare to his converts "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). Therefore, those who ate all things were those who ate all those things declared as food by the Word of God, whereas the 'vegetarian party' ate only vegetables. These were the two sides to the dispute.

Since both the vegetarians and the clean meat eaters were not wrong in the sight of God, Paul said to them: "He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks" (Rom. 14:6b).

Placing the *meat versus vegetables only* debate in the same category as individual believers' preferences for certain religious days (such as special fast days), the Apostle Paul wrote:

⁵ One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

⁶ He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

⁷ For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

Here the "day" being referred to is not the seventh-day Sabbath as some misconstrue it to mean. The very first sentence controls and gives away the meaning Paul seeks to convey: "One man esteemeth one day above another". It is NOT God blessing and sanctifying one day out of seven as is the case with the Sabbath, but an individual's own decision to devote a certain day to God in prayer or fasting.

In such situations, as with the issue of vegetables versus meat eating, it's best to leave judgment to God, "for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (vv. 10-12). What is important, then, is that we do not "judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way" (v. 13).

Emphasizing that both vegetarians and clean meat eaters are not fundamentally wrong in their choice of food, Paul continued:

¹⁴ I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

In the above scripture, Paul does not mean that there is no uncleanness in the world. If he were to do so he would be contradicting himself, for he states plainly in 2 Cor. 6:17 that believers should not touch the unclean thing, but rather “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1).

In fact, the actual Greek word the apostle uses which is translated as “unclean” is *koinos* (Strong’s #2839) and it literally means “common” as correctly translated in the *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* (LITV):

I know and am persuaded in *the* Lord Jesus that nothing by itself is common; except to the *one* deeming anything to be common, *it is* common.

In Biblical usage, “common” and “unclean” are not mere synonyms but denote two states of the unclean. Although similar in meaning, the subtle difference between the two words is of profound theological significance. *Akathatos* (#169), the Greek word for “unclean”, basically means “unclean and impure by nature”, whereas *koinos* (common) means “polluted through external misuse”. In other words, *koinos* refers to a thing which in its true nature is clean or pure but has been defiled or polluted by external factors acting on it. It’s to make what is holy *profane* as rendered in *Rotherham’s Emphasized Bible*: “I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus-that, nothing, is profane of itself,-save to him who reckoneth anything to be profane, unto that man, it is profane”.

This is how Paul’s statement in Rom. 14:14 should be understood. His point is that nothing which is *already clean by nature or declared so by God* should be considered as defiled or polluted and therefore to be avoided. Thus we come to realize that the weak in faith who abstained from meat did so on the basis that the meats had somehow been polluted probably because they might have first been offered to idols – as was generally practiced in Gentile cities - before being sold on the market, a problem Paul addresses in depth in 1st Corinthians. He is not in any sense saying there is nothing “impure” or “unclean”, for there are even unclean or impure people (Eph. 5:5; Rev. 21:27, 22:5). He simply means anything clean in itself should not be thought of as defiled because of a supposed contamination by an external factor. So then, since the edible fruits and vegetables of the vegetarians and the clean meats of the meat eaters were clean in themselves, none of them was to be considered as “common” or defiled and therefore unfit to eat. In effect, it made no difference whether one ate only vegetables or the flesh of clean animals.

Even so, the apostle calls for caution. If a brother thinks your (inherently clean) meat has in a way been contaminated and so rendered ‘common’, why not accommodate him out of love

and cease from eating meat altogether, considering that your continued eating will offend him? The peace and unity of the Church is paramount and, in fact, that is what the Church, the Kingdom of God on earth, ought to be! So he exhorts the brethren:

¹⁵ But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

¹⁶ Let not then your good be evil spoken of:

¹⁷ For the kingdom of God is not meat [food] and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

¹⁸ For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

¹⁹ Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

²⁰ For meat destroy not the work of God. All things [which you eat] indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.

In the end, Paul says, our choice of food *among the clean foods of God* is up to us, except that we must not eat to cause a brother weak in the faith to stumble. Hence “It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak” (v. 21). But ultimately, each believer should be true to the dictates of his faith before God because he who doubts what he approves of judges and condemns himself since “whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (vv. 22-23).

So ended Brother Paul’s sound counsel to the Romans on the vegetarian-meat eating dispute in the church. Vegetarians must believe in and stick to what they eat and so must meat eaters. Let there be no controversy that would rock the Church of God. It was not a meat-meat issue, namely, clean meats versus unclean meats, but clean meats (which some thought may have been polluted) versus vegetables.

Romans chapter 14 is not a call to eat unclean meats. Far from it. “For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness” (1 Thess. 4:7).

1 Corinthians 8 & 10: Meats Offered to Idols

In chapters 8 and 10 of 1st Corinthians, the Apostle Paul deals with the vexed issue of meats offered to idols. The issue appeared settled by the ruling of the Jerusalem Council as pronounced by council president James (Yaacov):

¹⁹ Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:

²⁰ But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.

²¹ For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day (Acts 15:19-21).

In the circular letter written to the Gentile Churches (which apparently met every seventh-day Sabbath and were taught from the writings of Moses among other OT books, v. 21), “the apostles and the elders” made it plain that it was not simply their considered opinion that the Gentile Christians abstain from meats offered to idols among others, but that “it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these NECESSARY THINGS; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well” (vv. 28-29).

Abstinence from unclean (or defiled) meats such as the flesh of strangled animals and those offered to idols is a divine commandment reinforced in the New Testament under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God. In the *IVP Bible Background Commentary* we read: “It seemed good’ (also v. 22) occurs in Greek decrees in the sense, ‘Be it resolved’, often associated with votes in citizen assemblies” (p. 366).

Thus at the Jerusalem Council the Holy Spirit had it resolved and affirmed that all Christians abstain from meats offered to idols and from the flesh of animals strangled to death and from blood. For the early church, it was not something new but a reaffirmation of divine commands given in the Old Testament against the eating of blood, the flesh of (clean) animals killed by strangling and of animals whose blood had been poured forth to pagan gods (Gen. 9:3-4; Lev. 17:12-15). The thirteenth verse of Lev. 17 enjoins the Israelites to pour out and cover with dust the blood of the game (‘bush animals’) they catch during hunting as a counter to the pagan practice of pouring out the blood of their game to their gods. In Deut. 12:23-24, the precise instruction is this:

²³ Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh.

²⁴ Thou shalt not eat it; thou shalt pour it upon the earth as water.

It’s this express ban on the consumption of blood and the offering of animal blood to idols that the Jerusalem Church Council, under Divine direction, upheld in a formal resolution as NECESSARY for New Testament Christian believers. Subsequently, “the apostles and elders” appointed Judas and Silas to accompany Paul and Barnabas to deliver the decision of the Council to the Gentile churches (Acts 15:22-32). “And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were the churches established in the [Christian] faith, and increased in number daily (Acts 16:4-5). In short, all the Gentile churches were taught to be “followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ” (1 Thess. 2:14).

Against this background, was the doctrine of clean food which was free from the “pollutions of idols” unknown to the church in Corinth? The fact that they raised the issue at all shows that they had been taught this truth but needed further clarification. (See 1 Cor. 7:1). Because Corinth was a Gentile city through and through and almost all the meat on the market had first been offered to idols, Paul handles the issue with care.

In chapter 8, the apostle Paul puts love at the centre of the discussion, saying “Knowledge puffeth up, but charity [love] edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. But if any man love God, the same is known of Him” (vv. 1-3).

With brotherly love as still the controlling factor in the discourse, he continues:

⁴ As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.

⁵ For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)

⁶ But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him.

⁷ Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.

⁸ But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.

⁹ But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.

Based on the Christian belief that pagan gods are not real gods, but the products of futile human imagination, Paul appears to trivialize the issue of meats offered to idols. But then, he warns against using that understanding as a basis for behaviour, because “if any man see thee which hast knowledge [that idols are not real] sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak [in that he believes idols are real] be **emboldened** to eat those things which are offered to idols; And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother PERISH, for whom Christ died?” (vv. 10-11).

The alarming word is “PERISH”! If one by his indiscreet example emboldens a brother to eat meats offered to idols on a regular basis as if it were okay to do so—and not as an occasional ‘fellowship meal’ intended to make converts as Paul did in 1 Cor. 9:20-23—he endangers the person’s salvation. This is because the brother with a weak conscience will assume that if it is alright to eat meat offered to idols, then it’s equally alright to break any of the other laws of God. In other words, his conscience becomes so blunted that doing what is wrong occurs to him as normal. This is what Paul means by the expression “wound their weak conscience” in verse 12: “But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ”.

Now, would an apostle of Christ encourage sin, one that even affects Christ Himself? Not at all! Hence he says in verse 13:

Wherefore, if meat [offered to idols as done in Corinth] make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend [i.e. stumble from salvation].

To avoid the danger of causing a brother to lose salvation, the apostle Paul advocates complete abstinence from meats offered to idols. This, in effect, upholds the ruling of the Jerusalem Council that Gentile believers, like their Jewish counterparts, ought to “abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication”. Towards the end of Paul’s career, James, the Lord’s half-brother and leader of the Jerusalem Church, found it worthwhile to remind Paul that “... we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication” (Acts 21:25).

From 1st Corinthians chapter 8, we proceed to chapter 10 where Apostle Paul explains the issue further. In chapter ten, he appears to have modified his statement in 1 Cor. 8:8 that “But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse”.

Here in chapter 10, he states plainly that we can provoke God by what we eat. His argument is that while an idol *as an image made of stone or wood* has no personal reality, demons do exist, and they lurk behind the idol to which the sacrifices are made.

Putting it on record that God meted out grave judgments to the disobedient Israelites to deter us the redeemed people of the New Testament from evil (1 Cor. 10:5-11), Paul urged the Corinthian brethren: “my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry” (v. 14). The specific type of idolatry to flee from is the eating of meats sacrificed to idols. Why is this a form of idolatry? It’s because the eaters are bound in a spiritual fellowship with the false gods to whom the sacrifices are offered.

To buttress his point, he cites examples from the Lord’s Supper and Israel’s O.T. sacrificial system:

¹⁶ The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

¹⁷ For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

¹⁸ Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?

¹⁹ What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?

²⁰ But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils [demons], and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

In verse 21, the apostle Paul states bluntly:

²¹ Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of devils.

²² Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than He?

Exactly because the worship of pagan gods provoke the jealousy of the living God (Ex. 20:5-6; 34:14), it stands to reason that the eating of meats sacrificed to idols does the same.

On the practical way of dealing with meats sacrificed to idols in a city where such meats were commonplace, Paul writes:

²³[On the assumption that idols are nothing] All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient [because meats offered to idols provoke God]: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not [because some brethren will be offended].

²⁴ Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth [good].

²⁵ Whatsoever is sold in the shambles [i.e. meat market], that eat, asking no question for conscience sake:

²⁶ For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.

The apostle Paul asks the believers in Corinth not to ask questions when they go to buy meat at the meat market in Corinth because by doing so they wouldn't know for sure whether the meat had been offered to an idol. Not knowing would salve their conscience and remove any sense of guilt that the meat is forbidden! After all, "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof", including "whatsoever" clean meat "is sold in the shambles", even though it might have first been sacrificed to an idol!

However, the rule is "eat not" once one gets to know that the meat he intends buying or which has been set before him had been offered to an idol:

²⁷ If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake.

²⁸ But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.

Again in verse 27, Paul says a brother may join an unbeliever for a meal in an effort to win the unbeliever through friendship, but even in such situations if he's told that the meat set before him has been sacrificed to an idol, he shouldn't eat it "for conscience sake". In verses 29 & 30, he explains that the "conscience" meant here is not that of the prospective eater but that of the 'concerned brother' who pointed out that the meat had been offered to an idol.

Yet this does not mean that it's okay to eat meats sacrificed to demons if not for the offended conscience of another! Since it's a known Biblical teaching that believers should abstain from meats offered in sacrifice to idols, the believer who sees a brother sit at such a meal might have his faith in the sound doctrine so shaken that he would have no qualms (sense of guilt) about abandoning other aspects of the gospel truth. In contemporary terms, it's like seeing your pastor or elder frequenting a nightclub with the explanation that he's making friends with the clubbers to get the opportunity to witness to them. The immature believer may consider the pastor's example as a licence for him to also hobnob with the worldly and the ungodly in clear

breach of God's Word (Ps 1:1-2; 2 Cor. 6:14-15). He may even be emboldened to visit the brothel, although the pastor visited the club for the nobler purpose of sharing the gospel!

So the bottom line, as the apostle exhorts the Church in verse 31, is eat and drink to the glory of God. In other words, believers should not eat to provoke God by eating things sacrificed to idols. We are not stronger than He!

Even so, given the complex cultural make-up of the Greek city of Corinth, composed of Gentiles, pagans and Jews, care must be taken not to offend persons of diverse cultural backgrounds for the gospel's sake. Hence the instruction:

³² Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:

³³ Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

A clear example is sitting at a meal with a pagan unbeliever so as to win him for Christ. It is called accommodation—something Paul practised (1 Cor. 9:19-20), sometimes reaching out “To them that are without law, as [though he too were] without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law” [Gentiles] (v. 21).

To sum up, 1 Cor. 10 does not endorse the eating of meats sacrificed to idols, but rather that honouring God in what we eat or drink should be our primary concern followed by respect for the sensitivities of others. Thus a believer may sit a meal with an unbeliever only if he does not know for sure that the meal has been offered to an idol—and that as an exception, not the rule! A believer may only do so to win an unbeliever; it's not the regular meal for the believer who is to eat only Biblically approved clean food.

That was why the Corinthian believers used to ask questions on the origins of the meat sold at the local market to identify the clean/uncontaminated ones to buy. Paul discouraged this practice because to ask would nearly always elicit a 'yes' response, and then they would be bound not to buy or eat. Because this could potentially render the brethren involuntary vegetarians and prove a hurdle to the new comers to the faith, he counseled that “ask not”. But what if on being told that the meat had been offered to an idol a believer still went ahead to buy or to eat? He would be committing a wilful sin because he would knowingly be transgressing a command of God forbidding the eating of meats offered to demons!

1st Timothy 4: Doctrine of Devils Enforcing Celibacy and Abstinence from “Sanctified” Meat

The scripture sets the tone in the very first verse:

1 Tim 4:1

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.

The Spirit is pretty specific:

- He gives the time
“in the latter times”
- He foresees the rise of apostates in the church
“some shall depart from the faith”
- He names the source of the false teaching
“seducing spirits and devils”.

Given this outline, the details that follow have nothing to do with God’s law or commandments. It’s about “the doctrines of demons” that will emerge “in the latter times” and which are taught and enforced by men who “speak lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron” (v. 2).

In verses 3 -5, Paul cites two examples of the latter-day doctrines of demons of which the Spirit speaks expressly:

³ 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.

⁴ For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving:

⁵ For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

Straightaway we realize that both doctrines of demons stated above run counter to what God has ordained—His express will that people marry and that they eat food which He created and set apart by His word as clean for consumption.

Like marriage, God’s food law was not originated by demons in these last days of apostasy; it was given in Eden at the beginning of human history and modified to include the flesh of clean animals in the days of Noah (Gen. 1:29-30; 7:2-3; 9:3-4).

The statement “every creature of God is good and nothing to be refused” should, therefore, not be taken as a blanket statement that everything created by God, including man and poisonous plants and insects, is good for food and should be eaten. It should be understood in the sense of ‘every creature of God created for food is good and is not to be refused since it has been set apart (or “sanctified”) by the word as clean for human consumption.’

In which part of God’s Word, the Holy Bible, does the LORD set apart or identify those foods that should be eaten by His people “who believe and know the truth”? The answer is Genesis 7 and Lev. 11 (repeated in Deut. 14).

For those who would stretch the phrase “every creature” to mean the right to eat all things, whether divinely declared clean or unclean, it should not be out of place to start preaching to dogs, cats and mice since Mark 16:15 also commands us to “preach the gospel to every creature” (see Col. 1:23). But here, the reference clearly is to mankind. In other words, preach the gospel to every human being.

In the same way, 1 Tim. 4 says every creature created to serve as food for man is good (Gen. 1:31), since what God does not refer to as food He does not recognize as food!

So 1 Tim. 4 in no way ‘revokes’ or abolishes God’s law of clean and unclean. It rather reinforces it in a timely warning against an end-time heresy that will forbid the eating of God-sanctified meats.

Now, how has 1 Timothy 4 found fulfilment in this end-time of terrible apostasy?

It’s a twin heresy. The same apostates who would forbid marriage would also forbid the eating of meats ordained for food by God. All evidence points unmistakably to the Roman Catholic Church. The Catholic system not only imposes celibacy on its priests but also forbids members from eating the fresh meats of even clean animals on Fridays and during Lent. Christian author John F. Walvood comments on 1st Timothy 4:

Of special interest is the prophecy that in the end of the age there will be prohibition of marriage and requirement to abstain from certain foods. It is evident in the Roman Catholic Church today that priests are forbidden to marry on the ground that the single estate is more holy than the married estate, something which is not taught in the word of God.... [See I Tim. 3:2].

Another obvious factor is the [Catholic] religious custom to abstain from meats on Friday and to refrain from certain foods during Lent. This again is a man-made invention and certainly not taught in the word of God (John F. Walvood, *The Church in Prophecy*, pp. 54-555, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1964).

But the text also hints at an incipient heresy Paul sought to curb at the time of writing his prophetic message of warning. The hint is found in verses 6 to 8:

⁶ If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.

⁷ But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.

⁸ For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

A heresy that was rising at the time was a form of *Gnosticism* (a movement which laid claim to secret divine knowledge) which taught asceticism (the practice of denying oneself all physical

comfort or pleasure). Based on the belief that all matter and pleasure were evil, this brand of Gnosticism emphasized celibacy and abstinence from nourishing food.

But the apostle Paul warned that such doctrine was not from God but from demons. True nourishment and overall goodness (in “the life that now is, and of that which is to come”) was in the unadulterated doctrine which placed little value on physical exertions or dieting. To the apostle, the Gnostics’ touted regimen of celibacy, enforced vegetarianism and strenuous bodily exercises were “profane and old wives’ fables”! And the Spirit spoke “expressly” to him that “in the latter times” this teaching would be institutionalized by men whose conscience would be anaesthetized to all truth. Yes, even in his day, “the mystery of iniquity” was at work, but then it would be most pronounced in the very last days (2 Thess. 2:7; Acts 20:29-30).

God’s truth endures to all generations. What He has sanctified by His Word as good and clean for food should not be called evil. It should rather be received with the prayer of thanks. This is the thrust of 1 Tim. 4:1-5.

Colossians 2: The Principles of Men versus Christ, the Source of True Wisdom

The whole of Colossians chapter two discusses the subject of worldly wisdom versus true wisdom found in Christ, the Incarnate God, in which is embedded a warning message not to be deceived by the former. Thus in verses 3 and 4 Paul describes Christ as the One “In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words”.

Making a call to press on in the truth that is in Jesus, the Apostle Paul says in verses 6-10:

⁶ As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him:

⁷ Rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

⁸ Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

⁹ For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

¹⁰ And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power:

This then is the heart of the matter: Don’t be swayed from continuing in Christ by worldly philosophy and the traditions of men. The law of God is not at issue here, but what carnal men will have believers do in place of the truth taught in Christ which gives “complete” knowledge of salvation.

Therefore Col. 2:16 is not about the abolition of God’s food law reaffirmed in the New Testament by the Apostles because “it seemed good to the Holy Ghost” to do so. The text reads:

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days.

The scripture here does not speak of isolated items but of a connected whole—the religious feasts of the Hebrew calendar in which meat offerings and drink offerings were made to God (Lev. 23:37; Neh. 10:33; Ez. 45:17) to foreshadow the ministry and great sacrifice of Christ Jesus, our Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7). These are to be reckoned as part of the abolished carnal ordinances of the Old Testament Levitical system “Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation (Heb. 9:10).

The feasts were and are simply “a shadow of things to come; but the body [substance/reality] is of Christ” (Col. 2:17). Keeping the feasts is therefore not binding on the Christian.

Nevertheless, some commentators see in the neutral tone of the apostle Paul’s statement—“Let no one judge you” or call in question—the freedom to decide whether or not to keep the feasts.

Whatever way one looks at it, the bottom line is that Paul impressed on the Colossian brethren the utmost importance of walking in Christ in obedience to God’s commandments in which Jesus Himself walked (1 John 2:6). In this connection, the carnal rituals and ceremonies of the Levitical Priesthood which were “imposed until the time of reformation” in the N.T. dispensation of spiritual worship were not to be continued now that Christ, Whom they foreshadowed, has come.

In Col. 2:16, reference is not to the moral law of God, which includes the seventh-day Sabbath; neither is it to His laws of holiness such as the law of clean and unclean. The *Jamieson Fausset & Brown’s Commentary* in its entry on “the sabbath days” in the text observes:

The sabbath — Omit “THE,” which is not in the *Greek* (compare *Note*, see on [Gal 4:10](#)). “SABBATHS” (not “the sabbaths”) of the day of atonement and feast of tabernacles have come to an end with the Jewish [i.e. O.T. carnal] services to which they belonged ([Lev 23:32](#), [Lev 23:37-39](#)). The weekly sabbath rests on a more permanent foundation, having been instituted in Paradise to commemorate the completion of creation in six days. [Lev 23:38](#) expressly distinguished “the sabbath of the Lord” from the other [yearly] sabbaths. A *positive* precept is *right because it is commanded*, and ceases to be obligatory when abrogated; a moral precept is commanded eternally, because it is eternally right. If we could keep a perpetual sabbath, as we shall hereafter, the positive precept of the sabbath, one in each week, would not be needed. [Heb 4:9](#), “rests,” *Greek*, “keeping of sabbath” ([Isa 66:23](#)). But we cannot, since even Adam, in innocence, needed one amidst his earthly employments; therefore the sabbath is still needed and is therefore still linked with the other nine commandments, as obligatory ... (p. 1322. Emphasis mine).

But there was yet another side to the problem Paul addresses in Col. 2, if not in the entire Epistle to the Colossians: The Gnostic heresy of self-imposed asceticism and worship of angels to the neglect of Christ, “the Head, from whom all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God” (vv. 18-19).

In verse 23, Paul calls such worship self-imposed (or “will”) worship based on a false humility that punishing the body had the spiritual virtue of “restraining sensual indulgence” (v. 23 NIV), but it was to no avail. Yet this was the reason for the human commandments and doctrines that said, “Touch not, taste not, handle not” nourishing food, etc, in a similar way to 1 Tim. 4. Their instructors were the supposedly deified angels they worshipped, not Christ, the Lord of all. And they could not be holy angels if the Colossians were really in communion with any astral spirits. The holy angels of God, as obedient servants of God who keep His commandments, do not demand worship (Ps. 103:20; Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9). Yet, like their chief (Satan), the fallen angels do for which God will punish them among other lawless acts on judgment day (Isa. 24:21; 1 Cor. 6:3; Jude 1:6).

Apart from the influence of fallen angels, there is further possibility that Paul was referring to pagan meat regulations such as obtained in Corinth. Steven M. Collins writes in his article “The Bible Diet: Which Foods were Created to be Eaten by Man?”:

Whatever Paul was referring in his comment [in Col. 2:20-22] “do not eat that”, he was not referring to the divine laws of Leviticus and Deuteronomy 14. Paul was arguing against “principles of this world” and “commandments and doctrines” which were “merely human”. Such human meat regulations could have been a secular rule in Colossae (a Gentile city with pagan gods and temples) that no meat be eaten unless it was first sacrificed to idols. Paul made it clear that he was discussing a human meat regulation known to his readers in Colossae, not the divine meat laws of the scriptures (p. 3).

The message of Colossians chapter 2 could not be plainer: Do not combine faith in Christ with human commandments and doctrines.

“None of these Diseases”

Good health is rooted in obedience to God’s commandments. In this connection, God’s food law is also a health law. Obedience to it ensures both our spiritual and physical health which is God’s overall will for us:

3 John 1:2

Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

1 Thess. 5:23

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God seeks our total wellbeing so He designed His commandments and invested them with His goodness to ensure just that:

○ that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever! (Deut. 5:29).

In Proverbs 3, He says to us:

- ¹ My son, forget not My law; but let thine heart keep My commandments:
- ² For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.

Good health is not gained by happenstance; neither can it be de-coupled from the good laws of the Creator meant for our wellbeing. Scripture affirms a clear correlation between obedience and long life resulting from good health. God's laws in whatever shape or form are meant for our good. The apostle Peter states the same truth, only with a different emphasis:

- ¹⁰... he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:
- ¹¹ Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.
- ¹² For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil (1 Pet. 3:10-12).

The laws of God have a bearing on our physical health and hence our longevity (Prov. 3:5-8). This was the key to good health Yahweh revealed to the children of Israel soon after He redeemed them from the land of Egypt. His commandments have the additional benefit of acting as a barrier against diseases:

And [Yah] said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee (Ex. 15:26).

The LORD is our healer who heals us when we fall sick (Ps. 107:20; 1 Pet. 2:24), but much more than that, He is our fail-proof EXPERT at preventing diseases! And it involves nothing more than obeying His voice and living in accordance with His will (John 5:14). His laws are a complete package of divine prescriptions for the wellbeing of the whole man (spirit, soul, and body). This is the context in which God's law of clean and unclean should be seen. It's for our WHOLENESS in spirit, mind, and body.

Why is this so?

It's because God is our maker. He designed and created us, including every limb, vein and fibre of our being; therefore, He is amply qualified to teach us what is good or not good for our system. The Bible is the manual He has given to us to guide us to both spiritual and physical wellness.

An examination of the physical characteristics of both the clean and unclean animal categories, including the mechanics of their digestive systems, easily proves this.

Clean Animals Filter out Germs and Harmful Bacteria

Clean mammals are identified as having split hooves in addition to being ruminants or cud chewers. What are the health implications of these unique characteristics?

The hooves protect the clean animals from cuts and injury which serve as openings for germs, parasites and disease into the body. This makes clean mammals comparatively freer from diseases and parasites than animals without hooves.

Cud chewing is an additional merit. Ruminants are by nature neither predatory nor carnivorous (meat eaters). As herbivores (plant eaters), they derive all their nutrition from plant sources which are purer and more nutritious. But the greater blessing lies in how their digestive systems work to break down the food. Ruminants don't chew or swallow their food whole at one go. They subject their food to an intricate process of filtration in their digestive systems which have four chambers.

A miracle is on in the digestive tract!

When the ruminant, be it a sheep or goat, chews and swallows the fodder, the food is first stored in the first chamber, the rumen, where it softens. Then after some time, this softened material, called the cud, is brought back into the mouth (regurgitated) and chewed again and again to further break down its cellulose content which is otherwise not easily digestible. From the first chamber, the chewed cud passes through the second (the reticulum), then the third (omasum), and fourth (obomasum) chambers of the stomach where it is further digested with the help of various essential microorganisms present in the stomach. Finally, enzymes and hydrochloric acids are secreted during the last stage of the digestive process in the last chamber, and the digestion is finished. It's estimated that, on average, most cattle spend up to ten hours each day chewing their cud.

The outcome of the filtration process through the four-chamber stomach is that the plants these animals consume are thoroughly refined, as a result of the increased opportunity for more bacterial breakdown in the four-chamber stomach.

None of the above is true of unclean predatory animals. Plants are not their fare. Predatory animals feed on fat and blood as well as diseased animals and carrion (the carcasses of dead and decaying beasts). Their bodies are a storehouse of toxins and impurities, both from the food they eat and the cuts on their germ-infested hoof-less legs. The difference in the effects on man of the consumption of the flesh of the clean cud-chewing split-hoofed animals and the unclean predatory types is far-reaching:

In the process of chewing the cud, most of the poisonous properties of plants eaten by ruminants are passed off by the salivary glands. This leaves little chance for toxins to affect the muscle tissue. Since vegetation constitutes the main building block of their flesh, their flesh is in an ideal state for human consumption. Their meat is easily digested in our stomachs. Moreover, it has little or no toxins, but contains more of the nutritious juices that are beneficial to the body. Such meat is certainly more advantageous for humans to consume. It fits in more with our own biological system.

Animals that do not chew the cud, on the other hand, digest their diet of fat, blood and decaying flesh much less perfectly. The result is that their flesh contains more toxins and impurities. The eater is slowing poisoning himself:

When one eats the flesh of unclean animals, the meat digests in three hours [because it's mostly composed of the decayed or rotten matter they fed on], compared to 18 hours for clean meats. The hog [pig] digests its slop in three and one-half hours, whereas a cow takes 24 hours to send its food through two digestive processes. Special enzymes and bacteria in the stomachs of ruminants help them break down plant matter into food, without absorbing poisons. In contrast, there are over 42 diseases and parasites humans can get from eating swine.

Hemenway [a writer/researcher] lists numerous diseases which can be transmitted to humans from unclean animals: from the hog: erysipeloid infection, taeniasis, toxoplasmosis, sparganosis, pork tapeworm cysticercosis, salmonellosis; from the rabbit and squirrel: tularemia infection, California encephalitis, bubonic plague (black death, also transmitted by rats); from squirrels: rat bite fever, Lassa fever, louping ill, Lyme disease, meliodosis. While you can catch some diseases and parasites from even clean animals, the severity and quantity of such dangers are significantly less. Even milk from unclean animals is different than milk from clean animals. The enzyme rennin in clean animals' fourth stomach is what coagulates and turns clean animal milk into cheese (Richard Nickels, *Biblical Health and Healing*, p.32).

What qualifies as food for man? The clean animals set apart by the Word of God for His holy people or the unclean animals forbidden to be eaten? The characteristics of clean animals speak for themselves: they are a better, healthier choice. And they don't defile the soul.

The same goes for their poultry counterparts.

Clean Birds are Healthier

Apart from the six characteristics of clean birds listed elsewhere in this booklet, clean birds also possess digestive systems similar in function to those of ruminants. The *crop* functions essentially as the first chamber of a three-chamber stomach, followed by an intestinal '*connector*' between it and the gizzard, which qualifies as the second chamber, and finally the *gizzard* where the food is ground up before digestion! During brooding, the crop also generates a milk-like substance which is regurgitated for the young, similar to cud chewing by clean ruminants.

The dietary and other characteristics of unclean birds are far disagreeable:

... unclean birds, such as vultures, owls, eagles, hawks and seagulls, are generally birds of prey (carnivorous), and often feed on carrion (dead or decaying flesh, including fat and blood). On the other hand, clean birds are predominantly vegetarian, eating leaves, nuts, seeds and fruits. This means that clean birds have less disease and fewer parasites. Owls eat rats and other disease-carrying rodents. Eagles eat dead animals. Vampire bats drink blood and bats, in general, can carry rabies (ibid. p. 32).

Again, clean birds serve man well as a source of healthful, nourishing food. The unclean birds, on the other hand, are scavengers, who rid the environment of rotten matter! They are not meant for the dining table.

Clean Fish are Insulated from Infections in a Sea of Hazards!

God's word defines clean fish as those with both scales and fins. Apart from their implications for holy living, what health significance do they have?

A core function of scales is to protect the fish from cuts, predators and parasites. But that's not all. Scales also reflect light, repelling parasites like leeches which shun light. The scales are basically the fish's coat of armour, so to speak.

What about fins?

They provide a further layer of protection for clean fish:

Fins help clean fish to maneuver so as to keep from hookworms, and dislodge any that have attempted to attach themselves to them in spite of the protective scales. Clean fish have gill covers called opercula, which again provide protection from worms, bacteria, and other parasites. [Unclean] *Chondrichthyes* fish, whose bones are made of softer cartilage rather than hard bone, have a gill which slits open directly to the outside environment. *Osteichthyes* (bony fish, mostly clean ones) have a different jaw structure than unclean fish, and a lengthened, folded small intestine, *Chondrichthyes* have only a spiral valve (ibid. pp. 32-33).

Clean fish are well protected in a sea of hazards! Not so with unclean fish. They are the proud scavengers of the sea:

As a general rule, clean fish are not scavengers. Herring and sardines eat plankton; ... mackerel eat other fish; cod eat mollusks; But shellfish eat dead and decayed plants and animals and waste from sewers, garbage and pollution, and are scavengers living at the bottom of the ocean. Not surprisingly, the meat of shellfish digests in a period of three hours as opposed to 18 for clean fish. Most people know that shellfish doesn't keep like other meats, but is very perishable and spoils quickly without refrigeration (ibid. p. 33).

Now, what are the health hazards of eating unclean fish?

... catfish are a principal source of *erysipelas*, a feverish inflammation of the skin and mucous membranes, often affecting the heart, seriously infecting the bloodstream, and causing various forms of arthritis. Some [unclean] fish, such as swordfish, may contain nerve toxins (referring to a book by Raymond and Dorothy Moore *Home Made Health*, p. 74; ibid. p. 32).

Because shellfish are so susceptible to toxins (poisons) from parasites and other bacteria due to the filth they feed on, they are never short of deadly infections. Once consumed, they strike almost immediately:

Symptoms of shellfish poisoning appear in a few minutes, and include nausea, light-headedness, vomiting, and tingling or numbness around the mouth, followed by paralysis of the extremities [the hands and feet], and possibly, respiratory paralysis. "Cooking is not preventive, boiling does not destroy the poison", says M. Rosenau in *Preventive Medicine and Hygiene*, page 826 (ibid. p. 33).

One such heat-resistant infection is paralytic shellfish poisoning disease. It cannot be neutralized by cooking. Yet it can be passed on to people, leading to death through respiratory failure.

The Creator really knows what is good for man. But His good laws have largely been rejected by man, including the wise of this world. Therefore, "what wisdom is in them?" (Jer. 8:9). They have dismissed out of hand His law of clean and unclean so they might eat dung-infested shellfish as a delicacy!

Unclean Insects are Disease Carriers

Clean insects follow the way of clean mammals and clean fish: they have clean eating habits and properly digest their food:

Most orthoptera (an order of insects including grasshoppers and crickets) are vegetarians. Grasshoppers, according to Hemenway, have a crop, gizzard, gastric caeca (intestines) and a stomach, in that order, from front to back. Like clean animals, grasshoppers chew their food with two powerful grinding jaws called mandibles (ibid. pp. 33-34).

Unclean insects, in a similar way to their unclean animal and fish counterparts, are another set of scavengers:

Unclean insects are generally scavengers, omnivores [eating both plants and meat] and occasionally predators. They bite and suck instead of chew [sic] thoroughly like the grasshopper. Even though bees are unclean, their honey is fit to eat, since it is converted pollen from flowers, and not actually from the bees themselves.

Many unclean “creeping things” are notorious disease carriers. Hemenway notes that *mosquitoes* transmit malaria, yellow fever, and other disease. *Flies* transmit tularemia, ticks can transmit germs of Rocky Mountain spotted fever, and *rats* host fleas which carry Bubonic plague, and can transmit numerous diseases and parasites (ibid. p. 34).

Again, the Almighty is wholly justified in declaring the clean insects He named as constituting part of the holy food for His holy people. He is the fount of all truth: “For the word of the LORD is right; and all His works are done in truth” (Ps 33:4).

Pig, the King of Filth

It’s the meat of choice for many and is used in preparing many popular ‘delicacies’. But in many respects, the unclean pig epitomizes all that is detestable, and unhealthful, and injurious in unclean animals.

The pig is tailor-made for waste disposal, and it is itself the disposal unit. A scavenger par excellence, the pig eats almost everything in its path—from the foul-smelling rotten carcasses of dead animals to rattlesnakes! Filth is its natural element, and every foul and detestable thing, including bodily wastes, is its delicacy.

The connection must be obvious: The flesh of swine is composed of what they eat. If so, it stands to reason that if human beings eat their flesh, their blood and their flesh will be corrupted by the impurities conveyed to them through the pork. These are animals which actually have running sores under their hooves. If you were to lift up the front hoof of a pig and apply a little pressure to the pig’s toes, you would see greenish matter oozing out from between the toes. The oozing artery is one of the small openings for the various filthy poisons the pig has ingested into its system; it’s an outlet to a sewer pipe that can be traced all through the animal’s body!

But as frequently happens, the oozing artery is blocked up and the poison is forced back into the pig’s body. When this happens, the pig will have very sore feet to the extent that it can hardly walk. Various parts of the body then develop greenish growths. The pig is near death but rather than being allowed to go ‘waste’, the ailing pig is quickly sent off to the market for slaughter before it dies on the farmer!

The eating of pork is proven to have produced scrofula, leprosy, and cancerous tumours. But this is only the tip of the iceberg. The swine is a transmitter of a large number of more dreaded diseases! And most is centred on a worm for which the pig is notorious:

The trichina worm is one of nineteen worms found in swine, not to mention lice on hogs or the various swine diseases such as rickets, thumps, mange, etc. The Trichina worm is deadly. In the March 1950 issue of *Reader's Digest*, Laird S. Goldsborough writes: "In the pork which we Americans eat, there too often lurk myriads of baffling and sinister parasites. They are minute spiral worms which scientists call *Trichinella Spiralis*. A single serving of infected pork, even a single mouthful, can kill or cripple, or condemn the victim to a lifetime of aches and pains" (*Health Yahweh's Way*, p. 10).

The general name for the disease which the pig-borne Trichina worm causes in man is *Trichinosis*, and it has no sure cure, "and no drug to stop it—even in 1992. Dr. Goldsborough's article went on to say: 'In the flesh of a pig, the trichinae are often so minute and so nearly transparent that, to find them, even with a microscope, is a task for expert scientific inspectors'" (ibid. p. 10).

The trichina worm is so elusive it tends to escape even the destructive effects of cooking. The booklet *Health Yahweh's Way* cites a laboratory research in an American University where "trichinae-laden swine flesh was heated to an unbelievably high temperature and then put under a microscope. To the amazement of the technicians, some worms were still alive and moving about" (p. 12).

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* confirms the treacherous nature of the Trichinae in pork when it states with almost an air of resignation: "There is no practical method for the large-scale detection of trichinous pork, and the surest safeguard remains the thorough cooking of pork" (*The New Encyclopedia Britannica* Micropaedia Volume 11, p. 920, 1994).

If even detecting it is a tricky business, how can you be sure the cooking has made conquest of it?

Yahweh knew what He was saying when He charged His holy people: "And the swine [family of boar, pig, hog and peccary], though he divide the hoof, and be clovenfooted, yet he cheweth not the cud; he is unclean to you. Of their flesh shall ye not eat, and their carcase shall ye not touch; they are unclean to you" (Lev. 11:7-8).

The health risks associated with the eating of unclean meats in violation of divine law proves Prov. 29:6 true: "In the transgression of an evil man there is a snare: but the righteous doth sing and rejoice".

In Ps 69:22, David prayed inviting God’s judgment on the wicked while at the table: “Let their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap”.

How on earth could a person sit down to a meal he has prepared himself or had it prepared for him and still be ensnared by it if eating the meal is not a transgression?

In a similar vein, the wise preacher noted in Prov. 5:21-23:

²¹For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and He pondereth all his goings.

²² His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.

²³ He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.

Common sense tells us that the originator or maker of a thing knows much more than the thing he produced with his imagination or hands. Yet when it comes to the dietary law given to man by God for his own good, many presume to know more than the Maker. They live to please their palates, not to keep their souls pure and their health sound. Thus on a daily basis they ensnare their own souls and health at the table by the abominable food they eat. It’s a snare because it’s an unexpected danger—they least expect the unclean food they have spent good money to buy or prepare to harm them one way or another but that’s exactly what it does! Their eyes are closed (“darkened”) to the spiritual and physical dangers of eating what God says is *NOT* food, as David powerfully articulates in prayer:

⁹ And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block, and a recompence unto them:

¹⁰ Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back always (Rom. 11:9-10).

They got caught in the snare and hurt their backs—“make their backs bend continually” (*NET Bible*).

Eating unclean things as food is not without dire consequences.

Fat and Blood Forbidden to be Eaten

Apart from the unclean animals expressly forbidden to be eaten, blood, either separately or together with flesh, should not be eaten. The same applies to animal fat. But beyond being an act of disobedience to God, are there health implications for eating blood or fat?

God bans the eating of blood explicitly in His word right from Genesis to the Acts of the Apostles:

Gen. 9:3-4

³ Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.

⁴ But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.

Lev. 7:26-27

²⁶ Moreover ye shall eat no manner of blood, whether it be of fowl or of beast, in any of your dwellings.

²⁷ Whatsoever soul it be that eateth any manner of blood, even that soul shall be cut off from his people.

Lev. 19:26

Ye shall not eat any thing with the blood: neither shall ye use enchantment, nor observe times.

Deut. 12:23-25

²³ Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh.

²⁴ Thou shalt not eat it; thou shalt pour it upon the earth as water.

²⁵ Thou shalt not eat it; that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the LORD.

Acts 15:28-29

²⁸... it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;

²⁹ That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.

It “seemed good to the Holy Spirit” to reaffirm the divine command to abstain from blood under the New Covenant because to do so is to “do that which is right in the sight of the LORD”—then and now!

Blood is in a unique class of its own and God has made it crystal clear that it should never be eaten:

Lev. 17:10-15

¹⁰ And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people.

¹¹ For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.

¹² Therefore I said unto the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood.

¹³ And whatsoever man there be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, which hunteth and catcheth any beast or fowl that may be eaten; he shall even pour out the blood thereof, and cover it with dust.

¹⁴ For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off.

¹⁵ And every soul that eateth that which died of itself, or that which was torn with beasts, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger, he shall both wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even: then shall he be clean.

Blood is life or, as the LORD puts it, “the life of the flesh is in the blood”. And it should not be eaten. Or else Yah will “set His face against that soul”. There are two ways in which blood may be eaten. The first is where the blood is prepared as food, especially in the form of a pudding, and then eaten. The second way is rather indirect: It’s where the blood of the animal is not well drained out—because it was strangled to death or the throat was not properly slit or it died of itself—resulting in eating “the flesh with the life [blood] thereof”. To consume blood either directly or together with the flesh is to sin against God:

I Sam 14:32-34

³² And the people flew upon the spoil, and took sheep, and oxen, and calves, and slew them on the ground: and the people did eat them with the blood.

³³ Then they told Saul, saying, Behold, **THE PEOPLE SIN AGAINST THE LORD, IN THAT THEY EAT WITH THE BLOOD.** And he said, Ye have transgressed: roll a great stone unto me this day.

³⁴ And Saul said, Disperse yourselves among the people, and say unto them, Bring me hither every man his ox, and every man his sheep, and slay them here, and eat; and sin not against the LORD in eating with the blood. And all the people brought every man his ox with him that night, and slew them there.

A sin against God, like the eating of unclean meats, is a sin against the soul. What about one’s health and one’s body?

As one of the functions of blood is to transport bodily wastes to the excretory ducts in the body, an animal’s blood unavoidably contains waste products. Uric acid in the blood is excreted as urine. What this means is that when a person ingests the blood of a diseased animal, he puts himself in danger of contracting the infectious disease. All this is avoided, however, when the blood is well drained because the animal was properly slaughtered to allow the blood to flow or it didn’t die of itself or wasn’t torn by beasts. The modern practice of stunning an animal with an electric shock before slaughter, or electrocuting it outright, is in direct breach of the divine command to make sure that the blood is drained out. Eating such meat is eating “flesh with the life [blood] thereof”. It’s hazardous to both health and soul:

The harmful presence of blood in killed meat has of recent years been realized fully by modern scientists. It has been found that in meat insufficiently bled, putrefaction sets in rapidly, even though frozen; whereas meat which has been adequately bled will keep for long periods.... Science also shows that blood congeals in flesh to such an extent after death that no amount of

boiling can properly remove it (Culled from *Today, Tomorrow and the Great Beyond* by John S. Fox in *Biblical Health and Healing*, p. 31).

.... There may even be a spiritual danger from drinking blood, as this may open up one to demonic forces. The *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, volume 2, page 716, mentions that “when the fresh blood of the victim is drunk The result is frequently seen in usual phenomena of demon possession” (ibid. p. 31).

What about fat?

God is likewise explicit in its prohibition:

²² And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

²³ Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Ye shall eat no manner of fat, of ox, or of sheep, or of goat.

²⁴ And the fat of the beast that dieth of itself, and the fat of that which is torn with beasts, may be used in any other use: but ye shall in no wise eat of it.

²⁵ For whosoever eateth the fat of the beast, of which men offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD, even the soul that eateth it shall be cut off from his people (Lev. 7:22-25).

“All the fat is the LORD’s”:

¹⁶ And the priest shall burn them upon the altar: it is the food of the offering made by fire for a sweet savour: all the fat is the LORD’s.

¹⁷ It shall be a perpetual statute for your generations throughout all your dwellings, that ye eat neither fat nor blood (Lev. 3:16-17).

All the fat of the sacrificial animal was to be burnt on the altar to the LORD or, in the case of a clean animal killed for its meat, to be put to any other use except to eat it. For instance, fat could be used in soap making. Eating fat carries a health risk many blithely choose to ignore. *Biblical Health and Healing* quotes *Prevention* magazine, February 1980, page 134:

In the case of heart disease, blame does not fall equally on all fats. Chemically, the fats in food come in several varieties. Saturated fats ... are most commonly found in meats. Polyunsaturated fats ... are found more abundantly in vegetables, and in fish and fowl. A large body of research indicates that saturated fats are the ones to watch, in keeping guard against heart disease. Where the diet is rich in these animal fats, heart disease is generally a problem.

Why?

Eating saturated animal fats causes a buildup of cholesterol in human arteries and veins, in turn causing atherosclerosis, or hardening of the arteries (ibid. p. 31).

Cardiovascular diseases are the usual outcome. The Eternal can never be wrong. Neither should we consider Him petty in His demands. It’s not good to eat fat.

Alcohol Takes Away Understanding

When it comes to alcohol, some take the view that God’s word does not explicitly forbid it. But is this really the case?

The view God’s Word takes is that the Spirit and wine are not bedfellows:

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18).

It’s a lifestyle choice between two irreconcilable activities—being filled with the Spirit and being drunk with wine do not belong together. The effects of each are as far apart as light is from darkness: “The fruit of the Spirit is ... temperance [self-control]” (Gal. 5:22-23), but wine excites debauchery!

As kings and priests of God (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6), it’s not for us to drink wine or strong drink as King Lemuel’s mother counseled her son in Prov. 31:1-7:

- ¹ The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him.
- ² What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows?
- ³ Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings.
- ⁴ It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink:
- ⁵ Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.
- ⁶ Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts.
- ⁷ Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.

The king’s mother speaks in alarm: “What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows?” Womanizing? Wine drinking? Step back! They are no-go areas. Both are beneath kings and princes. They ruin kings and reduce their judicial functions to a farce.

Strong drink is for the perishing; the emotional wreck wallowing in self-pity and hopelessness. It’s such that believes solace is to be found in the bottle. It’s not for people of worth and of value to God and to society to take to the bottle. It’s people who have nothing to offer society and therefore in no position to harm society by their actions or inactions that may be excused if they take to drinking. But for kings and priests, alcohol is to be avoided.

After Nadab and Abihu, the two eldest priest-sons of Aaron, were struck dead by the LORD for offering “strange fire” before Him (Lev. 10:1-3)—apparently because they were drunk—the LORD expressly banned His priests from drinking alcohol lest it interfered with their priestly mandate and sense of judgment in the discharge of their duties:

- ⁸ And the LORD spake unto Aaron, saying,

⁹ Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations:

¹⁰ And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean;

¹¹ And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses (Lev. 10:8-11).

The priesthood and the bottle do not go together. The latter only serves to throw the sacred responsibilities of priests into disarray. Thus just as God forbade His ministers from drinking alcohol in the Old Testament, so He forbids them today:

1 Tim. 3:2-3

² A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

³ Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous.

Titus 1:7

For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre.

In a sober mood from observing God's teetotal rule, God's holy word is safe in the hands of the priest and so is the congregation to whom the Word is taught and expounded as it is—in truth. But it's a complete disaster if the priest ministers under the influence of alcohol. He's completely out of order:

Isa. 28:7-8

⁷ But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.

⁸ For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean (see also Isa. 56:10-12).

If you doubt the evil potency of alcohol to disorientate a man of God who should ordinarily "be filled with the Spirit", just consider the mess the Patriarch (and prophet) Noah made of himself when he got himself drunk! He stripped and lay naked in his tent (Gen. 9:20-21)!

The lack of sobriety associated with alcohol is one strong reason why wine is not suitable for the Lord's Supper apart from inadequately representing the pure blood of Christ. The correct drink is the unfermented "fruit of the vine" (not wine) freshly squeezed and served (Matt. 26:26-29; cp Rev. 19:7-9).

New Testament king-priests should not use wine "wherein is excess" to represent the holy blood of Yeshua, "our Passover Lamb sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7-8). "Strong drink is for the

perishing”—who can afford to misbehave. Don’t be taken in by the alluring look of the wine; it belies the world of trouble it holds in store for the drinker:

Prov. 23:29-35

²⁹ Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes?

³⁰ Those who tarry long over wine; those who go to try mixed wine.

³¹ Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly.

³² In the end it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder.

³³ Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart utter perverse things.

³⁴ You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast.

³⁵ "They struck me," you will say, "but I was not hurt; they beat me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake? I must have another drink" (ESV).

Wine stupefies and dulls the senses and induces funny feelings. As Hosea 4:11 puts it, it takes away understanding from men: “whoredom, wine, and new wine, which take away the understanding” (ESV; see also Prov. 20:1). In the extreme, wine turns a person into an object of scorn and laughter and even physical harassment. And why not? After all, in one instant, the stagger and sway of the drunk, feels like the undulations of a ship sailing across the seas, while in another it feels as though he is floating in the air (levitating) like a fluttering flag tied to a mast! Thoughts are blurred and speech is gibberish. Yet always to the bottle he returns. He is under the spell of the intoxicating wine—it’s destructive but addictive!

Scripture paints a dramatic but accurate picture of the kaleidoscope of illusory feelings which the drunk experiences as the alcohol works on him. Wine is not for God’s anointed kings and priests. The Lord God of holiness, in fact, condemns those who have made it their business to readily make the ‘stuff’ available to people:

Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness! (Hab. 2:15).

The giver knows the result will not be decent—there will be misbehaviour, silly talk and jeering—but that’s the very motivation for giving out the alcoholic drink. It’s an open secret that, more than anyone else, producers of strong drink know the harmful and stupefying effects of alcohol on drinkers and yet zealously promote it only to attach warning labels to it against excessive drinking or underage drinking. For deliberately selling or giving out what they know to be harmful God says “woe” to them. They know it’s not good for people to drink alcohol but still sell it to them because of the profit or other benefit they will gain; they do what they know to be evil and therefore are guilty of sin (James 4:17).

Paul’s recommendation to Timothy to “use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake” (1 Tim. 5:23) is no excuse to use wine as a regular drink! He who wrote to Timothy in the same *First Epistle to Timothy* not to be fond of wine as an overseer of God’s church and who in Eph. 5:18 set the

Spirit in antithesis to wine—which he denounced as a source of “excesses”—would not turn around to urge him to drink alcohol. He only advised him to “use a little wine” as some sort of remedy for his stomachache. So unless you have a stomach ailment of Timothy’s type, it’s not a blanket recommendation for just everyone. In that case, if a qualified doctor prescribes it or you find it in your prescribed drug, you may use just a **little** wine. But even here, God’s healing power is always available and more potent (Jam. 5:14-15).

What of the miracle of wine Jesus performed at the wedding?

As the steward or “ruler of the feast” commented after tasting it, the wine the Lord miraculously produced from jars of water was “good wine” setting it apart from the earlier wine served which wasn’t as good. The difference was in the quality, and that difference in quality was not only in taste but essentially in fermentation levels. That is to say, the wine Jesus produced *instantly* though tasted and looked like grape juice (from which regular wine was made) it was milder; it hadn’t undergone the process of fermentation (which takes time) to render it ‘strong’ or alcoholic! This is the context in which the qualifying adjective “good” should be understood. In short, the miracle wine Jesus made at the Cana wedding could be likened to a soft drink. *Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* explains more:

The good wine - This shows that this had all the qualities of real wine. We should not be deceived by the phrase “good wine.” We often use the phrase to denote that it is good in proportion to its strength and its power to intoxicate; but no such sense is to be attached to the word here. Pliny, Plutarch, and Horace describe wine as “good,” or mention that as “the best wine,” which was harmless or “innocent” - poculovini “innocentis.” The most useful wine - “utilissimum vinum” - was that which had little strength; and the most wholesome wine - “saluberrimum vinum” - was that which had not been adulterated by “the addition of anything to the ‘must’ or juice.” Pliny expressly says that a good wine was one that was destitute of spirit (lib. iv. c. 13). It should not be assumed, therefore, that the “good wine” was “stronger” than the other: it is rather to be presumed that it was milder.

The wine referred to here was doubtless such as was commonly drunk in Palestine. That was the pure juice of the grape. It was not brandied wine, nor drugged wine, nor wine compounded of various substances, such as we drink in this land. The common wine drunk in Palestine was that which was the simple juice of the grape. we use the word “wine” now to denote the kind of liquid which passes under that name in this country - always containing a considerable portion of alcohol not only the alcohol produced by fermentation, but alcohol “added” to keep it or make it stronger. But we have no right to take that sense of the word, and go with it to the interpretation of the Scriptures. We should endeavor to place ourselves in the exact circumstances of those times, ascertain precisely what idea the word would convey to those who used it then, and apply that sense to the word in the interpretation of the Bible; and there is not the slightest evidence that the word so used would have conveyed any idea but that of the pure juice of the grape, nor the slightest circumstance mentioned in this account that would not be fully met by such a supposition (e-Sword).

The wine Jesus made at Cana was void of the stupefying element of intoxication leading to debauchery. It was good to the taste and good in its effects on the drinker. And it's no surprise. Jesus wouldn't perform a miracle unless it brought "a good and perfect gift" (Jam. 1:17).

God's kings and priests are to be filled with the Spirit and not with wine "wherein is excess".

The only time Clean Food is Unfit to eat—when it becomes 'Common'

How does clean meat become "common"?

- When it's strangled to death or dies of itself or is torn to pieces becoming decayed or rotten in the process.
- When it's sacrificed to idols.

How to treat such otherwise clean meat – give or sell it to an unbeliever or throw it to dogs:

Deut. 14:21

Ye shall not eat of any thing that dieth of itself: thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is in thy gates, that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it unto an alien: for thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not see the a kid in his mother's milk.

Ex. 22:31

And ye shall be holy men unto Me: neither shall ye eat any flesh that is torn of beasts in the field; ye shall cast it to the dogs.

Note, the Bible rules out the eating of unclean meats by Holy people of God—and in fact does not recognize them as food at all—so the command not to eat the flesh of strangled beasts or of those torn by predators or sacrificed to idols are really injunctions about clean animals only. These are the conditions under which clean meats become defiled (common) and therefore unfit to eat. This is how Acts 15:20 should be understood and interpreted just like Ezek. 4:14, Rev. 2:14 & 20, and Ez. 44:31. Thus in Acts 15:20, the divine command to abstain "from things strangled" is not abstinence from the flesh of just any animal (including the unclean) that had been killed by strangling but from the flesh of a CLEAN animal which was not slaughtered the right way but was strangled to death, preventing the blood from being drained out. When a clean animal is slaughtered this way, it becomes defiled and should not be eaten (Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:13-15; Deut. 12:23). Another way clean meat can be defiled is through the "pollutions of idols" when it is offered to an idol before being brought to the market to be sold or given out to be eaten. The practical rule or '*halakah*' the apostle Paul lays down is that, if informed of it, "eat not". But if not, be free to eat, for "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof".

The key text of Deuteronomy 14:21 coming at the end of the list of clean (or God-sanctioned) meats and unclean (or God-forbidden) meats is the interpretative background for all the

aforementioned scriptures; it forms their bedrock. Clean animals strangled without the blood drained out, sacrificed to idols or polluted in idolatrous worship through association with unclean spirits is forbidden to be eaten.

God's Holy Spirit-filled, holy people are not to eat such otherwise clean meats in addition to the plainly proscribed unclean beasts (Judges 3:7, 14; 2 Cor. 6:15-17, Ez. 4:14). Torn, smelly, decaying flesh, including fish, must also not be eaten. First, God rules it as unfit for food (Ez. 44:31); second, it's unhygienic and unhealthful.

Unclean animals, by contrast, are never fit for consumption, no matter their mode of death or slaughter or preparation for 'food'. They are inherently unclean and declared so by God Almighty, the Holy Creator!

Nicotine Intake and the Proper Care of our Bodies

As believers, everything we do should bring glory to God. It's for this reason that scripture calls on us to see our bodies as an instrument of glory to God:

For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's (I Cor. 6:20).

Glorifying God in our bodies is a principle to apply in our saintly attitude towards food products which contain nicotine, caffeine or similar addictive substances. These include not only tobacco, the notorious heart-wrecker, but also tea, kola, and coffee. They have the "appearance of evil" as any research will show and therefore to be avoided (1 Thess. 5:22; 1 John 5:17; Jam. 4:17). Their "evil" is in their eventual effects on users. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* gives the following scary facts about nicotine:

Nicotine is the chief addictive ingredient in the tobacco used in cigarettes, cigars, and snuff. Nicotine is ... an addictive drug... and smokers characteristically display a strong tendency to relapse after having successfully stopped smoking for a time. When ingested in larger doses, nicotine is a highly toxic poison that causes vomiting and nausea, headaches, stomach pains, and, in severe cases, convulsions, paralysis, and death (*The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, Micropedia, Volume 8, Article "Nicotine", p. 693, 1994).

On caffeine, the authoritative encyclopedia says:

Caffeine is present in ground coffee in amounts ranging between 0.75 and 1.5 percent by weight. The average cup of coffee thus contains about 100 mg (0.003 ounce) of caffeine. The caffeine content of tea varies greatly depending on the strength of the tea, but it averages about 40 mg. There are also about 40 mg (0.0014 ounce) of caffeine in a 12-ounce glass of carbonated cola beverage.

Caffeine has a stimulating effect on the central nervous system, heart, blood vessels, and kidneys. It also acts as a mild diuretic [induces increased passing of urine]. Caffeine's potent stimulatory action makes it a valuable antidote to respiratory depression induced by drug overdose (e.g., from morphine or barbiturates). The positive effects that have been described in people who use caffeine include improved motor performance, decreased fatigue, enhanced sensory activity, and increased alertness. These positive effects may partly explain the compulsion of many adults to consume coffee or other caffeine-containing beverages as part of the morning ritual of awakening. However, caffeine intake may also produce in people such negative effects as irritability, nervousness or anxiety, jitteriness, headaches, and insomnia (ibid., Micropedia, Vol. 2, p. 720).

"Positive effects" set off against "negative effects". But for all the talk about the so-called "positive effects" of caffeine, the truth is that the caffeine only masked tiredness, causing the body, especially the heart, to overwork when it should rest. To cap it all, it's addictive too, and users over time become dependent on it. In the long term, the body does not stand to gain from the compulsive intake of caffeine just as is the case with tobacco.

The same applies to excessive intake of sugary foods. Sugar or honey is not bad in itself but too much of it is certainly not good for the body. Dieticians, nutritionists and medical doctors generally discourage the consumption of sweets in large amounts because of their adverse effects on health. So too does the word of God:

Prov. 24:13

My son, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste.

Prov. 25:16

Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it.

Prov. 25:27

It is not good to eat much honey: so for men to search their own glory is not glory.

The scriptural message is that honey is good to eat but in moderate amounts. It becomes bad when we gorge on it because we have a sweet tooth and are slaves to our palates!

The Pitfalls of Modern Packaging and Labeling

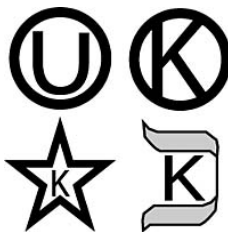
The clean animals we may eat and the unclean ones to avoid are clearly identified and/or named in the scriptures. If one wanted to obey God's food law and wanted clean meat to eat, he could buy a live sheep, or goat or turkey to prepare food with in total disregard of unclean animals like the pig, rabbit or the bat. Or he could buy such clean flesh (beef, mutton, turkey, etc) from the butcher's.

But what if he decides to buy processed canned meat from the grocery? How can he be sure that the can of meat labeled as beef or mutton or sardine is totally free from unclean additives and preservatives and therefore clean and wholesome for the believer to eat?

The hidden danger is in the labeling which may contain technical terminology unfamiliar to the average person for which reason the true nature of the product's contents will be concealed from him. An example is the substance "lard". When found listed among the contents of a food product, it may seem innocuous to the uninitiated, but it's actually melted pig fat used as seasoning for the meat of a clean animal, such as beef. Other by-products from pork include gelatin and the enzymes lipase and pepsin.

Worse yet, an additive may be listed by its chemical formula (e.g., E120). In such situations, what do you do?

Diligently read and seek to find out the true nature of the product. If unable to do this or still in doubt after such effort, buy an alternative whose contents are clear to you. Better yet, look for products with the following symbols—they are self-acclaimed *kosher* (Biblically clean) products:



KD or COR

Another helpful rule of thumb is to buy processed clean food products with Arabic writing on the can or wrapper. Such products are certainly FREE from additives derived from pork or alcohol or even from a clean animal which was "strangled" but not slaughtered to allow the blood to flow. The Moslems call them *Halal* foods and they are said not to contain *Haram* (unclean/forbidden) ingredients.

The watchword is, again, avoid "every appearance of evil" (1 Thess. 5:22) with a view to "cleans[ing] ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1 ESV).

Final Warning

God's law of clean and unclean has a minority following even among supposed Bible believers; all the rest of the world is seemingly dead set against it. But can the majority turn this truth on its head and in effect invalidate it?

We read in the Book of Job that what is unclean, more so declared so by God, cannot be undone, making it clean:

Who can bring a clean *thing* out of an unclean? No one! (Job 14:4 MKJV).

Yet ours is a generation that insists that what God has classified as unclean is clean, as though their word has inherent power and ability to make clean what the Almighty says is unclean. The problem is that they are obsessed with a sense of their own holiness and self-righteousness:

There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness (Prov. 30:12).

Their sense of holiness is a warped one rooted in self-delusion. They presume themselves to be "pure" yet they are not "washed from their filthiness". Followers of Christ they claim to be, but they are still not purified from their filthiness because, after they had been washed with the blood of Jesus, they declined to obey the "holy commandment" of God designed to keep them from "all filthiness of the flesh and spirit". In short, they are like the proverbial sow which after being washed returned to "her wallowing in the mire" (2 Pet. 2:19-22). They have rejected those aspects of the holy Word which teaches God's people holiness in *all* aspects of life, including the clean food to eat, claiming they were all nailed to the cross!

Yet it's exactly because of the blood of the cross that converted, blood-washed believers should not go back to or be controlled by the "former lusts" they indulged in, the "empty way of life" passed on to us as a family tradition. Now, the clarion call is that we should be holy since God who called us is holy (1 Pet. 1:14-20). In order not to leave us in doubt as to what this call to holiness entails, the Holy Spirit inspired the Apostle Peter not only to name the scope of the call but also its particular theological base in the Old Testament:

¹⁵ But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in **all** your conduct,

¹⁶ Since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." (ESV)

"Written" where?

Leviticus 11 where God instructs His children in the clean animals they may eat and the unclean ones forbidden to them:

⁴³ Ye shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creepeth, neither shall ye make yourselves unclean with them, that ye should be defiled thereby.

⁴⁴ For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

⁴⁵ For I am the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.

⁴⁶This is the law of the beasts, and of the fowl, and of every living creature that moveth in the waters, and of every creature that creepeth upon the earth:

⁴⁷ To make a difference between the unclean and the clean, and between the beast that may be eaten and the beast that may not be eaten.

The apostle did not quote from Lev. 11 at random. The Spirit of God moved him to quote this particular scripture (see 2 Pet. 1:20-21) to impress on our minds that abstinence from unclean meats as defined in Lev. 11 is the *reference point* for keeping holiness “in all our conduct”; it’s one clear example of how to maintain holiness in all aspects of our life, instead of continuing to indulge our “former lusts”, which included the unclean meats we lustfully devoured in “our ignorance” of Biblical truth. Since God made the call to be holy like Him in the context of a call to abstain from unclean meats, one cannot uphold or reaffirm this same call by ruling out or ignoring the original context in which God made the call. Abstinence from unclean food is at the heart of His call to holiness. Thus unless this basic criterion of holiness is met, we have failed in all points of holiness. As the commandment underpinning the whole call to holy living, God’s dietary law of clean and unclean is to be seen as the standard by which all holiness, in terms of not only moral behaviour but also general demeanour (1 Pet. 2:12), is to be measured.

But like how the present generation have failed in Yahweh’s Sabbath *test of obedience* (Ex. 16:27-29), so they have also failed in His *test of holiness* by insisting against God’s word that meats declared unclean by Him are no longer unclean!

It’s a generation which is “pure in their own eyes”, and their ministers teach to enforce their “holier-than-thou” attitude which rejects God’s law of clean and unclean as an unwarranted imposition. Yet they are not washed from their filthiness because they continue to eat abominations and “the broth of the abominable things” is in their cooking utensils. The LORD inveighs against them:

² I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts;

³ A people that provoketh Me to anger continually to My face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick;

⁴ Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine’s flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels;

⁵Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in My nose, a fire that burneth all the day.

⁶ Behold, it is written before Me: I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosom (Isa. 65:2-6).

Their ministers pander to their unholy desires, which ought to have been consigned to their past (aka “former lusts”), because they are, as well, fiercely opposed to God’s law of clean and unclean and make no attempt to teach or advocate it whatsoever:

Her priests have violated My law, and have profaned Mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from My sabbaths, and I am profaned among them (Ezek. 22:26).

It’s a blatant defiance of God and all He stands for by His supposed ministers, and they don’t bat an eyelid defying Him! But then, the prophet correctly addressed them—*her priests*, not God’s priests.

They combined open rebellion with dereliction (negligence) of duty. They did what they ought not to have done - violence to God’s law and desecration of His holy things – and neglected what they ought to have done – they failed to distinguish between the holy and the profane (common), and this showed in their teachings which equally failed to teach people the distinction between the unclean and the clean; and they totally disregarded God’s Sabbath, they held it in utter contempt! The result was that God was no longer honoured by the congregation; He was no longer an important part of their lives; they didn’t live by His standards. The Almighty had been reduced to a footnote in their lives, and they only honoured Him with their lips.

Is this not the current state of contemporary Christianity?

The “sound doctrine” is missing in action because both audience and preacher have itching ears –ears that itch for myths and fables, not the sound teachings of Christ based on righteousness and holiness (2 Tim. 4:1-4).

Don’t fall for the fallacy that Christ on the cross made all unclean animals clean by His blood. No scripture ever said that. The whole idea cheapens the precious blood of the Lamb of God. The Lord Jesus came to save sinners, not to make unclean animals clean. And even with people, it needs to be pointed out that the blood of Jesus does not automatically cleanse all men. People have to make a conscious choice to believe and to accept His sacrifice as part of a general return to God for them to be cleansed.

Revelation, the last book of the Bible, makes it plain that the Spirit of God and all the holy angels still consider the unclean animals and birds named and identified in the Old Testament scriptures as still unclean and detestable. Except that Babylon—apostate, paganized Christianity—disagrees with God and so harbours the very animals God calls unclean and disgusting:

¹ And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

² And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

³ For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

⁴ And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

⁵ For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities (Rev. 18:1-5).

The doom of Babylon is fast approaching, and all who desire life are being urged to “come out of her”. This spiritual Babylon, which is properly and quintessentially the ‘mother church’ situated on the Seven Hills of Rome (Rev. 17:9, 18), is scripturally called “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” (Rev. 17:5).

Her name communicates her characteristics:

First, she is a “mystery”; her true identity is hidden from the world. She puts on a façade of pristine holiness as the Holy Mother Church of all Christendom. But strip away this false image, and her religious system is rank idolatry in disguise!

Second, she is called “Babylon the Great” after historical Babylon because, like her, she is a centre of false worship, basically sun-worship, but on a grander, that is, worldwide (Rev. 17:1-2, 15, 18), scale. Hence “the Great”.

Third, Babylon the Great is a “mother”, and all her daughter churches have taken after her. They are equally “harlots” knee-deep in spiritual adultery (see Rev. 17:2; 18:2; 19:2).

Lastly, she is a principal source and purveyor of the “abominations” found on “the earth”, and she feeds her children with those abominations literally and figuratively (i.e. spiritually).

MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT and her anti-commandment, anti-Sabbath daughter-churches are allegorically referred to in Isaiah’s prophecy as “seven women” who attach themselves to “one man” but will neither be true wives nor allow their ‘husband’ to provide for their needs as expected of every responsible husband. They only seek the ‘Mrs.’ title to take away their shame; they will continue to eat what their hearts desire and wear their own clothes. We read in Isaiah 4:1:

And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.

The “one man” all the seven women eagerly seek as *a husband in name only* is the Lord Jesus Christ. Babylon the Great and her daughters show Him off to the world as their husband, and

yet have refused to assume His holy character (“apparel”) precisely because they have rejected His teachings (“bread”), preferring to formulate and follow their own human doctrines instead.

The true **wife** of Christ, whom He recognizes and who willingly and wholly submits to Him, is the Daughter of Zion, the true church. She is in the minority, but hers is the Kingdom:

Luke 12:32

Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

John 12:15

Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.

The identifying hallmark of the Daughter of Zion is the keeping of God's commandments:

Rev. 12:17

And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Rev. 14:12

Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

She is the only church that distinguishes between the clean and the unclean and teaches her children the same.

As New Testament priests of Zion, we must be careful not to defile ourselves with unclean meats (Ez. 44:31; 1 Pet 2:9; Lev. 11:43-44). We should therefore diligently consider whatever is set before us before we tuck into it; not all foods will serve us well (Prov. 23:1-3).

What does Christ Himself say in a post-resurrection, post-ascension message to His church on earth?

Foreknowing the false teaching of modern-day preachers that He did away with His law of food on the cross as well as nip in the bud such similar notion prevailing among some Gentile converts in the first century AD, Christ warned the church in Pergamum—applicable to His universal church down through the ages—against the eating of abominable food. In a stern rebuke, He thundered:

¹⁴ But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

¹⁵ So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

¹⁶ Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

¹⁷ He that hath an ear, LET HIM HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAITH UNTO THE CHURCHES; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it (Rev. 2:14-17).

The above scripture does not sound like Christ abolished God's law of clean and unclean or approves the eating of abominable food such as meats offered to idols. He says unless we repent and turn away from the eating of unclean food, He will fight us with the sword of His mouth (see Rev. 19:15). The consequences of disobeying God's word in the matter of unclean food are that scary! Christ Jesus, the only Law-giver "who is able to save and to destroy" (Jam. 4:12), will destroy all those who have broken His law of food in the last day (John 12:48).

In the Book of Revelation, His Word is plain that all those who work abomination, including the eating of unclean food, will not enter life but suffer in the fires of hell:

Rev 21:8

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

Rev 21:27

And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

The destruction of abomination eaters by Christ with fire actually fulfills a prophecy of the Prophet Isaiah recorded in the 66th chapter of his book:

¹⁵ For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with His chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire.

¹⁶ For by fire and by His sword will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many.

¹⁷ They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, EATING SWINE'S FLESH, AND THE ABOMINATION, AND THE MOUSE, SHALL BE CONSUMED TOGETHER, saith the LORD (Isa. 66:15-17).

That this prophecy of destruction by fire is still future is without dispute. It hasn't happened yet! Moreover, the New Testament identifies the Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom the Father "hath committed all judgment" (John 5:22) as "the LORD who comes with fire and with His chariots like a whirlwind" in Isaiah's prophecy. We read in 2nd Thessalonians chapter 1:

⁷ And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,

⁸ In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

⁹ Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power;

¹⁰ When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day (2 Thess. 1:7-10).

Obviously, the Lord Jesus has not appeared in His second coming “in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God”; it’s an event still set in the future. But who are those who “know not God” let alone obey the gospel of Jesus Christ?

The answer is found in 1 John chapter 2:

³ And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.

⁴ He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him (1 John 2:3-4).

Since God’s commandments include His commandments on clean and unclean food, those who ignore God’s food laws equally do not know God! And these shall face His fiery judgment!

Holiness in the Family

Separation and Purification after Birth

After detailing His dietary law of holiness for His holy people, God next teaches His people how to maintain holiness in the family. The first aspect of the family holiness God calls on His people to keep has to do with childbirth. The birthing process produces uncleanness, and His instructions here are meant to show us what is to be done as a holy family during such a time. They follow right after His dietary law of clean and unclean:

Lev. 12

¹ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

² Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a woman have conceived seed, and born a man child: then she shall be unclean seven days; according to the days of the separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean.

³ And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.

⁴ And she shall then continue in the blood of her purifying three and thirty days; she shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying be fulfilled.

⁵ But if she bear a maid child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her separation: and she shall continue in the blood of her purifying threescore and six days.

⁶ And when the days of her purifying are fulfilled, for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest:

⁷ Who shall offer it before the LORD, and make an atonement for her; and she shall be cleansed from the issue of her blood. This is the law for her that hath born a male or a female.

⁸ And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean.

The instructions are pretty straightforward:

- If the newborn is male, the mother shall be unclean for seven days in a similar fashion to her normal seven-day separation period during her monthly periods. On the eighth day after birth, the child is to be circumcised. Although circumcision is no longer binding on New Covenant believers (Acts 15:5-6, 19-20; 1 Cor. 7:18-19; Gal. 5:1-2, 6:15), it should be recognized that it's healthy for the male baby. According to the *Hebraic Roots study Bible*, "women who are married to men who are circumcised have a much lower rate of cervical cancer than those who are not circumcised. Only on the 8th day of life of a male baby does his vitamin k rise so that clotting can occur after the circumcision. Truly, the Creator's ways are perfect. Interestingly enough, scientific evidence shows that this is exactly the time it takes for a newborn's immune system to build. Girl[s] take double the time than boys do", (p. 154). After the initial seven days of 'mandatory' separation culminating in the circumcision of the baby on the eighth day, the mother is to continue in "the blood of her purification" (NASB) for 33 days, making a total of 40 days of her separation before she can enter the temple on offering sacrifices to God.
- If the newborn is female, the mother shall be unclean for two weeks as though she was having her menstrual flow all through the 14 days and therefore should keep to herself. Afterwards, she is to remain in "the blood of her purifying" for 66 days. It's only after this 80-day period of separation that she can enter the sanctuary on presenting sacrifices to God.

The *NET Bible* explains the probable background and rationale for the yawning differences in the separation and purification periods for the male child and female child:

The initial seven days after the birth of a son were days of blood impurity for the woman as if she were having her menstrual period. Her impurity was contagious during this period, so no one should touch her or even furniture on which she has sat or reclined (Lev 15:19-23), lest they too become impure. Even her husband would become impure for seven days if he had sexual intercourse with her during this time (Lev 15:24; cf. 18:19). The next thirty-three days were either "days of purification, purifying" or "days of purity," depending on how one understands the abstract noun טְהָרָה (toharah, "purification, purity") in this context. During this time the woman could not touch anything holy or enter the sanctuary, but she was no longer contagious like she had been during the first seven days. She could engage in normal everyday life, ... without fear of contaminating anyone else (B. A. Levine, *Leviticus* [JPSTC], 73-74; cf. J. Milgrom, *Leviticus* [AB], 1:749-50). Thus, in a sense, the thirty-three days were a time of blood "purity" (cf. the present translation) as compared to the previous seven days of blood "impurity," but they were also a time of blood "purification" (or "purifying") as compared to the time after the thirty-three days, when the blood atonement had been made and she was pronounced "clean" by the priest (see vv. 6-8 below). In other words, the thirty-three day

period was a time of “blood” (flow), but this was “pure blood,” as opposed to the blood of the first seven days (Footnote on Lev. 12:4).

When the Lord Jesus, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, was born, His human parents Mary and Joseph observed this post-natal separation/purification law of holiness as “the law of the Lord”. We read in Luke 2:21-24:

²¹ And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, His name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

²² And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord;

²³(As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)

²⁴ And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.

Luke calls the law of purification after birth “the law of the Lord” and not merely “the law of Moses” (see 2 Kings 21:8). The “law of Moses” is basically the *added law* of animal sacrifices which could not take away sins but were added all the same “because of transgressions” (to act as our “school master”) until faith in the perfect sacrifice of Christ would come (Heb. 10:1-4; Jer. 7:21-23; Gal. 3:19, 24).

Our holy God still demands, “Be ye holy for I am holy”. And the testimony of Dr Luke is that the post-natal purification law is “the law of the Lord”. The state of uncleanness associated with new mothers is clearly one of the defilements of the flesh (body) God commands His sons and daughters to purify themselves from in 2 Cor. 6:17-7:1.

As for the animal sacrifices, it needs to be recognized that a superior sacrifice has taken their place. They have been obviated and superseded by the perfect blood sacrifice of Christ, our High Priest. Thus in their obedience to Him, our High Priest Christ spiritually cleanses His daughters by His blood, and they are able to return to a state of cleanness after childbirth.

Since children are a gift from the LORD (Ps 127:3), it’s definitely not a bad idea for a new mother to give an offering of thanks to the Lord on returning to the sanctuary to join the holy community in worship after her days of separation. It’s also a way of acknowledging the safe delivery granted by the Lord in fulfilment of His promise (1 Tim. 2:15). He surely deserves thanks for both the gift of the child and the safe delivery. The Psalmist sung in praise of His steadfast love and faithfulness: “The children of Thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before Thee” (Ps. 102:28). Amen!

Separation during Menstruation

The details of this law are in Leviticus 15, but the practice of it actually predates the time of Moses. We first encounter it in Genesis 31 where Rachel demurely tells her father that “the custom of women” was upon her and hence her aloofness:

³¹ And Jacob answered and said to Laban, Because I was afraid: for I said, Peradventure thou wouldest take by force thy daughters from me.

³² With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live: before our brethren discern thou what is thine with me, and take it to thee. For Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them.

³³ And Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the two maidservants' tents; but he found them not. Then went he out of Leah's tent, and entered into Rachel's tent.

³⁴ Now Rachel had taken the images, and put them in the camel's furniture, and sat upon them. And Laban searched all the tent, but found them not.

³⁵ And she said to her father, Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise up before thee; for the custom of women is upon me. And he searched, but found not the images (Gen. 31:31-35).

The “custom of women” is a Biblical euphemism for menstruation or period. By it, Rachel clearly meant that she was ‘off-limits’ to her father and should be excused. She probably told an untruth (so Laban would not find his idols with her which she had stolen), but it’s clear from the text that the custom of separation during menstruation was practiced at that time and even further back.

In Lev. 15, the kinds of uncleanness resulting from menstruation and the holy practices to observe during such times are spelt out. In its entirety, though, the chapter covers a wider topic than just menstruation. It deals with the uncleanness of secretions from both men and women and, in fact, starts with those from the private parts of men.

In both cases, the genital discharges discussed are grouped into two main categories: (1) discharges which occur as a result of a disease, and (2) involuntary discharges which occur naturally. Accordingly, verses 2 - 15 deal with male secretions as a disease, in which case the patient will be unclean for seven days and is to live in isolation for the entire period. Where the discharge occurs involuntarily as a seminal emission, however, the man will only be unclean, as well as anything he touches, for a day (vv. 16-18).

After verse 18, the rest of the chapter goes on to deal with discharges from women. First is the regular monthly flow. Made unclean by her menstrual blood, the woman is to live apart for seven days considering that anything she touches also becomes unclean and therefore any person who comes into contact with the contaminated object (vv. 19-20). A person so defiled remains unclean until the evening (vv. 21-23). For this reason, no one is to touch her bed (v. 21) or sit in her chair (v. 22). The more serious defilement, however, is for a man to lie with her during this time—the culprit will be unclean for seven days (v. 24; see also Lev. 18:19).

What if the discharge is not a normal menstrual flow but a disease (Luke 8:43) which keeps flowing beyond the usual seven-day period?

She should treat the abnormal flow as though it were a prolonged menstruation. Indeed, until the cessation of the flow, she's unclean and so is everything she touches and, by extension, whoever touches those things (vv. 25-27). Once she is "cleansed of her issue, then she shall number to herself seven days, and after that she shall be clean" (v. 28). On the eighth day after this last seven-day separation, she is to offer a sacrifice and be pronounced clean (v. 29-30).

While the law regulating bodily secretions remains valid for both men and women, in so far as the menstrual flow of women occurs more or less regularly in a monthly cycle, it is important that greater emphasis is placed on it. Perhaps this explains why it's reiterated in the prophets and the discharges from men are not.

In Ezekiel 18, God lists separation from the menstruating woman among the "right" and "lawful" deeds a person should do to live:

¹ The word of the LORD came unto me again, saying,

² What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?

³ As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel.

⁴ Behold, all souls are Mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is Mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

⁵ But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right,

⁶ And hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbour's wife, neither hath come near to a menstruous woman,

⁷ And hath not oppressed any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment;

⁸ He that hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man,

⁹ Hath walked in My statutes, and hath kept My judgments, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord GOD.

A righteous man who does what is "lawful" and "right", according to the holy God, does not eat pagan sacrifices on the mountains (or "high places"), does not look to idols, does not commit adultery with another man's wife, does not approach a woman in her menstrual period, does not oppress any, restores to the debtor whatever was given in pledge, does not rob or forcibly seize the property of another, feeds the hungry and clothes the naked, does not charge (high) interest on loans (see Deut. 23:20; Lev. 25:36-37), refrains from lawlessness, administers true

justice between people and faithfully walks in the commandments and statutes of God. “This man is righteous and shall surely live”, says the LORD.

The things God expects in a righteous man come in a ‘package’; they stand and fall together. A righteous man who is destined for life does not only eschew adultery but should also avoid a woman in her menstruation, even as he carries out the other righteous things stated in the text and elsewhere in the scriptures.

What this simply means is that the law of holiness pertaining to menstruation enjoins a righteous deed which still applies as long as women continue to have their menstrual flow. If not, then we may as well disregard the divine warning against all the evil deeds mentioned in conjunction with the avoidance of menstruous women which a righteous person ought not to *live* according to the Word of God in Ezekiel 18.

Paul’s statement in Gal. 3:28 – there’s neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free neither male nor female in Christ - does not abrogate the divine law which women having their period are to keep. It simply means people of different races and gender have equal access to salvation in Christ (Luke 24:47; John 4:42; 1 Pet. 3:7). The same Paul who supposedly did away with distinctions of race and gender among believers is found instructing wives to submit to their husbands “as unto the Lord” and husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church—down to the place of children in the home and slaves (or employees today) in society in Eph. 5:21-6:9 and 1 Tim. 6:1-4. In 1 Cor. 11:3, he teaches ‘the divine order’ in which “the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God”. So then, while a person’s racial background or gender do not prejudice his/her salvation, those distinctions remain facts of life even when a person becomes a believer, and Paul duly acknowledged them (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 7:18-20; 1 Tim. 2:11-14).

The distinctions of race, class and gender will only truly disappear among the saints of God in the Kingdom of heaven where “they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection” (Luke 20:35-36).

Until this new age arrives, women will continue to menstruate, and God will continue to insist that His law of holiness meant for them be upheld. In Ezekiel 22:9-12, He again lists sexual relations with a woman in her period among the wickedness and sexual sins of the Israelites which He abhors with a passion:

⁹There are men in you who slander to shed blood (see Lev. 19:16-17), and people in you who eat on the mountains; they commit lewdness in your midst.

¹⁰In you men uncover their fathers' nakedness (see Lev. 18:8; 1 Cor. 5:1-5); in you they violate women who are unclean in their menstrual impurity (see Lev. 18:19; 20:18).

¹¹One commits abomination with his neighbor's wife; another lewdly defiles his daughter-in-law; another in you violates his sister, his father's daughter.

¹²In you they take bribes to shed blood; you take interest and profit and make gain of your neighbors by extortion; but Me you have forgotten, declares the Lord GOD (ESV).

In similarly strong language, Yahweh indicated His disgust at the evil deeds of the pre-exile Kingdom of Israel by likening them to the uncleanness of a woman in her menstruation.

Ezek. 36:17-18

Son of man, when the house of Israel lived in their own land, they defiled it by their ways and their deeds. Their ways before Me were like the uncleanness of a woman in her menstrual impurity.

So I poured out My wrath upon them for the blood that they had shed in the land, for the idols with which they had defiled it (ESV).

This is how the Holy Father sees menstruation—utterly unclean! How then can we by any stretch of imagination say that God has now expunged His law of separation given to women to observe during their menstrual period?

Even Mary, after the birth of the HOLY CHILD Yeshua (Jesus), whom she conceived by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35), observed the law of purification as written in the Law of the Lord given through Moses (Luke 2:22-24). The only difference today is that, now that Christ's perfect sacrifice has superseded all the O.T. animal sacrifices (Heb. 10:1-10), no sacrifices have to be made again, but the Laws of separation and purification need to be observed as women **still** undergo the same conditions as their ancient counterparts and God **still** commands us to be holy like Him, as He commanded the saints of old (1 Pet. 1:15-16; 2 Cor. 6:17-7:1; Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2). If sins formerly cleansed (actually covered) with the blood of sacrificial animals are now cleansed with the pure blood of Jesus when a person comes to faith in Him and repents of those sins, why not the uncleanness of obedient women previously purged with the same blood of sacrificial animals? Once we walk with God in the light of His truth which entails the observance of His holy laws (Ps 119:142), the blood of His Son cleanses us (men and women alike) from every sin and spiritual contamination (1 John 1:7).

In case of unintentional or accidental defilement because you share the same room with a woman in her period (who ideally should live apart) or are co-workers with her, be assured that God has graciously made a provision for such situations whereby He cleanses His holy people from hidden sins or defilement. In the Old Testament, the provision was to offer a trespass offering of sacrificial animals to the LORD for the priest to make an atonement for the offender (Lev. 5:3-6). Today, God does the cleansing Himself with the superior, perfect blood of His Son.

David prayed in Ps 19:12-13:

¹² Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults.

¹³ Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.

In this Psalm David identifies three categories of transgressions:

(a) Sins committed unintentionally and unknowingly and therefore never brought to one's consciousness.

(b) Sins committed wilfully with all the elements of premeditation and conscious execution; "presumptuous sins".

(c) "The great transgression" – wilful sins which repeated over time become dominant sins which enslave a person and make him an object of divine judgment and condemnation.

With the first category – a sin which may not even prick the conscience – it's God who graciously cleanses us and, in fact, acquits us of all guilt. The deed is not a flagrant sin which leads to death (Heb. 10:26-31; 1 John 5:16-17). But it's a sin nevertheless and will remain a stain on the soul if not cleansed or purged. This is the hoped-for cleansing David asks of God—not that he could somehow purge himself if it were a flagrant known sin but that where the sin is not even known or acknowledged for one to ask for God's forgiveness—he can only throw himself on God's mercy by asking for His special grace in cleansing him of it.

There's only one instrument for that true, effective cleansing David prays for—the blood of Jesus. And so here he anticipates the all-efficacious blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God, in his plea to Yahweh: "Cleanse Thou me of secret faults". The blood of Yeshua is the remedy for "all [kinds of] sin" and "all [kinds of] lawlessness" and "all [kinds of] unrighteousness" (1 John 1:7-9; Tit. 2:14).

This certainly includes unintentional defilement from the uncleanness of a woman in her menstruation.

In the case of the "woman with the issue of blood", we must remember that Jesus acted in mercy in response to the great faith the woman demonstrated by touching the hem of His garment. It was not to show that the law of uncleanness/separation had been done away with, but that great faith impresses God and releases His power to people in need no matter their condition or how long they have suffered. Both the woman and Christ tacitly acknowledged the offence of her appearing in public and mingling with the crowd to the extent of touching Him, the Holy One. That was why the woman, for fear of incurring the wrath of the Master, kept

quiet after she was healed on touching Him and would have stolen away had He not demanded that the one who “touched” Him ‘own up’! Overcome with fear, “she came trembling, and falling down before Him, she declared unto Him before all the people for what cause she had touched him and how she was healed immediately” (Luke 8:47).

The woman was not having a normal menstrual flow but a disease in which she had a continual haemorrhage and for which she had vainly “spent all her living upon physicians” for the past 12 years, but her condition only grew worse and worse (Luke 8:43; Mark 5:25-26). One day, she heard that the great Teacher and Miracle Worker, Rabbi Yeshua, was passing by (on His way to heal a sick girl whom He ended up raising from the dead). Gathering all her faith she said to herself, ‘I won’t let this chance slip by. I will fight my way through the press, tiptoe to His side and touch the hem of His garment. If I could just do this, I know, I will be healed’. She did as she purposed in faith. Lo and behold, her blood flow stopped immediately! And Jesus knew it, for He said, “Somebody hath touched Me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of Me” (Luke 8:46). When the woman showed herself, she did not get the scolding she feared but a reassuring word from the Lord: “Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace” (Luke 8:48).

The woman’s faith greatly impressed the Lord. The incident also reveals His attitude towards the sinner, the sick and the suffering who come to Him for succour—mercy (see Matt. 9:10-13; Luke 4:18-19). So then, the lesson is that even as we keep holiness, we must not withdraw the hand of mercy from the sick and the suffering, even though they may be Biblically unclean or impure. In such situations, and only in such situations, it’s proper and lawful to extend a hand of help or comfort to such sick ones in a similar way to what He teaches us concerning the Sabbath: “it is lawful to do good [to the sick, etc] on the Sabbath” (Matt. 12:12 *ESV*; Mark 3:1-5). Humanitarian deeds are never a sin except deliberate acts of disobedience.

Holiness in Family Relations

In teaching the Israelites holiness in family relations, Yahweh, who had called Israel into a holy covenant relationship, sought to re-orientate them away from the cultural ways and sexual proclivities of the Egyptians which the Israelites might have internalized as a result of their long stay in Egypt. Those sexual tastes were really sordid, and it was the will of God to introduce to His people His holy and righteous laws which were laws of life designed to engender social progress and harmony.

He began:

Lev. 18:1-18

¹ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

² Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, I am the LORD your God.

- ³ After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances.
- ⁴ Ye shall do My judgments, and keep Mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the LORD your God.
- ⁵ Ye shall therefore keep My statutes, and My judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD.
- ⁶ None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him, to uncover their nakedness: I am the LORD.
- ⁷ The nakedness of thy father, or the nakedness of thy mother, shalt thou not uncover: she is thy mother; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.
- ⁸ The nakedness of thy father's wife shalt thou not uncover: it is thy father's nakedness.
- ⁹ The nakedness of thy sister, the daughter of thy father, or daughter of thy mother, whether she be born at home, or born abroad, even their nakedness thou shalt not uncover.
- ¹⁰ The nakedness of thy son's daughter, or of thy daughter's daughter, even their nakedness thou shalt not uncover: for theirs is thine own nakedness.
- ¹¹ The nakedness of thy father's wife's daughter, begotten of thy father, she is thy sister, thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.
- ¹² Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father's sister: she is thy father's near kinswoman.
- ¹³ Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy mother's sister: for she is thy mother's near kinswoman.
- ¹⁴ Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father's brother, thou shalt not approach to his wife: she is thine aunt.
- ¹⁵ Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy daughter in law: she is thy son's wife; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.
- ¹⁶ Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife: it is thy brother's nakedness.
- ¹⁷ Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter, neither shalt thou take her son's daughter, or her daughter's daughter, to uncover her nakedness; for they are her near kinswomen: it is wickedness.
- ¹⁸ Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, beside the other in her life time.

The 'LORD God' of Israel was laying down a holy higher standard in sexual relations in general and family relations in particular. He set the 'forbidden degrees' (boundaries of blood relationship) within which neither marriage nor sexual relationship was permissible. His people are to observe these regulations as a law of life. Yet one might say, 'but the Patriarch Jacob was married to two sisters at the same time and did God not forbid it'!

First, we need to realize that Jacob's original intention was never to marry two sisters or even two unrelated women as wives. His express wish was to get "a WIFE from the daughters of Laban", his uncle (Gen. 28:1-2 *BBE*). But, as it were, Jacob was shortchanged when Rachel, the daughter of Laban whom he loved and for whose sake he had worked as a herdsman for Laban for seven years to pay off her bride price, was not given to him on the wedding night. Instead,

Leah, her elder sister, was presented to him under the cover of darkness because, as Laban put it, “It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn”.

Subsequently, Laban offered to also give Rachel in marriage to Jacob after he had had a weeklong ‘honeymoon’ with Leah on condition that he also worked for another seven years to pay off Rachel’s bride price (Gen. 29:16-28).

It was not by design; circumstances conspired to bring about Jacob’s marriage to two sisters; the force of events led to it. And God didn’t disallow it! It was not that it was not unrighteous at that time and that God prohibited such marriage only as an afterthought. In the light of God’s eternal truth (or standards), it was a sin then as now, but as far as the progressive revelation of God’s truth is concerned, whereby God chooses to reveal some aspects of His truth piecemeal, it hadn’t been revealed to Jacob or any member of the God-fearing community of the time. Nonetheless, it’s a truth that date from the beginning (Ps 100:5); only the time of the revealing came later. Unlike “the times of ignorance”, however, it has now been made known because God commands “all men to repent” in preparation for divine judgment to be executed by the risen Lord Jesus and therefore men have no excuse to engage in incestuous relationships or any of the sexual relations disallowed by the forbidden degrees established by God (Acts 17:30-31). Those boundaries of familial relationships within which marriage and all sexual relationship is forbidden are part of “the present truth” believers must now uphold and be “established in” (2 Pet. 1:12).

As evidence of their continued validity, the Apostle Paul takes the church in Corinth to task for condoning a brother having sexual relations with his father’s wife. He cracks the whip and calls for his expulsion for his wicked act. He reprimands them in 1 Corinthians 5:

¹ It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.

² And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.

³ For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed,

⁴ In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,

⁵ To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

⁶ Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?

⁷ Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:

⁸ Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

⁹ I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators:

¹⁰ Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.

¹¹ But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.

¹² For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?

¹³ But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

Paul used strong words on the man who cuckolded his father and excoriated the church on his account for taking seeming pride in him because they had turned a blind eye to his evil deed. He likened him to leavened bread which needed to be thrown out lest it contaminated the rest of the unleavened dough (or lump) with yeast. He cast the whole episode in terms of the dos and don'ts of the holy season of the Passover feast when it was strictly forbidden to keep leaven in the house. During the entire seven days of the feast, only "unleavened bread" was eaten. Hence, the house was purged of all leaven and anyone who infringed on the rule was to be cut off! (Ex. 12:15-20). But here the church was harbouring and entertaining a brother who had become "leaven bread" by his wicked deed, and the risk was that he could infect the still unleavened lump with his wicked lifestyle by undermining both church discipline and the moral character of individual members who may be tempted to copy him. He needed to be put out of the house of God.

The Feast of unleavened bread, instituted right after Israel left Egypt following the slaying of the Pascal lambs, represents righteousness and holiness which become our new essence on believing in Christ, "our Passover sacrificed for us", and repenting of our sins. So then, our entire life in Christ following Passover is a season of unleavened bread and therefore no leaven (sin) is to be countenanced. It's a "feast" that commemorates the new life in Christ which ought to be observed with truth and sincerity and not with "the leaven of malice and wickedness". But this was the very thing the man had done! He had infected the holiness of the church with his sin and the church ought not to have condoned it or take 'reflected' pride in it. He was a "wicked person" who had done wickedly, Paul charged, and should suffer the ultimate sanction—strip him of his membership and therefore his spiritual privileges and entitlements as a member of God's church. This practically leaves him to the mercies of Satan to harm him at will. Hence "deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus". Hopefully, he may learn his lesson and come to his senses which he did (2 Cor. 2:5-11).

God's laws relating to holiness in family relations have not passed away; they are still to be kept by the holy people of God in this New Testament time. As "the root [OT saints] is holy, so are the branches" (Rom. 11:16).

By verse 20 of Leviticus 18, where God broadly catalogues the sexual sins His people should not indulge in—all being an expanded application of and violations of the seventh commandment ("thou shalt not commit adultery")—He has shifted the emphasis of the prohibitions from the family context into the larger context of social relations. And He does not limit Himself to just sexual issues. In chapter 19, He essentially teaches His people to "love thy neighbour as thyself".

All these may be grouped under the topic,

Holiness in Social Relations

God is still teaching holiness in sexual relations, and He directs His people away from not only adultery but also from the bestial and subhuman sexual fantasies of persons bereft of all godly fear and even of basic human morality and etiquette. So He continues:

Lev. 18:20-30

²⁰ Moreover thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbour's wife, to defile thyself with her.

²¹ And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD.

²² Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.

²³ Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it is confusion.

²⁴ Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you:

²⁵ And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants.

²⁶ Ye shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations; neither any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourneth among you:

²⁷(For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled;)

²⁸ That the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you.

²⁹ For whosoever shall commit any of these abominations, even the souls that commit them shall be cut off from among their people.

³⁰ Therefore shall ye keep mine ordinance, that ye commit not any one of these abominable customs, which were committed before you, and that ye defile not yourselves therein: I am the LORD your God.

There are consequences for sin and more dreadful consequences for abominable, wicked sins! God places homosexuality on a par with bestiality. Homosexuality, the scourge of nations and the ruin of Sodom and Gomorrah, is increasingly becoming an index of a country's human rights credentials in these last days of evil; decriminalization of it is used as a measure of how 'liberal' and 'forward-looking' a country is in human rights! My foot!

God calls it an abomination, a detestable act of filthiness. And He punishes severely and greatly for it. He unleashes on the land so-called natural disasters and calamities which essentially carry out His 'eviction order', forcing the people off the land. The cataclysms under reference are disasters like floods, earthquakes and tornadoes which wreak massive destruction on the human population and the environment, "casting" and "vomiting" and "spewing" out hundreds of thousands of people from their dwelling-places and leaving in their wake wretched lives and untold devastation!

All because man will not do as His holy Maker and Creator of the universe says. Unbending in their rebellion and wickedness, they cry hoarse, "gay rights"! The West holds homosexuality aloft as a badge of enlightenment and orders the whole world to follow suit. The campaign is on to turn the whole world into Sodom and Gomorrah in accordance with Isaiah's prophecy:

And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.

Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah (Isa 1:8-9).

The consequences are dire. They sowed the "wind" and they reaped the "whirlwind"—unprecedented curse!

Hosea 8:7

For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up.

Only Zion remains pure and undefiled, but she's likened to "a cottage"—a fringe group, and their godly lifestyle is under siege from the majority anti-God Babylonian society.

Like the self-acclaimed "wise" Greeks and Romans of the first century, who considered their Greco-Roman civilization the best in all history, the deeds and moral philosophies of today's "wise" Western nations have exposed them as "fools" so much so that they have stooped to doing what is contrary to nature and even unacceptable in the animal world: men lying with members of their own gender and women likewise:

Rom 1:22-28

²² Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

²³ And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

²⁴ Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:

²⁵ Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

²⁶ For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:

²⁷ And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

²⁸ And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.

The blatant, irrational rejection of God as the Creator who is worthy of worship and who has set standards of behaviour for men leads to a depraved mind that is open to all sorts of evil tendencies and moral filth. It's a mind without moorings; a mind denuded of all godly fear; a mind from which God has withdrawn the restraining power of His Spirit because it has elected to disregard Him despite the clear evidence of His existence and "eternal power" in the things He created—the created order that so plainly communicates His attributes as His means of revealing Himself to man (Rom. 1:19-21).

The result is that godless mankind has strayed so far from the good and sensible that he revels in unnatural and perverse passions which bring on curses as retribution from God—HIV/AIDS (first discovered in homosexual men) and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). They "sowed the wind"—the pursuit of a vain, empty lifestyle driven by a vociferous global gay movement—and they have "reaped the whirlwind"—God's wrath unleashed in heaps!

The word of God makes it clear homosexuals are barred from the Kingdom of God:

⁹ Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,

¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (I Cor. 6:9-11 ESV).

No matter how ingeniously so-called 'Christian gays' twist and distort this scripture, there's no escaping the truth that God abhors and punishes sodomy and lesbianism, and He has revealed this plainly in both the Old and New Testaments.

The homosexual lifestyle is only to be spoken in terms of their past if they truly claim to be Christians. For “such *were* some” of the Corinthian believers, in a city known for loose morals and sexual laxity, but they “were washed” from their homosexual filth among other sins, and they “were sanctified” and “were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the [sanctifying] Spirit of our God”.

They were!

Present-day homosexuals cannot plead ‘sexual orientation’ and therefore assert that they cannot repent of that which is inborn! The right word is ‘sexual preference’. They chose to be homosexuals because they refused to retain the fear of God in their minds; they refused to acknowledge His authority over their lives and instead gave free rein to the bestial and sinful impulses of a debauched mind, that is to say, “the lusts of their own hearts” (Rom. 1:24). God did not put any homosexual tendencies or instincts in the genes of any man (or woman). What He put in man AT CREATION is a natural longing for a wife (and a woman for a husband) (Gen. 2:21-24). And He incorporated it into His creation of mankind as male and female (not male and male or female and female) right from the beginning. It was all in His foreknowledge and plan when He set out to create man as a married couple, Male (husband) and Female (wife), in a monogamous marital set-up (Matt. 19:4-6).

Homosexuality is therefore a sin to be repented of; otherwise none of those who practice it will be welcomed into the Kingdom of God. Instead, they will suffer the “vengeance of eternal fire” just as befell the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah who on top of all their sin of sexual immorality went after “strange flesh” (unnatural sex), being the homosexual variety of illicit sex (Jude 1:7).

Our holy God changes not (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8). To this day, He is “a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:29) who consumes sinners who refuse to repent as He consumed the sodomites of Sodom and Gomorrah to set us an example!

Now to Leviticus chapter 19. In this chapter (bar the first few verses which appear to be a set of disparate commands, vv. 1-8), God essentially teaches His people to “love thy neighbour as thyself” as a way of fostering and institutionalizing holiness in social relations. The meat of the instructions is in verses 9 to 18. They enjoin a whole gamut of humanitarian deeds, fair dealing and pure thoughts which should be extended to one’s neighbour as our way of loving him or her God’s way:

⁹ And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest.

¹⁰ And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD your God.

¹¹ Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another.

¹² And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD.

¹³ Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.

¹⁴ Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumblingblock before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I am the LORD.

¹⁵ Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.

¹⁶ Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD.

¹⁷ Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.

¹⁸ Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.

God truly desires that His people be holy in all their conduct. The overall effect of the instructions is the creation of a just, righteous and harmonious society in which members treat one another as they would treat themselves. That is the paradigm. The Lord Jesus in the *Sermon on the Mount* put it this way: “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Matt. 7:12).

In other words, put yourself in the shoes of your neighbour and treat him as you would treat yourself were you in his situation. If so, why not provide for the less fortunate who could have been you? Why steal what belongs to another or solemnly lie to him? Why delay paying your staff or hired worker? Why harass the disabled? Why mete out injustice to your neighbour or show partiality? Why badmouth, slander and bear a grudge against your brother?

Will you subject yourself to any of the above? If the answer is no, the simple truth God impresses on us is, don't do the same to your neighbour. Love is, indeed, the “fulfilling of the law” of God as the apostle Paul tells us in Romans 13:

⁸ Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

⁹ For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

¹⁰ Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

The effect of God's law is a harmonious, righteous, caring society. The absence of it is an evil, self-seeking society. With God's law, love is at the centre of all social interaction; it's the defining element thereof.

In such a society, be it a church or communal setting, the common but seldom admitted vice of gossip and backbiting is not even practiced. In the sight of God, it's close to murder and indeed is murder and the step to it. The apt expression is *character assassination!* The words can breed rancour, anger and hatred. And the hapless person against whom the hearsay or slander is directed is as good as murdered! Because the diligent tale-bearer in recounting what the man or woman is said to have said added juicy details of his own not only to make it sound believable but also have the effect he desires—make him or her even more hated! Ah the hurtful juicy details! The wise writer of the *Book of Proverbs* hit the nail on the head when he wrote:

The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly (Prov. 26:22).

Two verses above, he wrote with insight:

Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife (vv. 20-21).

Gossips are social vermin. They can instigate murder! That's why in Ezekiel 22:9, as in Lev. 19:16, God equates tale-bearing with the shedding of blood:

In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood: and in thee they eat upon the mountains: in the midst of thee they commit lewdness (Ez. 22:9).

Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD (Lev. 19:16).

In so far as tale-bearing can lead to hatred and hatred murder, actual and/or reputation-wise, tale-bearing can be likened to murder! So next time you are tempted to speak evil of your brother, remember that in the sight of God you are an accessory to murder. This is because He regards hatred, *which your words are stirring up against your neighbour*, as murder. We read in 1 John 3:15:

Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him (see also Matt. 5:21-22).

God will have us use our mouths for constructive purposes, not to destroy or pull others down. He tells us in the following scriptures:

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers (Eph. 4:29).

Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man (Col. 4:6).

God insists we “be holy in all our conduct”, including our speech. For even our speech will be examined in judgment (Matt. 12:36-37).

A Final Word

The divine call to holiness is a holistic call. It involves living a holy life in all our behavior. It is the outward manifestation of the inward work of God in our hearts. It’s a yielding to His instructions of holiness in a spirit of humility and self-abnegation. It’s the testament to the life of grace we live whereby we are set apart from all others in consecration to the Holy One. Holiness stamps us as God’s holy people who are His special people and treasure, the apple of His eye. As Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, sung and prophesied in poetic verse at the naming of his miracle son, holiness is a key reason for the Messiah’s mission on earth—“That He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life” (Luke 1:74-75). Halleluiah!

May His grace and sanctifying Spirit make and keep us holy forever to His own glory. Amen!

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