***Epaphroditus - PH61-02  
  
Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 2:25-30***

We are studying Epaphroditus, the strenuous worker. This is the fourth in that series. Miracle healing was a fantastic thing in New Testament times. It was obviously something that was very welcome, and those who needed it were very delighted to find that it was in operation. It is understandable that since New Testament times, people have longed for such a power to heal. Sick people, we have found from the book of Job, will do just about anything in order to get well.

Therefore, anyone today who can create the impression that he possesses the gift of miracle healing will become not only famous, but will become extremely wealthy. If you want to become wealthy in short order, just establish for yourself the reputation that you are able to heal people. I don't care whether you are the kind of healer who is deliberately faking, such as the psychic healers do, or if you're the sincere but deluded type such as Kathryn Kuhlman and Oral Roberts are. It makes no difference. Once you have established the fact that you have the power of miraculous healing in people's eyes (and, of course, you don't, but if you can establish that in their minds), you will become fantastically wealthy. As you know, Kathryn Kuhlman had a falling out not so many months ago with her pianist Dino. I don't know where it currently stands, but when everybody got mad at everybody else, Dino was describing for us the fantastic vault that Kathryn Kuhlman has in her home in Pennsylvania–a walk in a vault where she keeps jewelry which is literally worth over a million dollars, as well as all kinds of other valuable things, including greenbacks.

So the business of miracle healing is not a poverty situation. Both of these types, the psychic healer (who is a deliberate faker), and the sincere but deluded charismatic type, give credit to God. We want you to understand that. What these men in the Philippians are doing is constantly accredited to God as the source of what they reportedly accomplish.

God has created the human body to function in good health. Therefore, He made the body as the marvelous mechanism which will maintain itself in health if it's given half a chance. This requires certain things. It requires proper nutrition; it requires proper exercise; and, it requires proper rest. In order to meet the need of nutrition, the Old Testament listed certain dietary laws which were given to guide the Jewish people so that they would have good physical health. These were not merely for ceremonial purposes. They were actually designed in order to protect the people of God from the diseases which were to be found round about them in the heathen nations.

I want to continue reading to you from the book by Pastor Elmer A. Josephson, God's Key to Health and Happiness, in which he has been discussing, as the result of his own near brush with death through cancer, his investigation over a period of 30 years relative to foods. By the way, he's still alive, strong and kicking. In the previous session, we were particularly looking at the role of one of the dietary laws which forbad the Jewish people to eat any product that came from a pig.

So continuing now on page 39 of his book, he says, "During the past two summers, it has been our privilege to have the Jim Van Koevering family as guests in our home. They are now widely known as the Swiss Bell Ringers of St. Petersburg, Florida, and as a family play about 100 various instruments. Mr. James Van Koevering, before his conversion, was in the professional show business. He counted such personalities as Mr. Edgar Bergen among his close friends. To a degree, his life paralleled that of Mel Trotter, under whose ministry he surrendered his life to God for full-time Christian service, and became his lifelong friend. Mrs. Van Koevering told us the following true story of a relative who lived in the state of Michigan:

"Mr. H. owned a farm on which there were some deep ravines which he wished to fill. Then he came to a very brilliant idea. He invested in a herd of hogs and a few trucks, and contracted for a garbage route in the nearby town. The garbage dump in the ravine supplied more than ample food for the swine. This was a wonderful arrangement. This was a gold swine. Why hadn't someone thought of it before? They had. It goes on all over where pagan eating habits exist. "He really began to prosper financially. There was a big income with minimum expense. He bought more trucks; increased his garbage route; and, got more trucks and more hogs and more pigs. They had the world by the pig tail.

"Soon, however, neighbors began to complain. The hog farm was not only an eyesore, but a nose sore as well. The obnoxious stench was more than farmer patience could endure. The result? Mr. H. bought his neighbor's farm. The vile odor got worse and spread to other farms. He brought their farms too. Finally, irritated citizens said the place was a public nuisance because of having to endure the loathsome stench while driving by the hog haven. The outcome? He bought the road leading through his farms.

"Nothing seemed to hinder his onward march of prosperity until Mr. H. began having trouble keeping drivers for his trucks. They would work a week or two and get sick, and have to quit. The problem continued and got worse, which at times all but halted the gold swine operation. The drivers also ate the hogs fattened on the garbage.

"Mr. H. had secured two beautiful husky German Shepherd watchdogs in the beginning of this project to guard against prowlers and thieves. At the start, they were unusually alert and active. They not only got scraps, but special portions of the swill-fed swine were prepared for them. In a relatively short time, these fine dogs began to lose weight; became listless; and, just wanted to lie around and do nothing. It was not long until they finally sickened and died, but this was not the worst.

"Mr. H. and his family became ill more and more frequently. Doctor and hospital bills mounted. They began to suffer from various and rare ailments. Children that were born to them were found to have diseases from birth. They were spending more and more for medical and hospital treatment in their search for relief and health. At last, after losing everything, it was necessary for them to sell their farm and move to Arizona, where doctors recommended that they seek to find some help and benefit from the more direct healing rays of the sun. Let us hope their ailments can be arrested or even miraculously cured.

"Don't you think we should conclude that the chief nutritionist (headquarters: heaven) knew what He was about when He separated the clean animals from the unclean for our physical health and well-being? Let us abide by His decisions. When our Lord reminds us that we are the temple of the living God, He is talking about our bodies. He continues by saying, 'I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them and be separate,' says the Lord, 'and touch not the unclean thing.'

"Here God declares that he wants us to dwell and walk in clean bodies. Is yours? We prefer to spiritualize these passages, but God is talking about our bodies, which the context proves. 'And I will receive you and will be a Father unto you. You shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.' It's too bad the chapter divides there, for the next verse is related: '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 Corinthians 6:16-7:1).

"Let us allow God to say what He means. Many who profess to live holy lives would never defile God's temple with cigarettes or whiskey, but will take secondhand, disease-laden, maggot-infested garbage into the temples of God, and still boldly contend they are keeping the temple clean. I reiterate, 'What thinking person can believe that all this vile refuse is sanctified and made clean just because a hog has eaten it?' I am cleanly aware of the weight of prejudice produced through centuries of common acceptance of pagan eating habits. The adoption of heathen (those who know not God) customs on the part of Christians is not isolated to diet, but is evident in fashions; desecration of the Lord's Day; and, in other areas.

"We live in the day of carbon copies of conformity. What monkey sees, monkey does. There are few Abrahams and many Lots; few great Christians with strong convictions. 'Follow the crowd' is the order of the day. 'But if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch' (Matthew 15:14), and the ditches are full.

"The apostle Paul, inspired by God's Spirit, writes, 'Be not conformed to the heathen, but rather to the perfect will of God.' Which shall we choose? Good or evil; clean or unclean; or, holy or unholy, your future welfare hangs in the balance. We have heard some say, 'I've eaten pork all my life and it hasn't hurt me.' But do you know how much sharper and more vibrant health they might have had if they had they honored God's word?

"I heard of a baby that fell from a fast moving train, and to the amazement of all, they found the infant without a scratch. Is the moral of this story to start throwing babies out of moving trains? We have heard of thieves who operated for years without being caught. Does this prove stealing is right? May the Spirit of God open our hearts to receive and obey truth for the blessing and God's glory?

"A personal friend of mine, who is the prior owner of a supermarket (an expert butcher), gave me a very pertinent fact about meat. He stated, 'When pork begins to get bad, it spoils from the inside out, where it is noticed last. On the other hand,' he said, 'when beef breaks down, it starts on the outside. This can be trimmed off, and the inside is just as good as ever.' This is another corroboration of the wisdom of the dietary laws."

**Trichinosis**

The next section that I want to read before we go on is something that perhaps you've heard all of your life. I remember as a child back in Chicago people talking about run-of-the-mill servings of dishes such as pork or pork chops. They would say, "Be careful that you really cook your pork because pork has trichinosis worms in it. If you don't cook your pork well enough to kill the worm, you'll eat it alive, and you can get extremely sick. Trichinosis can be very disastrous to a human being."

So the rules always seemed a little strange to me because they were saying, "Cook it real good so you'll eat a good cooked worm, and not a live one." However, I assumed something as a teenager that I realize now is not true. I assumed as a teenager that that was one rare (once-in-a-while) possibility that you were going to go to the butcher shop and buy a piece of pork that had a trichinosis worm in it. You may have thought the same thing. So let's read on:

"Trichinosis is the name of the disease that originates with the trichina worm. The scientific term is trichinella spiralis. The trichina is one of 18 or 19 worms found in swine, not to mention lice or other diseases such as rickets; the thumps; mange; and, so on. The trichina worm is deadly. Let's listen to a scientific report in this field. In the 1950 March issue of Reader's Digest, Laird S. Goldsboro writes: 'In the pork which we Americans eat, there too often lurks myriads (countless numbers) 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. For this unique disease (trichinosis) there is no cure and no drug to stop them. Dr. Goldsboro's article goes on to say: 'In the flesh of a pig, the trichina are often so minute, and so nearly transparent, that to find them with a microscope is a task for expert scientific inspectors.' Remember this: when stamped on a pork product the words *U. S. Government Inspected and Passed*, these words do not mean that any official inspection whatever has been made as to whether this pork has trichinosis or not. It has merely passed the routine inspection given meat in general.

"London's eminent Sir James Paget, who discovered this parasite in 1835, wrote: 'Fancy the body of a single individual supporting more existing creatures than the whole population of the world.' Sounds impossible? This word comes from a specialist. Dr. Maurice C. Hall, late Chief of the Division of Zoology of the U. S. Public Health Service comments, 'It appears to be a legitimate demand that when a man exchanges dollars for pork, he should not do it on the basis that he may be purchasing his death warrant,' speaking in regard to the infected meat of the swine. Senator Thomas C. Desmond, who served as chairman of the New York Trichinosis Commission, stated, 'Physicians have confused trichinosis with some 50 ailments, ranging from typhoid fever to acute alcoholism.'

"He states that pain in your arm or leg may be arthritis or rheumatism, but it may be trichinosis. That pain in your back may mean gall bladder involvement, but it may mean trichinosis."

Is anybody feeling anything? I hope not.

"It was reported recently from a lab at one of our northern universities that trichina-laden swine flesh was heated to 600 degrees Fahrenheit, and then put under a microscope. To the amazement of the technicians, some worms were still alive and moving about. The supposition that all these worms can be killed in cooking is not to be relied upon. Why take the chance with such a crippler and killer?

"In another scientific laboratory, examinations were made of the joints of arthritic swine. The exact formation and build-up of arthritis cells were found in the swine as is common in the arthritis in humans. Did the pigs get it from the people, or the people from the pigs? The trichina is just one worm found in swine. These include: the large roundworm, the gullet worm; three kinds of stomach worms; a tiny hair worm; a hookworm; and, the thorn-headed worm in the small intestines. There are several species of nodular worms, and one species of whip worm in the large intestine, and the kidney worm. The large roundworm can be as long as 18 inches. Dr. Hess & Clark in The Barnyard Doctor asks from Ohio, 'Could it be since physicians have confused their diagnosis of trichinosis with 50 different ailments, that this worm could be the cause of one of the great killers in America today, cancer?' My personal belief is that it is one of the great causes of this dreaded disease, which I'll touch on in the next chapter.

"As I picked up the Kansas City Times the morning of September 11th, 1952, I noticed a headline on the front page which read 'Big Swine Kill,' and the next line: 'To Stamp Out Disease.' The article went on to state that 4,900 hogs were infested with Vesicular Exanthema, a disease in hogs similar to the hoof-and-mouth disease which is found occasionally in cattle. The hogs were owned by the B Construction Company, holder of the city garbage collection contract. This means they bought all the garbage collected in Kansas City, and would use it to fatten hogs that they had bought from farmers throughout the Midwest. Only a fraction of the imagination is required to realize that garbage covers a multitude of filth. When a veterinarian was called, he diagnosed the virus infection immediately, and quarantined all of the animals. The Agriculture Department officials asserted the disease is traceable to garbage-fed hogs.

"Why do people insist on eating filthy garbage secondhand in animals that are subject to such perilous diseases? Even though this scavenger were not on the Creator's blacklist, the knowledge scientists have given us in knowing, as we do, the swine to be a mobile garbage disposal unit should be enough to warn us of the danger of its use as food. A household appliance company sent fancy pamphlet questionnaires to housewives asking the question, 'What make of garbage disposal do you use?' One woman answered, 'Four hogs.'

"In the same paper and under the same date, I noticed another headline title 'Faces 30 Years in Jail.' This article went on to state that an Illinois ex-official pleads guilty in a horse meat scandal. He confessed to six indictments growing out of horse meat violations. Immediately, he became liable to fines totaling $12,000 in jail or prison sentences, aggregating 30 years. Compare these two articles. Both, according to the Scriptures, were peddling unclean meat. The first would have been guilty, had a veterinarian not stopped the selling, of starting an epidemic of dreadful disease. He was merely detained temporarily from his money-making project. The second faced a $12,000 fine and 30-year prison sentence, though no disease was found in the horse meat. In the first case, the swine are far filthier animals than the horse. No great study or scientific knowledge is needed to come to such a conclusion. The horse feeds on grass, hay, and so on, and is a far cleaner animal in every way. But in our courts, the filthy swine takes precedence because we have commonly accepted the heathen dietary custom, and because it's a fast moneymaker on the market.

"Several years ago, a government meat inspector told the owner of a meat locker plant at Granada, Minnesota, 'If the dates on the packaged pork products run past a specified given date, I must condemn all the meat in the locker.' Why? Isn't this a commentary on the Scripture God gave as a warning against swine? 'Their carcass shall you not touch. They are unclean to you.' Why, with all of our advance in various fields of science and social uplift, do we retain these filthy pagan foods that foster so many deadly and crippling diseases? Why do we have such a twisted sense of values as these above articles reveal? We are supposed to be an enlightened Christian nation, and yet we reject the truths of the book that we claim to believe.

"'The love of money is the root of all evil' (1 Timothy 6:10). It plays a far greater part in this entire question than perhaps we are ready to admit. To the farmer, the hog is known as the mortgage lifter. They thrive and fatten on all kinds of rotten refuse, and can be sent to market at a good price in a relatively short time. Baby pigs come in large litters of eight, ten, and twelve at a time. It has been known for a large sow to have as many as 22 pigs at a time. The horse, of course, cannot reproduce nearly as fast, so we must whet our appetite for the dirty, lucrative swine.

"We have been so thoroughly brainwashed and indoctrinated into pagan eating habits that not only have we commonly accepted a heathen diet to our hurt and destruction (Hosea 4:6), but we look with disdain and stamp the label 'heretic' on anyone who is brash enough to suggest we return to the biblical path of clean nutrition.

"Miss Joan Wells, instructor of nurses at Wesley Hospital in Wichita, Kansas (then a member of our Prayer and Bible Study Group), told us of a special report on trichinosis given at a doctors and nurses conference on communicable diseases. That was very revealing. A Dr. Manley, who is an expert on animal diseases, made the statement that autopsies show that one of three people are infected with trichinosis. This means there is a tremendous increase in the spread of the subtle crippler and killer. The law has mercifully warned us of these diseases lurking in these unclean animals, and of the consequence of disobeying His commandment and statutes (Deuteronomy 20:8, Deuteronomy 27:35). These are God's warning signals–flashing red lights–installed in the book of God to keep us from disaster. Many today make sport of the God-given scientific Mosaic Laws, and laugh themselves right into the hospital and into a coffin.

"Of whom are we making light? A scientist, such as Dr. Goldsboro, a minister who faithfully declares God's message? No, but the Almighty in whose hand is their very life and breath. These are not the arguments of a man, but factual statements from the indestructible Word of the eternal God. Let us beware of mocking God who gave these words of wisdom (Proverbs 14:9)."

Of course, that's just presented for your consideration. The book has much more to say. However, you may, as your own priest, react as you choose to this matter. You may go positive or go negative. One of our men, when we had our first segment of discussion on this, said that if there is anybody who is negative toward what you heard us say, please get in touch with him. He has a locker with 500 pounds of pork he's ready to give away. So if you're negative, you can get the pork to have it for yourself.

There is no repeal of these dietary laws for good health in the New Testament. I do appreciate the fact that you are a thinking congregation. The previous session was not over before several Bibles came floating in my direction with questions like, "How about this," and "How about that?" The rest of this service will be spent on, "How about this," and "How about that?"

**Acts 10:9-17**

Please turn to Acts 10:9-17. We will not read this passage, but you are acquainted with it because it is the story of Peter seeing the sheet of unclean animals being lowered from heaven. The idea that somebody brought up is that God brought this sheet down filled with loathsome, creeping, four-footed, unclean animals of every type. God told Peter, "Peter, get up here and eat." Peter says, "I've never eaten anything unclean. I can't do that, Lord." We're not told specifically what the unclean animals are, but you could go back to Leviticus 11 and get the list of unclean animals. Undoubtedly it was filled with that. No doubt the pig was sitting there right on the front row in that sheet.

What he was told was, "Get up and eat." Peter recoiled at the idea. And God says, "Don't you call unclean what I call clean. Don't you call common what I call clean." So we might be led mistakenly to believe that now these unclean foods are no longer unclean. We might think that something happened at the cross to correct this situation with the pig who is reared entirely on grain and never gets a mouthful of garbage, yet automatically has flesh (whether it's his ham; bacon; pork; pork chops; or, spareribs) that has all parts of him shot through with various kinds of worms and parasites just because he is a scavenger pig animal, and that's why God said, "Don't touch him. Stay away from him."

We might somehow want to stretch the spiritual concept here to say, "Now he is no longer going to be dangerous. Now it is OK," even though we can't kill some of these worms with 600 degrees of temperature (which no wife ever gets anywhere near cooking with). So whenever you eat products from pigs, you are eating live parasites and live worms. There is no way around it.

So what does this passage means? Well, the vision here is made on the analogy of comparing these unclean animals to a group of people who, in the experience and eyes of the Jews, were unclean, namely the gentiles. Both unclean animals and gentiles were untouchables to a Jew. A Jew did not sit down and eat with a gentile. A Jew had no relationships with a gentile. As a matter of fact, the usual word to describe a gentile in the Jewish community was "dog." Gentiles were called "dogs," and a dog is an unclean animal.

So the point of the vision was that the gentiles, who were unclean dogs to the Jews, were, of all things, to be part of the body of Christ, the church, with the Jews. That's what God was trying to prepare Peter to understand. God was going to tell Peter that something in the past had been unclean in the matter of a group of people, and God, in His sovereign authority, was now going to declare them to be clean. God had once told His Jewish people, "Don't have any relationship outside of your own Jewish circle. Don't allow your kids to date gentiles. Don't invite gentiles into your home for food. Don't go into business with Gentiles. You are not to have any relationships with them at all. If you do, they will contaminate you spiritually. You are to view them as unclean.

Now, Peter, who has been a faithful Jew, and who has the traditions of centuries behind him, all of a sudden, is going to have to shift gears and look upon the gentile as a brother, of all things, in spiritual things. And he is going to look upon him not only as a brother, but in a unique relationship, of being in one body, the body of Christ–something that had never been heard of in the history of the world before. Since Pentecost, the Jews were extremely pleased that God had selected them to form such a unique part of the Godhead. They were the body of Christ.

Seven years has now passed at this point in time. Seven years has passed since Pentecost. Now God says, "It's time to bring the gentiles into the operation of the church age." So he sends Peter to do this through the household of the gentile, the military man, Cornelius, the Centurion.

What I want you to notice as you read through Acts 10:9-17 is that the vision did not declare that the unclean animals were now clean, and thus fit for human consumption. What it does declare is that the gentiles as a people were now clean by divine declaration.

Now, Peter, at first, was perplexed as to the meaning of the vision. Verse 17 tells us that. He was perplexed as to what all this should mean. But there was no suggestion that he was, in any way, considering that this meant that the dietary laws relative to unclean animals had been repealed. He just didn't know exactly what it was that God was trying to tell him about these unclean animals, and the suggestion that he participate in eating them. But Peter connected the vision with the fact that immediately, as soon as the vision was over and the sheet went up into heaven the third time, there was a servant that came up. He was up on that flat roof resting. It was the sixth hour, 6:00 p.m. Immediately that that sheet went up, the servant came and said, "There are some men down here who've come to see you. Peter connected this in his mind. Later, when he describes this back in Jerusalem to the believers there, that's what he indicates. Peter says, "The sheet went up, and I'm pondering what in the world does this mean?" And the servant says, "There's a group of gentiles to see you." Peter says, "A group of gentiles to see me?" The chain of thought is set up in Peter's mind. He connects it.

Verses 19-20: "Peter thought on the vision. The spirit said unto him, 'Behold, three men seek you. Arise, therefore, and get down. Go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them.'" In order to put Peter completely at ease, God the Holy Spirit spoke to him and said, "Have no hesitancy about speaking to these men, and furthermore, going with them. They're from Caesarea. You go back with them."

Now, if God had not shown him this vision, and the Spirit of God had then not connected this to these gentiles, Peter would never have gone with him. He would have told them to get lost. So he connects the two together. Peter is told to have no hesitancy in going with them. So his conclusion was that the vision meant that henceforth, God had declared that gentiles were not common or unclean. Notice Acts 10:28: "And he said unto them, 'You know that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company or come unto one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.'"

Peter got the point, and that's the whole point of this vision. There were unclean animals. God said, "Eat it, Peter." Peter said, "No, I can't." God says, "Don't you call unclean what I call clean, Peter." There was a knock on the door. Here are dog gentiles, unclean people. The Spirit of God says, "Go with them. It's OK." Peter says, "I see what you're trying to tell me. You have declared these people clean." Notice that God did not declare the pig clean. That's the difference. To conclude that is to make an assumption.

The event with Cornelius brought the gentiles into the church. However, it got Peter in trouble. If you look in the first verses of Acts 11, you'll see that he was called up on the carpet back in Jerusalem: "And the apostles and brethren that were in Judea heard that the gentiles had also received the Word of God. And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were the circumcision contended with him, saying, "You went in to men uncircumcised, and ate with them." These are Christians, mind you. They were horrified when they got the word that Peter ate with gentiles. They said, "Oh, boy, he's really getting high and mighty now that he's an apostle."

Well, Peter's explanation of the meaning of the vision, and of what God was telling him relative to the condition now of the gentiles, satisfied the Jewish Christians. If you look in Acts 11:18, you will read, "When they heard these things, they held their piece and glorified God, saying, 'Then God has also to the gentiles granted repentance unto life.'" It had confirmed and enabled the Jews to get over this hurdle of resistance of the gentiles. It had confirmed that the gentiles were now to be viewed as an acceptable people in relationship to the Jews. God used the vision to prepare people to go to the gentiles, not to repeal the dietary laws.

**1 Timothy 4:3-4**

How about 1 Timothy 4:3-4? "Forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from foods which God has created to be received with thanksgiving, by them 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." Now what does that mean? Here are people commanding us to abstain from food. Now, it sounds like today we've been suggesting to you that maybe you ought to consider abstaining from certain foods because of Old Testament dietary laws. But you'll notice that it is alright for us to accept food with thanksgiving by those of us who believe and know the truth. We accept foods on the basis of knowing the truth, and only those who believe (who are born-again believers) can know the truth. Part of the truth of the Word of God are these dietary laws (not for ceremonial reasons, but for health reasons), which we have no reason to think have been repealed.

Verse 4 says, "Every creature is good," and nothing is to be refused for human consumption. That's the verse that people will point up to you. How can you say that there's something wrong with a ham and Swiss cheese sandwich? The Bible says every creature of God is good. Nothing is to be refused. Well, how about Swiss cheese and a rat roast then, if no creature of God is to be refused, and it's all good? How about a little worm sandwich? How about toasted lizard? Or maybe a little bit of cockroach jam? There are not many dogs or cats found in China. Do you know why? They eat them. How would you like that? You can make rugs out of the hides. Or how about the solid high protein of a group of maggots?

So don't be ridiculous and take the Word of God and press it. Somebody is going to bring this verse to you. He's going to look you right in the eye and say, "Now here's 1 Timothy 4:4, 'Every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused.'" Well, you invite him for dinner, and you serve him a nice little hamburger crawling with maggots, but pray over it first. Thank God for the food first. That's what you're supposed to do. Then receive it.

We express our thanksgiving before a meal for legitimate nutrition. That's all this passage means. That's all Paul has in mind. He is not talking about the Old Testament rules being repealed. As a matter of fact, what he is referring to here is the old Roman Catholic idea of no meat on Fridays, which even they have gotten over. That's the kind of people Paul is talking about. False teaches are going to come along (as the Catholic Church has done for centuries) and say, "You can't eat this," when it's legitimate food. I've been in conversations where I've heard Catholics speaking to their priests when this rule was in force and saying, "Father, last Friday, I ate some soup for a lunch in which a chicken had been cooked. Did I sin?" The priest would say, "Yes, you did, my son. Chicken is meat. You shouldn't have eaten the soup." That's the kind of thing that Paul is talking about here.

**Matthew 15:11**

Well, how about Matthew 15:11. Let's take a look at that one: "Not that which goes into the mouth defiles a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth. This defiles the man." That's a good one. How am I going to be defiled because I eat spareribs? Spareribs are delicious. What can be nicer than ham sliced thin? It's very tasty. Well, this has reference to spiritual and moral defilement. If you look down at verse 19-20, you'll see that Jesus explains what He means: "Do you not yet understand that whatever enters at the mouth goes into the stomach, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart. And they defile the man. For out of the heart (out of the mind) proceeds evil thoughts; murders; adulteries; fornication; thefts; false witness; and, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man."

We have this saying repeated in Mark 7:18-23. There's no suggestion here that unclean foods do not harm your body physically. All Jesus is saying is that spirituality is not a matter of what you eat. These dietary laws were not to make you spiritual. They were to make you healthy. That was the point. The Lord is trying to tell these people that, when it comes to spiritual things, it's not whether you eat meat on Friday, or even that you do not eat pork. What's going to defile you spiritually is what comes out of your mentality–that which is your mental attitude, and that which is a result of what you have taken into your soul in the way of thinking.

**Romans 14:14**

How about Romans 14:14? "I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself, but to him that esteems anything to be unclean, to him, it is unclean." Here's a passage that says there is nothing unclean unless you think it's unclean. But this passage has to do with convictions about personal eating habits relative to whether you want to be a vegetarian or a meat eater. As you go back over this passage, you will see that some Christians in the New Testament church were weaklings. So they were therefore offended if you ate meat, especially if they discovered that you bought some of the best beef steaks in town which were always the ones that they had just offered on the altars to the idol gods. Those were the best meats you could find–down at the temple in town. There was some Christians who were goofy enough in the early New Testament church to think that there was something wrong with the meat because it had been offered to some dumb idol.

What this person says is some of them didn't eat meat at all. If you came along and you made fun of their vegetarian way of life, God says, "You can offend them, and you can hurt them spiritually, and you should not do that." Paul is in no way suggesting that unclean animals were suitable meat for human consumption. When Paul says, "All things are lawful for me" in 1 Corinthians 6:12 and 1 Corinthians 10:23, he does not imply that moral commandments have been repealed. When he says, "All things are lawful for me," for example, does he mean that all the moral commandments now can be broken by him? Not at all. So when he says that, concerning all these foods, nothing is unclean in itself (all these are lawful), he is speaking again within the limitations of the legitimate foods that are available for human consumption. Paul's point is, "Try not to do spiritual injury to weaker Christians with your legitimate eating habits."

Romans 14:20-21 says, "For food, destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for that man who eats with offense. It is good neither to eat meat nor to drink wine, or anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak."

**Acts 15:28-29**

How about Acts 15:28-29? When the legalists of the New Testament church descended upon the poor new gentiles who had come in now through the house of Cornelius, one of the first things they were socked with was being told, "You gentiles have to come under the Mosaic Laws." So they finally had to have a church meeting. The first church council met here in Jerusalem. We have the record in Acts 15, and the decision was, "No, gentiles do not have to come under the Law of Moses. The Law of Moses is not operational."

But the leadership of the church said, "Now that gentiles are going to be related with Jews in the local assembly, there are certain things that will make life smoother, and will make our spiritual relationships better, because there are certain things that are extremely offensive to a Jew. So we are going to suggest to you gentile Christians that you not do certain things. And the things that they mentioned are the things that were particularly offensive to a Jew. That does not mean that there were not other things that were wrong for them to do, or that the Jew himself would object to. But, apparently, under the circumstance of the time, here is what was most offensive to the Jew.

Acts:15:28: "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols; and from blood; and from things strangled; and, from fornication, from which if you keep yourself, you shall fair well." That's the letter. So they named these four things and said, "Just avoid this." You should not eat something that has been strangled. Always eat only meat that has had the throat slashed, and the blood has been able to drain out. It is a great evil in the sight of God to eat blood. So all you borscht eaters have got a problem there. All you blood sausage enthusiasts have got a problem there. Blood carries all the contaminants in the human system. That's why God said, "You will not eat blood."

This is a problem, incidentally, in slaughterhouses where they kill cattle by a knock on the head with a hammer, unless they get that thing strung up there immediately, and get that throat slashed. Even then, it's not the most desirable way. Unless that meat has been strung up and that throat slashed so that the blood gushes out in order to ensure the food that you're eating is being free of the contamination that blood carries, you have to put the meat through a certain process. I think it's marinating it in vinegar, or something of that nature, in order to drain out what blood was left there because of the way they slaughtered the animal. This is what is meant by "kosher meat." This is why the rabbi stands there as a supervisor to see that the cattle that you are buying is an animal that has had his throat slashed so that the blood gushed out and was drained out of that carcass.

So these particularly offensive acts were suggested to the gentile Christians that they avoid these. Among the gentiles, Paul says, "However, don't make an issue." In 1 Corinthians 10:27, Paul says, "If you go to somebody's house, and they give you beef steak that's been offered to an idol, don't make an issue. Eat it." Paul says, "When you're among gentiles, don't make an issue over meat that's been offered on the altar." However, he says in 1 Corinthians 10:20, "If somebody else there makes an issue (some weaker believer), then don't eat the meat offered to the idol.

So this seemed to be the best regulation for the gentile Christians under the circumstances of the times. So we leave that with you. There's much more that could be said, and I'll not burden you further with it, at least at this time. I will lay that much on you, and let you think that over, because this may have to revolutionize some of your eating habits and some of your lifestyle. I realize that the reason for some of the things that are being taken off the market (or being threatened to take off the market) is because of preservatives that are in food in order to make it last so long. But the Word of God says there's another overriding consideration. The preservatives are bad, and finally, man is discovering that problem. However, God says there's some other problem anytime you deal with anything that comes from a pig. So it's up to you. You're an individual believer with your own freedom and your own priesthood to exercise this or to reject it. If you do choose to reject it, we have an offer of 500 pounds of pork that can be yours, and you can go ahead and go merrily on your way.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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