

## DEPARTING FROM THE FAITH

### DECEPTION IN THE CHURCH OF THE LAST DAYS, AS PREDICTED BY PAUL



Last week we touched on the theme that religion, and the adherence to its often peculiar ways, leads to death. Only faith in Jesus Christ can save you from eternal punishment.

This week we continue the discussion, but delve deeper into the topic. Our focus is Paul's first letter to Timothy in which he prepared his protégé to continue with his work after Paul's death. We are going to look specifically at 1 Timothy 4:1.

<sup>1</sup>Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; <sup>2</sup>Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; <sup>3</sup>Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. – **1 Timothy 4:1**

Let us break down this verse in logical parts and see how this was not only true in the first century of the church, but is becoming worse in our time.

#### 1. *Now the Spirit speaketh expressly*

- a. This verse is a continuation of chapter three. In verse 15 of chapter three he mentions the house of God, which is the church, and in turn is the pillar and basis of the truth. Verse 16 summarises the work of Jesus, which culminates in the founding of the church. He then prepares Timothy for the dangers that he is going to experience in this same church, and this is a forecast of conditions in our time.
- b. It is the Holy Spirit that reveals this, not the mind of man. Paul was merely the mouthpiece through which the Holy Spirit spoke.
- c. The Holy Spirit speaks expressly – clearly and directly. There is no ambiguity in the message.

#### 2. *that in the latter times*

- a. Paul wrote this to Timothy to warn him of a time after his death, that these things would happen. Paul clearly understood that despite the work of many to build the church, the evil one was never going to leave it alone.
- b. These things have just become worse in our time, right now.

#### 3. *some shall depart from the faith,*

- a. Not all believers will depart from (leave) the faith, but some will. The point is that we often look at unbelievers as the guilty ones for the problems we face in the world. Since you cannot leave faith if you do not have faith, the focus is not on unbelievers (“the world”) but on people in the established church. They are the ones who are leaving behind the truth they learnt earlier. They are not

necessarily leaving the church, but are replacing faith and sound doctrine with the lies they are told.

- b. That the verb “depart” is indicated in the future tense as “will depart” means that it started happening in Timothy’s time and it continues to this day. In fact, it is just getting worse.
- c. The sad part is that “some” represents people who were believers in Jesus Christ in the past, but they have left the faith. This group also includes religious leaders. They have fallen away from sound doctrine (2 Thessalonians 2:3).
- d. The verb used here, depart, is an active verb. You may be enticed to do something wrong but, in the end, you are still the one who acts on the desire or the deception. The devil sets the bait. You are the one who takes it.
- e. The Greek word used for “depart” is Αποστησονται – apostēsontai. See our article on the apostate (fall away, depart, forsake) church for more information: <https://www.johnchapterthree.com/en/theapostatechurch>

#### 4. *giving heed to*

- a. Those who have departed from the faith are now replacing the true doctrine they once learnt, and are listening to (“giving heed to”) and accepting the message of misleading teachers and leaders.

#### 5. *seducing spirits*

- a. These are false spirits that make people believe that they are still on the right path but all they do is to deceive. This is the tragedy of deception that Jesus mentioned to His disciples:

<sup>4</sup>And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man **deceive** you. <sup>5</sup>For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. – **Matthew 24:4-5**

- b. The seducing spirits cunningly lead people away, slowly but surely, because they make the lie appear attractive.

#### 6. *and doctrines of devils;*

- a. These are doctrines/teaching of devils/demons – (Greek: διδασκαλίας δαιμωνίων – didaskaliais daimōniōn) given to people by teachers that have already been deceived and now they lead others away from the truth. These doctrines are false and are antichrist doctrines, the complete opposite of the true doctrine of salvation and faith.
- b. These doctrines may have had their origin in the true faith, but they have twisted the truth in such a cunning way that people are not aware of it.
- c. Read Peter’s comment about false prophets in 2 Peter 2:1.

7. *speaking lies in hypocrisy;*

- a. They **speak lies**.
- b. **They are hypocrites** and operate in a situation in which they pretend to believe something that they do not really believe, or that is the opposite of what they did or said before.

8. *having their conscience seared with a hot iron;*

- a. The lies they speak are branded into their conscience. They are marked and now belong to the evil one. The irony is that while they deceive others to do what they themselves will not do, they are so confused that they believe their own lies. This is the opposite of having a clear conscience.

9. *forbidding to marry,*

- a. Some major denominations prevent their workers from marrying. Marriage is sacred, normal, and blessed by God. It provides companionship, assistance and safety. Deciding not to get married is not wrong in itself, and Paul is an example, but being forbidden from getting married, thus against your will and wishes, is most definitely wrong.

10. *and commanding to abstain from meats,*

- a. At the same time that these deceiving spirits forbid people to marry, they order (command) them not to eat meat of any kind.

11. *which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving*

- a. Think here of Peter and the dream he had. See Acts 10:10ff. While we know that the overall message of Peter's dream was that he had to proclaim the gospel to all, including the Roman centurion named Cornelius (Acts 10:1), the Holy Spirit uses this verse also to clearly indicate that there is nothing wrong with eating meat which God has created to be clean (Acts 10:15).
- b. Whatever God gives us as believers is to be received with thanks as a gift from God. In our time many no longer believe that being given anything is a blessing to be thankful for. They demand it as a right. To be thankful is God-focused. To demand is self-focused (selfish).

12. *of them which believe and know the truth.*

- a. Those who are true believers and know the truth will understand what faith is.
- b. This part ends the verse and shows that there are liars (seducing spirits) that lure away genuine believers to believe their false doctrines. This is what we have to be wary of!

## HOW DO I KNOW I AM BEING DECEIVED?

Examine the verse again. Then compare it to what you believe or what you see happening in your church. The crucial test is that you have to examine yourself in the light of the Word, the standard by which everything else is measured. Go back to the start of the verse and see where things go wrong. Find the object in the sentence (some) and the verb (depart).

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1. Have you left your first love, Jesus, to pursue something else? See one of our previous articles: <https://www.johnchapterthree.com/en/yourfirstlove> for more information. The verse states that it starts with you, not the deceiving spirits. It is the same with sin:

<sup>14</sup>But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. <sup>15</sup>Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. – **James 1:14-15**

While the temptation is always there, it affects you only when you take the decision to give in to it.

2. Are you comparing what people in church **say** and **do**, against the Word of God?
  - a. What do they **say** (speak, teach) and what does the Bible teach on the subject?
    - i. Do they teach that all religions can find God in their own way and that Jesus is not actually the only way? If they do not teach that salvation is available only through faith in Jesus Christ, they are deceiving you. Clearly, they have never read Jesus' words:

<sup>6</sup>Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, **but by me**. – **John 14:6**

Of course, false religions that do not believe in God as a Father will use this as an excuse not to accept John 14:6. Some will go even further to refer to God as a mother. There is no Scripture that even remotely supports this idea, so if your teachers start referring to God as a mother, run away.

- ii. Do they teach a gospel that focuses on the “inherent goodness of man” and that we are not really as sinful as the Word makes us to be? Instead, teaching based on sound doctrine emphasises the sinful nature of man and the need for repentance and a Saviour:

<sup>23</sup>For **all** have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;  
<sup>24</sup>Being justified freely by his grace **through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus**: – **Romans 3:23-24**

- iii. Do they teach that a “loving God surely will not condemn people to eternal punishment” just because of the choice they made, or did not make? If they do, then they have missed the essence of Jesus’s message to Nicodemus:

<sup>16</sup>For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that **whosoever believeth in him should not perish**, but have everlasting life. – **John 3:16**

- iv. Do they prevent their members from eating meat, contradicting God’s command in Genesis 9:3-4 emphasised by Paul in Acts 15:29? Note that in both these verses, there is no mention that one should not eat meat. They merely address the way the animal is killed (not strangled) and the meat treated (bled out).

- b. What do they **do** (rituals) and what does the Bible teach on the subject?

- i. Does your church use other materials that replace the Bible as the sole source for sound teaching?

<sup>16</sup>All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: <sup>17</sup>That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works. – **2 Timothy 3:16-17**

The purpose of Scripture is that the man of God (the believer) may be perfect. Nothing more or else than “all scripture” is required.

- ii. Does your church observe other rites, apart from the only two rites observed by the Bible, namely baptism and communion?

<sup>13</sup>For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. – **1 Corinthians 12:13**

This verse addresses baptism as the outward proof that we are part of the Body of Christ, and communion is the inward evidence of our fellowship as the Body of Christ. There is no other example in the New Testament that can be used to support other man-made rites or observances.

- iii. Do leaders in your church clothe themselves with attire other than that normal people will wear? Some readers may want to criticise the writer here, but think about it for a minute: If the leaders adorn themselves with capes, jewellery, headgear and other ornamentation, why not you as the member of the same church? If what they wear is necessary for salvation, why are they not expecting you to wear the same?

<sup>38</sup>And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in **long clothing**, and love salutations in the marketplaces. – **Mark 12:38**

The quoted verse clearly focuses the attention on elaborate clothing worn by religious leaders. God does not look at the outward appearance, but at the intents of the heart (See 1 Samuel 16:7).

- iv. Are you expected to confess your sins to anyone else but to God the Father?

<sup>5</sup>For there is one God, and **one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus**; – **1 Timothy 2:5**

Jesus alone is our mediator. Nowhere is it stated that we confess our sins to a human being.

- v. Does your church have statues of humans or other relics that are used as part of the worship rituals?

<sup>3</sup>Thou shalt have no other gods before me. <sup>4</sup>Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the Earth. – **Exodus 20:3-4**

This is the law of God and it has never changed.

- vi. Do you use prayer beads? Jesus warned against vain repetition of prayers:

<sup>7</sup>But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, **as the heathen do**: for they **think** that they shall be heard for their much speaking. – **Matthew 6:7**

Prayer beads are meant exactly for this purpose – vain repetitions of memorised prayers. If you cannot actively and consciously pray, and communicate with God, there is a serious problem with your walk in faith. They think that they will be heard, but they really deceive themselves.

- vii. Are the members of your church council married? If they are not, is this by choice or by force? If by choice, there is nothing wrong with it. If it is forced, then there is a problem.

<sup>2</sup>A bishop then must be blameless, the **husband** of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; – **1 Timothy 3:1**

There are many other references stating the marital status of overseers, elders and bishops, and the emphasis is that they have to prove that

they can manage their own households before they can be deemed fit to serve in the church.

- viii. Do you call your preacher Father? If you do, you have not read the Bible properly:

<sup>9</sup>And call no man your **father** upon the earth: for one is your **Father**, which is in heaven. – **Matthew 23:9**

No man on Earth can be called “Father”. Your own biological earthly father is at best “my father”, never “my Father”.

The list can go on, but we will stop here. The message is clear. As you can clearly see, the deception ranges from twisting the major doctrines of the Word of God, to small things we may deem trivial, like prayer beads, clothing, marrying, consuming meat, and titles.

## **CONCLUSION**

Do you follow the infallible Word of God as your source of life or are you really giving in to the doctrines of demons? We are living in perilous times where the world is waiting to lure us out of the church. How tragic it is then, that some people inside the church fall away because they are deceived, and are damned forever. In the end, you have no excuse as the Word is your one and only guide.