

The Goodness of God's Creation

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Date: 23 March 2008

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[0:00] Let's take our Bibles and turn to 1 Timothy chapter 4, and I'll read the entire chapter. 1 Timothy chapter 5, verse 1.

With thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.

If you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, brought up in the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed.

Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales. Rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance, and for this we labor and strive, that we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe.

[1:48] Command and teach these things. Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity.

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching, and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.

Be diligent in these matters. Give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely.

Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers. Come tonight to 1 Timothy chapter 4.

But elsewhere in our Bibles, you know that it says, In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And God saw all that He had made, and it was very good.

[3:01] Your acceptance or rejection of that truth is not just the difference in how you live the Christian life, but whether or not you are a Christian.

Maybe that sounds a bit radical, and I don't want you to misunderstand. There are people who affirm that truth who are not Christians. Being a Christian is more than understanding and believing that God created the world, and that His creation is good, but it is never less than that.

I don't need to tell you that in our day there are many, many who reject God as Creator. But today, and also in history, there have been many who denied that God's creation is good.

They've forbidden the enjoyment of things in creation, things like food and marriage, that were created by God and are good and are intended for our good.

They've gone by different names. They've come at different times in history. They've believed these things for different reasons, but we'll see that in the end the outcome is the same. In the passage before us tonight, Paul warns Timothy that this is coming.

[4:25] The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith, follow deceiving spirits, the doctrine of demons, and then he goes on to flesh out what that false teaching is. But you say, we're the church.

We're safe here. We're the pillar and foundation of the truth, and so we don't believe the doctrine of demons. We don't listen to deceiving spirits here. But as one commentator says, wherever truth flourishes, error will raise its head.

And so here we are in the church. We're to be the pillar and foundation of the truth. And so it's here that Satan will send his deceiving spirits. He wants to lead you astray.

He wants you to believe these spirits and to be led away from the faith. He wants you to abandon the faith. And so some might think warnings about false teachers and teaching are unneeded and paranoid.

But this is not so. The church at Ephesus was founded on the truth. It was founded by the Apostle Paul. And they are under attack from false teachers and will be under attack from other false teachers and deceiving spirits.

[5:37] I hope you don't think that we're so firmly settled in the truth that we're invincible from such attacks. We are not. And so we must be vigilant and guarding and protecting the truth.

Error will raise its head here. The question is, will we be ready to withstand it? Will we recognize it when it comes? Tonight, we want to look at this particular error that had arisen or that was going to arise in later times.

Probably not quite there when Paul wrote these words, but was about to come onto the scene. We want to understand it. And in doing that, we aim tonight to understand the truth of God's good creation being for our enjoyment, for our good, so that when this teaching otherwise comes, we'll recognize it.

And we won't fall away. Next time in verses 6, Lord willing, to the end of the chapter, we'll see exactly how Timothy and the church should respond to such false teaching and the potential for apostasy, the potential for falling away.

How do you deal with that? Well, you train yourself for godliness. You watch your life and your doctrine closely. You do all of these things that Paul tells Timothy to do. We'll consider that. But tonight, we want to consider the error itself and the truth that shows why it's an error.

[7:03] And so first of all, we want to see the truth. We want to see that God's creation is good. You notice it in verses 3 and 4. These false teachers forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it's consecrated by the word of God and prayer.

So first of all, God's creation is good. This assumes, obviously, that God is the creator. I'm not going to belabor that point tonight. I think that most people, if not everyone here, believes that God is the creator.

But you can't assume that everyone that you meet in this life is going to believe that. You'd be foolish to think so. Many today deny that if God exists, they deny that he's the creator.

If you've been to school, if you've cracked open a science textbook, you know that the prevailing view on the origin of the earth and everything in it is that it was by chance through a process of, it's known as evolution, evolution with a capital E.

[8:10] How many people here have been exposed to that teaching in some way or another? Raise your hand. Okay. Yeah, pretty much everybody has heard the denial that God is the creator.

But this is in clear contradiction to the word of God. We quoted it at the beginning. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. So God's creation is good.

That assumes that God is the creator. But we want to consider the goodness of that creation contrary to those who claim otherwise. The creation that God made is good.

And don't we know that to be true? Haven't we experienced that? We don't really need someone to tell us, but let's be reminded tonight. Let's think for a few moments on God's good creation.

Remembering that the point of these things is that they are to be received with thanksgiving, Paul says. Some are teaching that they should be rejected. They're requiring a version of holiness that's foreign to what God requires of us.

[9:14] They say to be really holy, to be a true follower of God. Oh, you must abstain from food. You must abstain from marriage. You must abstain from what Paul says. These are good things that God created. And they are to be received with thanksgiving, not rejected.

So let's think about some of those good things. The two that are named here are food and marriage. Probably certain kinds of food were in view. Maybe meat.

But what does God's Word say? Genesis 9 and verse 3. Everything that lives, and this is after the fall, everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave the green plants, I now give you everything.

And it was Jesus that declared all food to be clean. And God appeared to Peter and revealed that all foods were clean. And you notice that Paul doesn't nuance his words here like he does in Romans 14 or 1 Corinthians 8 where the problem is food sacrificed to idols.

That's not these people's problem. They're saying food in general is to be abstained from or particular kinds of food. Perhaps particularly pleasurable food.

[10:16] It's likely that's meat in view here, but it's not because it's been offered to idols that they're forbidding it. It's the meat itself that they're forbidding. And so Paul doesn't talk about the weaker brother here. He doesn't talk about being careful for that.

He just says, no. It's to be received with thanksgiving. They'll deny the enjoyment of good food. But God created it for us and for our good and for our enjoyment.

And isn't food good? I like food. I love food. Now, I can't let it become an idol. I can't become a glutton.

These things are not to supplant the Creator and become more important than the One who made them. They are to draw out our affection and thanksgiving for the Creator who gave them to us.

And so I can love food to the glory of God. So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10.31 And so we can enjoy our food.

[11:23] What a blessing. God has given us food with different tastes and textures and the contrast of bitter and sweet and sour and salty and the combination of different flavors brings great delight to the palate.

Food is good. And God made it that way. And we should enjoy it. Because He made it for us. Marriage, too.

A good gift of God's creation. Who was it that said that it's not good for a man to be alone?

Anybody?

Yeah, it was God that said that. That's right. It was God that said that. And who was it that created for Adam a woman, a wife, to be His partner, His help me?

It was God that did that. And who was it that established that leave and cleave principle? It was God that did that. God gave us the good gift of marriage.

[12:28] And so it is not to be rejected as some would teach. And you know what that means? It means different things. But one thing in particular tonight.

That means that sex is good. I hope that doesn't make you uncomfortable tonight. God created us with the capacity for a sexual relationship to be fulfilled within the bonds of marriage.

God is the one that made it. So it brings pleasure. He could have made the marriage relationship cold and sterile, but He didn't.

He made it warm and personable and pleasurable. And that is to be received as a good gift from God, the Creator. It's not to be rejected just because our society has sinfully abused the gift.

The gift is still good. Many here know that. Many will one day when they are married. But some in Paul's day and in our day deny this truth.

[13:27] Don't ever let some false teaching or misconception make you feel guilty about enjoying God's good gift of marital intimacy.

We can talk about other parts of God's creation that are good that aren't listed here, but that would be denied by some. You know, if you just look around, I see beautiful sunshine out the window.

I see trees that once had leaves on them that were green and then were different colors and now they've fallen and now spring is almost here and they're going to blossom again and be beautiful.

The creation that God has made, you can just look at it and see that it's good.

And we're not required to put blinders on and say, no, we can't enjoy God's good creation. That would be pleasurable and that wouldn't be right for a Christian. We don't have to wear darkened sunglasses so that nothing has color or form or shape.

No, we receive it with thanksgiving. We praise God for His beautiful creation. It's good. It's obvious that it's good. If you've never traveled outside of northern Indiana, you should. But even right here in northern Indiana, you can see the goodness of God's creation.

[14:38] I've never seen such flat land in my whole life as I've seen here. But isn't it beautiful to see the corn that God made growing in rows?

Now men put it in rows, but it's God's creation. That's beautiful. And the trees and the leaves changing in the fall here. It's beautiful. And snow covering the earth.

It's beautiful. It's white. It's pure. It's more beautiful in winter than it is in spring. It's beautiful. And it's clear that God made it. But then get outside of northern Indiana just a little bit and go to New England and see some beautiful mountains and forests and go there in the fall when the leaves are changing color.

Go down to the Gulf Coast and walk on the white sand beaches of the Gulf of Mexico. You'll see that God's creation is good. Head out west. Go to Arizona and see the beauty of the desert. Did you know that the desert is beautiful? Unique plants and vegetation that you don't see here? Go to southern Arizona. See the great saguaro cactus. There really are cactuses that look like this. [15:41] They're not just in cartoons. That's remarkable. And then go up to northern Arizona and go to the Grand Canyon and literally have your breath sucked out of you by the marvel that God has made.

Grand Canyon stands as this monument to the creative genius of our God. Just amazing. If you've never been there, you must go. And go up into the Painted Desert and go up the Colorado River in Utah and see the sandstone, red sandstone rising majestically all around it. And go to Colorado and be dwarfed by the Rocky Mountains. And see the greatness, the goodness of the creation that God has made. Go to San Diego where the weather is as perfect as you can get, I think.

This side of heaven if you love 70, 80 degrees and sunshine year-round. Some people like variation. But God's made the world with all of these things. Snow in some places and beautiful sunshine.

See the palm trees and the ocean? Go up to the northwest and see the lush greenery there. There's two places. They're called Garden of the Gods.

[16:48] And it should be called the Garden of God because He made it. But it's called Garden of the Gods. There's one in Colorado Springs and it's red sandstone. Remarkable outcroppings of rock. Beautiful to see.

And there's one in less than a day's drive from here in southern Illinois. A place called Garden of the Gods. And it's beautiful. And this is granite rock. It's a different kind of rock but these huge rock outcroppings and formations and cliffs and you can hike among them and you can climb them. And all of these places you should take in a sunset. There you see the goodness of God's creation. You look at all of these things and you begin to get an idea that God's creation is good.

A good Creator made this and it's for enjoyment. It's for pleasure. I hope you'll love to take a walk. Soak some of it in and see some of these things. Travel around the country.

It's to say nothing of the rest of the world. There's such variation just in our country and then there's the rest of the world. But we've got to move on. God's creation is good.

[17:48] The gifts that He has gifted us with in creation are good. He gives us abilities. He's created us with the ability to run and jump and sing and to create music.

We're able to sing hymns and we can delight in the truth and we can delight in the beautiful harmony, the melody that we hear, the music that we hear because God gifted us with those abilities.

We can delight in the ability to participate in and watch sports because God gave us those physical abilities, those things that we can do with our bodies and so we can even enjoy March Madness. And I do enjoy it because God created us with these remarkable abilities. They're good gifts from Him. But you say, what about the fall?

Aren't you forgetting something? Wasn't everything corrupted in the fall when sin entered the world? What about that problem? Well, it's true.

[18:45] The fall did change everything. But Paul doesn't say it is the perversion of these things that are good, but rather the created things themselves that are good. And notice he says in verse 5 that they are to be consecrated by the Word of God in prayer.

Everything created by God, verse 4, is good. And nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving because it is consecrated by the Word of God in prayer. The Word of God is likely, it's what it says it is, it's the Word of God, the Word that God spoke.

When He made the creation, He said, it is good. That was His evaluation of it. I know that was before the fall. And He instituted marriage. And He said that it was not good for man to be alone. And so He made the good gift of marriage and so on. But the verse we read earlier about Him giving the animals of the field and the plants for food, that was after the fall.

God ordained those things for our good, even after the fall. And here, God speaks through His Spirit, through His servant Timothy, and He still says, after the fall, that everything God created is good.

[19:50] And to be received with thanksgiving. When it is consecrated by the Word of God and prayer. That prayer there, I think, is our prayer of thanksgiving. It's mentioned in the previous verses two times.

Once in verse 3, to be received with thanksgiving. Verse 4, to be received with thanksgiving. And then consecrated by the Word of God and prayer, a prayer of thanksgiving as we give thanks for it. This is true even after the fall.

Though all has been affected by sin, we may and must receive God's good creation with thanks as it is set apart by His Word. Now because of the fall, there are things that must be rejected.

Some may say, well, I can do whatever I want and enjoy whatever I want. Look, right here it says nothing is to be rejected. Well, that's to take it out of context. It says none of God's good creation received with thanksgiving consecrated by the Word of God and prayer is to be rejected.

And so that means the sinful perversions of these things must be rejected. The taking of these things and making them greater than the Creator. The supplanting of creation as our God instead of the Creator must be rejected.

[20:57] That is a perversion that comes with the fall. And a danger that we must guard against when we enjoy these good gifts. To indulge in them in excess, must be rejected.

You can't go out and indulge in gluttony and then thank God for His good gift of food because you're sinning against Him. You can't go out and engage in all sorts of sexual immorality and perversion and then claim to be delighting in God's good gift.

It is evil to require God's people to abstain from marriage and food and other good gifts of His creation, but it is equally evil not to abstain from the perversion of these things.

And the fact, the word abstain, He uses it in verse 3. They teach people to abstain from certain foods and marriage and so on. But God uses that same word to tell us we must abstain from some things.

1 Thessalonians 4.3 It is God's will that you should be sanctified, that you should avoid, that is, abstain from sexual immorality. Receive the good gift, but abstain from sexual immorality.

[22:03] Or 1 Thessalonians 5.22 A void, that is, abstain from every kind of evil. Or 1 Peter 2.11 Dear friends, I urge you as aliens and strangers in the world to abstain from sinful desires which wage war against your soul.

These are the things we must refrain from. You cannot consecrate by your prayer of thanksgiving that which God has declared by His word to be sinful. So God's creation is good.

And it is to be received with thanksgiving. The perversions of those good gifts must be rejected. So first of all, God's creation is good.

I hope you see it. Secondly, and we've said this already, but you must receive it with thanksgiving. These good things are to be received.

That is why they were created. It's the language of purpose. God created them to be received. The purpose for which He created them was for us to be able to receive them with thanksgiving.

[23:07] That's why He made them. He didn't make them so they could sit there and not be used. So they would sit there and not be enjoyed. He created them for our good. For our benefit. And so we receive it with thanksgiving.

Who is it that receives it with thanksgiving? Well, verse 3, it's you who believe and know the truth. Now we know that created things are enjoyed by sinners and saints alike. God causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust.

And they both enjoy good gifts from His hands, but those who believe and know the truth are to receive it with thanksgiving to the God who sent it. And so for someone to say that Christians must deny themselves the good things of God's creation is to deny God's design.

So Paul emphasizes here that those good created things are not just for unbelievers, but are for those who believe and know the truth. One commentator says, what was created for all men must therefore be legitimate for Christians.

It's for those who believe and know the truth. So believe or receive these things with thanks. On your homes, I would guess that when you sit down to a meal, how does that work out?

[24:14] How do you receive it with thanks? One obvious way, I think, for most of you when you sit down before a meal, I would guess that before you eat, you pause, and give thanks to the God who gave the good gift of the food that's before you on your plates.

Don't you? We do it in my home. We did it growing up. We do it here before our fellowship lunch. We pause to acknowledge the Creator who gave the good gift. We give thanks.

Maybe that's an embarrassment for some of you if you have to do it in public. You don't like that your family holds hands around restaurant tables and pauses to pray.

My family and our family we always held hands around the table when we prayed and gave thanks. And that didn't change when we went out to eat. Which wasn't real often, but we went out to eat and we would hold hands around the table and I remember wondering, what are people thinking?

There's an element of embarrassment there to my shame. Or maybe you go to eat at work and break room or at school in the cafeteria or out with some of your friends.

[25:18] And are any of you familiar with this? You sit down with your food and you go... And in that two seconds, you laugh because you know you've been there.

You've done at least to my shame. I can get in a thank you for the food. Amen. And people just think I scratched my head. And we devise these ways so that we can soothe our conscience and say that we thank God but we're ashamed.

We're embarrassed. It doesn't say receive these things with thanksgiving if nobody's watching. It says receive them with thanksgiving. And so one way we do that is we thank God for the food that He gives us.

Jesus did it when He told the crowd to sit down on the ground feeding the 5,000. Mark 8, He had taken the seven loaves and given thanks. He broke them and gave them to His disciples to set them before the people and they did so.

They had a few small fish as well and He gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them. And Jesus did it because He recognized that it was a gift from His Heavenly Father.

[26:28] And so when we pray before we eat and thank God it's an acknowledgement that we believe God is the Creator, the Provider. We're receiving that good gift that's been consecrated by His Word because He said this has been created for you to eat.

We receive it and set it apart with thanksgiving to God. And so we can do with the other good gifts. We pray and thank. You're out walking enjoying that beautiful creation that God has made and He stops and says, thank you Lord.

It's beautiful. And we receive these gifts with thanksgiving. Let's not advocating again some sort of indulgent hedonism where we pursue these things to excess.

The perversion or the use and excess of these things is not what Paul is talking about. Another commentator says, the repeated emphasis, verses 3 and 4 and 5, reminds the readers that it is thankful acceptance of God's good gifts that is being defended.

Not in autonomous materialism or hedonism. We're not delighting in the things themselves separate from the One who gave them. We're delighting them to excess. We're not told to put these things on a pedestal and worship them.

[27:37] Our life is not to revolve around them or come unglued when we don't have them and can't enjoy them. There will be times when we were without them and that can't be our undoing. We enjoy these things but our ultimate joy comes from the Creator who gives them.

And so they don't turn our hearts away from God. Rather, they point us to our Creator in thanksgiving. And so, savor that piece of perfectly grilled steak. Enjoy that beautifully ripened piece of fruit and thank God for it.

Go home. Enjoy the bonds of intimacy with your spouse and thank God for it. Look around and drink deeply of the beautiful creation and thank God for it.

Enjoy music and sports as gifts from our Creator. Enjoy the snow and delight in the coming warmer weather when it's easier to get outside and enjoy that creation that God has given us and receive these things with thanksgiving.

Good gifts from God. And so, God's creation is good. We're to receive it with thanksgiving. And thirdly, rejecting that truth will be our downfall.

[28:54] The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Following these false teachings will be our downfall.

It was foretold by the Spirit. He clearly said these things will happen. He says it right here through Paul. And such false teaching did come and attack the church.

They came proclaiming lies and led many away from the truth. The most prominent example after the days of Paul were the Gnostics. You might remember Pastor John talking about them when we went through 1 John.

They believed you could be saved through knowledge, through Gnosis. And they were strict dualists. They maintained a separation between body and spirit. Everything body, everything matter, all created matter was evil and spirit is good.

And so, you see a problem already? All created matter is evil? No. No. God's creation is good. But they said the God of the Old Testament who created this physical world was a base, evil God who created these things.

[30 : 04] The God of the New Testament was the God of the Spirit and that was his good. And that resulted in one of two teachings with regard to those physical things and particularly their bodies. One was to indulge it.

The flesh doesn't matter. It's evil. It's separate. So keep your spirit. Guard that. But go do whatever you want with your flesh. And you can live however you want. And it doesn't matter because the body is already evil anyway.

It doesn't matter. The other extreme was to say that since the flesh is evil it needs to be tamed and brought under control and they would deny their followers physical pleasures like food and marriage and other things.

It was an extreme asceticism. Denial of pleasure. And so you see here why God through Paul affirms the goodness of God's creation anticipating that some are going to teach these things. Now this doctrine of demons would take other forms besides Gnosticism but that's one example of what the Spirit clearly said would happen did happen.

[31 : 03] And such teaching is alive and well today. But where does it come from? It comes from deceiving spirits. It's the doctrine of demons. We're warned in 2 John verse 7 many deceivers who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh have gone out into the world.

Any such person as a deceiver and the Antichrist deceiving spirits go out. Satan sends them out to deceive and to lead astray. And one of the things they deny is that Jesus has come in the flesh. It's one of the things the Gnostics denied that Jesus couldn't have been the Son of God because God would never take on dirty, evil, created flesh. That's impossible.

And so they would deny that God came in the flesh. It's just a short step away from denying those pleasures to denying that Jesus came in the flesh. That's what the Gnostics did.

And so Satan's angels as deceivers are going out to seek to fill people with falsehood. And where do you think they're going to come? They're going to come to the pillar and foundation of the truth. They're going to come to where the truth is found and they're going to try to deceive and lead people astray.

[32 : 09] They're going to fill people's minds with these lies. It's why we're told in 1 John 4 in verse 1 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they are from God because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

And so this deceiving spirit comes and gets a hold on someone who swallows his lies and that person begins to propagate this doctrine of demons. And such a person it says is a hypocritical liar. It's lies obviously because it's not the truth and they're hypocritical because they're teaching what it sounds like a good Christian should do. They're pushing them off as an even more holy person. Here's what a really holy person will do. They'll deny themselves food and marriage and all these other good gifts. They'll deny themselves these pleasures. There's a really godly person. But underneath they're denying the God who made them.

It's hypocrisy to claim to be pleasing God when in actuality you're denying Him. It sounds so pious so holy. We deny ourselves these pleasures. And after all didn't Jesus say to deny yourself and to take up your cross and to follow me and doesn't He tell us to fast?

[33 : 23] And you see with so much false teaching there's an element of truth. We are to deny ourselves. Even legitimate physical pleasures we are to have periods of fasting.

They are to be legitimate pleasures to be denied when they hinder our service to our Savior. When they become more important to our God. But Jesus never forbade marriage or certain foods. The opposite actually.

And so it might sound good on the surface but on further review it's hypocritical lies. It's the doctrine of demons. They came to be pleasing God but in reality they're following Satan.

You don't want to follow this person. You don't want to be this person. You see their problem is that their conscience has been seared. Their conscience has been so cauterized.

It's been branded. When you brand something it makes an imprint on the flesh and it destroys the flesh at that point to where it's dead and it'll never come back. And you can't feel anything where something has been branded.

[34 : 23] And that's what's happened to these people's consciences. These false teachers. They've been branded to where they have no sensitivity to the truth. They don't care that they're teaching lies.

They don't care that it's not the truth. They delight in it. That can happen with doctrine. It can happen with morality and your behavior. In Ephesians 4.19 we read having lost all sensitivity they've given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity with a continual lust for more.

The hardening searing of one's conscience has devastating results. And it's sort of a sub-point here. These are the false teachers that come.

They've had their consciences seared but take note of the warning. Your conscience can become seared to the point where you don't care if it's true or false right or wrong.

And if you are headed down that road you find yourself moving that direction I don't care. And you don't feel guilty anymore when you sin. You know you have but you don't care.

[35 : 27] And you're listening to lies and you don't care. Then stop in your tracks beg God for mercy that He would pull you back from the brink of destruction. Get help. Talk to your parents. Talk to a trusted friend.

Come talk to one of your pastors. That's what we're here for. Come if you feel that your conscience is becoming so dead that you don't care whether something is true or false right or wrong.

And if that sort of thing sounds good to you man I wish I didn't feel guilty when I sinned. I wish I could have my seared conscience. Oh my friend you're going down the wrong path. Come back before it's too late.

This is not what you want a seared conscience. May God guard us from such. And so these hypocritical liars with seared consciences who've been deceived by deceiving spirits come and they teach.

They forbid marriage. They forbid food. They encourage the rejection of God's good creation. You'll know them by what they teach. So it helps us then to know the truth that God's creation is good.

[36 : 30] Hebrews 2.1 We must pay more careful attention therefore to what we have heard so that we do not drift away. Listen to the things you hear in this church.

Listen to the things you read in God's Word. Pay close attention to them so that when error comes you won't be led astray by it. It's why that we aim to know the truth inside and out.

It's why we seek to preach faithful doctrine here. It's why we make it our aim to keep abreast of false teachings that are popular during our day and bring them to your attention. We don't do that just so you can know the latest heresy.

We know it so you can know it and recognize it when it comes knocking at your door. It might sound like we're overly concerned, paranoid, whatever. We've got the truth. We've got our 1689 confession.

We're Reformed Baptists. We're safe from error. No. This is where Satan will come trying to deceive and lead astray. And so we must be ready. And the reason we warn you is that following false teaching will lead you away from the faith.

[37 : 36] Some will abandon the faith. Paul's talked about a good conscience. Some already. And those who abandon a good conscience make shipwreck of their faith. And those who follow false teaching will abandon, apostatize from the faith.

It's not just a little error that you could be in danger of. It's apostasy. And the warning is for God's people. It's for the Christians sitting in the pew.

Don't be led astray. It's for those who have faith. Those who have come to a knowledge of the Savior. Don't be led astray by false teaching. And teaching even like this can be found in our day. Did you know that the New Age movement is nothing more than Gnosticism with new clothes on? It tends to be the more indulgent type, but still it's Gnosticism.

There are still those that teach that we must deny ourselves good things that God intended for our joy. You think of the Catholic Church denying its priests' marriage, forbidding the eating of meat on Fridays during Lent, and so on.

[38:40] Fine to fast, but to impose on people's consciences what God has not done is not right. Strict fundamentalists do this.

requiring things of God's people that God does not require, forbidding things that God does not forbid. And some will even deny that Jesus came in the flesh and say that physical flesh is evil, and so there's no way that Jesus was the Son of God.

These things may seem harmless enough, the denying of pleasures and physical things, but it's actually damning. Imposing on men's consciences is God's job.

And if men take that role, they have usurped the authority that belongs only to God. It is to create a man-made religion trying to please God on one's own terms instead of on the terms God has revealed to us in His Word.

And so may God preserve us from such an error. You know what other people, what happened to them in the Bible, when they just tried to approach God on their own terms? Nadab and Abihu, they thought this special incense would be pleasing to God.

[39:57] They thought it up. They decided it. They brought it before God. And it wasn't what God had required. And they were struck dead. So, too, people who require things that God does not, forbid things that God does not forbid, are inventing their own way of pleasing God.

It is man-made religion. And it will lead to apostasy. You start to deny the creation, the good things that God has created. It's a short step to denying the Creator.

It's a short step after that to denying that Jesus came in the flesh. And so may God preserve us from such error. And may we delight in the truth.

If anyone here is contemplating some new teaching, it doesn't have to be this, but something else. It sounds so good. You picked up a new book. It's really good.

That's fine. It's good to read new books. And to hear good teaching, but if it's something that's different than what you've heard, sift it very carefully through the sieve of God's Word.

[41:07] and see if it matches up with what is printed here in the Scriptures. Remember, much error sounds so good because it starts with an element of truth.

You'll think, oh, that sounds good. And then dive in and forget to be discerning as you dig in. Guard yourself carefully. Think on these things. Come again. Ask your pastors for help if you're not sure. What about this? What about this? What about this thing that I've read? Or this thing that I heard on the radio the other day? Sift it carefully through God's Word.

Ask someone else who's able to help you. Better to be careful and guarded. To understand the truth and to guard yourself with it than to be led away from the faith by a deceiving spirit.

May God preserve us from error. Deceiving spirits will come. They will seek to lead us astray. And if we are led astray, we will abandon the faith. And so may God preserve us from such.

[42:07] May He make us a people that love the truth. And one other note tonight. We talked about the rain falling on the just and the unjust alike. And Christians and non-Christians alike enjoying God's good creation.

But only Christians receive it with thanksgiving. Some here are trying to enjoy God's good gifts, but separate from the giver of those gifts.

To receive God's gifts without thanksgiving to Him is just as dangerous as rejecting them. To pervert God's good gifts is to sin against the One who gave them.

To take God's good gifts and make them more important than the One who gave them is to set up an idol and to worship it. And so may God open your eyes to your idolatry, to your sin, to your pursuit of these things without pursuing the Creator.

And may He draw you to His Son who did come in the flesh. May He draw you to His Son, Jesus, who did die for our sins that they might be forgiven. Who did rise from the dead and is ascendant even now at the right hand of God, our risen Savior and Lord.

[43:18] May you come to Him and trust in Him and find your hope and your delight and your joy in Him. Let's pray together. Our Father, we thank You that You are the giver of every good gift.

We thank You for the gifts given to us in Your creation. Things that are good. And we pray that You would give us grace to receive them with thanksgiving. We do thank and praise You for these things and ask that we might always acknowledge them as coming from Your hand.

May the gifts You give never in our hearts or minds supplant You who have given them. May they never become idols to us. May we never overindulge them into sin and indulgence of the flesh. May we guard against these things while enjoying them as gifts from Your hand. We pray that You would help us, that You would guide us, that You would give us grace to revel in Your good creation, to take delight in it.

And we pray that You would guard us and keep us from error, whether it's this one we've heard of tonight or other errors that come in, these false teachings that would lead us astray. May none here ever leave the faith because they follow the deceiving spirit.

[44 : 30] Guard us. Protect us. We are not immune from such attacks, but we pray that You would protect us from them, that You would give us grace to withstand them, to sift all that we hear through the filter of Your Word, understanding Your truth.

Help us then to be rooted and grounded in the truth as Your church, to guard that truth and to not be led astray from it. Help us to that end, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen.

Amen.