

1 Timothy 4:1-5

The Spiritual Preservation of the Man of God--Maintaining a Good Conscience

In Ephesus, some were falling away from the faith and falling into heretical doctrines.

1. The pastor must avoid adopting any practice or doctrine that does not align with the gospel (1-3).

a. v.1, Paul is warning Timothy against apostasy that involves false asceticism. Paul warned against savage wolves that would come upon the church (Acts 20:29). These men claimed to be a part of the faith but had fallen away from "the faith."

b. v. 1 The root of all apostasy sinks down to the Devil and his demons. Devilish doctrine is carried along by false teachers. Paul warned "that evil men and imposters would proceed upon the church from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived." (2 Tim 3:13).

c. v.2 Paul calls the false teachers "liars" because they contradict the word of truth. By acting upon these false doctrines they have so cauterized their minds that their conscience can no longer discern right from wrong. Their minds can no longer rightly judge what is good, moral and pleasing to God. They had quenched the Holy Spirit and became tools of Satan.

c. v. 3 By prohibiting by what God has given us to enjoy together, we offend God's goodness and hinder fellowship within the church. The false teachers in Ephesus were promoting abstinence from marriage as a sign of greater holiness. They placed celibacy above marital intimacy. They also demanded abstinence from certain foods, most likely enforcing Sinaitic dietary restrictions. For Paul, the only food that should not be eaten was food not eaten with thanks to God and blessed through prayer.

d. The church should be ready to recognize and remove all forms of apostasy because the Holy Spirit has prophesied that it will come. The Holy Spirit speaks to us through the scriptures and to our conscience minds. The Spirit empowered Jesus to preach and prophecy that apostasy and false prophets would come upon the church (Matthew 24:10).

2. The pastor must approve of all things that are given approval by God as being good (4,5).

a. The remedy to overcome legalism is to promote the goodness and grace of God. There is no dualism in creation. Everything God made in the beginning he made good and made for our good. Paul is telling Timothy that a thankful heart transforms all food to be eaten as permissible.

b. The rejection of what God considers good to appear righteous is merely self-righteousness.

c. Everything that God created for our good should be received with thanks because all good things are made holy through God's word and prayer. The gospel brings a proper understanding of food, fellowship, and life. The gospel teaches us about the goodness of God. Even giving a simple prayer before meals is an opportunity to promote the gospel.

Conclusion: We are to promote the gospel and oppose legalism. Legalism prevents a believer and a church from maintaining a clear conscience and receiving the freedom that comes through grace by the Holy Spirit. Legalism refused grace and destroys gratitude. Promoting grace and receiving everything God gives us as good defeats legalism.

Make sure those who profess Christ also possess Christ. There are many empty professing people that would love lead your church members away from the fold.

Beware of self-righteous church members. Other members will see them as holy and godly. They use piety to conceal their arrogance. They will ask for their counsel and listen to their advice. Their legalistic standards that they hold are caustic to the church at large. They will look down at anyone who does not keep the bar as high as they do, even pastors. If you promote in leadership, you are asking for trouble and promoting hypocrisy. They form clichés and take on holiness groupies.

- 1 But the Spirit explicitly says [Holy Spirit's present, prophetic ministry to the church]
that in later times [apostasy, deceit and disorder mark the end times]
some will fall away from the faith, [αφοστηψονται, commit apostasy]
paying attention to deceitful spirits [great danger in moving away from truth]
and doctrines of demons,
- 2 by means of the hypocrisy of liars [actors, say they know God but don't live like it]
seared in their own conscience [συνειπδησιω, translates faith into action]
as with a branding iron, [rejecting truth leaves the conscience seared]
- 3 [men] who forbid marriage [an example of heretical teaching]
[and advocate] abstaining from foods [dualistic conclusions about spiritual life]
which God has created [affirming the goodness of God's creation]
to be gratefully shared in [we are to receive God's gifts thankfully]
by those who believe [the church enjoys common life by sharing]
and know the truth. [as opposed to those who cannot know it]
- 4 For everything created by God is good, [displaying God's creational intention]
and nothing is to be rejected [believers are free in Christ to make use of all foods]
if it is received with gratitude; [we are to receive God's gracious gifts thankfully]
- 5 for it is sanctified by means [it is declared suitable and clean to be used]
of the word of God [which enlightens the conscience to truth]
and prayer. [the appropriate posture to receive God's provision]

- * Pastors must put in place protective measures so that they will never drift away from truth
- * Pastors must persevere in proclaiming truth, especially in these "later times"
- * Pastor must not be intimidated by those who appear "super spiritual"
- * Pastors must keep their conscience sensitive to God's truth and appropriate God's good gifts