

If you're married you remember your wedding reception. A bunch of people you have to talk to and great food you probably didn't eat that much of. Think if someone had approached you and said they weren't going to eat the food you were serving because they didn't like the caterer's personality. That's a foolish reason not to eat plus they would miss some great food.

Certain groups and church bodies have decided that marriage isn't right for some people. They say it's forbidden because it's a distraction to a calling of godliness. The pleasures that are enjoyed in marriage get in the way of spirituality. They seem to indicate God forbids marriage to some people. Other groups say certain foods should be avoided. Getting pleasure out of eating or drinking these foods must be avoided if anyone wants to be spiritual. It can be tempting to agree, maybe not about marriage or certain foods but about other things in life. If we could just get away from certain things then we wouldn't be tempted, we would be closer to God, and God would like us more.

In just two verses, Paul shares with us in his letter to Timothy that this is foolishness. His instruction to us is valuable because it's a reminder that God provides for us and what he provides is good...

**God's creation is good
Nothing needs rejecting
Everything can be consecrated**

More than 5000 people were gathered on the hillside listening to Jesus preach. When it got dark the disciples were concerned the people wouldn't have anything to eat. Jesus miraculously provided all of them with food, plenty of food for every person to have their fill. What if someone had approached Jesus and rejected the food saying, "I won't eat fish. I'm giving up fish to please God. He sees I'm giving this up for him. I won't eat it.?" Jesus might have let that person starve.

Giving up certain earthly things to please God is called asceticism. The idea is to reject a worldly pleasure and show God how strong the desire to please him is. Then he rewards with blessings and heaven. To do this the idea must be accepted that there are things in the world that are bad and evil and must be rejected. If we just reject all TV then we won't ever sin by lusting after someone who is not our spouse. We'll be alright before God. If we reject money and a lot of earthly possessions which only lead to greed then we won't be greedy anymore. We'll live in meager conditions so we'll be right with God. What this doesn't recognize is that the problem is not with TV or money. The problem is with our sin. We sin when we try and please God by what we do. Suddenly we're not just lustful and greedy, but trying to earn heaven by our own actions.

Where did your TV come from or your money? Where did the bread and fish come from that Jesus fed to the people on the hillside? All came from God because everything comes from him. Paul says, ***"Everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected."*** Because God is perfect and cannot exist in sin or with sin everything that he makes and provides is also inherently good. The entertainment we find or the pleasure we experience are given by God and are good things not bad. These are blessings, and used in a God pleasing way they need not be rejected in order to be sin free. Sin is what we have to avoid, but because we're sinful we can't.

God isn't just about giving us blessings that we enjoy in this world. God has seen to our bigger needs with bigger blessings. These bigger spiritual blessings are in no way earned but rather gifted to us. God can do that because Christ paid for them. He earned them for us and gives them freely to us. What God gives through Christ lifts our eyes beyond the entertainment and pleasure of this world to the new heavens that wait for us. There our sins will be gone completely. Even now through Christ sins of lust and greed are wiped away. These bigger spiritual blessings are to be received by us with thanksgiving.

So don't reject things God gives as blessings. Make use of them with thanksgiving giving glory to God. He does care about our physical well being. The things he gives to us for that purpose are good. We receive them gladly and use them. We have opportunity to show how these blessings are to be used in a God pleasing way rather than foolishly avoided to try and please God or reach some higher spiritual plain.

It happens every first Monday of the month at our house: big junk day. The day you can set out just about anything and it will get picked up. If you notice though depending on what you set out it might not make it to the garbage collector. There are always people that take someone else's trash and turn it into a treasure. They see possibility where others see junk and rejects. God gives only good things because God doesn't make sinful things. But human beings like us have ruined what God created. Instead of throwing it out what sin ruins or avoiding it completely God says through Paul that everything can be consecrated.

Look around you at this church building and everything in it. Everything you see was built by a sinful person, maybe even by someone not a Christian. Certainly not everything was built or provided by Lutherans. The drywall may have been hung by someone who didn't believe in Jesus. The communion ware perhaps was fashioned by someone who believed in false gods. The paintings and artwork may have been done by someone of a completely different faith. Yet we gather here each Sunday and we worship the true God within these walls and we utilize the articles of the building for good purposes. How? Isn't someone concerned that we're making use of materials, goods, and services that don't necessarily come from Christian sources in our worship of the true God? Are we sinning by doing this?

On any given trip to the grocery store you're doing the same thing. You might buy peaches harvested by a Muslim. You might pick steaks from cows raised by unbelievers. You might buy laundry detergent produced by a company cheating on its taxes, bottled by a person cheating on their spouse, and delivered by a driver doubting God's existence. Still we buy the products and use them at home, at work, and even at church confidently. We do this because Paul not only says they're good because they come from God who is good, but Paul also says, **"it is consecrated by the Word of God and prayer."** That doesn't mean we're saying a prayer over the laundry detergent to make it spiritual or God pleasing. It means that by our hearing of the Word of God and by our trust in that Word we have been consecrated and so have the elements and products we use.

Consecration makes things holy by not by some magic formula or weird hand motions. It happens through the grace of God shown to us in the Bible. It's the Word of God that tells us how God made us holy through Christ Jesus. It's the Word of God that points out what we can do to make God happy and please him. It's the Word of God that we run to when we need comfort or direction or assurance of the promises of God. So it's the Word of God that has consecrated us and consecrates everything we might come into contact with. This way everything we do is done to the glory of God.

Paul says plainly that nothing is evil in and of itself. Because everything was created by God and given by him then it must be good. Nothing connected with God can be bad. So human beings need not reject anything. They can instead receive everything their gracious God gives to them and make it holy by using the Word of God and the Word in prayer.