

## The Heresy of Ingratitude

This past week, I came across an article written by a man named Jon Bloom. Right at the beginning, he described “**grumbling as the accent of hell and gratitude as the accent of heaven.**” How does that statement strike you? As I thought about it, I was reminded of Jesus’ story of the unnamed rich man and the poor man named Lazarus. Lazarus sat outside the rich man’s house, receiving hardly any blessings and yet, when he and the rich man died, their experiences were even more diversely different. The rich man was in hell and Lazarus was in heaven with Abraham. In the interchange between Abraham and the rich man, you see the torment of the formerly wealthy man, but you also read the anger and also the desire to regain control. When Abraham confronts the man, the man responds by arguing with Abraham – that he knows what would be best.

As you read that story, there should be a profound sadness in our hearts because even in hell, this man thinks he deserves to be listened to. He believes he deserves control. And because he bosses Abraham around (grumbling against the truth) you really don’t hear any type of humility or gratitude. I understand what Bloom was saying. Grumbling is the accent of hell.

But is it right to say that gratitude is the accent of heaven? Absolutely. I think of Jesus’ resurrected body and how he still has the scars in his body. For all eternity future, we will be gloriously reminded of the eternal victory of Jesus at the cross – in conquering our sins and the brokenness of the world. Those scars aren’t there to shame us. They’re there to increase our gratitude at the continuous reminder of his infinite love and power. It’s no wonder that we read every creature in Heaven, on earth and under the earth saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”<sup>1</sup> Forever and ever, God will receive gratitude, blessing, honor and glory!

Now, what does gratitude in heaven have to do with us today? Everything. In the prayer of Jesus that we commonly call *The Lord’s Prayer*, Jesus prayed, “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” As I have thought about that statement in the past, I’ve often then concluded that we are to obey with the same type of immediacy or fervor as the heavenly beings. And while I did think that this prayer also calls me to pray for my *heart* attitude in obedience, I honestly don’t think I ever thought that gratitude was a necessary component to obeying on earth as those obey in Heaven. But the reality is that for those of us here who have been rescued by Jesus, we are to pray that in the here-and-now we would do everything with gratitude. To quote one of my favorite verses, we are to pray that in whether we eat or drink (or whatever we do), that we glorify God! Gratitude, joy and praise should pervade our being and exude from us in all we do. Pray that it would be so. Pray that we would exhibit to the world what a citizen of God’s kingdom looks like: gratefully obedient no matter how mundane our lives appear to be.

If we understand this, maybe we can begin to understand why I have entitled the sermon this morning “The Heresy of Ingratitude.” I am one who tries to not use the term “heresy” often because heresy refers to something very specific. It refers to teaching that are contrary to God’s message of salvation. Heresies aren’t merely disagreements we have with other Christians. Heresies refer to those divergent beliefs that attack the core and obvious truths of the Scripture.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Re 5:13.

In studying this past week, I've come to see that ingratitude denies core truths. It defies the accent of heaven and the attitude of ingratitude links arms with various forms of heretical beliefs and practices, thus denying God's glory in Christ.

As I say this, I know that this could come as quite a shock. Or you might think that I'm exaggerating. I understand feeling that way. So, instead of giving my own words, open up your Bibles to 1 Timothy 4, and we will read verses 1-5 together this morning. Before we do, let's pray together.

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*4 Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, <sup>2</sup> through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, <sup>3</sup> who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. <sup>4</sup> For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, <sup>5</sup> for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer. <sup>2</sup>*

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I picked this passage to conclude our gratitude series because I wanted to focus on how gratitude ought to be exhibited in the most basic of life. As I said, 1 Corinthians 10:31 is one of my favorite Bible verses: "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."<sup>3</sup> One of the reasons I love this verse is because it encourages me in the fact that I can have joy in any circumstance. We live in a world that tends to preach to us that we have to do super-amazing, exponentially impressive things in order to matter. But in God's Kingdom, we can even worship God through eating and drinking. So, I could be cleaning up after dinner, sweeping the garage, going on a date with my wife, preaching, praying, reading my Bible, talking with a friend, drinking coffee and God has privileged me to glorify him in the midst of it all!

This is something that I think many of us miss many times, myself included. As a result, I think we minimize our joy and gratitude in God. Ventura, I don't want that for us. I want our satisfaction in God to increase all the more. And as I studied this passage this past week, I saw how the apostle Paul was contrasting those who have denied Christianity with those who are Christ-followers. Both have beliefs. Both have actions that flow from those beliefs. But the differences between the two are stark. So, I hope in studying this passage, **that we would see the bondage that surrounds ingratitude and the freedom that impels thanksgiving.**

### **1. The Bondage That Surrounds Ingratitude (and its heresies; vv. 1-3a).**

In verse 1, Paul starts off by saying, "Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons. . ."<sup>4</sup> Here is the prophetic problem.

He says that the Spirit expressly says this. Paul words this in this way in order to tell Timothy that it should be obvious to the Christians in the Ephesian church where Timothy was pastoring that people

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<sup>2</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 1 Ti 4:1–5.

<sup>3</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 1 Co 10:31.

<sup>4</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 1 Ti 4:1.

were going to deny the faith. Why should it be obvious? The Spirit expressly says it. The Spirit makes this so obvious that there really shouldn't be a question in the minds of the church as to whether or not it's going to happen. But how did the Spirit make it obvious? This phrase could mean that throughout the ages, the Spirit has told story after story in the Bible about those who denied the truth. In the Old Testament, the Spirit warns of people denying the faith. There are plenty of examples of people who denied God's warnings and were therefore punished. These Old Testament examples should make it clear that people will come and deceive.

But you may say, "But Paul says 'in later times.'" Was the Ephesian church in the "later times?" Yes, and actually, so are we. Sometimes the "last days" can refer to the final days or years immediately preceding Jesus' second coming. But many times this phrase simply means the time period between Jesus' first coming and Jesus' second coming. Therefore, the Ephesian church and our church live in the last days. And we're told in the New Testament that in these last days, false teaching will come in and people will leave the faith. In Matthew 24, Jesus says, "See that no one leads you astray. <sup>5</sup>For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray."<sup>5</sup> In 1 John 2:19, John writes of professing Christians who walked away from the gathering and he says, "<sup>19</sup>They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us."<sup>6</sup>

The apostle Paul is also recorded to have said to the elders at Ephesus, "<sup>29</sup>**I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; <sup>30</sup>and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.**"<sup>7</sup> People from outside will try to come in. But people from within will even teach twisted things.

Clearly, the Spirit has warned of this. But Paul writes here in the present tense, which I think is Paul's way of saying, "Right here, right now, the Spirit is making it clear to you that some will depart from the faith." Timothy, who was pastoring Ephesus, needed to listen. The threat was real. The Spirit was talking straight to him. And, by the way, the Spirit has expressly spoken this to us as well, Ventura. As those who live in the later times as well, we need to be aware that false teaching can come from within and without.

This is no minor problem. Paul doesn't simply say that these people are believing some things that are disagreeable. Instead, he explains the magnitude of the spiritual problem. These people are departing from the faith and devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teaching of demons. Spirits? Demons? Devote? They may not even realize it, but they're embracing demons. Let's never forget that Satan is the deceiver of the nations and it is his goal to accuse and keep people from knowing the truth.

But let's not forget something else. It's not like these people went to a séance and asked the demons to teach them. Heresy is most often taught through other people. Paul says that the demonic doctrine was taught "through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared."<sup>8</sup> The doctrine is taught through liars.

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<sup>5</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Mt 24:4–5.

<sup>6</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 1 Jn 2:19.

<sup>7</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Ac 20:29–30.

<sup>8</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 1 Ti 4:2.

This word for insincere is sometimes translated as “hypocrisy.” The idea is that they are not what they project themselves to be. They could look great externally. They could look really smart or really religious, but they are not. They are insincere. So as one man by the name of John MacArthur writes, “They may be religious leaders, and appear outwardly good and devout. . . . Though they may wear the mask of religion (even Christianity) and wear a mask of piety, they do not serve God, but Satan. They blaspheme God. Sitting under such teachers has no redeeming value. . . .” (MacArthur, p. 151).

So, they may have an appearance of godliness, but they’re not godly. In addition, Paul also says that these liars have their conscience’s seared. The idea is cauterizing something. Paul is saying that the conscience, which is intended to warn you of wrong and encourage in the right, has been burned numb. These teachers believe they are right and their conscience will not warn them whatsoever. And sadly, the way this is worded in the Greek is that they embraced this path. This is not simple ignorance, but here were people who (for whatever reason) did not want to embrace the truth and were just looking to deny what they knew to be true. It’s somewhat the idea of Romans 1 that although people knew there was a God, they did not want to acknowledge him so they suppressed the truth and embraced a lie.

As you think about all of Paul’s wording here, you could then begin to think, “Wow, these people are awful!” And if by that you mean that they look really bad and that you’ll be able to tell how bad they are by their tone of voice and squinty eyes, then stop right there! They’re proclaiming heresy and leading people down the path to hell, but remember this: they’re deceivers. That means that people don’t spot it easily.

I mean, it would be nice if false teachers would say something like, “Hey, just want to be forthright with you. I’m a false teacher. So, you may or may not want to listen to me!” Or, I would really like it if in the first couple of pages of a book, the author said, “Now, not everything I’ve written is true. I do embrace certain heresies. They can be located on pages 7, 22, and 55-67.” That would be so nice! But that’s not how heresy works. Many times it looks like this kind of scenario Paul brings up: through people who look godly.

Now, you ought to ask, “If the people look godly, how do we spot these false teachers?” Look at verse 3. Paul says that they “forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving. . . .”<sup>9</sup> When I hear the doctrines of demons, hypocrisy, liars; I don’t think of someone who says “Don’t get married” and “don’t eat certain foods.” Honestly, I think some of us could look at someone like that and say, “Wow, they have so much self-control. They’re so spiritual. Do you see what they’re not doing? Talk about discipline!”

Before we address this more, there probably does need to be some explanation here. Paul is not against people who choose to not get married. To the Corinthian church, he actually encourages people to not get married due to the distress that was taking place in their area. Yet, at the same time, Paul also doesn’t discourage marriage either. In addition, with food, it’s not wrong to fast or to go on a diet. Also, some people have allergies and cannot eat certain foods. So, Paul is not against abstinence from certain foods for those types of reasons.

The idea given here is that Paul is against those who make blanket statements for whole groups of people regarding food and marriage. In other words, it’s fine to go vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, Adkins, South Beach, or Mediterranean. But if you require that diet for all people as though God

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<sup>9</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 1 Ti 4:3.

requires it, you're entering into false teaching. Similarly, with singleness. Singleness is referred to by God as a gift. But if you require that of all people, you're trying to take the place of God because God also gives the gift of marriage.

But why did people highlight these two issues: refraining from marriage and abstinence from certain foods? We cannot be certain; however, in the Greek culture, there was an idea that the spiritual was superior to the physical. Matter was evil and the spirit was good. As a result, it would make sense that with the pleasure of food and the pleasure of the physical union in marriage, these teachers were calling people to deny themselves these pleasures and be truly spiritual and godly.

In the early church's writings, called the *Apostolic Canons*, this issue is addressed with severity. We read this: **"If any overseer priest or deacon, or any on the priestly list, abstains from marriage and flesh and wine, not on the ground of asceticism (that is, for the sake of discipline), but through abhorrence of them as evil in themselves, forgetting that all things are very good, and that God made man male and female, but blaspheming and slandering the workmanship of God, either let him amend, or be deposed and cast out of the Church. Likewise a layman also"** (*Apostolic Canons*, p. 51). The church is to take this seriously! If you believe certain pleasures that have been given by God are evil, you blaspheme and slander God's workmanship. And yet, I think we too can highlight people as super spiritual because of their great self-denial. Did you see so-and-so has given up \_\_\_\_\_. Wow, I wish I could be like them? God doesn't call us to be like other people. He calls us to be like Christ. While self-denial can be quite impressive at times, it's not a sign of godliness to deny what God calls good.

And that's really the point. We are to deny those things that are sinful and serve as weights that keep us from pursuing Christ. But we are not to call people to deny what God created as good. Paul said that these things are to be received with *thanksgiving*. Get this. The person who rejects these things is not truly a thankful person. They might be happy that they were really self-controlled, but are they thankful to God? No. Paul goes so far as to at least suggest that they don't know the truth and they don't believe God. Therefore, these people are in bondage to their man-made religious hoops of religiosity. They appear to have godliness, but deny the power. No thanksgiving. No glorifying God. That means they're sinning. And the end of sin is death.

Why pursue your own man-made system? Why not live with gratitude and even pleasure in the gifts God has given? This is what Paul wants for Timothy and the Ephesian church. And this is what God wants for us! So, let's move on to see the

## 2. The Freedom that Impels Gratitude (vv. 3b-5).

Let's read these verses again together: "God created [foods] to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. <sup>4</sup>For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, <sup>5</sup>for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer."<sup>10</sup>

Paul says that God created these things to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. This emphasizes the biblical teaching that apart from faith, it is impossible to please God. So, while God sends rain on the just and the unjust (as Jesus said), only those who entrust themselves to God actually please God and can glorify him with all the gifts he's given. For those who believe and know

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<sup>10</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 1 Ti 4:3–5.

the truth, know that God created marriage and food to be received with *thanksgiving*. You should always be grateful for God's gifts. This is even part of Jesus' prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread."

Have you ever thought about all that happened in order for you to get food on your plate? We had to have an atmosphere that would rain. There had to be people and animals in fields. There had to be sustenance for them. There had to be people to pay the workers. There had to be truck drivers to take the food from one place to another place. You had to have money. Or, maybe you say, "I just kill my own food." Well, where did you get your weapon? Who made it? Also, how did you get your eyesite? When you start to realize that everything you have – including your food – is a gift from God, you will increase in thankfulness to God. He cares about you down to the details of the food you're eating at each meal.

I recognize this all sounds nice, but how do we know that God has given this to us to be received with *thanksgiving*? If the false teachers are false, does the Bible tell us they're false or is Paul just saying they're wrong and I'm right? Verse 4 is Paul's biblical argument. First, he identifies God as the creator. When he says that God created everything good, that should take us back to Genesis 1 where after every day of creation, we're told that God says that it was good. So, before Adam and Eve sinned, everything to eat was good.

But maybe the false teachers didn't deny that. Maybe they said, "Sure, we can eat any types of food that might have existed before sin came in. But no meat!" So, just for good measure, Paul addresses that by his next statement: nothing is to be rejected if it is received. In order to receive something, it has to be given to you, correct? In order to reject, there has to be an offer, right? Of course. Now think about Genesis 9:3 where God says to Noah (and the whole human race after the flood): <sup>3</sup>Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything.<sup>11</sup>

God gives everything as a possibility for food. So, here's Paul's argument against the false teachers. They're trying to deny certain foods. They're trying to deny marriage. Listen, God's the Creator. He calls food good. He gave it to us. And in the creation account, God instituted marriage and called it very good! Instead of trying to create new rules, let's trust God and be amazed that he wants us to enjoy gifts he gives to us. As MacArthur puts it, "**How foolish to abstain from his kindness and thus deny God the right to be glorified for their enjoyment**" (MacArthur, p. 154)!

I know at this point, some people could be concerned that this *thankfulness* statement could go too far. I mean, is Paul saying that as long as you're thankful you can have as much of anything as you want? I've heard people use this verse as a justification for drug abuse! "Everything God has created is good. We just should be thankful." That's hypocrisy as well. Thankfulness does not fuel harm to the body. If we can't be thankful, we should reject it. And I would say that type of argument isn't recognizing the biblical understanding of thankfulness.

You see, gratitude recognizes a gift as a gift and receives the gift as it is intended. Gratitude recognizes that there's an intended use for everything and when we know that God has given us certain foods, we will even eat it appropriately and not excessively because we know the gift-giver who gave it to us. The person who wants to justify drug abuse or gluttony or drunkenness on the basis of this verse doesn't see God rightly and doesn't see God's creation as gifts. They view themselves as gods and God's creation as entitlements. But, as one person put it, **Gratitude is the antidote to entitlement.**

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<sup>11</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Ge 9:3.

Think of it this way. You work hard to save your money up to buy a very special gift for someone. Obviously, for whatever reason, this person is special to you. You purchase a very expensive, quality pen. You give them the gift. They open it, and then they begin writing all over your furniture! "Wow, this pen really writes smoothly," they say. You're appalled that they would do that and you're asking them to stop, and they say, "Why, pens were made to right!" He's right, but he's also very wrong. He's not grateful to *you* for the pen. If he were, he wouldn't destroy what's yours. He would know how to use the pen, and he would be grateful to you as well. As a result, you would take joy in his pleasure in using that pen and he would take pleasure in using that pen and be grateful you wanted to give that pen to him.

This is how gratitude combats sinful excess. But not only that, gratitude helps us to glory in God all the more! I may have already told you this, but I have been affected by this, so I'm going to say it again. Several months ago, I was talking with a group of guys, and Jeff Lindell made a statement that I hope I'll never forget. He said that when we look around at the various good gifts of good, we should ask ourselves, "What kind of God must he be to have given us *that*?" Think about that question. Looking at the flowers in Spring. What kind of God must he be to have given us that? Thinking about the fact that God has not only given us food, but spices for added flavoring. What kind of God must he be? Thinking about how God has created marriage to be a glorious portrait of Christ and the church. What kind of God must he be?

Our Creator God delights in giving good gifts. And he wants people to come to the knowledge of the truth and fully rejoice and be grateful in his gifts. What about you, Christian? Do you rejoice continually every day as you ponder the good gifts of God? The apostle Paul, who had been persecuted, beaten, rejected, was also one who was able to say, "**give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.**"<sup>12</sup> He doesn't praise God for sin, but he can praise God in the midst of everything because he knows his God! He knows he is gloriously good.

I think these truths ought to shape how we relate to everything around us. Sometimes I get this feeling that Christians don't think Christians should be very joyful. We think if we're too happy, God's going to smite us. God wants us to have *his joy*. But I get the fear. Sometimes we think that if we're too happy with something, then maybe we're idolizing it. Maybe we're loving that *thing* more than we love God. Have you ever felt that way before? Listen, if that thing is a good gift of God, here's the best way to combat idolatry: praise the Lord! This even goes back to last week's message in fighting for godliness. My friend told me to praise the Lord in the midst of my struggles. That seemed so contrary to what I thought I should do. I thought I needed to figure things out and be in control and try to get *out* of that season of life. Instead, I needed to rejoice in God and trust him and his ways.

The same is regarding marriage and food (and all the varied gifts of God). Our quick response to our temptation to idolize is to say, "Well, I'll just get rid of it from my life." Well, listen, you better not do that with your spouse or your children! And, honestly, we can worship family more than most things. But God doesn't want us getting rid of them! Instead, we are to repent and *give thanks!*

What a blessing that God has given to us in our lives. In our fight for godliness, he wants us to have joy. He wants us to have gratitude. God's not a miser who wants to tame our joy. He's benevolent and wants us to acknowledge his kindness and rejoice! What kind of God must he be to even make our fight for sin to have encouragement?! "How foolish to abstain from his kindness and thus deny God the right to be glorified for their enjoyment!"

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<sup>12</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 1 Th 5:18.

Do you believe God wants you to have his joy and that he has wired us in such a way that our thanksgiving and his glory are intertwined? Look at verse 5 again: for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.<sup>13</sup> “It” is made holy. What is made holy? This is referencing food specifically. But what does it mean that food is made holy? Other translations say food is sanctified or consecrated. The Greek word here means to set apart. Biblically speaking, it refers to something being set apart for religious purposes or for a person being set apart to God for his intended purposes. So, here Paul is saying that even food can be set apart for eternal purposes, godly purposes when received with thanksgiving. In essence, eating food can be worshipful!

But how? How can eating food be worshipful? Because of the word of God and prayer. Let me comment first on prayer. The idea of prayer is closely connected to the idea of thanksgiving. In the Bible and throughout church history, you find Christians praying before their meals. Why is that? There’s a tradition. Even Paul speaks of that tradition here. Elsewhere Paul mentions in, like in 1 Corinthians 10:30: If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks?<sup>14</sup> Jesus himself, at the Last Supper, gave thanks before they ate. So, here Paul says that there’s an active giving of thanks that the Christian is to express when eating. This doesn’t mean that as long as you say “grace” before your meal, then you’ve accomplished the task and done your duty! No. Prayer is the expression of the thankful heart. And, like even Jesus’ meal with the disciples, he didn’t just pray once. So, there isn’t some magical formula. Instead, Paul’s emphasizing gratitude that expresses itself in words and prayer. In experience, we recognize the food as a good gift from God, as set apart for God’s glory, as we actively give thanks for it and worship God while eating.

The food is set apart through prayer. Now, let’s take this one step further. Did you know that God purchased your freedom to enjoy him and his gifts rightly? Paul says that the food is sanctified by the word of God. What does that mean? Paul could simply be reiterating that God had decreed the food as good and therefore even food is set apart for worship. I think that’s part of it. But I also think there’s probably more than that. At the end of verse 3, we read that food and marriage is to be accepted by those who believe and know the truth. Clearly, Paul is bringing across the idea of faith and true belief.

Well, how do we know truth and come to faith in God? Through the word of God. But even more specifically, this phrase “word of God,” in the pastoral letters, refers to the message of salvation. In 2 Timothy 2:8-9, Paul writes, **“Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, <sup>9</sup> for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound!”<sup>15</sup>** You see how the word “gospel” and the phrase “word of God” are connected?

So, what does the gospel have to do with food? Jesus always worshipped God perfectly. In his life and in his death, he worshipped God. But in his death, he took the punishment that we deserved for not worshipping him. Even in the everyday details of life – like eating and drinking and marriage – we did not praise God for his gifts. We were ungrateful. While we deserve punishment, Jesus took it on himself, and we’re told in the Bible that Jesus reconciled the world to God. In other words, he was victorious at the cross – making it so that all things can matter for God’s glory again. Everything we do can matter for eternity because Jesus is the eternal Son who reconciled us to God!

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<sup>13</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 1 Ti 4:5.

<sup>14</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 1 Co 10:30.

<sup>15</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 2 Ti 2:8–9.



Through Jesus' death and resurrection, he gave us his righteousness and then also sent his Holy Spirit so that we can worship God always. Jesus, the living Word of God, through the message of the gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit, led us to turn from the heresy of our ingratitude and to turn to God for forgiveness and eternal life. Therefore, all of life is transformed. So, Christian, let's rejoice in the good God. Because of Jesus, in our daily experience, let's grow in gratitude. This is God's will! Mere external self-denial is not true religion. Thankfulness is not to be found in your self-denial, but in Christ's! As the writer of Hebrews says, "Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them."<sup>16</sup>

Rejoice in God at the freedom he has given to you in Jesus to glorify God and enjoy him *forever*. We have been set free from the hellish accent of grumbling to embrace the heavenly accent of gratitude. So, **in concluding this series, I hope we remember the themes of this series. We will only be grateful when we know who our God is: he is great and he is good. This knowledge fuels prayers to be filled with gratitude and praise. And this salvation God has given us empowers our fight for godliness and this salvation also frees us to live for God's glory in every single facet of our lives! Praise God for the gift of gratitude! Praise God for the gift of his Son!**

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<sup>16</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Heb 13:9.