



"The truth has no defense against a fool determined to believe a lie."
—Mark Twain

17-Apr-26

Traditions of Men (Part Two)

A while ago, I received a text from an acquaintance containing just the words, "[Mark 7:18](#)." It states, "Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?" ([Mark 7:18-19](#)). It confused me until I remembered sharing a Facebook post called "Insects of the Sea," featuring a shrimp and a cockroach.

So, I replied, asking, "Are you sure you understand that passage? Have you compared it to Peter's vision of the sheet of animals, where he stated he had never eaten anything unclean?"

She responded, "Why would I need to compare anything to what came out of Jesus' mouth? He's the ultimate authority. I believe what [Jesus](#) said." She quickly shut down the conversation.

Because of the traditional teachings she had been taught, she could not accept that the phrase "thus purifying all foods" is not in the original text but is an interpretation of translators. Not only that, the phrase contradicts many other passages regarding [clean and unclean meats](#).

The traditional gospel of grace has influenced people for centuries, so much so that even translators are affected by its perspectives. There are times when individuals, locked into their traditions, refuse to have a teachable attitude of proving all things and can even become defensive about acknowledging any other perspectives. The impact of these [false gospel](#) perspectives is evident in Western cultures, such as New Orleans, where God's food laws hold no authority, allowing everyone to do what is right in their own eyes.

Romans 14 provides a clear example. In this part of his letter, a primary concept Paul wants the Roman congregation to accept is that not everyone who is converted understands everything at the same level. So, they should not judge others based on their level of [faith](#).

In addressing this issue, Paul uses an example of eating to provide understanding. In [Romans 14:2](#), he begins, "For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables." The apostle contrasts someone who enjoys a variety of clean foods with someone who chooses to be a vegetarian. It seems straightforward: He is speaking of personal choices. He does not indicate any sinful attitude, just differing preferences.

Then Paul makes his point, teaching in the next verse, "Let 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."

For generations, those who have accepted the perspectives of these other gospels have disregarded the contexts within Paul's letters, cherry-picking certain passages like this one, twisting the apostle's intent, and suggesting that it nullifies God's food laws. These preconceived beliefs lead them to engage in illogical reasoning, as the context shows that these passages have no connection at all to God's food laws.

Paul is speaking about brotherly [love](#) and varying levels of growth in knowledge and understanding. He addresses Jews who refuse to eat certain clean meats, fearing they might have been offered to idols, a belief taken from Judaism. Elsewhere, he dismisses this idea, stating that idols have no actual power to contaminate or make food unclean (see I Corinthians 8). He

remains focused on the importance of refraining from judgment on personal choices. Choosing to be a vegetarian or a meat-eater within what God has appointed as food is neither wrong nor sinful.

To illustrate his point further, the apostle turns to a different example, writing in verse 5, "One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind." This passage is also straightforward, but many nominal Christians have adopted the perspective of a false gospel that rejects God's food laws and the seventh-day [Sabbath](#). They misuse it, taking it out of context to justify their beliefs.

This passage is a perfect example of our need to be on guard not to read into Scripture what is not there. Notice that Paul never mentions the Sabbath but speaks of individuals who "esteem" or judge one day above another. In God's Word, judging something to be holy is never defined as a matter of personal opinion or choice. Only God can make something holy. This truth confirms Paul is not speaking about [holiness](#) in this passage. He then writes in verse 6:

He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.

Notice that the apostle combines the two examples and forms a conclusion about the personal choices of eating and observing one day over another.

The entire thread of his thought indicates that this discussion is not about the Sabbath (which God "sanctified" or made holy at Creation; [Genesis 2:1-3](#)) or other holy day observances. Instead, it is about one church member feasting on a chosen day and another fasting on that same day. In the Jewish culture of that time, there were designated days for fasting for spiritual reasons, and some converted Jews brought the practice into the church. However, others in the congregation might choose to feast on those same days.

The diversity of practice within the early Christian community highlights the importance of honoring Christ in whatever choice is made. Paul emphasizes

that the intent behind the action matters most: Whether a person chooses to feast or fast on certain days, his focus should always be on love, unity, and building each other up in faith.

It is easy to see how someone with an incorrect perspective might automatically conclude Paul is speaking about clean and unclean meats. But recognizing that God Himself has set the standard for what He has declared clean and unclean, we can see that such thinking creates a contradiction. Thus, the apostle must be speaking about something each person is free to choose for himself.

But what about verse 14? Paul writes, "I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean." Instead of undermining the whole argument, as many anti-law advocates claim, this verse confirms it.

Paul is not referring to God's commands about what is clean or unclean, but to *an individual* who takes it upon himself to decide if something is clean or unclean. There is not one place in all of Scripture where it is left up to a man and his human nature to determine whether something is clean or unclean. For selfish reasons, a person would always choose what pleased his senses—sight, smell, taste—just as they do in New Orleans.

No, Romans 14 is not about eliminating God's food laws. Rather, Paul uses illustrations of omnivorousness or vegetarianism and of fasting or feasting on certain days to highlight his main point: Christians should express genuine love and concern for the brethren by not judging them for their *legitimate* personal choices. He clearly says so in [Romans 14:13](#): "Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way."

God's gospel is clear. His is the only perspective of what is good and what is evil that matters. So, as Solomon writes in [Proverbs 3:5](#): "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."

- Craig Sablich

New Transcripts

[1869-PM: Peace, Peace \(Part Two\): Christ's Peace](#)

Given by Richard T. Ritenbaugh on 08-Apr-26

[1870A: More Excellent Sacrifice](#)

Given by Clyde Finklea on 11-Apr-26

[1870B: The Sons of Korah: Door Keepers](#)

Given by Ted E. Bowling on 11-Apr-26

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Clean and Unclean Meats](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh (1932-2023)

To rightly interpret the Scriptures, we must be aware of textual and cultural contexts, be able to visualize the overall picture, and use God-given common sense. God is absolutely sovereign, but is regarded as the enemy by the carnal mind. God desires to give us a positive future, but His purpose requires our cooperation. Unconverted man does not believe God, and will not submit to Him. All of God's goals and instructions are good for mankind. Nothing about the clean and unclean statutes has changed from the beginning; those statutes continue to transcend the Old and New Covenants. Moreover, they continue to apply to the entirety of mankind. God instructed Noah (who already knew the difference) to differentiate clean and unclean pairs of animals. In both the plant and animal kingdom, some things were never intended for food. These proscriptions (given before the Old Covenant) were universally applied—not just for Israel. The New Covenant did not abolish these universal proscriptions. Eating swine's flesh has been continually equated with idolatry. In the Millennium, what had previously been defined as unclean will still be unclean. The fear of defilement experienced by the Pharisees never applied to unclean food, but to clean food supposedly contaminated by dirt. Physical dirt does not defile the spiritual heart of a man.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Did God Change the Law of Clean and Unclean Meats?](#)

by John O. Reid

Most Christians believe that the clean and unclean laws were "done away" at the crucifixion. But is that the case? John Reid looks into the most troublesome New Testament scriptures on the subject.

Featured Audio Schedule

Friday Night Bible Study

The next Bible Study (Friday 17-Apr-26) will be **Abraham (Part Twelve)**, given by **John W. Ritenbaugh**. The Bible Study will be featured on the [CGG homepage](#) from **6:00 pm Friday** (EST) and all day Saturday.

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