

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JULY 21ST, 2019 // 1 TIMOTHY

1 Timothy 4 speaks of the dangers of legalism and the importance of staying faithful and diligent in personal godliness.

DEPARTING FROM THE FAITH (1 TIMOTHY 4:1-5)

Paul has spent the last 2 chapters encouraging Timothy to establish order, structure, and organization within the church.

- He ended chapter 2 with a very poetic description of the church's role along with a hymn of praise towards the victorious Christ.
- Now, he shifts gears and reveals that "the Spirit" (the one giving him the words to write) has revealed something to him about the "later times" (vs. 1).

What will happen in the "later times"? Some will "depart from the faith devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons".

- The phrase "later times" most likely refers to the time between when this was written and Christ's return.
- Some will "depart from the faith"- a sad reality is that many who seem to have been saved and to be walking with Christ will choose to walk away.

How will they depart from the faith? "By devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons".

- This isn't specifically talking about people defecting from Christianity to become blatant Satanists, it's referring to the fact that all deceptions come from Satan's realm.
- Satan is the "father of lies", so any false doctrine that leads someone away from the true faith is satanic.

People will also be led to depart from the faith "through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared" (vs. 2)- false teachers.

- It's people who are so numb to the conviction of the Holy Spirit and so committed to their own falsehood that they're "liars" who mislead people.
- This doesn't have to be a cult leader! Well-meaning "friends" can mislead others into error.

Paul then talks about a specific form of false teaching occurring in Ephesus (vs. 3).

- Apparently false teachers were teaching some form of "asceticism" (extreme self-denial through abstaining from sex, certain foods, sleep deprivation, and even exposure to heat or cold).
- Many in the early church weren't sure what to do with the "physical" aspects of life- if Christ transforms us spiritually, what do we do with the physical?

One answer was that because the physical world was passing away, physical pleasure was bad, so therefore a true follower of God must renounce it and abstain from it ("ascetics").

- The other answer was that because the physical world was passing away, what we do with our bodies doesn't really matter, so therefore a true follower of God can indulge in as much physical pleasure as possible ("gnostics").

To this form of asceticism Paul says, "God created everything good" and "nothing is to be rejected if it is received by thanksgiving" (vs. 4).

- Food, sex, and physical pleasure are gifts from God- they're not bad things in and of themselves.
- They can lead to things that aren't good when they're not "made holy by the word of God and prayer" (vs. 5).

When food becomes an idol and the enjoyment of it goes beyond the boundaries given in God's Word, it becomes gluttony (which is sin, and a bad thing).

- When sex becomes an idol and the practice of it goes beyond the boundaries given in God's Word, it becomes fornication, adultery, lust, or immorality (which are sins, and bad things).
- "Good things" can't be made into "God things".

A GOOD SERVANT (1 TIMOTHY 4:6-10)

Paul tells Timothy, "if you put these things before the brothers, you'll be a good servant of Christ Jesus..."

- As a pastor, Timothy was charged to not let doctrinal compromise or wrong ideas creep into his congregation.
- Instead, he was to "be trained" in good doctrine and in the word.
- Constant spiritual nourishment is crucial.

Being trained in the words of faith and good doctrine is being trained for godliness- not going deeper in "irreverent, silly myths" (vs. 6-7).

- The purpose for more Biblical and doctrinal training should be for greater godliness, not deeper knowledge in fringe theology and speculations or theories about the obscure.

- Beware of knowledge that distracts from becoming more in love with Jesus.

Instead of training yourself in "silly myths", train yourself for "godliness" (vs. 7).

- We expect and want to be told that spirituality is simply a deeper awareness or sense that God loves me and is with me, but this text tells us that "godliness" is actually something you work at.
- The word is gymnazo- it's where we get the words gymnast & gymnasium.

Bodily training is of some value (vs. 8)- taking care of your body and exercising has value to it and it's something we should do.

- But more important than physical fitness is spiritual fitness, that is of value in every way in both this life and in the life to come.
- Spiritual fitness ("godliness") affects our view of self, marriage, parenting, business, civic responsibilities, and our relationships.

Even the most physically fit and beautiful people in all the world will someday die.

- So not only is spiritual health incredibly profitable in this life- what we become spiritually in this life we carry into eternity.
- This training in godliness to prepare us for the "life to come" is the purpose for which Paul and the other apostles toiled and strived, because their hope was set on the living God (vs. 10).

The living God is the "savior of all people" (vs. 10)- not that everyone will be saved, but everyone can be saved if they put their hope in Christ.

- He is the savior "especially of those who believe"- although salvation is available to all people through Christ, only those who believe in Christ will know Him as savior.
- Our hope is not in legalism, but in a living God who we train ourselves to know.

KEEP A CLOSE WATCH (1 TIMOTHY 4:11-16)

Paul's instruction to Timothy was to "command and teach the things" (vs. 11)- that rules are great for discipline and growing in godliness, but they don't make you righteous and personal convictions can't be made into universal restrictions.

- "Let no-one despise you for your youth"- chronological age does not necessarily bring spiritual maturity (Heb. 5:11-14).

Timothy was to not let his age be the measure of his spiritual maturity, but to let his spiritual maturity be measured instead by what kind of example he was providing through his "speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity." (vs. 12)

- These are the true measures of someone's maturity in Christ and qualifications as a leader.
- We focus on all the wrong things- what matters most is a pure heart and a holy life.

Paul tells Timothy to give his energies to the "public reading of Scripture, to preaching, and to teaching" when the church came together (vs. 13).

- Reading together as a church centers us on God's truth and is a defense against falsehood.
- Preaching (exhorting) and teaching (explaining) are only effective when centered on Scripture.

Timothy is then told, "don't neglect your spiritual gift" (vs. 14).

- This spiritual gift was apparently given to Timothy through a prophetic message, probably at his ordination, and it was affirmation of God's call on Timothy's life for a special ministry to God and the church.

- Every believer has been specifically gifted by God for ministry- we're not neglect our gift.

"Practice and immerse yourself in these things, so all can see your progress" (vs. 15)

- Training in our spiritual disciplines of prayer, the scriptures, and Christian doctrine.
- Growing in character and Godly conduct in our speech, love, faith, and purity.
- Developing and using our spiritual gifts to serve others within our church.
- We should be able to see progress in these areas.

"Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching..." (vs. 16).

- My ability to lead and influence is connected to my ability to manage and live my own life well.
- If you can't lead yourself you won't be able to lead other people.
- Sometimes we're the hardest people to lead! It takes a tremendous amount of work to discipline ourselves and manage our lives well.

A correct view of Holiness, a commitment to training ourselves in godliness, and close watch on our souls.