

CONCERNING FALSE TEACHERS

I Timothy 4:1-16

I. False Teachers. 4:1-5.

Turning from his summary of the greatness of the mystery of godliness, Paul reminded Timothy that the Holy Spirit "saith expressly that in later times some shall depart from the faith," the body of redemptive truth. There was neither doubt nor vagueness about it. Three parties are involved in the apostasy or falling away from the faith:

1. The victims.

The victims who follow false teachers are denoted by the indefinite "some." Not all will be affected at any one time, but there will be some. Those who are victimized will depart from the faith or stand away from their original position. They will depart from the body of truth, which constitutes Christianity, to which they once gave assent.

2. The demons.

The source of the teaching of the false teachers is evil spirits and demons. "Deceiving spirits" denotes those who are wandering away from the truth and are leading others to do so.

3. The human agents.

The human agents who bring about this departure from the faith are hypocritical liars. They are simply hypocrites, or men who are playing a part. Their consciences have been seared or cauterized and are no longer effective in restraining them from evil. Such errorists must work in the realm of hypocrisy in order to palm off their lies. These false teachers must assume the mask of an actor or make themselves appear different from what they really are. They feel no qualms whatever because their consciences have been seared.

The important thing is the warning against the teachers of these insincere and unscrupulous men who derive their doctrines from a Satanic source.

II. The Duties Of A Good Minister. 4:6-10.

A good minister of Christ will draw upon the truth for his inspiration and will pursue an entirely different course from these false teachers.

1. Constructive teaching. 4:6-7a.

It is his task to remind the people of the good doctrine. "If thou put the brethren in mind of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Christ Jesus." He must keep his fellow-workers alert to the dangers from false teachers. Bad doctrine is demoniacal, insincere, conscience-destroying and dishonoring to God. Good doctrine nourishes faith and makes a good servant of Christ.

Paul exhorted Timothy to decline to involve himself in disputes about profane and old-womanish myths or fables. "But refuse profane and old wives fables." Old wives fables seemed to have been the inventions or empty stories of interest to gossiping old women who had nothing worthwhile to do. While the good servant of Christ must meet

demonic teaching head-on and refute it with God's Word, he must not fritter away his time with such silly religious trivialities. The good servant of Christ will excuse himself from giving attention to such trash. While false doctrines must be met with true doctrines, silly myths and fables simply merit disdain. He must not even bother to argue against them. These myths have no spiritual value and are of the type that old women tell in entertaining others. The word refuse here has in it the idea of rejecting or politely ignoring. To dignify silly doctrines by considering them may do more harm than good.

2. Godly living. 4:7b-9.

Paul employed the language of the gymnasium to encourage Timothy to keep on exercising in the power of godly living. The Christian must exercise himself spiritually toward godliness. By godliness is meant that manner of life which is according to the standard of the Word of God. The power for such a life is supplied by Christ living within.

There are many forces at work in the world which would try to persuade men of the uselessness and vanity of godliness in the Christian life. The man who deals honestly not infrequently will see a dishonest man, a shyster, or a crook pass him in the race of life. The man who makes an effort to practice the Christian virtues of kindness and patience and forgiveness will meet with those who take advantage of him because he practices these virtues. The Christian believer who tries to keep up the life of worship and of prayer comes daily in contact with multitudes who look upon the whole thing as a joke, an absurdity, who disregard the unseen world entirely and who seem to get along just as well without professing religion. Thus men are tempted to say to themselves, "Is the struggle worthwhile; does it pay to be a Christian?"

A godly life pays physically. Bodily health is frequently the direct reward of godliness, whereas sin undermines physical health. Right living not only helps one physically, but it also has an effect upon one's offspring.

A godly life pays mentally. Christianity gives one the abiding comfort of an ever-present Companion and Guide.

Many years ago, a distinguished lawyer died in Indianapolis. At that time Benjamin Harrison, who later became the twenty-third president of the United States, was a member of the bar in that city, and he was asked to deliver an address at the funeral service. When he arose to speak to the group of lawyers, and others, assembled there, he said: "Gentlemen of the bar: Last night I was awakened by my little daughter who had arisen from her bed and made her way across the room and was stroking my face with her chubby hands. When I asked her what she wanted, she said, 'Papa, in the great big dark of the night I am lonely and afraid unless I can touch you.' Gentlemen, in the great big dark of the night of life's bereavement, we are afraid unless we can reach out and touch God." The ever-present companionship of Christ Jesus gives sustaining comfort for every hour of life.

Godliness makes life better and happier. The maximum achievement of any life is the doing of the will of God. When a Christian faces death he realizes that his having lived a Christian life has been profitable.

On June 6, 1799, Patrick Henry, great patriot of colonial times, lay dying. The physician came and examined his patient and said, "I'm sorry, Mr. Henry, but there is nothing I can do for you." Patrick Henry said: "Doctor, do you mean that I must die?" The physician said: "Yes, Mr. Henry, you are about to die." Patrick Henry said: "Doctor, if you will get yonder chair and place it beside my bed and sit here, I will show you how a Christian can die."

When the aunt of Gipsy Smith was dying, she called Gipsy to her bedside and said: "Gipsy, I want you to tell the world that I have found Jesus to be a rock in a weary land, a shelter in the time of storm, and tell the people that He does not forsake His followers when the hour of death is upon them." When one contemplated the death of a Christian he is reminded of the revealing words of Wesley concerning the death of Christians when he said, "Our people die well." Yes, the religion of Jesus Christ pays in the gloom of the valley of shadows.

'Tis religion that can give
Sweetest pleasures while we live,
'Tis religion must supply
Solid comfort when we die."

3. Faithful Laboring. 4:10.

Godliness, which is so profitable for both time and eternity, is the goal of every true servant of Christ. "For to this end," that is, the attainment of godliness, "we labor and strive." The word which is here translated labor means to work to the point of exhaustion. It is the word which describes the strenuous effort of the Greek athlete in his attempt to win the game. God's child should strive as fervently as any athlete in any contest.

Just as a youth in the gymnasium exerts himself to the utmost, so a Christian, by God's grace and power, must not spare any efforts to attain the goal of godliness. Just as that youth discards every handicap or burden in order that he may train the more freely, so a child of God should divest himself of everything that could encumber his spiritual progress. Just as that youth has his eye on the goal, so should every Christian be constantly aiming at complete dedication of self to God in Christ.

God's Word states that physical training is of some benefit, but that training for godly living is beneficial in every way. It says that the boon which bodily training bestows, however great it may be, is definitely inferior to the reward which the godly life promises. The sphere in which bodily training is of benefit is far more restricted than that in which godly living converts its rewards. The former concerns the here and now. The latter concerns the here and now and also reaches far beyond into eternity.

III. The Appeal For A Constructive Ministry. 4:11-16.

This good advice which Timothy received here is certainly applicable and helpful for any man who desires to have an effective ministry.

1. In his public life. 4:11-13.

- (1) He should teach sound doctrine. 4:11.
- (2) He should maintain the respect of his people. 4:12a.
Some were not taking Timothy seriously because of his youth. That sounds strange to us because he was between thirty-five and forty years of age. The exhortation here is to stop allowing anyone to despise you or to push you aside contemptuously because of your age. He was urged to assert the dignity of his office even though some people thought he was too young to hold it. He was admonished to refrain from giving anybody any ground for despising his youth due to any fault in his character. For such an important and responsible position Timothy was youthful, even though he was nearly forty. Yet any who despised him for his youth were inexcusable. They had no right to think down upon him or have an inferior estimation of him.
- (3) He should be a worthy example to them.
There was something that Timothy could do to win their respect. He could live before the believers in a manner above reproach. This statement does not imply that he had been careless about his conduct. "Continue becoming a model." The present imperative, which is used here, denotes a continuance in a course of Christian deportment to all believers. It was his duty to be an example to believers in five realms:
 - a. In speech. "Word."
 - b. In conduct. "Manner of life."
 - c. In attitude. "Love."
 - d. In faith. "Dependence upon God."
 - e. In character. "Purity."
- (4) He should maintain a balanced scriptural ministry.
 - a. The reading of the Holy Scriptures.
 - b. Exhortation based upon the Word which has been read.
 - c. Instruction in the Word.
If the people receive clear explanations of the Word, they will be saved from becoming entangled in these heresies. Proper teaching of God's Word will save many from the teachings of demon-influenced men.

2. In his personal life. 4:14-16.

- (1) He should exercise the gift which he has received. 4:14-15.
He was simply urged to exercise the gift which he had received from the Holy Spirit. This gift of grace was bestowed upon him for some special ministry. What that was we do not know. It may have been the ability to teach, or to discern error, or to administer the affairs of the church. Whatever it was, he could not afford to neglect it.

- (2) He should take heed to himself. 4:16.

As a minister he was under obligation to take heed or to care for his own character, creed and conduct. Both his life and his message were very important. If he would remain faithful, he would save himself from failure, and many of those to whom he preached would trust Christ and be saved from their sins.