

Study 9: 1st Timothy Chapter 4

Introduction

The last chapter dealt with the qualifications of the elders, and Paul now deals with the practicality of the falling away that some of them had led. He further instructs Timothy regarding the purpose of his ministry.

Body of the Study

The falling away

Timothy's role as a minister

Timothy's duties

Homework and preparation for next week:

- *A cult movement usually exercises power over people from the leader through a chain of command, to make sure that the people are “under authority” of the shepherd or discipler. By contrast, what is the source of power for Timothy's ministry? What are the two methods for delivering his ministry?*
- *Read the notes as a review of the study*
- *Read chapter 5 in preparation for the next study,.*

Notes for study 9: 1st Timothy Chapter 4

The last chapter dealt with the qualifications of the elders, and Paul now deals with the practicality of the falling away that some of them had led. He further instructs Timothy regarding the purpose of his ministry. The chapter contrasts the falsehood of the elders who were leading the revolt, and Timothy who was a true disciple and was to show the fruit of the spirit in his actions.

The falling away

Paul had warned the Ephesian elders that a falling away was going to come, and would be led by some of them (acts 20:30). It happened just the way Paul had prophesied that it would, and Timothy has now been empowered to straighten out the church and put the disorderly church into order. He may have had this revelation of the Spirit, or some other revelation in mind when he says “...*Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith...*” (1:4:1 NKJV). The characteristics of the falling away are described in their actions of “...*following deceiving spirits and things taught by demons...*” (1:4:1 NIV). Rather than being led by the Spirit, they were being deceived by spirits.

The characteristics of this falling away does not stop just in the *knowledge* of demons, but they were also involved in the *practice* of them “...*speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron...*” (1:4:2 NKJV). They knew what they were doing was wrong, but they had become so engrossed in the practice that it no longer pricked their consciences, which had become cauterised (the Greek work is *kausteriazō*). They were not only being hypocrites (saying one thing and doing the very thing that they condemn in others), but they were denying the things that they were practicing, and lying about it.

They were also making commandments for which they had no authority “...*forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created...*” (1:4:3 NKJV). Forbidding marriage is a sign of false teaching, as is forbidding eating certain types of foods. All food has been created by God “...*to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth...*” (1:4:3 NKJV). This is probably an illusion to the Judaisers who would bind the abstinence from certain kinds of food on the Gentiles. As Christians, we understand that the things that God has provided for us are for our good, and we ought to be thankful, “...*For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving...*” (1:4:4 NKJV). We are instructed to give thanks for our food, and we “set it apart” “...*sanctify it by the word of God and prayer...*” (1:4:5 NKJV).

Timothy's role as a minister

Paul uses the word *diakonos* to describe the role here – the role of a servant (minister). “...*If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ...*” (1:4:6 NKJV). Note that Timothy's suitability as a servant required him to do something. ***IF*** you instruct... What Timothy was to instruct the brethren in, was not discretionary. Paul had given Timothy the instructions, and he was thus charged with implementing them. This should not be a surprise to Timothy, since he was “...*brought up in the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed...*” (1:4:6 NIV).

Timothy was to “...*Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly...*” (1:4:7 NIV). Paul describes these fables and godless myths (being taught by those who had abandoned God for the *doctrines of demons*) in the same way as an old woman might tell fairytale stories to young children. When we come to the practical acceptance of the truth, these things are to be rejected. The adjective to describe how we get to be Godly is *train* (NIV) or *exercise* (NKJV). This directly contrasts with the next verse, where the exercise (or

training) of the body is contrasted to the training in the spiritual realms “...*For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things...*” (1:4:8 NIV). The value of that training is in both the “...*promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come...*” (1:4:8 NKJV).

As with 1:1:15, we have “...*this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance...*” (1:4:9 NKJV), which refers to the preceding statement (about the promise of the current life and the life to come). This is the main point of christianity – the salvation of our souls – and is the purpose of the work of the apostles (as with Paul), and the evangelist (as with Timothy) “...*For to this end we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God...*” (1:4:10 NKJV). Our faith (trust) in God motivates us to go and preach the gospel to others. Jesus came to be “...*the Saviour of all men, especially of those who believe...*” (1:4:10 NKJV). Paul affirms that salvation is for everyone (not just the Jews, but the Gentiles too), and not just for the Gnostics who believe that only the enlightened ones (those who had knowledge) would be saved. The phrase *especially for those who believe* does not mean that everyone will be saved, and that the believers would be saved in some special way! Rather, the word *malista* is also translated particularly (1:5:17), and so the context would be that *salvation was promised to believers in particular*.

God is "the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe." In what sense is he the Savior of *all* men? To interpret this in terms of universal salvation would be contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture. What Paul means is that God is potentially the Savior of all men because of Calvary, but actually the Savior of only those who believe. (NIVBC)

Timothy's duties

Timothy was to teach these things, but Paul uses a very strong term here “...These things command and teach...” (1:4:11 NKJV). This was not optional – it was to be taught and delivered as commandments.

Timothy is here described as a youth (or young man NIV), which means he was under 40 years old. This fits with his conversion about 20 years earlier on Paul's first journey. “...*Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity...*” (1:4:12 NKJV). He was to present himself with the characteristics that those he was instructing could follow and imitate. He was to lead by example, and not just by what he said! The five areas that Paul describes here present an awesome responsibility to an evangelist to follow, and failure in any one of these areas can result in failure of the ministry.

Paul was planning on making another visit (1:3:14 -15), and until that time, Timothy was to “...*give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine...*” (1:4:13 NKJV). This statement reflects a simple pattern of worship of the early church that was similar to that practiced in the synagogue. The scriptures are to be read, the people are to be preached to (exhorted), and they are to be taught (doctrine means the thing that is taught). Timothy's responsibility as a minister was to all of these things.

“...*Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you...*” (1:4:14 NKJV). We should not assume that the gifts Paul was talking about here was the miraculous spiritual gifts, although Timothy did have those gifts which were received from the laying on of Paul's hands as an apostle (2:1:6). There is no evidence anywhere else in scripture that miraculous powers were imparted by the elders, and the context here does not demand that conclusion. Further, we should not conclude that Paul was an elder, and it was his own hands that he was referring to, since he was (apparently) not married (1 Cor 9:5). What we do know, is that:

- Timothy did have a gift of some description,
- That it was given with a prophetic message,
- The elders (somewhere) had laid their hands on him, and
- The gift was given at that time.

The laying on of hands was used as a sign of approval and appointment, and the elders (?) in Antioch laid their hands on Barnabas and Paul as a sign of their appointment (Acts 13:3). It would not be unusual for the elders to have the miraculous gifts (although only the apostles had the ability to pass it on); they could however exercise their gifts, which would most likely include the gift of prophecy. It is most likely that Timothy's gift was that of the ministry – his appointment as a minister – and that it was confirmed with a prophetic message when the elders appointed him to it.

Timothy is further exhorted to “...*Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress...*” (1:4:15 NIV). He was to be an example to others in the things that he did, so that he could be effective. “...*Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers...*” (1:4:16 NIV).