

**Series: Body Essentials: Imperatives for Church and Leaders****Today's Message: Church, Keep the Main One the Main Thing! Pt 2; 1 Timothy 4:1-5**

Sometimes chapter breaks distract us from the continuity of thought. But the end of chapter 3 and the beginning of chapter 4 are connected. Paul has emphasized the point in 3:14-16 that the church must keep the main One the main thing if it is to be faithful in calling and purpose. In 3:16 Paul described the “mystery of godliness” by summarizing the theme of apostolic preaching. That theme has Jesus Christ the Lord at the very heart of all that they preached and taught. His Deity, His incarnation, His Death, His resurrection; His ministry, and His ascension. The point can certainly be made that godliness is found in Christ alone. In other words, in Christ alone is our relationship with God secured.

On the other hand, as we will see in 4:1-5, Paul describes what happens when Christ Jesus does not have supremacy. So, as some have said: “Paul describes in these verses the mystery of iniquity, which stands in opposition the mystery of godliness (A.R. Faussett).” What does this mean? It means that Christ becomes secondary, supplanted by false teachers, deceivers, teaching the doctrines of demons which subordinate Christ Jesus and His person and work to the spiritual inventions of apostate Christians.

As we come to this text today, we must readily acknowledge that Paul is warning about apostasy—that is the intentional turning away from *the faith*. *The faith* “refers to the content of divine revelation that constitutes what Christians believe. (MacArthur)” We are going to look at this text as a warning not to turn away from sound, orthodox doctrine. You will stand firm; you will not turn away from *the faith* if you hold to the sound doctrine of Scripture. It is what Paul emphasized when encouraging Timothy—hold on! (see 1 Tim. 6:20

- I) **(4:1-2) Be Aware, some who profess faith in Christ will fall away.**
  - A) The Spirit says so.
    - 1) All through the OT and NT God has warned about those who would fall away.
    - 2) There are seemingly two kinds of people being mentioned:
      - (a) Those who are led astray by deceitful spirits and doctrine of demons. And,
      - (b) Those who are leading people astray by teaching.
  - B) Who are the people who are led astray
    - 1) 2 Timothy 4:3: “For a time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears what to hear.”
      - (a) They “follow/ pay attention to deceitful spirits and things taught by demons.”
      - (b) They will never be content with the content of the message of the Gospel and will lose interest with the doctrines of grace.
      - (c) They become mesmerized by the personality and charisma of the pastor/teacher/leader.
        - (i) Acts 20:29-30 Paul warned these same Ephesians that one day there would come into their midst men described as savage wolves. These “wolves” will be trusted men from their own number. These that are led astray were led astray because they did not hold to sound doctrine.
  - C) Who are they who lead people astray?
    - 1) They have already committed full-blown apostasy. They are devious false teachers who are determined to amass a cult following.
      - (a) They are hypocritical liars. In other words, they are deceitful lie speakers doing the bidding of demons. The native language of demons is like that of Satan, who is the father of lies! **John 8:44**
        - (i) Hypocrites: They sound holy and play the part but are full of evil, greed and depravity.
        - (ii) They will claim to have a “new revelation,” or a “word from God.” (**See 2 Timothy 2:17-18**)
      - (b) Their consciences are seared. They’ve lost all sensitivity to the conscience which either affirms or condemns an action (Romans 2:14-15).

- (c) Their false teaching is most often very subtle with a slight deviation from the truth, as we will see.
- II) **(4:3) Be Aware of their subtle deviation from the Truth.**
- A) A subtle deviation from Truth serves as “an entry point of demonic teaching (MacArthur).”
- 1) Rarely will a false teacher begin by denying the foundations of *the faith*. They won’t initially attack the doctrine of God, or person and work of Christ Jesus, or the Trinity, or of salvation by grace. But what do they do? Paul tells us in 4:3. This is how Satan gains a foothold. He just needs a small opening.
- B) (3a) “They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods”
- 1) On the surface it may sound like serious self-denial. Are we to deny ourselves. But when we are more strict than God on issues such as these, a line has been crossed.
  - 2) Denial of marriage and strict food abstinence are externals; these are common of all false religions.
    - (a) See what Paul wrote in Colossians 2:16-23 (**read it**)
      - (i) Notice: the regulations are good but only served as shadows of Christ who was coming.
      - (ii) Notice: growth does not come through externals but only as we are attached to Christ Jesus.
      - (iii) Notice: These externals have an appearance of piety but are of no sanctifying value!
- C) (3b) The externals result in “self-congratulations” instead of thanksgiving to God who gave us marriage and food.
- 1) To claim to have gained a righteousness by following externals is **to deny or misuse God’s Word.** (see 1 Timothy 1:7)
    - (a) Our righteousness comes through faith in the faithfulness of Christ Jesus—His person and work!
    - (b) Marriage and food are gifts from God and to be received with thanksgiving (Genesis 1:28-31; 2:18-24; 9:3). Also, remember, in Mark 7:19, Jesus declared all foods clean!
      - (i) God made marriage and food and everything else to give people joy and bring God glory!
- D) APPL: Be aware that there are many teachers who subtly steal glory from God and His gospel by adding external practices as necessary to experiencing the so called “deeper life” with God. The so called “deeper life” with God is something God desires for you. But it is found only as you abide in Christ! Jesus spoke about this in John 15:1-5. All of the apostles spoke about knowing God better as we follow after Jesus Christ and obey His Word. What are you doing to know God’s gospel of *grace*?
- 1) What external practices are you involved with hoping to gain God’s favor; that God will notice you?
    - (a) Who is it who God esteems? He who is humble and contrite before Him (Is.66:2). In other words, the person who fears Him and trembles (is in awe) of His Word. Doesn’t deviate from the Word.
  - 2) If you find more interest in new teachings from unknown teachers than you do from sound teaching from the well-worn paths laid out in the Bible, you may be at risk of deviating from the Truth.
  - 3) Keep the main One the main thing!
- III) (4:4-5) Be aware that deceivers refuse to recognize that everything created by God is good.
- A) Everything created by God was created for mankind to enjoy and for God to be glorified!
- 1) Everything God created is good and is not to be rejected.
  - 2) He teaches us how to enjoy all that He has created.
    - (a) Sin and sinful practices (contrary to God’s word) leads to perversion of the purpose of God’s creation.
      - (i) Creation is good. But sinful man twists its purposes and steals glory to God.
        - (a) Marriage is good, but sinful man twists its purpose by being ungrateful for it.
          1. This lack of gratitude to God shows up in sexual and relational sin.
- B) Nothing is to be rejected, and everything is to be received with thanksgiving.
- 1) As we receive all things with thanksgiving to God we fulfill God’s righteous purpose all things were created for in the first place.
  - 2) All things for which we give thanks to God is consecrated by the Word of God and prayer!
    - (a) God’s Word sanctifies all things as holy. When Jesus finished His work all things became ours in Christ (see 1 Corinthians 3:18-23)
    - (b) Prayer: Expressing gratitude to God allows us to freely and joyful receive all He has created.
- C) APPL: What practice in your life has minimized the supremacy of Christ in your life? What will you do with that practice so that Christ Jesus becomes the main One in your life?