

1 Timothy 4:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

Analysis

Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats (κωλύόντων γαμεῖν, ἀπέχεσθαι βρωμάτων, kōlyontōn gamein, apechesthai brōmatōn)—'forbidding marriage and requiring abstinence from foods.' Kōlyō means to hinder, forbid, prevent. Apechomai means to abstain, keep away from. The false teachers imposed ascetic rules—celibacy and dietary restrictions.

Which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth (ἃ ὁ θεὸς ἔκτισεν εἰς μετάληψιν μετὰ εὐχαριστίας τοῖς πιστοῖς καὶ ἐπεγνωκόσιν τὴν ἀλήθειαν, ha ho theos ektisen eis metalēpsin meta eucharistias tois pistois kai epegnōkosin tēn alētheian)—'which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.' Ktizō means to create. Metalēpsis means receiving, partaking. Eucharistia means thanksgiving, gratitude.

Paul refutes asceticism by appealing to creation: God made marriage and food good gifts to be received gratefully. Forbidding them insults the Creator and misunderstands His design. The believer who knows truth receives these gifts with thanksgiving, neither despising nor idolizing them, but enjoying them as God intended.

Historical Context

Gnostic and Platonic thought viewed matter as evil—the body a prison for the soul. This led to asceticism: deny bodily pleasures (food, sex) to achieve spiritual purity. Some Jewish-Christian teachers added dietary laws from the Old Covenant. Paul refutes both by affirming creation's goodness—the material world is God's gift, not a curse. Christianity is neither ascetic nor hedonistic but thankfully enjoys God's good creation.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does the goodness of creation refute both asceticism and self-indulgence?
2. Why is thanksgiving essential to properly receiving God's gifts of food and marriage?
3. What contemporary ascetic or legalistic rules contradict God's good creation design?

Interlinear Text

κωλύόντων	γαμεῖν	ἀπέχεσθαι		βρωμάτων	ἃ		
Forbidding	to marry	and commanding to abstain from		meats	which		
G2967	G1060	G567		G1033	G3739		
ὁ	θεὸς	ἔκτισεν	εἰς	μετάληψιν	μετὰ	εὐχαριστίας	τοῖς
G3588	God	hath created	to	be received	with	thanksgiving	G3588
	G2316	G2936	G1519	G3336	G3326	G2169	
πιστοῖς		καὶ	ἐπεγνωκόσιν	τὴν	ἀλήθειαν		
of them which believe		and	know	G3588	the truth		
G4103		G2532	G1921		G225		

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 13:4 (References God): Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

1 Timothy 4:4 (References God): For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving:

Romans 14:6 (References God): He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

Genesis 9:3 (Parallel theme): Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.

Colossians 2:16 (Parallel theme): Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:

1 Corinthians 8:8 (References God): But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.

1 Corinthians 7:28 (Parallel theme): But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.

Hebrews 13:9 (Parallel theme): Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

Colossians 3:17 (References God): And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Romans 14:3 (References God): Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

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