

Paul's Epistles to Individuals

Lesson 9 – 1 Timothy 4:1-5

I. The Threat of Apostasy (vs. 1-5)

Though Paul wrote by inspiration to Timothy to prepare him for his work of preaching, the warnings and instructions contained herein have relevance to gospel preachers of every age, and to Christians generally. The risk of false teaching resulting in apostasy has already been identified by Paul as a thesis in this letter (**1 Tim. 1:3-7**). In **Chapter 1**, the motives of some is exposed, reminding Timothy (and us) that they will selfishly strive to pull the faithful away to a perversion of the Truth. In the same way that Paul warned the elders in Ephesus of this threat and instructed them to be on the alert for those who would arise from among them to speak perverse things (**Acts 20:29-31**), here Paul warns the young preacher to likewise be prepared to refute liars and hypocrites who would destroy the faithful with their false teachings.

II. The Spirit Speaketh Expressly... (v. 1)

Here Paul makes clear the source of this teaching. It is not Paul on his own who speaks, but the Holy Spirit. See also **1 Cor. 2:10-16** wherein Paul clearly states that by inspiration he has "the mind of Christ" and the things he speaks did not come from the spirit of man but the Spirit of God. Peter also made clear this fact. (**2 Peter 1:20-21** – "*But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, 21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God*"). Paul also emphasized the authority of his teachings in both word and letter to the Thessalonians (**2 Thes. 2:15**). The word "expressly" (Gr. "*rhetos*") simply means, definite, clear, or unambiguous. This is easy to understand and not open to human interpretation.

III. Latter Times (v. 1)

This reference is a source of confusion in the religious world. Many attempt to apply this kind of phrase in the Bible to things that have yet to occur. Many times the misapplication is tied to a pre-millennialist view wherein it is believed that references to the latter times, last days, or last times are attributed to the fictional time of the 1000 year reign on earth. In fact, these terms cannot refer to the end of the world because of other scriptures that exclude that possibility. Paul warns Timothy of the difficulties associated with the "last days" in **2 Tim. 3:1**, preparing Timothy for that reality. In Hebrews, the writer speaks of "these last days" wherein God speaks to us through His Son (**Heb. 1:2**) as a contrast to times past when God spoke through the prophets. Peter also referred to "these last times" in the present tense, the time in which Christ came (**1 Pet. 1:20**). In **Acts 2:14-24**, Peter quoted from Joel and attributes the Prophet's account as referring to the time of Christ. Therefore, Joel's "last days" also to the time of the Christian dispensation. Thus the "last days" began on Pentecost and will continue so long as God speaks to us through His Son.

IV. Depart From the Faith (v. 1-2)

Here the Spirit through Paul makes it clear that it is a certainty that some will lose their faith. In **Chapter 1**, Paul specifically mentions Hymenaeus and Alexander as having already done so. In Paul's second letter to Timothy, he cites Demas as having abandoned him because of his love for this present world (**2 Tim. 4:10**) and Alexander the Coppersmith as having done him "much harm" (**2 Tim. 4:14**). This is no idle concern and the specific examples prove it.

A. *Seducing Spirits/Doctrines of Demons*

“Seducing spirits” are those influences which would entice the faithful. They are false prophets, real people and not supernatural, who John said are “from the world” and must not be believed but tested (**1 John 4:1-6**). They are “demons” or “devils”, again not in a supernatural sense but humans, such as Judas (**John 6:70**) who do great harm with their doctrines.

B. *Speaking Lies in Hypocrisy*

These individuals are not innocent. They have selfish and prideful motives such as the ones who desired to be teachers for their own aggrandizement (**1 Tim. 1:7**) or sought to exploit with sensuality and greed (**2 Pet. 2:1-2**). They had willfully seared their conscious as with a hot iron so as to avoid the internal conflict that comes from a healthy conscious that guides one to conduct themselves honorably (**Heb. 13:18, 2 Pet. 2:12-22**).

V. **Creating False Dilemmas (v. 3)**

Doctrines of the Gnostics and Essenes included prohibitions against marriage and proposed extreme dietary restrictions. The Essenes were a sect of the Jews that existed at the time and along with the Gnostics, grew through the second century and beyond. They forbade what the scriptures allowed, taking on an exaggerated admiration for virginity to the detriment of marriage while ignoring scriptural approval for it (**Heb. 13:4**). They also expanded on Old Testament prohibitions against certain foods in spite of teaching to the contrary (**Col. 2:20-23, Acts 10:10-15**). Many of these restrictions were adopted into the Roman Catholic Church much later. By playing on weak consciences they created false moral dilemmas and arguments where none should exist, resulting in division (**1 Cor. 8**).

VI. **Incompatible Philosophies (v. 3-5)**

The prohibition of these things by man-made doctrines is not benign. It is completely at odds with inspired Truth. Paul makes it clear that not only are these foods allowable, but also to be received with thanksgiving. Not only is marriage allowable, but it is honorable. To turn away from what is provided by God for His people and claim that action to be even more righteous is dishonest and evil. **Verse 3** makes it clear that “believers” do indeed “know the truth”. So it follows that ignorance of the truth facilitates the success of these false doctrines. People are more easily deceived when they are not trained to discern good from evil (**Heb. 5:14**). The Galatians were “bewitched” and “foolish” (**Gal. 3:1**) because they had so quickly deserted Christ for “another” gospel (**Gal. 1:6**). This insidious tactic is compared to “leaven” in **1 Corinthians 5**, which when introduced into the body tends to spread its affect as a malignant influence, detrimental to God’s people. Not even a little can be tolerated. Since these things are “sanctified by means of the Word of God and prayer” (**v. 5**), no man has a right to declare them a violation of God’s law.

VII. **Gratitude Should Be Always in Our Hearts (v. 4)**

No matter what we receive, attain or enjoy in this life, thankfulness should characterize us.

- **2 Cor 9:15** – “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift”.
- **Ps 138:1-2** – “I will give Thee thanks with all my heart; I will sing praises to Thee before the gods. 2 I will bow down toward Thy holy temple, And give thanks to Thy name for Thy lovingkindness and Thy truth; For Thou hast magnified Thy word according to all Thy name”
- **1 Thess 5:16-18** – “Rejoice always; 17 pray without ceasing; 18 in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”