

1 Timothy 4

Verse 1:

--***Now the Spirit expressly says that in the latter times some will depart from the faith.*** . . Paul warns Timothy of the spiritual conflict between the truth of God's house and the lies of the devil.

--The Holy Spirit was clearly and presently speaking about a coming apostasy. How? We don't know directly, but certainly through Jesus Christ (**Mt. 24:4-12**); Paul (**2 Thess. 2:3-13**); and other apostles (**1 Jn. 4:1-3**).

--When the very Spirit of prophecy is speaking, preachers and people better listen!

--When will this departure happen? In ***the latter times.*** . . which is a descriptive term for the church age (**Acts 2:17+39**)—the first coming of Christ till His second coming. We can see this thought process as Paul speaks about the future and present problems here and in **2 Timothy 3:1-9**.

--What is the Holy Spirit warning? That ***some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.*** . . Paul warns Timothy that many will depart from the pillar and ground of truth. They will abandon their former profession.

--For what? What is luring these departers away? Literal demonic lies! Much of the spiritual warfare we face is a battle against influential spiritual intelligences.

--That is why we must hold to, proclaim, and remain in the truth of God as the church of God despite this departure.

--What does this spiritual battle look like? Are we seeing and interacting with literal demons? No!

Verse 2:

--***speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron.*** . . It is not the demons that are lying hypocrites with seared consciences. Demonic teaching comes through deceived men and women.

--One of the ways someone brought up in the faith goes astray is described right here. On the outside, we wonder why the household of God, the church, the pillar and ground of truth, did not make a difference in them. On the inside, the history is clear. Hypocrisy sears the conscience, and an unfeeling conscience is ready to accept any lie.

--Demonic lies work through the hypocrisy of lying men and women. *Progressive Christianity leading others astray, doubtful thought by demonic thought!*

--It is a terrible thing to play with truth. We are all either listening and responding to the Holy Spirit or a seducing spirit. There is no middle ground.

--It's a dangerous assumption to think I can reject the conviction of truth, suppress my conscience, and decide to return to the same conviction at some point in my life.

Verses 3-5:

--What are these false teachers teaching?

--**(3) forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.**

--These false teachers are forbidding good things under some cloak of false spirituality. They are declaring evil what God made good.

--Paul had to deal with the issue of food numerous times (**Rom. 14:1-23; 1 Cor. 10:23-33; Col. 2:16-21**). Marriage and sexuality in general were also regular issues.

--If we **believe and know the truth** as it is in God, we will relate to marriage and foods correctly. What will that look like?

--**(4-5) For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.**

--The proper response to every good gift is the proper enjoyment (not too much) and the proper thanksgiving (not entitlement or ingratitude). Without thankfulness, all good things here are gifts from a Giver we are actively ignoring! *Our great sin is not having God's blessings where others do not, but not responding to blessings with the proper gratitude.*

--How can good things be set apart from God's glory as they should? Even my regular meals (**1 Cor. 10:31**)? By knowing they are good from His Word, and responding in thankful prayer to the Giver.

Matthew 14:19: And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes.

--Every gift should make us more grateful. Every good should be a touch from God.

*G.K. Chesterton: "You say grace before meals. All right.

But I say grace before the play and the opera,

And grace before the concert and pantomime,

And grace before I open a book,

And grace before sketching, painting,

Swimming, fencing, boxing, walking, playing, dancing;

And grace before I dip the pen in the ink."*

--It is not more spiritual to reject something God made for me to enjoy and return to Him in gratitude for the fresh expression of His goodness.

Verses 6-7a:

--**(6) If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ. . .**

How can Timothy be a good minister of Jesus Christ? By ministering the right truths, the right way. He needed to continue to instruct them as a brother in Christ.

--**nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.**

--A good minister is a good teacher. They are good teachers because they have learned well themselves! Paul is encouraging Timothy to continue being well-fed in the truth. *Deposits must be made before withdrawals.*

--How often do we require physical nourishment? Daily! The same goes for our spiritual lives! Our souls need to be nourished by what we are feeding others—this is true for all, but especially for pastors.

--**(7a) But reject profane and old wives' fables.** . . This exhortation is in direct contrast with nourishing words of faith and good doctrine. Error, conspiracy, and speculation cannot feed our souls.

--Paul is describing anything outside of what is holy, and even those things that press the bounds of reality, like old myths thrown around by crazy old ladies.

--We should be able to ask: *Is it Biblical? Show me where the Bible teaches this.*

Verses 7b-9:

--***and exercise yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance.***

--Paul exhorts Timothy to train himself to be godly.

--Training our physical bodies has some benefits. Exercise helps our bodies, now in this life, for a time. *It is so easy to lose gains!*

--In contrast, spiritual training, godliness of character, has benefits in every area of life both now and eternally. *What are we training ourselves and our kids for? Youth sports? College? Worldly influence? Addiction? Etc.*

--Are we training ourselves or our kids to love God? His Word? Prayer? Praise? The house of God? Sharing the gospel? Worship? Service? Etc.

--Everyone should understand and agree with this truth. The value of godliness should be universally accepted, not just by lips but by lifestyle.

Verses 10-11:

--**(10) For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God. . .**

Holding to the truth despite demonic lies, nourishing ourselves and others, rejecting foolish things, exercising ourselves toward godliness... all these things will take intentional work and effort.

--The world, the flesh, and the devil will press against us. We will be reproached, dishonored, and lowered in reputation at times. Godliness will be a reproach to the world and even sometimes to other Christians. *We must accept our share of both!*

--Paul says **we**, placing himself on the narrow path with Timothy. Will we join *them*?

--Why is this important? Because Jesus Christ ***is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.***

--Paul states emphatically that Jesus *is* (not just *wishes to be*) the Savior of all men (not just the "elect"). There is only one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, and His salvation extends to all. But He is especially the Savior of those who believe.

--To some, Jesus Christ is a rejected Savior. To believers, Jesus Christ is Lord.

--**(11) *These things command and teach.***

--***These things.*** . . is repeated throughout the letter: **3:14; 4:6, 11, 15; 5:7, 21; 6:2.**

--The tenses are *keep on commanding + keep on teaching*. Timothy's teaching was more than suggestion or opinion. We are responsible for obeying and submitting to the Word of God.

Verse 12:

--***Let no one despise your youth.*** . . Timothy was somewhere in his thirties. The Roman world considered **youth** anyone of military age who was still under 40.

--There is always a temptation, particularly in the ancient patriarchal society, for older folks to look down on others simply because they are younger. Timothy's position to command and teach would amplify this tendency.

--Now, there were not many "aged" Christians because Christianity was just beginning, and people hadn't grown up in Christian homes like today. And Timothy didn't need to be old to be mature in Christ. He had traveled and ministered with Paul for some time! *Days lived is not the same thing as distance traveled.*

--Every minister, particularly younger ones, will have to deal with these scenarios. How should they respond?

--***but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.***

--Paul tells Timothy to earn respect by being an example *of* and *for* believers. Again, this is the basic calling of a pastor. Peter says: ***nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock (1 Peter 5:3).***

--**word:** is basic conversation.

--**conduct:** regular life and habits.

--**love:** to God and others.

--**spirit:** in the virtuous work of the Holy Spirit in us.

--**faith:** in both "the faith" and in faithfulness.

--**purity:** is wider than sexual purity. It is being unmixed, or uncompromised, in all things.

Verse 13:

--***Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.***

--The language here adds in the article indicating three, separate but known practices: *the reading, the exhortation, the doctrine.*

--Of course, more went into a church gathering, such as prayer, praise, communion, etc., but Paul is emphasizing with Timothy the pastor-teacher part of the service that he was directly responsible for. If one of these three distinct, but simple elements is lacking, then the church gathering is lacking.

1) **Reading:** Actually reading the Bible!

--Certainly, this was important in Paul's day, as most believers didn't have their own Bibles. We have no excuse today! Sadly, many church services have no Bible, or very little Bible reading! There are numerous churches you could attend for your entire lifetime and never hear the whole Bible read aloud! Some literally say, you won't need your Bible, or latently get the message across that reading the Bible is not that important by relegating the Word to the background of the service.

--Bible reading is not a good idea. It is a command! ***Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27***

2) **Exhortation:** We might just call this preaching. It is the application of what is read in proper warning, admonition, comfort, etc. It is a moral appeal!

***Acts 13:15: And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, "Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on." Then Paul stood up. . . and said. . . ***

--There shouldn't be Bible reading and Bible teaching without Bible exhortation. Some teachers get too heady and theologically speculative. It is all thought-life and no real-life.

--Also, the exhortation should be in line with the Scriptures. ***We should be warned, admonished, comforted, as the Word leads.***

3) **Teaching:** Is Biblical doctrine, the truth, sound doctrine, the deposit. What Paul has been speaking about from **1:3+10** to this point. The sense of what the Bible is saying should be made plain.

--Again, this is teaching the Word of God, not just teaching *from* the Word of God. When you are listening to a pastor, ask yourself: *Is that what the inspired Biblical writer meant?*

--A good minister will continue doing those three things, and other Biblical essentials like prayer, praise, service, and communion will be built around them to make a healthy fellowship.

Verse 14:

--Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.

--The Greek word for **neglect** has the idea of *making light of* or *being careless*. Paul is reminding Timothy that he was clearly set apart by God for this task.

--We don't know the details, but apparently there was a prophetic word to Timothy, and a time when God's call on his life was recognized by the elders of the church. We could say he was ordained.

--The ***laying on of hands*** has a clear OT and NT history. (**Num. 27:18-23; Deut. 34:9; Acts 13:1-3**). It was a physical symbol recognizing the spiritual hand of God on a person.

--The key here is not understanding what Timothy's prophecy was, or when and who laid hands on him. The key is realizing we are responsible for God's calling and gifting. Our spiritual gifts are not magic charms that flare up without our consent. We must not neglect what God has given us. To do so is a positive sin.

--Find your gift by serving others (**1 Cor. 12:7; 1 Peter 4:10**), then cultivate it and don't ignore it!

Verse 15:

--***Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.***

--Timothy was to live within the sphere of these truths. He was to be caught up in them ***entirely***. We cannot give ourselves to everything. I only have so much time. So much money. So much emotion. So much thought. So much love. So much of me.

--The minister should give himself God, to prayer, to the Word of God, and to the teaching and shepherding of the people of God. Not other things! *How many have burnt out because they began to give themselves to every opportunity and not their calling?!

--Paul is defining priorities here for Timothy, and all future Timothys through the ages.

*Spurgeon (Lectures to My Students): *"We are, in a certain sense, our own tools, and therefore must keep ourselves in order."*

--What will happen? The people around us should see our growth, and likely will before us!

God is looking for our progress, not necessarily our perfection. Glorification is secured eternally in Christ.

Verse 16:

--***Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.***

--This is the proper order! It is hypocritical and a stumbling block to have high doctrine and low life practice. There will always be an intimate connection between a man's personal life with Christ and his message.

--The pastor needs to be continually watchful over his own personal life and continually growing in good doctrine. Paul was a learner, asking for books and parchments up until the very end! ***2 Timothy 4:13***

--No doubt this would remind those elders in Ephesus of Paul's exhortation to them just a few years earlier!

Acts 20:28: Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

--What is the salvation Paul is speaking about here? He is speaking about being saved from the end of the false teachers he is rebuking and dealing with. Being saved from spiritual shipwreck **(1:19)!**

--The salvation spoken of here will be found *in the process* of continuing in these things, not *because* of the merit of these things. Not meritorious but methodological. The path of simple obedience is the safest place for a Christian to walk.

--To save myself and everyone who hears me sounds like a great ending for my story and yours. Please pray this for me and for yourself! ***Romans 15:30***