

SOUND WALK IN THE CHURCH

PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scripture for this lesson. First let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word.

Summary and Historical Background

Paul had instructed Timothy concerning the operation of a sound church in chapters two and three. In this chapter Paul instructed Timothy concerning the apostates who would destroy the local church.

First, Paul described the danger of apostates (4:1-5). They were dangerous because the Spirit clearly warned believers of their existence (4:1). They were described as those who had departed from the true faith to follow the doctrines conceived by Satan and his hosts. Their conduct and conscience rendered them unfit for spiritual service (4:2). The content of their message was foreign to sound scriptural teaching (4:3-5).

Next, Paul instructed Timothy to do three things to defend the church against apostates (4:6-11). One, he must remind the believers to receive God's word about marriage and all food and reject the harmful fables of old women (4:6-7a). Believers must know the Word of God before they can receive it and they must reject the stories not found in the Bible when they hear them. They must not try to reason with apostates. Instead they should simply proclaim the truth to apostates. If they listen to the truth and repent, keep talking to them. If they refuse to listen to the truth and want to argue, turn from them and wait for a better time, if God grants it. Two, Timothy must exercise rigorously in spiritual matters to develop a godly life (7b-10). Nothing stops apostates like godly believers who are fully satisfied with God's blessings. Three, he must command these things to be done and teach believers the truth (4:11).

Finally, Paul charged Timothy to take heed to his personal life (4:12-16). He needed to be a devoted example for the believers (4:12), a dependable servant in the affairs of the local church (4:13-14) and a disciplined leader in obeying the doctrine of God. In this way he would both save himself from the apostates and those that listen to him (4:15-16).

I. The Danger of Apostates — 4:1-5**A. The Certain Presence of the Apostates — 4:1a**

4:1a — The truth expressed: the Holy Spirit spoke clearly through prophets that the apostates would come.

The truth explained: apostates would come in the "latter times." This is not a reference to the "last days." This is what would happen repeatedly during the whole period of the church age. And when they appear, they will be known as those who "depart from the faith." "Depart" is a deliberate turning away. "The faith" is the truth of the Christian faith that is written in the Bible.

B. The Characterization of the Apostates — 4:1b-2

4:1b — "Giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" - This means they listened to evil spirits. When a man departs from the faith, he is open to the influence of evil spirits. Then they give their attention to the "doctrines of devils" i.e. the teachings of demons (cf. James 3:15). This teaching of demons is the mystery of iniquity (cf. 2 Thess 2:7). The teaching about Christ is the mystery of godliness (1 Tim 3:16). This verse and the one before it present the two contrasting mysteries.

4:2 - "Speaking lies in hypocrisy" — The apostates are hypocrites who speak lies. They know

better, but they deliberately tell the opposite because they love their sins too much to depart from them.

"Having their conscience seared with a hot iron" — Their conscience is no longer able to discern between right and wrong. "Seared" comes from the Greek word "to cauterize" (kausteriazō). When a doctor cauterizes, he burns a part of the flesh, i.e., to stop bleeding, but in so doing that part of the flesh loses its sensitivity. Since it is a radical act, done in a moment of time, the same must be true of those who sear their consciences. From this perspective it seems logical to say the apostate sears his conscience when he deliberately turns away from God's truth to follow the doctrines of demons.

C. The Corruption of the Apostates — 4:3a

4:3 — "Forbidding . . . to abstain" - One doctrine of apostates is asceticism, a self-denial of some privilege, pleasure or comfort. This is an attempt to earn God's favor through their works to be saved or to be more holy. It is not wrong to deny oneself in fasting and prayer to draw close to God in order to know His will or to seek His power to do His will, but it is wrong to deny oneself to earn salvation or to attain holiness. Salvation is a gift to be received from God and holiness is given to those that turn away from the doctrines of false teachers to serve the living and true God (1 Thess 1:9). These apostates forbid marriage in an attempt to make themselves more holy, but God ordained marriage in the Garden of Eden because it is not good for man to be alone (Gen 2:18-24). They also abstain from eating meats to deny themselves of some pleasure so they can be more holy. Both of these false doctrines are practiced today.

D. The Correction of the Apostates — 4:3b-5

Paul refuted the confusion caused by these false teachers with three short, but biblical statements.

1. God's purpose in creation — 4:3b

God ordained marriage in the Garden of Eden because it is not good for man to be alone (Gen 2:18-24). God provided foods from the fields and animals from the forests to be received with thanksgiving and eaten with gratefulness (Gen 1:29; 9:3).

2. God's perfection in creation — 4:4

Scripture says about creation, "God saw that it was good" (Gen 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25), yes, "It was very good" (Gen 1:31). Therefore, men are not to reject any of God's creation, marriage or foods, but they are to receive it with thanksgiving.

3. God's protection against corruption — 4:5

What God created is sanctified (kept holy) by His Word and prayer. Satan perverts the goodness of God's creation so that what is good is made to appear bad and what is bad is made to appear good. Satan did this to Eve when he told her that she could eat the fruit of all the trees in the Garden. When Eve corrected him and said she could eat the fruit of the trees in the Garden except for one tree. If she ate of that tree, she would die. Satan said she would not die, because God knew that if she ate of that tree, her eyes would be opened and she would be like Him, knowing good and evil. He twisted her mind with lies to make God's good warning look bad and his bad lies look good. Satan's demons do the same thing as he does. They have twisted the minds of teachers to believe their lies and now they teach the lie that marriage is bad; it only placates sinful desires, so celibacy is good and necessary to be holy. These false teachers also teach the lie that eating animal meat is bad because it takes the life of a living creature (teaching of Hindus). Believers need to study God's Word and believe

what it says about His good creation and how we should live in it to be saved and live holy lives. For this reason it is important that God's ministers have time for prayer and the study of the Scriptures so they can refute the lies being taught to believers (Acts 6:1-7). But all believers that can obtain a Bible should study God's Word to know how to be saved and how to live to please Him.

II. The Defense against Apostates — 4:6-11

Timothy must defend the believers against apostates by giving his attention to the following:

A. Expounding the Truth — 4:6-7a

4:6 — Timothy was to remind the brethren of the good things that God has given to them and refute the errors of the apostates. He was to teach them the Word of God so that they could defend themselves. A good minister must be negative as well as positive. He must speak against lies of false teachers and declare the truth of God's Word. By so doing, he will be a good minister, nourished in the words of faith and sound doctrine. What a good minister learns in his study, he preaches from the pulpit and practices in the world.

4:7a — "Refuse profane and old wives' fables" - Timothy also was to expose the corrupt stories that old women passed on to their families and told to their neighbors. These were the doctrines of demons that were no better than the false doctrines that the apostates were spreading (cf. 4:1-3).

B. Exercising unto Godliness — 4:7b-10

4:7b — Godly exercise is commanded in place of listening to fables. "Exercise" (*gymnaze*) is the word from which "gymnasium" is derived. In the world, "exercise" speaks of the physical training of athletes. In the church, "exercise" speaks of the spiritual training of pastors and all believers.

4:8 — Bodily exercise is profitable, but only in this life. Spiritual exercise that produces godliness is profitable in this life as well as in the next. In this life, godliness is a powerful weapon against the apostates. In the next life, godliness will be rewarded by God.

4:10 — "We both labor and suffer reproach" - Attaining godliness through obedient exercise is strenuous work, but this is what believers must do to be godly in their lives. When they attain it, they will be reproached by the world. Why? They look differently, speak differently and act differently. They do not fit with the life style of the world. It is difficult to be godly, but it pleases God and is well worth it.

"The living God, Who is the Savior of all men, especially of those that believe" — God is the Savior of all men on a temporal basis in this life through His many acts of mercy and kindness, but He is the Savior of believers on an eternal basis when they put their faith in His Son's death to take away the penalty of their sins and in His resurrection to give them eternal life. Another interpretation says God is the potential Savior of all men: He sent His Son to pay for the sins of all men (1 Tim 2:6; Heb 2:9; 1 Jn 2:2). But God is the actual Savior of only those that believe: He raised His Son to share His life with them (Jn 1:12-13; 5:24).

C. Exhorting Sound Doctrine — 4: 11

4:11 — "Command" and "teach" are imperatives in the present tense. This means Timothy, and all ministers that are true to God, are commanded to teach sound doctrine continually.

III. The Defeat of Apostates — 4:12-16.

The following actions of Timothy would defeat the apostates:

A. Timothy's Conduct — 4:12

4:12 — "Youth" - Timothy was not to be looked down upon with contempt because of his age. Even though he was probably between 30-40 years of age, he was young for such an important position.

"Example" — Timothy's life was to be an example, a model or a pattern, for others to follow.

"Word" — This refers to Timothy's speech or conversation with believers and unbelievers.

"Conversation" — This is an old word that refers to one's conduct; it is a person's walk, not talk.

"Charity" — Love that will cause a person to give sacrificially; it motivates a person to do good deeds to those in need of help. It does not provide salvation, but it is the fruit of salvation.

"Spirit" — Even though this word is not in most manuscripts, but where it appears, it would refer to his enthusiasm.

"Faith" — Trustworthiness, faithfulness: true faith in God leads one to be trustworthy, faithful.

"Purity" — A pure life enables a person to make good decisions and to perform with right actions.

B. Timothy's Commission — 4:13

4:13 — Concerning the public services, Timothy was to "give attendance to" or pay careful attention to three areas.

"Reading" — It refers to the public reading of Scripture. People did not have a copy of the Bible in their homes because copies were very expensive to produce. Each copy had to be written by hand. Printing presses were not invented at that time. So the public reading of the Scriptures were the only way most people would learn what God had said in the Scriptures. However, the public reading of the Scriptures is still a good practice in our age.

"Exhortation" — Preaching: encouraging the people to act upon the reading of Scripture (cf. Acts 13:15).

"Doctrine" — Teaching: the formal instruction of believers in the Word of God.

C. Timothy's Calling — 4:14

4:14 — "The gift" - A gift of grace was given to Timothy by the Lord for some special work (cf. Eph 4:11; 1 Pet 4:10). Evidently Timothy had neglected to develop and use this gift. He was commanded not to continue this neglect. From this it can be learned that a gift from God is not automatically useful. The recipient must exert his will to use it by faith. To neglect a gift from God is sin.

"Given you by prophecy" — A prophetic utterance was perhaps given him at the time the gift was given in order to encourage him to use it (cf. Acts 16:1-3; 1 Tim 1:18)

"Laying on of hands" — Other pastors identified with him by laying their hands on him. It does not imply that spiritual power or authority was transmitted to him.

D. Timothy's Concentration — 4:15-16.

He was to make sure he was a success in his life and spiritual service so that others would benefit from his ministry to the Lord.

1. Dedication — 4:15

4:15 — "Meditate" — It has the idea of thinking carefully on what was told to him so it would change his life.

"Profiting" — It shows progress. As Timothy practiced the things on which he was meditating, others would be able to see the progress he had made in his spiritual duties and follow his example.

2. Determination — 4:16

4:16 — Timothy was exhorted to take heed, first to his own personal life, and then to the doctrine, the subject he was teaching. A person must pay attention to his own life first, to be certain he is living according to the Word of God that he is teaching. Otherwise he would be a hypocrite. Students can detect a hypocrite very quickly and when they do, they stop listening to their teacher.

"Continue in them" — It has the thought of Timothy exercising himself in godliness (4:7), while he was teaching others.

"Save yourself, and them that hear you" — Timothy and his students were already saved from their sins, so in what sense did Timothy and his students need to be saved? They needed to be saved from the doctrine of demons that false teachers were teaching (4:1-3) and from blasphemous fables of old wives tales (4:7). If Timothy continued in the Word of God and carefully taught it to his students, these words that produced godliness would save him and those who heard him from these satanic attacks.