

Imagine that you could never eat pork

Leviticus 11:1-8

In the OT church there were things that we were allowed and not allowed to eat. God said that an animal which had a split hoof and which chewed the cud could be eaten. But if it had or did one or the other, it could not be eaten. For instance, both conditions applied to a cow, so Israel could eat beef. A pig, on the other hand, had a split hoof but did not chew the cud. It could not be eaten. God said: It's unclean. You may not eat pork.

Now Leviticus 11 gives a lot of examples of the kinds of animals we cannot eat. Mostly you'd say: That's okay. I wouldn't eat them anyway - I wouldn't eat a badger or a beaver, an owl or an eagle. Not many of us are tempted to eat a frog or a water snake. These are all examples of animals that God declared unclean and therefore, you may not eat them.

But pork - in the OT, you could never eat pork. Well that's just terrible. I love pork. I love bacon and pulled-pork and pork chops and pork roast. Just saying that brings back really beautiful memories of times when I ate these foods with people I loved. But in the OT you could not eat it. To me, that seems pretty tough.

So why did God say that? Well he tells us clearly in verse 44: be holy for I am holy. God always wants his people to be more like him. It's what parents want for their children - to be like them in the sense that they accept their values and express those values in their lives. That makes parents proud and happy. It makes God proud and happy too - when you express the values that God stands for.

And if you lived in the OT times, you would be more like God if you never ate pork. That makes sense, right? You see the point, right? No? No you probably don't see the point. I didn't either. How does not eating pork make us more like God?

Well, let's think back to the very beginning, to Adam and Eve in Paradise. This is nearly exactly the issue in the Garden of Eden. God said: I'm giving you a lot of freedom for you can freely eat of all the trees in the garden, but there is only one thing that I'm going to tell you to not do: Don't eat of the one tree in the middle of the garden, the tree of knowledge. If you do, you will die.

Well, perhaps you know the story. Adam and Eve did that one thing God told them not to do - they ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. By disobeying God, they became unlike God. Immediately, a new feeling arose in their hearts, the feeling of guilt. They didn't know what it was, but it made them feel badly, perhaps even very sick. Guilt made them realize something that never bothered them before: they were naked. So they ran away and hid in the forest, hoping nobody would see them there. That's what happened when they didn't listen to God. They became unlike God. And that made God very sad.

You see, all God wants from us is to love him. And love is not an idle feeling. Love is the hardest working feeling a human can experience. In fact, it is the greatest power in the

universe. If a man feels love for a woman, he'll do anything to prove his love. If he could bring down a star from the night sky for her, he would. If crossing the seven seas would impress her he would do it. If searching the 7 continents would reveal her, he would search till he found her.

So in the OT, if you loved God, you would show it by denying yourself pork. If you love God, you'd do whatever he tells you - eagerly, happily. "No problem God. I love you so I'll do it."

But you if you don't eat pork today, it won't mean anything to God. Not anymore. Jesus Christ has made a difference in just about every respect. He declared that all foods are now clean and we can eat whatever we want.

He has the right to change the laws because he loved God perfectly by obeying God's laws outwardly in the details, and inwardly out of love and respect for God his Father. In obedience to the Father, he showed how much he loved us by dying on the cross. That was the job which the Father gave him to do and he did it willingly. His love for his Father and his love for you and me has been proven as love never has and never will again. So, as a result, God the Father appointed Jesus the Saviour to be the King of the universe. He has the right to change the law if he wants to. And he can be trusted to change laws in responsible ways. So we read in Mark 7 that Jesus declared all foods clean. We can eat pork now. Jesus made a new law saying it was okay now.

So if we can't respond and show to God how much we love him by not eating pork, how shall we? Well, just read the Bible and let God tell you there what things he wants you to do, and what not to do. And then, because you love God for Jesus sake, do what he wants, and avoid what he forbids. It will be 1000 times better than choosing to not eat pork. That is the beauty of living in Jesus.