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MINISTRIES

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Can We Eat All Things? (1 Timothy 4)

Perhaps your interest in this study is because you have recently realized that all of God’s Word is still for us today and all of it is still true, yet some words of Paul prove to be difficult to understand. Or perhaps you are still not too sure if some of God’s commandments still apply to us today.

One reason you might believe this is because 1 Timothy 4 has you convinced that God’s dietary instructions, found in Leviticus 11, no longer exist because someone has taught you that is what Paul was teaching.

Regardless of where your theology is at this particular moment, if you stick with us in this study, you might be surprised to learn how 1 Timothy 4 actually proves that the Lord’s dietary instructions are still every part of God’s Word even now, just as they were when our Messiah taught the Law of Moses as the Word of God in His ministry.

First, before we begin, let’s ask ourselves some questions that we will all have to answer in light of 1 Timothy chapter 4. Does 1 Timothy 4:4 teach that all animals are clean and therefore acceptable for food? Are those teaching obedience to God’s commandments such as Leviticus 11 (God’s dietary instructions) *‘giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils?’* Is that what God’s commandments are? ...is Leviticus 11 a doctrine of the devil? Would such teaching be speaking lies in hypocrisy? Are the same teaching others to not marry?

What things are stated to be consecrated by the Word of God and declared to be food and to be received in thanksgiving? Isn’t that the context here? Are God’s commandments old wives’ fables? Are God’s commandments profane? Is keeping God’s commandments in Leviticus 11 no longer Godliness? Is Leviticus 11 no longer good doctrine? Is obeying God departing from the faith? Is Leviticus 11 no longer scripture and thus no longer instructions in righteousness? Is it no longer valid as a basis of rebuking and correcting?

It might be quickly assumed that answering these questions should be rather easy. Some of them sound quite absurd right? ...They should...

If one believes that 1 Timothy 4 is teaching the abolishing of Leviticus 11, which is what has been done, then answering those questions not only becomes complicated but actually quite scary.

Let's read 1 Timothy 4.

1 Timothy 4:1-7

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ (or in Hebrew Yeshua haMashiach), nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness.

The mainstream Biblical commentary focus is often centered on verse 4 and is often used as support suggesting that God has abolished His dietary instructions for His people (Leviticus 11) and now all things are clean and thus declared suitable as food. This is an easy mistake to make if we do not consider the verses before and after verse 4.

So core support is drawn from verse 4 in which Scripture says that "every creature of God is good and nothing is to be refused, if it is received in thanksgiving."

If we believe that verse is teaching against Leviticus 11, then the resulting consequence must be that anyone stating and teaching that God has not abolished His dietary instructions for His people is one who is also:

1. commanding to abstain from eating meat
2. causing others to depart from the faith
3. speaking lies in hypocrisy
4. promoting doctrines of devils
5. holding on to old wives' fables
6. holding on to things profane
7. not exercising Godliness
8. searing their conscience with a hot iron

Since 1 Timothy 4 is a letter and written to be read as such... it would serve us well to treat it as it is intended to be read. That is how letters are intended to be read, right? ...from start to finish? Does it really make sense to pull a sentence or half of a sentence out of a letter and build a doctrine around it? Probably not...

What if we were to do that to Paul's letters not just once, but perhaps a couple dozen times, or so? ...Even worse results right? Were we not already warned that Paul's letters are difficult to understand and can be used to teach against the law of God in error, thus creating lawlessness or sin?

2 Peter 3:14-17

So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him..... He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters..... His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction..... Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position.

This was written nearly 2,000 years ago when people understood the context and common debates of the first century. We are 2,000 years and a couple languages removed...that being said, perhaps we should take the warning in 2 Peter 3 even that much more seriously!

Ok...Let's begin by applying hermeneutical principles by considering the immediate context and simply allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. It is important to read every reference in Scripture contextually. Fortunately, in this case, the context is quite obvious to those who are interested in extracting it and applying it.

Verse 3 precedes verse 4, so does it not make sense to take verse 3 into account of our understanding of verse 4?

And...

Verse 5 follows verse 4, so does it not make sense to take verse 5 into account of our understanding of verse 4?

As with most misunderstandings in Scripture, error is often a result of verse plucking words out of context. Since this is a writing of Paul and is related to God's law, then extreme carefulness should be exercised based on our warning from Peter alone regarding Paul's letters and the law...we do not want to make the "error of the lawless" by abolishing some of God's law, do we?

The central point of this discourse is found in the preceding verse, "...to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth." And it is substantiated in the verse immediately following, "for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer."

So what does it mean to "*know the Truth?*" The truth being that the dietary instructions are abolished? No. God's law, which includes God's dietary instructions (Lev. 11), is declared by a Scripture to be the truth.

Psalm 119:142

Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And Your law is truth.

If all animals are now clean and suitable for eating, then as a consequence Leviticus 11 is no longer truth. For example, if all animals are now made clean, is the following statement true?

Leviticus 11:7-8

Also the swine is unclean for you, because it has cloven hooves, yet does not chew the cud; you

shall not eat their flesh or touch their dead carcasses.

Doesn't seem like it.....or what about this statement, is this still true?

Leviticus 11:46-47

'This is the law of the animals and the birds and every living creature that moves in the waters, and of every creature that creeps on the earth, to distinguish between the unclean and the clean, and between the animal that may be eaten and the animal that may not be eaten.'"

Those statements by God are either still true or they are not. There is no "in between"...There is no, well yes it is still true but we are not to do that truth...The command is either true or it is now false...Paul says that all Scripture is not only still truth but also still instructions in righteousness

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

If Paul says that, then how can we conclude anything different? How can we say that Leviticus 11 is no longer instructions in righteousness? How can we say that Leviticus 11 is no longer Scripture? Again, the law of God is truth...

Psalm 119:42

Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth.

That is a definitive statement....

1 Timothy 4 verse 3 clearly says:

...and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

Verse 3 provides the context. It states that these are men who commanded believers to abstain from eating meat that God has already said is good to eat according to the Truth of His Word.

Thus, these false teachers are commanding believers not to eat beef, chicken, and other meat already declared food....not by man, but declared food by the truth of God's Word. Guess where God's Word declares what was created for food? That's right, Leviticus 11, which happens to be part of God's law...and what is God's law? **and thy law is the truth.** Not was truth, but IS truth...

These false teachers are not telling believers to abstain from eating pork for example, which is not defined as food in Scripture, by the way. Keep in mind, when this was written to Timothy, the Scripture was, in fact, the Old Testament. The New Testament hadn't been written yet.

Where in Scripture (the Word of God) are we told that swine, lobster, etc. are created to be good for food? Since when are animals that are unclean defined in Scripture as clean food? They are not, Leviticus 11 makes that clear.

Why is this important?

Paul wrote 1 Timothy 4. Paul was a Jew. Paul wrote from a Hebraic context. Food, according every Hebrew that authored every book of the Bible, was defined by Leviticus 11.

Pig, lobster, dog, cat, etc., are not considered to be food according to the Bible!

We cannot read 1 Timothy 4:3 with our society's definition of food. Do we consider dog or cat to be food? No, we do not. But our society believes pig and lobster to be food, and there lies the problem when we read 1 Timothy 4:3 from our perspective, instead of a Jewish perspective, like Paul.

Paul wrote 1 Timothy 4:3, and Paul was a Jew. We need to define the word food in 1 Timothy 4:3 as a Jew would define food, not as we would define food.

Ask any Jew today whether pig, lobster, crab, etc. are considered food. They will emphatically say no! ...those things are not created to be food, have you not read Leviticus 11?!

Perhaps this is good time to remind ourselves of how Paul encouraged us to approach all doctrine...

1 Thessalonians 5:21

but test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good

Consider testing the abolishment of God's dietary instructions to Scripture to see what happens. Be a Berean (Acts 17:10-11) and search the same Scriptures daily that the first century searched to test and prove such a conclusion. Remember, the Bereans only had the Old Testament to test Paul's words to. So, do you see anything in the Old Testament about the dietary instructions being temporary and changing? You won't, because it does not exist.

What does it mean in verse 5 that the food is "*sanctified by the Word of God and prayer?*" For something to be sanctified it means it is to be holy or set apart, hallowed or made uncommon. Here is the Greek word for sanctified...

hagiazō (ἁγιάζω)

According to the Newman Greek Dictionary it means:
set apart to or by God, sacred, consecrated.

In Scripture, for something to be holy, it literally means to be "set apart," it is the opposite of common or profane. If all animals are now clean as supposed, then the animals would not be holy or set apart.

Consider this, animals that are set apart for eating must be separate from animals that are not set apart for eating. This is by the very definition of the word sanctified. The very fact that there are animals sanctified means that there has to be a separate group of animals that are not sanctified. Doesn't this make sense?

We cannot conclude that all animals are set apart or sanctified, when there in fact would be nothing to set them apart from if all animals were made clean. How can animals even be set apart and holy if they are all rendered the same? If all animals were made clean, then by that very definition, they would then be common, unholy, or not set apart. They would not be declared sanctified, but instead, declared

profane or common.

So, this is very important to understand. The very fact that Paul states that these animals are sanctified absolutely proves that there are still some animals that are NOT sanctified. It proves that there are still some animals that are NOT set apart or holy, which is contrasted against the animals that ARE set apart, that ARE sanctified.

So, here is the question must still be asked that if all animals are now clean and set apart then what in the world could they be set apart from? Logically it should be obvious that it cannot be possible the clean is no longer set apart – sanctified - from the unclean because supposedly there is no such thing as anything unclean! For it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer.

We cannot declare that all animals are now set apart or made holy. It simply does not make sense. It is literally an oxymoron. It is contradictive to what Paul just said. This is why Paul had to state in verse three that those who believe and know the truth, God's law, will understand what he is saying. Too many people are reading Paul in 1 Timothy 4 and do not know God's law. People are reading 1 Timothy 4 and trying to evidence what they want Paul to be saying, or what they have been told Paul is saying.

The animals that are sanctified or set apart for food from animals that are not set apart for food are defined very clearly in Leviticus 11. If we believe and know the Truth that means we believe and know the law of God. The very fact that some animals are declared to be "consecrated", or "sanctified" or "made holy" or set apart by the Word of God means that some animals are obviously NOT "set apart" by the Word of God. Something can only be "set apart" if there is something to be "set apart" from. That is not too complicated at all.

At this point, one would expect this matter to be settled. What else is there to discuss? It is clearly impossible to conclude that 1 Timothy 4 verse 4 is declaring all animals to be Scripturally acceptable for food. The only creatures that are to be received with thanksgiving as food are the creatures that have been set apart by the Word of God and prayer (of thanksgiving). It is as simple as that.

This is why verse four (4) uses the qualifier [IF it be received in thanksgiving](#). The ONLY animals that are to be prayerfully received in thanksgiving for food according to Scripture are those listed as such in Leviticus 11. We are told by His Word to be thankful for clean animals as food, not for unclean things. Why would we be thankful for eating animals God told us were unclean?

That is nowhere found in His Word and actually, we only find the opposite, being thankful for the set-apart or consecrated animals found in Leviticus 11. This why verse three (3) states that verse four (4) is for those who believe and KNOW THE TRUTH. Truth is defined by God's Word as the Law.

However, there is more. Why should we stop at the verses before and after verse four? Believe it or not, this actually becomes even more interesting when we pull in even more context.

Here is the question: Are all of God's commandments old wives' fables, profane, and ungodly? On the surface the question might seem rather absurd, but that is what must be asked if we conclude that verse 4 is speaking against those teaching God's dietary commandments. Paul also uses the word fables -muthos in the Greek- in verses 1 Timothy 1:4, 2 Timothy 4:4, Titus 1:14, and Peter uses the word in 2 Peter 1:16.

So let's see how this word is Biblically used.

1 Timothy 1:4

Neither give heed to **fables** and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.

Paul contrasts his usage of fables with the law in the verses following verse four, meaning that fables and God's law are not one and the same, but polar opposites.

1 Timothy 1:5-8

Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm. But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully...

The next usage of fables by Paul is found in

2 Timothy 4:2-4

Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to **fables**.

In Paul's usage of fables in 2 Timothy, "fables" is again contrasted with truth, sound doctrine, and the Word. Noticing a pattern? Fables are the construct of false teachers that the masses have heaped up for themselves to tickle their itching ears. Fables are the opposite of God's Word.

Informing someone that Scripture declares ham is an abomination to us now, and to the Lord at the time of His return, as declared in Isaiah 66 verses 14 thru 18, does not usually tickle many ears.

As it has already been established, God's law is declared as Truth throughout Scripture. Unless we want to contradict Scripture, God's law, which is Scripturally defined as Truth, cannot be fables and commandments of men. God did not turn Truth into not Truth. Fables and truth are polar opposites, they are obviously not the same thing.

Titus 1:14

Not giving heed to Jewish **fables**, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.

In this verse, Paul again contrasts Jewish fables and commandments of men with the Truth, meaning that Jewish fables and commandments of men are not the same thing as commandments from God. Surprisingly, mainstream doctrine often confuses commandments of men with commandments of God.

Colossians 2 would be an excellent example. Read it, the word law is not even found anywhere in Colossians 2, only commandments, doctrines, and traditions of men, not God.

Here is the difference we must understand to fully understand what Paul is teaching. Commandments of men are commandments invented by men. Commandments of God are commandments given by God to His people through His Word. That was the whole problem in the first century. False doctrines,

traditions, and teachings were nullifying the Law of God. Jewish fables and commandments of men are against the truth of the Word.

It should be noted that, once again, the contrast is exactly the same. Fables are not related to God's law and truth, but commandments of men and fables. The dominant Jewish leadership of the first century (the Pharisees and Sadducees) created their own law and their own commandments, called the oral law or Talmud. Such would be an example of the commandments of men.

As already mentioned, the Gnostics doctrine presented in Colossians 2 would be another example of Paul arguing against the commandments of men, not the commandments of God. We cannot turn commandments of men into commandments of God... unless we conclude men are God.

Even Yeshua, or Jesus, was constantly against the Pharisees with their "oral law", their traditions of their fathers. Our Messiah railed against the Pharisee oral law and instead only taught obedience to God's law as written by Moses.

Let's examine Mark 7 for example:

Mark 7:6

He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. **And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men**

Mark 7:9

He said to them, "**All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.**

Mark 7:13

making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do."

It is the Word of God that we are to follow, not the doctrines and traditions of men. Even in Mark 7:10 specifically, we see our Lord appealing to what was written by Moses as the Word of God. How interesting is that? Yet we know that Yeshua, himself, kept God's commandments perfectly, which included the Sabbath, Feast days and the dietary instructions. And even though he was often false accused of otherwise, Paul kept and taught them as well - see Acts 21 as just one example.

We have already established that God's law is Truth. Man's commandments are against God's Word because man's commandments elevate man above God's Word. God's commandments humble men and bring themselves under God. That is a significant difference.

Again, Paul is using the word "fables" consistently, as something that is against God's law, not the same as God's law. We should use the word fables as Paul uses the word. Thus, fables is not the law of God, but against the law of God.

Remember, we are trying to determine how Paul used the word fables in his writings. If Paul used the word fables as equating to the law of God, then we could rightfully conclude that 1 Timothy 4 is indeed teaching against the law of God, such as Leviticus 11. However, contrary to popular doctrine, it appears

that Paul uses the word fables as being the opposite of the Law of God.

This supports what we established earlier about 1 Timothy 4, that it is actually teaching in agreement to the law of God, Leviticus 11 in this case, instead of against God's law. The contrast of fables versus the truth is exactly the same. We also find the word "fables" in 2 Peter 1:16.

2 Peter 1:16

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Yeshua HaMashiach [Jesus Christ], but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

In this verse, Peter states that "fables" are cunningly devised and that he (and others) have not followed them. If Peter considered God's dietary instructions in Leviticus 11 as fables then Peter would have a hard time explaining why he stated that he did indeed follow them in Acts chapter 10 verse 14.

Acts 10:14

But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.

Since we cannot accuse Peter of lying, then we must also conclude that Peter uses the word fables in the same sense that Paul uses the word. Fables is still opposite of God's Law or Truth.

As long as we allow Scripture to interpret Scripture, we will correctly conclude that usage of the word "fables" in 1 Timothy 4 verse 7 is not equating to God's commandments but is instead referring to commandments and doctrines of men.

Does God cunningly or deceitfully or sneakily devise anything? Is that His nature? Is the law of God deceitful or cunning?

If we allow the totality of Scripture to define the usage of the word "fables" we learn that in every instance it is speaking of commandments and false doctrines of men that are actually contrary to God's commandments written by Moses, just like in Mark 7.

Therefore, we can only conclude that in 1 Timothy 4 that verse 7, which relates back to verse 4, is speaking of commandments of men and not commandments of God. That should not seem like too much of a stretch since God also never commanded us to refrain from marriage or refrain from eating of animals Scripturally set apart as food, but He in fact commanded the exact opposite.

Now that it is established that old wives' fables cannot be God's commandments, it should make sense why the same verse contrasts it against godliness. Godly behavior is walking in God's commandments.

We do not want to be walking in men's doctrines and commandments, but God's doctrines and commandments. God's commandments are uncommon, holy, sanctified and set apart. Men's commandments are fables, common, unholy and profane. This is as simple as it gets.

The commandments found in Leviticus 11 are not fables, common, unholy and profane. Anyone concluding such just violated several hundred verses in Scripture. Most importantly and consider this would it be remotely correct to suggest that God's dietary instructions are taught by those who have departed from the faith and are teaching things from seducing spirits or doctrines of devils (4:1)? Is

Leviticus 11 a doctrine of the devil?

And perhaps even more odd, are these same people that follow God's dietary instructions in Leviticus 11 also teaching others not to marry? Certainly not. Since when is keeping God's commands anything devils and seducing spirits want to teach us? Did Leviticus 11, as instructed from God, actually come from the devil? That should sound absurd, even to an unbeliever.

In fact, there are many absurd conclusions we would have to draw if we were to believe that 1 Timothy is teaching against the law of God. Here are just a few of the things that we would have to believe in order to conclude that 1 Timothy 4:4 is teaching against anyone teaching obedience to all of God's commandments:

We would have to believe that teaching God's dietary instructions are doctrines of devils and seducing spirits (4:1).

We would have to believe that teaching obedience to God's whole Word is departing from the faith (4:1).

We would have to believe that teaching that God has set apart (sanctified) certain animals as food in the Word of God is speaking lies and hypocritical (4:2).

We would have to believe that those teaching that God has not abolished Leviticus 11 are also teaching believers not to marry (4:3).

We would have to believe that somehow all animals can be set apart, uncommon, sanctified and holy by the Word of God but at the same time leaving nothing to be common and unholy.

We would have to conclude that God's law (which Scripture defines as the Truth) states nothing about animals being clean and unclean (food and not food) and that all animals were always to be received with thanksgiving (4:3)

We would have to conclude that God created all animals to be eaten (4:3)

We would have to conclude that the Word of God states that all animals are now clean in which Scripture declares no such thing in either the New Testament or the Old Testament (4:5).

We would have to conclude that teaching God's commandments in Leviticus 11 is profane (common/unholy)

We would have to conclude that teaching God's commandments in Leviticus 11 is ungodly.

We would have to conclude that teaching God's commandments in Leviticus 11 is old wives' fables, which is contrary to every usage of "fables" in all of Scripture.

Are we ready to sign up for that doctrine? Hopefully not, but strangely many do.

Hopefully concluding any of those 11 things would be well beyond anyone's comfort level, even for the most relaxed Biblical scholar.

All it takes in order to not make the "error of lawless men" is to invest some time and attention in applying context and critical thinking at minimum. At best it would be great if we were educated in the Word of God and stable in our understanding so we could be like the Berean and test what Paul wrote back to the Old Testament as Paul instructed us.

We are called to test all things to the Word and hold on to only what is good. For all of those who claim 1 Timothy 4 is evidence that God abolished His dietary instructions, contrary to Matthew 5:17-20 and Romans 3:31 for example, they might be very surprised to discover that 1 Timothy 4 actually proves that His dietary instructions still exist for our benefit.

We hope that this study has blessed you and remember to continue to test everything.

Shalom

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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