



## “Departing the Faith...”

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**1 Timothy 4** *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, 2*

*speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, 3 forbidding to marry, [and commanding] to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. 4 For every creature of God [is] good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; 5 for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. 6 If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. 7 But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. 8 For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. 9 This [is] a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance.*

### 4:1

Throughout our lifetimes as Christians, we are unable to ever let down our guard. I know it can be such a temptation to grant ourselves a spiritual “reprieve” ...a small little “vacation,” especially after a long period of spiritual battle or a long stretch of success. But we must remember that Satan is always and forever “*seeking whom he may devour.*” He does this by exploiting the smallest crack in our faith and discipline, and he promptly begins to drive a wedge into it, seeking to take advantage of any and all weakness. He is subtle, relentless, and very patient!

The “long con” is his specialty, and I have more than once watched him from afar, work an individual and methodically manipulate his or her thoughts and passions. He is not in a hurry. Certainly not as long as he eventually gets you. Time is something Satan has plenty of! Yet the irony is that while he **does** have a lot of time, we do not! Paul in chapter 4 calls upon us to “continue.” To “hold the course.” To “be diligent.”

I have witnessed countless individuals that engaged the kingdom for years...even decades, only to eventually fold on their calling and their faith because of a seemingly inconsequential issue. But it wasn't *that* issue that got them ultimately. It was the chipping away by Satan over an extended period until finally the building collapsed. The worst thing about it all, is even after the building collapsed, most of them don't have a clue as to the fact that he did it and now they are gone.

Verse one tells us something we all know and all have witnessed, and that is the fact that there will be people who will “depart from the faith.” Paul uses the Greek word which means “to be apart from, depart from, or stand apart from.” It's the source of our English word apostasy. In this case, those departing are leaving “the faith.” Instead of holding to the sound teaching that is the foundation that is in Christ Jesus (as Paul mentions in 1 Timothy 3:13), these people are choosing to follow a different path and listen to different voices.

Usually, my experience is that people will leave their church, refuse discussion as to why, lie to those they once claimed to be their brothers and sisters, attack and slander believers, break fellowship, relationship, and promise, etc, but will adamantly claim they have not “left the faith.” What then is the “faith?” Is there no practical manifest of the word “faith?” You want to believe that you are ok with Jesus still? So Jesus is ok with behavior such as yours? I burned the village down but I still attend church somewhere, so that means I remain “in the faith?” Of course this is exactly what Paul is speaking of when he says that “These people are hypocrites and liars, and their consciences are dead.” Ouch. I know. But note that these are His words, not mine.

It comes as a shock to some people that Satan will and can use professed Christians in the church to accomplish his work. I understand. It is a deeply uncomfortable truth. Paul went so far as to specifically name some of these guys...Hymenaeus and Alexander, early in *this* letter, and in 2 Timothy he also calls out a guy named Demas. Remember, Satan one time even used the apostle Peter to try to lead Jesus on a wrong path (Matt. 16:21–23), and he used Ananias and Sapphira to try to deceive the church at Jerusalem (Acts 5). Paul warned that false teachers would arise from within the church, and indeed they have and do. (Acts 20:30).

Paul said they *do* depart, but how and why? Well 1 Timothy 6:4-5 sheds some light on one example, saying “*Anyone who teaches (and that is not just from the pulpit, but from the alley...from behind a computer) something different is arrogant and lacks understanding. Such a person has an unhealthy desire to quibble over the meaning of words. This stirs up arguments ending in jealousy, division, slander, and evil suspicions. These people always cause trouble. Their minds are corrupt, and they have turned their backs on the truth.*”

The reality is, there are *and will be* those who “taste the things of God” and yet will still “fall away.” (Heb 6:4-8) The message renders that passage as follows:

*Once people have seen the light, gotten a taste of heaven and been part of the work of the Holy Spirit, once they've personally experienced the sheer goodness of God's Word and the powers breaking in on us—if then they turn their backs on it, washing their hands of the whole thing, well, they can't start over as if nothing happened. That's impossible. Why, they've re-crucified Jesus! They've repudiated him in public! Parched ground that soaks up the rain and then produces an abundance of carrots and corn for its gardener gets God's “Well done!” But if it produces weeds and thistles, it's more likely to get cussed out. Fields like that are burned, not harvested.*

There will be those who have “put their hand to the plow” only to ultimately “look back.” Now these folks, according to Christ, are “not fit for the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:62) But this passage is speaking not just concerning those that have dumped it all to “return like a dog to its vomit” (2 Peter 2:22). For many will actually remain physically around a church, but will effectually still ‘depart’ from scriptural teaching and foundational Christian doctrines in exchange for a “new” interpretation of God and His directives, one that is unique to them and them alone. This of course is the ultimate “trifecta” for Satan. He has them, ...they then do his work for him, ...and they still think they are ok with their Creator so no further work on his part is necessary!

Indeed, these folks may remain physically ‘in the ranks’ and yet for all practical purposes they are void of any real faithful living and kingdom focus. They have never “surrendered their lives’ to God...because if they had they would be unable to take it back. They failed to give priority to the kingdom pursuit, or once again, have attempted to take it back once given. They wear the outward façade of religion, but know nothing of Jesus style servant-hood and “dying to oneself.” These have “a form of godliness, yet deny it's power” manifest in their lives...” (2Tim 3:2-5) And most of all, having departed from us, only expresses that they were never one of us. 1 Jn 2:19. Again, the “Message” renders such as: “*They left us, but they were never really with us. If they had*

*been, they would have stuck it out with us, loyal to the end. In leaving, they showed their true colors, showed they never did belong.”*

These folks are no longer hearing the Spirit of God or his words in scripture, if they ever did. They are hearing and following “deceiving spirits.” Spirits that tell them what they want to hear...mostly that in all things they are right and everyone else is wrong. Hence it goes without saying that they are therefore “deceived.” That means they actually think they are ok with God, but they are not. For their doctrine is not that of God, but ironically, that of “demons.”

I do not believe that such folks are truly reborn Christians. That position is based on scripture, not upon my own “feelings” or personal judgment. They will be those that on judgment day that say “Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.’ But (Jesus) will reply, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws.’ (Matt 7:22-23)

This issue speaks not only concerning the lies that the world is telling, but also those coming from within many churches. I do not take joy in such words today, but rather I grieve. However, the teaching is before us and I am compelled, as was Paul, to bring these things out into the light of day. For the greater church itself will become and has already become in many cases tainted with the works of Satan, the world and the flesh. 2Cor 13:5 warns us to “*Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves. Surely you know that Jesus Christ is among you; if not, you have failed the test of genuine faith.*”

It is such a temptation to water down the Word in order to personally please our flesh and feed our desires. Today...no doubt the “last days,” churches often corporately seek to make comfortable the flock, or to build a church of numbers instead of one of truth and discipleship. These folks are false apostles. They are deceitful workers who disguise themselves as apostles of Christ.

But I am not surprised! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no wonder that his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. In the end they will get the punishment their wicked deeds deserve. (2Cor 11:13-15)

#### **4:2**

In verse 1, the Old King James use the term “seducing spirits.” These “false teachers” work through a method of “enticement.” Rarely does Satan throw down in a situation of blatant lies, at least not at first. From the ‘garden’ he has practiced instead a methodology of slow compromise that leads ultimately to disaster. These “seducing spirits” are those that are counterfeit Holy Spirit.

Satan often uses a “mimicking” of the true Spirit, (NOTE! “Angels of light!”) and leads away those who have little or no knowledge of the Word, as well as those who are simply willing, out of their flesh, to “cut a deal with the devil.” Plenty are so willing, and do so for their own worldly gain, fleshly desires, or to satisfy their emotions. For centuries it seemed that Satan faced the church “head on.” But the harder he fought against it, the more determined it became! It was emboldened by its martyrs...strengthened by the blood of its saints. Thus unable to beat the church, Satan changed his strategy and decided rather to join it and seduce it into lethargy, sleepiness, and passivity.

Today our church buildings are full. But full of what? Sadly, they are so often full of ‘religious’ Americans who want nothing to do with the radical lifestyle and sold out faith that Jesus and the New Testament is calling us to. Faith is relegated to a fluid moral compass and a feeble attempt to provide a hedge against hell. We generally like church as long as it is first run through the sieve of modern political correctness and if it doesn’t require too

much of our time. Yet such is miles away from the radical New Testament Christianity that Jesus died to bring us. Nobody wants to admit that publicly and openly for fear of voiding their heaven warranty. But it's a reality just the same. It's all just a quiet coup. Not all local churches are guilty of such rabid compromise. There are still a few that are holding on to the biblical positions.

One of Satan's most prominent attributes is that he is a liar. Thus those that immolate him...even inadvertently, will be liars too. How will we or anyone know? Because their lies are always rolled up in hypocrisy. It works like this: when confronted, they will immediately attempt to turn the tables on you by attempting to focus on *your* perceived sins and shortcomings. Or they will quote obscure scripture passages out of context to drag you away from the fact they are blatantly sinning in another area. They will ignore 99% of biblical instruction to club you over the head with the 1% that you can't under any circumstances argue against because of the obscure nature of it or the nebulous manifest of such. It's the old "smoke and mirrors." Magic and illusion. And that's only if they are brave enough to come out from behind made up names on social media sights.

They will accuse you...lie about you...lie about God...all the while doing exactly what they are accusing you of. Why? How could they justify such? Because even though they are literally doing what they are accusing you of doing...they are doing it for a better reason! Thus, they are righteous in doing what you are evil for doing. It is "lies in hypocrisy."

And what happens over time is they can...we can, build up a 'callous.' We can get to a point where we no longer feel convicted any more of our sin. At such point, it is essentially over for us...

#### **4:3-5**

In Paul's day, the false doctrine was different than ours, but just as insidious. The false teachers of his day tried to tell people that they couldn't get married...or could not eat certain things (i.e. pork). It is the slippery slope into a works-oriented salvation, and a blatant exodus from a personal relationship with Christ.

The Judaizers attempted such infusion of works into the faith in Paul's day, and the "new Judaizers" of today are still trying to do the same. This is the "self-righteousness" and hypocrisy Paul was referring to. The beginning of a fall is always a failure to be thankful. And then when we do that, we then begin to be bitter and divisive. The rest from there is the crashing and burning effects of our own personal demise.

Know this...the believer is free from religious mores, man-made ideals, and church traditions. Christianity is "Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Col 1:27) Any and all acts of personal or biblically corporate discipline must come from a desire to please God through our living and the desire to stay away from things that cause us to "run the race slow" as Paul puts it.

This passage is not the freedom to sin. It is however a prohibition upon adding the 11th and 12th commandments! 1Cor 10:31 tells us "*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*" Whatever you indulge yourself in, can God be glorified in it?

#### **4:6-7**

The reason we walk away is we fail to see the blessing and experience the joy in being part of God's family. We can often see God and His Word as limiting and not liberating. My job is to teach the Word, and point to the Holy Spirit as guide. It is not my job to dictate the exercise of each individual walk in Christ in the areas of freedom. I am called to simply teach the truth of the Word, verse upon verse, line upon line, the whole of scripture. This is the calling upon the under-shepherd and is your calling to hear it and receive it. But I am to

“steer clear” of all extra-biblical teaching and doctrines, many of which are simply religious “fables” and denominational traditions of men.

Again, this does not somehow prohibit the “exercise of godliness.” It does not mean there is not effort or the ‘running of the race’ as Paul calls us to elsewhere. These verses actually are telling us the opposite! But it calls us to keep the main the main thing, and to avoid distractions and getting sidetracked on silly extra-biblical or legalistic efforts.

#### **4:8-9**

It’s not that Paul is against physical exercise, but rather that it must be a far less consideration than Godly living. How often I see people through the windows of the work-out studio or jogging down the street when I am on my way to church on Sundays. Yet no matter how much we exercise and watch what we eat, death will eventually come. It is the hereafter that should be the focus of the heart and lives of a believer.

The Bible is a tidal wave of this one great truth...a truth that untold numbers of church going folks fight daily against, and the truth that has sent more people to the door than any other within the greater church and certainly this one: “The advancement of the kingdom of God must be the most important thing in our living.” Jesus Himself said so. Matthew 6:33 "***But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.***”

God is not going to love you more because you are “Mr. Healthy” or you deny yourself ice cream! We have been given promises from above concerning the quality of life, and the quantity of the afterlife. Neither are affected much through such ascetic lifestyle.

However, being too overweight to significantly serve Him or not having the money to evangelize because you spent it all on cigarettes and fast food is a problem. Having too many possessions, too many earthly responsibilities, too much family priority, too much career, too many hobbies, etc...will absolutely come under the heading of “have no other God’s before me.” When we indeed “seek FIRST the kingdom of God”...*all these other things will be added unto us!* All the great blessings of a life in Christ on this earth.

Our goal and priority must be motivated by our greater love for Jesus and our fellow man. The problem in that is not ***what you are doing*** as much as the ***results of what you are doing***. Exercise, fitness and an ascetic life can be an idol to you, but so can cigarettes, food, a boyfriend or girlfriend, TV, or fishing. The bottom line is the biblical directive “Have no other God’s before me...” It always comes down to this: How much do you love Jesus and what are you going to do about it?