

## Received with Gratitude

by Tricia Berg

*For everything [specific context: food] created by God is good, and **nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude**; for it is **sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer**. 1 Timothy 4:4-5*

All foods are acceptable for Christians to eat (but make no mistake--blood is not a food or beverage). Don't listen to people who try to say that food restrictions are still in effect today.

*I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that **nothing is unclean in itself**, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. Romans 14:14*

***To the pure, all things are pure**, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. Titus 1:15*

*As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. **Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him**. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. **One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God**. For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. **I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.** Romans 14:1-14*

God's purpose in defining clean and unclean foods in the Old Testament was revealed in the New Testament, and so food restrictions are not required for the

Church. (See more later.) However, that doesn't mean He now approves of other things, such as sexual immorality--that was repeatedly reinforced in the New Testament as being unacceptable for Christians. I am covering this topic yet again because of the rebellious attitude of those who use the obsolete food restrictions as an excuse that they can continue in their sins.

*Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But **now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.** For he himself is our peace, who has **made us both one** and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself **one new man in place of the two**, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. **For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.** Ephesians 2:11-22*

*Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be **undefiled**, for **God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.** Hebrews 13:4*

In the passage below, Jesus teaches that things from outside the body don't make us unclean. Sexual immorality is not from outside the body. The unholy desire comes from within, and when two people are physically intimate with one another, they "become one" body. If that intimacy is outside of marriage between a man and woman, then both the physical act and the emotions behind it are defiled and corrupt. When Paul says that the Corinthians were washed, he doesn't mean that they can't become filthy again if they refuse to repent from their evil behavior. That would go against the rest of his teachings. It's not about what was done and forgiven, but about the continuing practice--about soiling the brilliant white garment that Jesus died to clothe us in. (2Pet. 2:18-22) Do unbelievers possess a white garment of salvation? No. They're utterly naked before God. (Heb. 4:13, 2Pet. 3:10, Rev. 16:15, 2Cor. 5:1-3, Rom. 13:14) That is how we can be sure that the instructions to be pure are for believers. Unbelievers cannot be saved by their actions, but only by believing. ONLY Jesus provides the garment of salvation, and

we must abide IN Him in order to remain clothed and clean. (John 15, 1John 1:5-2:6, Heb. 12:14, Rev. 3:4-6)

*And he called the people to him again and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand: There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him." And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?" **(Thus he declared all foods clean.)** And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person." Mark 7:17-23*

*Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: **neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.** And such **were** some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."All things are lawful for me," but **not all things are helpful.** "All things are lawful for me," but **I will not be dominated by anything.** "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food"—and God will destroy both one and the other. **The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.** And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. **Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh." But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. 1 Corinthians 6:9-20***

*I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you, and I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned earlier and have not repented of the **impurity, sexual immorality, and sensuality that they have practiced.** 2 Corinthians 12:21*

**But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be**

**named among you, as is proper among saints.** Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Ephesians 5:3-6

Now the works of the flesh are evident: **sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.** I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. Galatians 5:19-21

Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to **put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.** Ephesians 4:17-24

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might **present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.** Ephesians 5:25-27

Jesus Himself had the following to say when He sent His angel to tell John the Beloved about the things that were to happen in the end times. Instead of being rebellious, obstinate, arrogant, proud of sin, defiant, etc. - think of eternity. It's not worth it to give in to sin now and pay for it forever!

*But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.” Revelation 21:8*

*Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. Revelation 22:15*

*I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained. Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. **For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.** Philippians 3:14-19*

Jesus also taught that the eye is the lamp of the body. In other words, what we let in can either enlighten our body and therefore the resulting actions, or it can do the opposite. God's word is a light for our path and a lamp for our feet. (Psa. 119:105) In the parable Jesus told, the wise virgins were READY when the Bridegroom (representing Jesus) came for them with oil in their lamps so that they could see the path to Him. The oil represents the Holy Spirit, who illuminates the Scriptures for us and gives us the gift of faith (and repentance—first from unbelief and then from “dead works”, i.e. both trying to earn salvation and practicing sin - Rom. 6, Jam. 1:12-16, Jam. 2:14-26, 1John 5:16). Faith comes from hearing the word. (Matt. 25:1-13, Heb. 11:8) It's how we know our Savior's voice and follow Him. (John 10:27)

*"The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. **If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!**" Matthew 6:22-23*

*For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. **But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief.** For you are all **children of light, children of the day.** We are not of the night or of the darkness. **So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.** For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. **But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.** 1 Thessalonians 5:2-8*

*So **faith** comes from hearing, and hearing through the **word of Christ.** Romans 10:17*

*So **flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace,** along with those who call on the Lord from a **pure** heart. Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently*

*enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. **God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.** 2 Timothy 2:22-26*

To make it as plain as possible, craving and giving in to sin is NOT a fruit of the Spirit! (Gal. 5:16-25) Anyone who takes delight in sin has good reason to question whether they belong to Jesus or not. (Rom 8:9, 2Cor. 13:5, Rom. 16:17-19) All ten virgins in the parable were WAITING for the bridegroom and started out with oil in their lamps, but half of them let their lamps GO OUT! They thought it was sufficient to accept the Good News and then go back to blending in with the world, like the seed sown on the thorny path in the parable of the sower. (Matt. 13:18-23, John 15:1-15) Apparently, they didn't "hold fast to their crowns" as Jesus instructed in His letter to the Church of Philadelphia? (Rev. 3:10-13) The foolish virgins do return and ask to be let in, but Jesus doesn't KNOW them. How tragic!!

*Finally, **be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.** Stand therefore, having fastened on the **belt of truth**, and having put on the **breastplate of righteousness**, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the **readiness given by the gospel of peace**. In all circumstances take up the **shield of faith**, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the **helmet of salvation**, and the **sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God**, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak. Ephesians 6:10-20 (Also see Matt. 26:41, Rom. 8:13, Gal. 5:16, Gal. 6:7-8)*

Common sense tells us that if we put on clean white clothing and then go and roll in a mud puddle, that we will no longer be clean. The good news is that forgiveness and cleansing IS available for any sin we confess and repent of.

*For, **speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.** For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and*

Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. **What the true proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire."** 2 Peter 2:18-22

**If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.** But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may **not sin**. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. **Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him,** but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. **By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.** 1 John 1:6-2:6

The context above is those who are walking in darkness, i.e. deliberately practicing sin, and claiming to be "walking in the light" - claiming their garments are still WHITE. Think about it, no one who is not already saved is "walking in the light" in the first place (John 8:12), and so all their efforts at trying to please God will fail. The FIRST step is belief. Also see Hebrews 10:26-39 and 1John 2:1-6, 1John 1:28-29, 1John 3:4-22.

Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not **soiled their garments**, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. **The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.** Revelation 3:4-5

In this next passage, Peter sees a vision that is given to him to teach a lesson about how God is the Savior of the Gentiles as well as the Jews. **This explains what the food restrictions were pointing to all along, to demonstrate a separation between Jews and Gentiles.** (Read the rest of the chapter about Cornelius and his family, the first Gentiles to receive the Holy Spirit.)

The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went

up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." And the voice came to him again a second time, "**What God has made clean, do not call common.**" This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven. Acts 10:9-16

But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question. So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the brothers. When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them. But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses." The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter. And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. **Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.**" And all the assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. After they finished speaking, James replied, "Brothers, listen to me. Simeon has related how **God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name.** And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written, "'After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, **and all the Gentiles who are called by my name,** says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old.'" Therefore my judgment is that **we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood.** Acts 15:1-20

For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater

burden than these requirements: that you **abstain** from what has been **sacrificed to idols**, and from **blood**, and from what has been **strangled**, and from **sexual immorality**. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell." Acts 15:28-29

But as for the **Gentiles who have believed**, we have sent a letter with our judgment that they should **abstain** from what has been **sacrificed to idols**, and from **blood**, and from what has been **strangled**, and from **sexual immorality**." Acts 21:25

Regarding the restraint from eating food sacrificed to idols, that is for the benefit of any who actually believe there is any other "god" than the one, true God.

Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "an idol has no real existence," and that "there is no God but one." For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. **However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.** Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a **stumbling block to the weak**. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will he not be encouraged, **if his conscience is weak**, to eat food offered to idols? And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brothers and **wounding their conscience** when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, **lest I make my brother stumble**. 1 Corinthians 8:4-13

As for not eating or drinking blood, that is because the life is in the blood. "If any one of the house of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from among his people. **For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.** Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, No person among you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger who sojourns among you eat blood. Any one also of the people of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn among them, who takes in hunting any beast or bird that may be eaten shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth. **For the life of every creature is its blood: its blood is its life. Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, You shall not eat the blood of any creature, for the life**

**of every creature is its blood.** Whoever eats it shall be cut off." Leviticus 17:10-14

So people who say that if the Christians observe the food restrictions, then they'll repent of their sexual immorality are sadly misled. Everyone used to know this, but the culture has declined to such an extent that sin is accepted (and more so every day).

Strive for peace with everyone, and for the **holiness without which no one will see the Lord.** See to it that no one **fails to obtain the grace of God**; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is **sexually immoral or unholy** like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that **afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.** Hebrews 12:14-17

Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and **impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.** But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with **the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.** 2 Timothy 3:12-15

**Look carefully then how you walk,** not as unwise but as **wise,** making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but **understand what the will of the Lord is.** And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit. Ephesians 5:15-18

Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. **There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.** You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, **take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.** But **grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.** To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. 2 Peter 3:14-18

The grace of Jesus is not to be perverted into sensuality, replacing the knowledge of Him that He is HOLY and desires His people to be conformed into His image. "Denying our only Master and Lord" includes refusing to OBEY Him, in addition to saying there are other ways to be saved. Don't think that the rest of the New Testament (or the Old Testament either, for that matter) disagrees in any way

with the words of Jesus. (John 5:39-40, Luke 24:27) **Once we are saved, we're meant to do His will out of love for Him as our Savior.** (2Cor. 5:14-15, John 14:15-24, John 15:8-10, Eph. 2:8-10, Col. 1:9-10) We're FREE, but not for the purpose of sinning. We will be judged by Jesus as to how we used our freedom. (Jam. 2:12) Don't trade your eternal inheritance as a child of God for a "bowl of soup." (Heb. 12)

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*** Romans 12:1-2

*What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? **By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?*** Romans 6:1-2

*What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become **slaves of righteousness.*** Romans 6:15-18

*Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. **For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.** 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8*

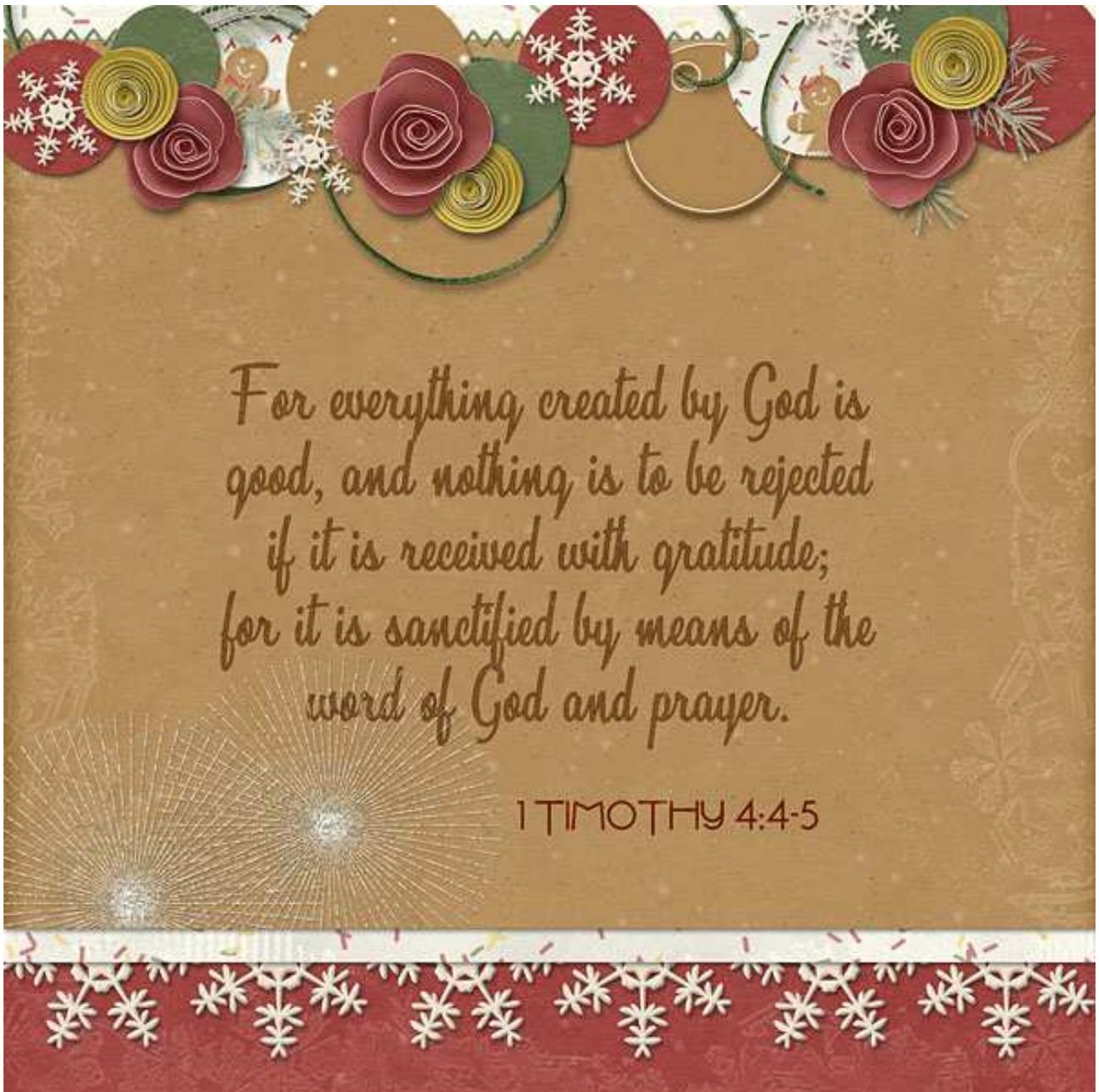
*For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who **pervert the grace of our God into sensuality** and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. Jude 1:4*

*His divine power has granted to us all things **that pertain to life and godliness,** through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through*

them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having **escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire**. For this very reason, **make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love**. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins**. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you **practice** these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an **entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**. Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to **recall these things**. 2 Peter 1:3-15

"For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. **"Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?** Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. **But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.**" Luke 6:43-49

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