

Christians Do Not Need To Keep Old Testament Laws Regarding Food

'My judgment is, we do not trouble those from among the Gentiles who turn to God, but we write to them (to tell them) they must abstain from the pollution of idols, from sexual immorality, from eating what has been strangled and from eating blood ... It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us, to lay no greater burden on you (Gentiles) than these necessary things: You must abstain from eating animals sacrificed to idols, from eating blood, from eating things strangled and keep yourselves free from sexual immorality and if you do keep yourselves from these things, it will be well with you" ... Concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written our decision, they should observe no such thing (of the Laws of Moses regarding food), except they should keep themselves from food offered to idols, from eating blood, from eating strangled animals and from sexual immorality" (Acts 15:19, 20, 28 & 29; 21:25).

'When I saw they (James, Peter and Barnabas) did not walk uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you being a Jew, live as the Gentiles do and not as the Jews do, why do you compel the Gentiles to live as the Jews do? We, being Jews by nature and not Gentiles, knowing a person is not justified by the works of the Law (of Moses) but through faith in Jesus, as we believed in Jesus, so we might be justified by faith in Jesus the Messiah and not by the works of the Law, because no flesh will be justified by the works of the Law"' (Galatians 2:14 to 16).

'Let no one judge you in what you eat, what you drink or with respect to a feast day, a new moon or a Sabbath day, which are merely shadows of the things to come. The body (our flesh) belongs to Jesus. Let no one rob you of your (eternal) prize by a voluntary (false) humility and worshipping of angels, trying to live in the (heavenly) things he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his carnal mind and not holding firmly to the Head (Jesus), from Whom the whole (spiritual) Body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and ligaments, grows with God's growth. If you died with Jesus from the elements of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to ordinances such as, "Do not handle this, nor taste that, nor touch it," all of which perish with use according to the precepts and doctrines of men? These things indeed appear like wisdom in self-imposed worship, (false) humility and severity to the body, but these are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh' (Colossians 2:16 to 23) ... Continued ... If you were raised together with Jesus, seek the things that are above where Jesus is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things on the earth' (Colossians 3:1 & 2).

These scriptures inform us, as Holy Spirit filled believers and disciples, we do not need to adhere to the Laws of Moses regarding food. Before the Lord gave food laws to the Children of Israel, the Hebrews were able to eat whatever animal they wanted. Every moving thing was to be considered food. Only after the Hebrews were brought out of Egypt did the Lord impose strict food laws onto them. Since Jesus came, we are once again allowed to eat what we desire, as long as we keep to the three areas the apostles instructed us, which were similar to what the Lord told the ancient Hebrews and they are (1) we must never eat food that has been offered to idols because idolatry is one thing God really hates. (2) We must never eat animals that have been strangled because they could be diseased animals that were killed to avoid spreading the disease. It would be equivalent to eating road-kill today. (3) Blood is the life of every living creature and must not be eaten. 'The fear of you will be on every animal of the earth and on every bird of the sky. Everything that the ground teems with and all the fish of the sea are delivered into your hand. Every moving thing that lives will be food for you. As I have given you the green herb (vegetables), I have given everything to you but not flesh with its life, its blood. You will not eat the blood' (Genesis 9:2 to 4). Eating a 'medium rare' steak is not eating blood within the meat. The fluid is blood-coloured but is not whole blood so enjoying a juicy steak is not wrong. The fluid is myoglobin. It is used within the body to oxidise the fat but it is not whole blood. It is the same fluid that seeps from a thawing piece of meat. Moreover, animals are usually 'bled' after slaughter and that whole blood is used for many things like making fertiliser for gardens.

Those people who choose to adhere to the food laws given to Moses are free to do so but the scriptures say those people are putting themselves in bondage and are considered weak believers, as the verses in Romans and Colossians written above and below reveal. Those same people are strongly instructed not to judge those who are free of bondage and who feel free to eat whatever the Lord provides for them, and all will be well with them. As long as we bless the food in the name of Jesus, we can eat whatever we enjoy. Nothing is unclean of itself and all foods are indeed clean. However, in the course of eating what we like, we must not cause a weaker Christian to stumble and sin by eating foods in front of them, that they may consider to be unclean. For example, if someone thinks it is wrong to drink wine, then people should abstain from drinking wine in front of them. The last thing a reformed alcoholic needs is an unthinking Christian to serve them a glass of wine because that could cause the former alcoholic to stumble and go back to their wretched ways. We must not destroy a person's salvation by serving them food or alcoholic drinks. If a person considers pork to be unclean, then for their conscience sake, it would be wrong to serve them pork for a meal. To do so is not walking in God's love. By faith, we are able to eat whatever we desire.

The scriptures tell us: 'Accept one who is weak in faith but not for disputes over opinions. One person has faith to eat all things but those who are weak may choose to eat only vegetables. Do not let those who eat meat despise those who do not eat meat. Do not let those who do not eat meat judge those who do eat meat, for God has accepted them all ... Those who eat, eat to the Lord for they give thanks to God. Those who do not eat meat, they do not eat to the Lord but they still give God thanks ... Each one of us will give account of themselves to God, therefore let us not judge one another, but no one put a stumbling block in their brother (or sister's) way, or an occasion for falling (such as giving a former alcoholic some wine). I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus, nothing is unclean of itself except to those who consider something to be unclean, so to them it is unclean. If because of food your brother (or sister in Jesus) is grieved, you no longer walk in love. Do not destroy (a person's salvation) with your food (or alcohol), those for whom Jesus died. Do not let your good works be slandered for the Kingdom of God is not all about eating and drinking, but is about righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Those who serve Jesus in these things are acceptable to God and approved by people. Let us all follow after things that bring peace and things by which we may build one another up. Do not overthrow God's work for the sake of food or drink. All things are indeed clean, however it is wrong for those people to create a stumbling block by eating what others consider to be unclean. It is good to not eat meat, drink wine, nor do anything by which your brother or sister stumbles, is offended or is made weak. Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy are those who do not judge themselves in what they approve. Those who doubt are condemned if they eat what they think is unclean because it is not of faith and whatever is not of faith is sin' (Romans chapter 14).

People with faith are free to eat what they want but we all need to exercise common sense. There were some laws given to the Children of Israel regarding food to keep them healthy. For example, they were told not to eat animal fat, blood, offal, the skin or the head. It all had to be burned outside the camp, or away from the general population (Leviticus 8:16, 17 & 20). Eating animal fat is very bad for our health. Liver and kidneys were created to purify the inner workings of bodies so to eat offal could be bad for us. Eating the brains can cause diseases. Skin is created to keep bacteria out of our bodies and it is covered with bacteria, so it is not a good idea to eat these things. To eat wild pig could give us parasites but the modern farmed pigs are vaccinated, drenched and fed clean food, mostly whey, fruit and vegetables so they are free of parasites and disease and are very safe to eat, especially in Western countries where food production laws are strict. Wild animals might have diseases or parasites but farmed animals are safe to eat. The Children of Israel were told not to eat shellfish and other crustaceans. Some shellfish can harbour botulism and thousands of people have suffered food poisoning after eating contaminated oysters or other shellfish. It would be wise not to eat them but if we love the taste then we are free in God to indulge.

The scriptures tell us we can eat or drink deadly things and they will not harm us. 'If they drink any deadly thing, it will in no way hurt them' (Mark 16:18). That does not mean we can tempt the Lord and deliberately eat poisonous food and expect to be okay. That means if we accidentally swallow something deadly we will not succumb to the poison. One true story happened recently, when a Christian woman gathered mushrooms from her front lawn to serve at dinner. The mushrooms had grown there overnight after heavy rain. They were tasty and enjoyed by everyone. The next day a news bulletin came on the television warning people not to touch the mushrooms because they were of a poisonous variety. Four people had already died from eating them and others were critically ill in hospital. The woman and her family were amazed because they were the same variety of mushroom that had sprouted on their front lawn. The Christian mother was unaware the mushrooms contained the toxin and her family were unharmed. Had she given them to her family after she knew they were poisonous, they may have fallen very ill. We all need to exercise common sense along with our faith.

Just as Jewish people do not have to become Christians, neither do Gentiles have to live as Jewish people do, as we read above (Galatians 2:14). We are free to enjoy eating good food and we can enjoy fellowship with the Holy Spirit in all righteousness, peace and joy. 'The Kingdom of God is not about eating and drinking but about righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' (Romans 14:17).

Amen and God bless you.

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