

Title: In Later Times
Text: I Timothy 4:1-11

Would you open your Bibles, please, to I Timothy. I Timothy chapter 4. We are continuing our study of the DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF FOLKS WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE LOCAL CHURCH. So far, in our study, we have looked at the place of PRAYER in the local church. We have looked at the responsibilities of women. And last week we noticed the qualifications of leaders within the church.

(4B) Today, we come to the tremendous reason why the church needs spiritual leaders.

WHY DOES THE CHURCH NEED SPIRITUAL LEADERS? WHY? Well, there are two reasons.

Two reasons why the church needs spiritual leaders. We will deal with the first reason today. And then next week we will look at the second reason.

I Timothy chapter 4 beginning with Vs 1 ... (Read 4:1-11)

Prayer

(1C) Now, the first reason for the tremendous need within the church for spiritual leaders concern what will happen in later times. This phrase "in later times" is referring to that period of time that began at Pentecost and will continue until the rapture of the church. So, we are in the later times. These are the "later times" of God's whole program for this world.

Now, I want to share with you three things about these "Later Times."

(1D) Number one: In Vs. 1-5, notice the character of these later times. Dear friends, there are some very important things being said in these verses. So, follow this very carefully.

Vs 1 says: "But the spirit explicitly says." The word "but" is referring back to

chapter 3. In chapter 3, Paul gave to the church the qualifications for the office of Pastor and Deacon. And now, Paul says "BUT". But remember there is something happening in the "Later Times." Be on the guard. Be alert. Be careful. Things are happening and that is why we need spiritual people serving in the church.

NOW, WHAT WILL HAPPEN?

According to Vs 1, "Some will ^{fall} ~~all~~ away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods." Notice, in these verses, that there are three parties involved. There are three groups under discussion.

(1) First of all, you have the victims. Vs 1 says: "Some" Not all. Praise the Lord. "But some will fall away from the faith." Some will do it.

The phrase "fall away" is the word "Apostasy". We talk about the apostasy of the end times. God says in later times some will fall away. Some will fall away from the faith. WHAT FAITH? It is "THE FAITH". Not just "faith" in regards to "faith, love, hope." But, 'THE FAITH'. The sum total of God's revealed will and plan as found in the Bible. Some will "fall away" as it were from the teachings of doctrine of the Bible.

And that is just what is happening today. People no longer believe that the Bible IS THE WORD OF GOD. They say that it contains the Word of God. And the Bible is no longer looked to for counsel and guidance in life. And those who teach and believe the Bible are considered "wired" or "nuts", or "old fashion."

Dear friends, we all need to be very careful. We need to be especially careful when

we hear some strange doctrine coming from some pulpits in American, or from some radio and T.V. programs. People who are falling away from the Word of God. And when we in this church begin to talk about that which is not centered in the Word of God, it is time to close our doors. So, some will depart and fall away from THE FAITH.

But, let me share a deeper concern with you. This verse is not referring to unbelievers falling away from the faith. It is referring to Christians falling way from the faith. What we have, here, is what many call "PRACTICAL APOSTACY." Now, what is that? Practical Apostacy is living as if God was not around. It is saying, "I believe in God." But, in daily life God is completely left out." He doesn't effect my daily life.

And dear friends, I believe that is what has happened in many of our churches throughout our country. We are living in Practical Apostacy . Many Christians stay away from the Word of God and church. We never consider the counsel of God's Word in making decisions. And we are opening up ourselves not only to error and heirasy, but for a life that is lived apart from God's will. A life that is lived in control of self and apart from the will of Christ. And this, by the way, is why many Christians are defeat,discourage, and frustrated. Dear friends, do not fall away from the faith.

(2)Now, secondly, Vs 1 says "that some will pay attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons. This is referring to our second group -- demons.

People often ask: "Pastor, do you believe in demons?" Absolutely. Now, I don't believe they can take bodily human form. My own conviction is that they are a part of those angels who fell with Satan. They are fallen angels. And they are doing the work of Satan just as much as angels are doing the work of God.

But, I do believe that demons can have an influence on Christians. We read in Ephesians chapter 6 that "we war not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers and forces of darkness and wickedness." This is referring to the spiritual battles that we face every day.

And just like there was an out break of demonism when Christ came the first time, I believe there will be an equally strong out break of demonism when Christ comes for the second time. And I believe we are seeing a shadow of that today. Right now with the rise of the church of Satan, the interest in witchcraft, the interest in spiritualism centered in false religions. But, I say to you that Satan's work is not with those who practice these things; it is with those who confess faith in Jesus Christ. It is the deceitful spirits who pull away those who are not strong in their faith. And these demons influence the heart of Christians. And cause many to be tossed around by every doctrine that comes their way.

WHAT IS THIS KIND OF FALSE TEACHING? Will you turn, please, to James chapter 3. The book of James chapter 3 beginning with Vs 14. Dear friends, I want you to be clear in your understanding of what we are saying. James 3:14 says: "But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. But, the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."

Did you notice? Jealousy, selfish ambition, arrogance..where does it come from? ~~It~~ is not from above. It is earthly, natural, demonic. IT IS THE WORK OF DEMONES.

Christians often fall into the trap. And we say that jealousy, selfish ambition, and arrangance is just the result of circumstances. But, the Word of God tells us that it is the result of following the influence of demons. And I trust that if there is any jealousy or bitterness toward another person or with ourselves or with people on the job or with family members, we might realize the source of this kind of thing. It comes from Satan and not from God. OH, how we need the wisdom from above. ^{vs 7} The wisdom that is produced by the Spirit of God. And we need to yield, constantly, to the control of the Holy Spirit of God.

O.K. what is the result of following the influence of demons? Some will fall away from the faith. And I pray that none of us here today are living in practical apostasy.

(3E) Now, let's come to the third group. Come back to I Timothy chapter 4:2
Vs 2 says."by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron." ^{Now} Some folks teach that this is referring back to Demons But, that is not true. Because demons already have their conscience seared. They are already on the wrong track.

Vs 2, when it says "speaking lies in hypocrisy" is referring to men. Men speak lies in hypocrisy.

So, we have three groups here: The Victim...those who depart from the faith. WHY? Because they give heed to the second group: deceitful spirits and the influence of demons and Satan's attempts to defeat the Christian. And Satan does this through the third group who are men who speak lies in hypocrisy. Men who have their conscience seared with a hot iron. Men who are no longer sensitive to spiritual truth.

And notice the three types of men in this passage. First, we have men who speak lies. Secondly, we have men whose conscience is seared; and third, we have men who will say that we no longer need marriage. Men who say that marriage is old-fashion. It is out of date.

And dear friends, that is just what is happening in this day and age. We are living in the fulfillment of this prophecy.

And it is so easy for Christians to fall into this trap. Instead of depending upon the life of Christ and God's gift of grace, we depend upon that which we do or that which we do not do. And we offer it to God and expect to be saved. *But*, according to this passage of scripture, it is wrong. For God tells us that we have all sinned and come short of His glory. There is nothing we can do to earn our salvation. Our good works are as filthy rags in the sight of God. The thing we must do is yield (and that is the key)..yield ourselves daily to the control of the Holy Spirit. And yet, many of us will try to defeat sin in our lives by that which we do or do not do. And it cannot be done. We only discourage ourselves and frustrate ourselves further.

And so, dear friends, this is the character of these "LATER TIMES." Now, I don't want to stop here. We would all leave this service with a cloud hanging over our heads. I want you to leave with the Good News of the Gospel. (2D) So, let's come to Vs 6 thru 8. In these verses Paul gives to us some solid counsel for these "later times."

What should we do in these later times? What should be our attitude? Vs 6 says.."IN pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant(that, by the way, is the word translated DEACON in chapter 3) a good deacon of Christ Jesus, ~~constantly~~ constantly nourished (there is the key) .

In other words, there is a need for proper health in the life of a believer.

What makes for good health in times when people are standing off from the truth? What will make for proper health? What will make for a balanced christian? What will make for spiritual growth? Notice, there are two things mentioned here: Good food and good ^{discipline} exercise.

1st First of all, good food. Paul says ^{Vs 6} "nourished on the words of the faith." The word "nourished" is not referring to the person who would come to one big banquet and stuff himself and then go away saying, "I have been nourished." OH, NO...~~Going to one Bible Conference~~ ^{Bible Conference}..going to one service of the church will not bring good nourishment.

It is not one big banquet. But, Paul is referring to a regular diet. The text says "CONSTANTLY NOURISHED", on (not in, but on) the words of THE FAITH. (That is the Bible which is the total revealed word of God to us). So, let me ask, where is your food coming from? Are you being constantly nourished? You see, it is your responsibility to constantly feed on the Word of God.

Also, we should have a discerning appetite. Vs 7 says, "But have nothing to do with worldly fables." ~~The word "fables" is the word for~~ "myth". Refuse this...don't listen to it. But, be nourished in the words of THE FAITH and have a discerning appetite.

2nd Secondly, we need good ^{discipline} exercise ..Vs 7 says, "On the other hand, discipline ~~exercise~~ yourself for the purpose of godliness; for bodily ^{discipline} ~~exercise~~ is of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things.

Now, what is Paul saying? Is he discouraging ~~the~~ the exercise of the body? Should we forget all of the physical fitness programs? Is that what it means?.....No, I don't think so...Literally it is saying ^{Vs 7} "for bodily ^{discipline} ~~exercise~~ is of profit for a few things; ~~but~~ godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come."

O.K., what is the point? The point is that godliness is profitable not just for a few things, as bodily exercise is. But, it is profitable for all things. Godliness is not just for a short time, as is bodily exercise, but is for all eternity.

It is doing what Jesus would do!

What is godliness? Godliness is a quality of being like God.

O.K. How does a person be godly? You know, in so many of my messages, I have come back to the theme of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And I come back to this theme because that is what God says over and over again. It is the Holy Spirit of God who produces the quality of Godliness in the life of a believer. Godliness is not something that comes from the self. Godliness isn't something you can work for or take a course in or achieve by your own merits. Godliness is produced by the Holy Spirit of God as we yield daily to His control in our lives! And so, godliness is something that is not profitable for just a short period of time. It produces a character for all eternity.

(30) Then, finally, I would like you to notice the challenge that Paul gives us in these ^{latter} times. Vs 10 says, "For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the saviour of all men, especially of believers."

The challenge is to put our ^{this measurement} hope in the living God. To hope in God. If your hope is in God, then you will be willing to do what he commands. WHAT IS IT THAT GOD WANTS FROM US? ^(1P) He wants us to labor and strive in his service. The word "labor" means "to work to the point of exhaustion." And the word "strive" is an athletic word. A word which speaks of the Athlet who will not give up until he has reached the prize.

(2P) Why should we labor and strive in serving God? Why? Because our hope is in the living God. That is what makes it all worth while.

Let me ask you, Where is your hope?... Is your hope in the things of this world? Are you surrounding yourself with the things of the world, the philosophies of this world, the materialism of the world, with the hope that they will bring you happiness and security?... Where is your hope?

Now I pray that we may place our hope in Jesus Christ. The person of Jesus Christ who went to a cross and died there for our sins. There is our security.....There is our happiness....

1 The word "hope" means "to rely upon." It is not simply an agreement to a set of facts. It is relying on. It is saying with Job, "Even though ^{God} he slay me, yet will I trust him."

2 It also means "a daily attitude in a person's heart." Daily, day after day, relying on God. Trusting God and not self. Trusting God and not man. Trusting God and not methods or techniques or the philosophies of the world. But, trusting God. It is an attitude of the heart towards God.

3 But, hope is also a wonderful anticipation. Trusting ^{Jesus} God for one day He said that He would come again. Jesus said, "I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there you may be also.:"

And dear friends in Christ, what more reason could we have for laboring and striving to ^{then} serve the living God. The God who is alive.... present...and here today.

Are you trusting Him? Have you ever taken that step of faith whereby you ask God through Christ to be part of your life? Are you trusting him?
I Trust you are'

Let us close in prayer

Our Father, we thank you for these moments together to share the Word of God. And we pray that you would deeply plant Your Word in our hearts. And Father, teach us not to rely upon human methods and philosophies, but to trust completely on you. Give us believing and trusting hearts. Hearts that are confident and secure in the faith. And we pray this in Jesus name.....Amen.

Trust and obey