

Apostasy In The Church

1 Timothy 4:1-5

“Now the Holy Spirit tells us clearly that in the last times some will turn away from the true faith; they will follow deceptive spirits and teachings that come from demons. ² These people are hypocrites and liars, and their consciences are dead.¹ ³ They will say it is wrong to be married and wrong to eat certain foods. But God created those foods to be eaten with thanks by faithful people who know the truth. ⁴ Since everything God created is good, we should not reject any of it but receive it with thanks. ⁵ For we know it is made acceptable by the word of God and prayer.”

It has been said that the Bible is a book man could not write if he wanted to, and would not write if he could. The Bible tells all; God's Word does not hide anything. It records the good and does not attempt to hide the evil.

In the Bible we read of Abraham, Moses, Elijah, David, Gideon and the great things these men accomplished for God; but the Bible also records the ugly side of their lives. When man writes the biography of a great man, the ugly details are usually omitted, and only the praiseworthy things are published; but not so with the Bible. Paul wanted Timothy to know that as God's undershepherd he would find much in his ministry to bring him much joy and pleasure! **But he would also find things that were ugly and evil.** Enemies of the Gospel would appear, and Satan would attack even through those who were supposed to be followers of Christ.

1 Timothy 4 begins this way, "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times..." We need to be careful right here, because in 2 Timothy 3:1 Paul says, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." **In the Greek there is a clear difference between the two statements.** In 2 Timothy 3 Paul uses a Greek term that always refers to the last days of the church on the earth before the Lord

Jesus takes it out. But, the term "latter times" used here in 1 Timothy 4 literally means "later on," and literally reads this way, "A little later on, some shall depart from the faith."

Ladies and gentlemen, there is only one faith that will produce salvation, and that is faith exercised in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Romans 10:9-10 tells us "that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Look, once more, at what Paul says in verse 1, "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy..." This word "depart" is an unusual Greek word that means, "to stand away from." **The indication here is that there are those people who have heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, but have backed away from making a commitment to the Christ of that gospel!** This does not mean that they have *not* gotten involved in some religious organization; it simply means that they have not made a commitment to Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

What, then, is the problem? The answer is found in these words: "Giving heed to deceiving spirits." When people depart from the "faith," who is responsible? **What has caused them to depart?** Is it because they have become better educated, or more intellectual? Is it because of some new scientific development and increased knowledge that reveals that the faith can no longer be trusted? **No!** It is because they have been "**deceived**" by the devil!

The Greek word translated "seducing" in the King James Version and "deceiving" in the New King James Version simply means "impostor" or "deceiver." **In other words, the "deceiving spirits" have to do with one's mind.** They have to do with deceiving people into believing something that is not true, or into believing something that

is wrong. So “deceiving spirits” have to do with the *mind* of the individual.

Look once more at verse 1, “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits...”

How does this work? A careful study of Scripture will take us back to 2 Chronicles 18 where Ahab and Jehoshaphat were having a discussion concerning an upcoming battle and why their prophets were all prophesying such a great victory. But the prophet Micaiah stood before Jehoshaphat and told him that he was going to be defeated. Micaiah’s prophecy made Ahab furious, and he wanted to know why his prophets could be so wrong.

In 2 Chronicles 18-12 we are told that God has called the angels before Him, and asked, “Who will entice Ahab king of Israel into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there? One (angel) suggested this, and another that. Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the Lord and said, I will entice him. By what means? the Lord asked. I will go and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets, he said. You will succeed in enticing him, said the Lord. Go and do it.” **This “lying spirit” was obviously a demon spirit doing what demon spirits do best – they lie.** Remember, Jesus referred to Satan in John 8:45 as “a liar and the father of it.”

Therefore, this “deceiving spirit” attacked the minds of these prophets, which resulted in them believing a lie. And that deception showed up in their lying ministry.

Now I want you to watch what happens – watch the progression that takes place in an individual’s life. *Deceiving spirits* attack our *mind*, which affects our *thought process*, which leads to *self-deception*, which manifest itself in our *relationships* and *activities*. Or, if we look at it in reverse – what we do, or how we act is in reality a product of our belief system, that is, what we believe. **So, if**

our believing is wrong then our acting will be wrong. If we have been deceived and are thinking wrong as a result of that deception, then we need to adjust, re-set, and refocus areas of our thinking that have been subjected to deception. Replacing them with truth, and ultimately seeing the conformation in our actions!

This truth is seen in 1 John 2:18-20, "Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son." From Scripture, it is obvious that this matter of apostasy has been in the church for a long time, and the indication is that it will continue to grow until Christ raptures the church out of this world.

Jesus predicted this: Mark 13:22 "For false Christ and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect - if that were possible." **Every false religion, every cult, and every denomination that departs from the Word of God is a forerunner of the antichrist.** Every preacher, and every teacher, that takes away from the lonely Lordship of Jesus Christ, and says that Jesus Christ is not the only way to God, is a forerunner of the antichrist.

Now, look again at verse 1, "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons..." **Do not make the mistake of thinking that "seducing spirit" and the "doctrines of demons" are the same.** The "seducing spirits" have to do with the *mind*, while the "doctrines of demons" have to do with the *flesh*.

This truth is shown for us in 2 Peter 2:18-21, "For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them." What Peter is alluding to here is the same thing that we find in the book of Jude, when he speaks of "turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness."

Now I want you to be very, very careful right here, because Paul is talking about keeping a BALANCE in our walk with Christ. And he is saying that Satan subtly tries to trip us up and knock us off balance in our Christian walk with what Paul describes as the "doctrine of demons." What is the "doctrine of demons"? Simply put - the doctrine of demons promise *satisfaction* and *fulfillment* of natural appetites under the guise of "liberty."

How do they do this? When the Word of God is preached that reveals to them that they are no longer under the bondage of the law, and that they have freedom in Christ Jesus, demonic influences convince them that it is all right to "remove the boundaries of restraint."

But there is one great problem: Satan is no fool, and the very things from which Christ has set you free, now become even more of a bondage. Listen once more to this warning given to us in 2 Peter 2:18-21, "For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. For if, after

they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.” **I know that you have heard this passage of Scripture preached as pertaining to salvation, but a careful study will reveal that is not a right interpretation of this Scripture.**

How do we know? Look at some of the keys: verse 20 says "...after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." Verse 21 says, "For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness ..." (not salvation). **Ladies and gentlemen, I submit to you that these are people who have been saved and set free from the bondage and appetites of the flesh, but because of demonic error playing on the "lust of the flesh" they go back to their old ways, and back into their old forms of bondage.** And the Word of God says that they are worse off than they were before they were even saved! **Why?** Because, now, they are using the grace of God to justify what they are doing!

Listen to me very carefully right here. These are those people who have come to church and said, "I believe in the grace of God. I believe in once saved always saved. I believe that Jesus Christ was God's Son. And, after all, it's what you believe that is important." How, then, could their lives get so out of balance? **The answer is simple, yet complex – they allowed biblical doctrine to be replaced with the "doctrine of demons."** And when that happened biblical doctrine was then used as a "**springboard**" to go back into the very bondages from which they have been set free.

Now please do not misunderstand what I am saying right here. Listen very carefully to what we have been told in Romans 14:17, "For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." **Therefore, the**

key to living the Christian life is that of *balance*, and that is we have been told in "Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith."

Child of God, ever so often we just need to stop what we are doing, go to the Word of God, and take a long look at our personal relationship to the Christ of Calvary. Why? Because it is very, very easy to listen to the voice of error if we are not careful.