

Sermon Notes

WORSHIP SERVICE - 5.14.2023

PART 12 - DEPARTING FROM THE FAITH

I. INTRODUCTION

1 Timothy 4:1-7a

Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, **2** through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, **3** who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. **4** For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, **5** for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer. **6** If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. **7** Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths.

II. THE ANATOMY OF APOSTASY

- The church is the visible manifestation of the household of God, the church is the dwelling place of the presence of the living God, and the church is the guardian and herald of the word of God.
- The church confesses the mystery of godliness, which is Christ.
- Christ is the key to godliness and our identity and conduct will flow from a right confession of the truth.
- The confession of this glorious Christ makes possible the godly conduct that Paul is instructing the church to walk in as God's family, God's temple, and guardians and heralds of the truth.
- But now at the start of ch4, we see again, that there are false teachers who are denying what the church confesses.
- There are some in the church who are not holding fast to the truth but departing from the truth.
- This letter is peppered with exhortations for Timothy to safeguard the truth and to keep himself away from getting caught up with false teaching and error.
- His final instruction to Timothy is to guard the deposit of the faith that was entrusted to him and to avoid foolish controversies of what is falsely called "knowledge" which has caused some to swerve from the faith (6:20-32).
- In beginning to dissect how one apostatizes from the faith, we gain valuable principles for detecting error and false teaching and keeping ourselves from it.
- Philip Ryken, Reformed Expository Commentary on 1 Timothy, *"If Satan's favorite strategy is deception, it follows that the church is in real danger of being fooled by false doctrine. Some theology is so bad it can be spotted a mile off. But most false doctrines contain enough truth to resist detection. The most dangerous heresies often sound the most like authentic Christianity."*

SOME WILL DEPART FROM THE FAITH

- Greek, "apostēsontai", means 'will depart, abandon a position, go away, withdraw from.'
- It is where we get our English word, "apostasy / apostatize".
- When is that time? When will this apostasy take place?
- It is in the future tense, it will happen "in later times," that's when some will abandon the faith.
- But then Paul proceeds to describe the activities of those who apostatize in the present tense.
- 'Later times' can also be stated, 'last days'.
- The later times or last days is the present church age.
- 2 Timothy 3:1ff, Paul writes that in the last days will come times of difficulty and he describes the wicked behavior of people and then he tells Timothy to avoid them. Indicating that this was not some undisclosed future time frame, it was present.
- How does Paul know this?
- It is not from observation, though he definitely cites examples in his letters.

- “The Spirit expressly says...”
- The Spirit has predicted this occurrence. He has revealed that to Paul.
- How? Could have been through prophetic revelation. The Spirit is inspiring him as he writes this letter.
- Certainly we know this same prediction was made by him in Acts 20:29-30.
- Our Lord also predicted this falling away.
- Mark 13:22 For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. (also Matthew 24:10-11)
- However this came to him, it is true. And it reveals to us that none of this is a surprise to God.
- The Spirit gives us ample warning of this in Scripture and we must pay careful attention to it.

WHY DO SOME DEPART FROM THE FAITH

- Why do people abandon the true gospel?
- Paul gives us two main reasons.
- The first cause is demonic, the second cause is human false teachers.

- DEMONIC CAUSE OF APOSTASY

- To understand why people depart from the faith and leave the truth, we cannot underestimate the spiritual reality of the kind of warfare that takes place in the supernatural realm.
- Paul writes that people are departing from the truth because they have devoted themselves to demonic doctrine.
- This is the underlying spiritual dynamic at the heart of apostasy.
- Notice the contrast Paul draws by stating that “the Spirit expressly says...”
- False teachers and others are under the sway of demonic spirits, deceitful spirits, spirits propagating error.
- Paul is speaking under the inspiration of the Spirit of truth.
- False teachers are speaking under the influence of deceitful spirits.
- There is a Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

- HUMAN CAUSE OF APOSTASY

- Paul now links this demonic deception and doctrine to how it is introduced to people.
- It is transferred from the demonic spiritual realm into the world and into the church through human agents who are insincere liars whose consciences are seared.
- Paul gives a description of the nature of false teachers who teach these demonic doctrines.
- They are insincere, it is the Greek word, “hypokrisis”. They are hypocrites.
- Paul says they are hypocritical liars. They are deliberate liars.
- So Paul writes that their consciences are seared; the voice of their conscience has been silenced so they have no feelings of guilt or remorse.
- These false teachers that cause some to depart from the faith, no matter how sincere they may appear to be, how humble they act, are not uttering their falsehoods ignorantly or unknowingly, they are conscious liars and deceivers.
- People depart from the faith by way of demonic and human cause.
- False theology, bad theology comes by way of lying spirits and lying men.
- This causes many to fall away from the faith.

THE NATURE OF THE FALSE TEACHING - ASCETICISM

- What was the nature of the demonic doctrine that these false teachers were spreading?
- They were requiring believers to deny two great gifts from God— marriage and food.
- They were spreading the lie that ascetic practices were a necessary part of one’s faith and if you didn’t do these things you were not really a follower of Christ.
- Asceticism has to do with the denial of fleshly appetites through rule keeping.
- On the surface you might just see that as spiritual discipline for the purpose of growing in godliness.
- But asceticism takes that to an unhealthy and ungodly extreme that distorts the gospel.
- **Colossians 2:16-21** Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. 17 These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. 18 Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, 19 and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God. 20 If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— 21 “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” 22 (referring to things that all perish as they are used)— according to human precepts and teachings? 23 These have indeed an

appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

- What is ultimately wrong with denying oneself these things in the pursuit of godliness?
- Some may be called to celibacy. Fasting is an appropriate Christian discipline.
- It all comes back to our motivations and the gospel.
- When you add rules and regulations to the gospel, it ceases to be the true gospel that saves.
- You can avoid external practices and abstain from certain foods and still not abstain from a selfish and sinful heart that is greedy and cruel and is selfish.

- Furthermore, to forbid what God's Word has declared to be good and God's general will for his people is folly and error.
- Marriage and food, which these false teachers were forbidding, are gifts God created to be received with thanksgiving.
- Why on earth would we forbid marriage when God is the one who instituted it?
- Why would we demand people abstain from certain foods when God is the one who made these things to be received with thanksgiving?
- That is not the gospel.

III. THE ANTIDOTE TO APOSTASY

- So how do we avoid this ditch that can lead one to apostatize?
- Paul gives us the antidote to falling into the error of asceticism that can lead to apostasy and a departure from the truth.
- **We must affirm the inherent goodness of everything God created.**
- God has rendered the verdict on everything he has made.
- At the end of the week of Creation, at the end of the sixth day, God declared, "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31).
- God created male and female and charged our first parents with the responsibility of filling the earth with other image-bearers.
- The one-flesh union between a man and a woman who have given themselves in marriage is God's idea and God's design, to forbid that is to go against the Creator.
- As it relates to food, God put everything we need on this earth for our sustenance and survival, but also for our enjoyment. There is pleasure and enjoyment in eating certain foods.
- Jesus himself declared that all foods are clean (Mark 7:19).
- We who believe and know the truth need to celebrate the goodness of God's creation.
- To reject these things is to depart from the faith. To require abstinence as a means of godliness is an error.

- **We must receive with thanksgiving the goodness of God's creation.**
- Nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving.
- V5 made holy through the word of God and prayer is a double declaration of consecration.
- God declared that what he had made is good, that's His Word, and we receive it with a prayer of thanksgiving.
- This is how we should approach all of life.
- Giving thanks for all of God's good gifts thus redeeming them for our enjoyment.
- Are you thankful? Have you expressed to our Creator your gratitude and thanks for all of his good gifts in your life?

- **Lastly, We must train ourselves in sound doctrine.**
- How can you detect the false? By becoming an expert in the truth.
- Paul tells Timothy to put these things before the church, and by doing that he is a good minister of Jesus Christ.

- As we read in Col 2:23, these have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.
- They don't produce the true work of godliness in our life and heart.
- Have nothing to do with those things. Avoid them. Stay close to God's Word.
- Affirm the inherent goodness of everything God created.
- Express thanksgiving to God for the good gift of creation.
- If we reject God's good gifts, if we live lives of ingratitude, if we skimp on our training in sound doctrine, we run the risk of departing from the faith.
- Give God thanks for having received the only true gospel that leads to salvation, freedom and abundant life!