

Receive God's Gifts with Thanksgiving

1 Timothy 4:1-5

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I Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, ² through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, ³ who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. ⁴ For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, ⁵ for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

You don't have to be convinced or persuaded to know that there are all kinds of impostors, deceivers and con-men in this world. Rarely a day passes by without seeing a scam email or fake text or a fake phone call. This world is filled with treacherous people who are out there to get you if you are not careful and vigilant.

But what about people in the church, specifically people who lead churches and teach in the church? You would think every Bible teacher or church leader would never deceive others? You would certainly hope so. It is the right thing to assume best intentions.

However, Paul offers Spirit led wisdom and instruction to Timothy and for us today as well. Paul knows and says that there are going to be false teachers.

Jesus calls the false teachers greedy and vicious wolves. "**Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.** Matthew 7:15.

When Paul left the city of Ephesus, he warned the elders that there would be false teachers. Paul called them wolves.

*17 Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him
28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. 29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Acts 20:17, 28-30*

So here Paul warns that false teachers will arise and say some twisted things. These false teachers will draw or attract disciples to themselves. So where there are false teachers, there will be their followers too. And these false teachers care little about their flock or their welfare. They care about themselves. And, sadly Paul's warning comes true when he writes to Timothy. There may have been many false

teachers during Timothy's pastorate. And Paul identifies two of them – Alexander and Hymenaeus. Paul tells Timothy to hand these men over to Satan.

Now why does Paul make such a strong statement?

First, Paul knows what false teaching can do to your spiritual health. False teaching is like a poison in your daily meal. It slowly and surely causes your spiritual health to decay. And one day you wonder what happened. In his second letter Paul tells Timothy to “*avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, ¹⁷ and their talk will spread like gangrene*” 2 Timothy 2:16-17

Secondly, Paul in this passage identifies the source of the false teaching.

False teaching is not of human origin. What is its origin then?

Look at verse 1.

I Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons,

What is the source of false teaching?

Deceitful spirits and demons.

Paul has been given the incredible responsibility of an apostle. Paul had warned the elders in Ephesus once. Now he tells Timothy that in the later times. Meaning the days that Paul lived in and the times that we are living in, until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, there are going to be people who will depart from the faith. The word that Paul uses here in verse one is ***apostatize***. Some will abandon sound doctrine. They will leave the teaching of the Bible that profits their soul to a teaching that deceives and corrupts their spiritual health.

And who or what are these deceitful spirits or demons?

John the apostle writes in his letter in 2 John the 1st chapter.

⁷ For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. 2 John 1:7

Last week, we saw a six-part confession of our faith that we hold to. In verse 16 of 1 Timothy 3:16 we saw the first part of that confession that “He (Jesus Christ) appeared in the flesh”. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who always was with God. He is the Eternal Son of God, at the bosom of the Father came into

our world as a human. So, those who teach denying Jesus' deity and humanity are deceivers. John further says that if any one insists on such a teaching, you don't have to receive them. (2 John 1:10-11).

When the religious leaders were plotting to kill Jesus, he told them plainly that if they knew who he was, they would love him. Jesus says that they didn't have any love for the Son of God because their father was the devil. And the devil's character is only to deceive, lie and kill. The devil is the father of lies.

*“But **false prophets** also arose among the people, just as there will be **false teachers** among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. ² And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³ And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. 2 Peter 2:1*

So, if the source of the false teaching is *demonic*, how do these spirits operate and in whom?

What can we know about their hearts?

Verse 2 tells us *through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared*,

The phrase that is used there is the word *cauterize*. Cauterization is the process of burning, searing or burning the tissue with a caustic or hot iron. Cauterization results in the hardness, numbness of the material. It becomes callous and insensitive. Similarly, once the heart becomes callous, it's becomes insincere and can start lying. That is how these demons operate in the life of the false teacher.

First, by *searing* the conscience. Then by *promoting* lies. You see the character of the devil? It's *lying*. The devil's intent is to produce liars just like him. So, if the devil is able to *sear your conscience*, he has successfully *apostatized*. And if the man is a teacher or preacher the devil has made a false teacher through the searing of the conscience.

So the source of false teaching is **demonic**. And the operative method of making false teachers is the **searing of the conscience**. *But what are particulars of the false teaching?* There are many false teachings the NT authors point to but Paul points out to *two* specific elements of false teaching.

Look at verse 3:

I Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, ² through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, ³ who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods

You could call this false teaching *asceticism* – *forbidding marriage* and *abstinence from food*.

1. Forbidding marriage

- Today's cultural and moral landscape is filled all kinds of unbiblical definitions of marriage. God instituted marriage in the beginning. Here is God's definition of marriage: *"He (Jesus) answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵ and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? ⁶ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."* Matthew 19:4-6. And those receive and believe this truth, receive it with thanksgiving. ***And you know why God made it this way?*** *To perpetuate and multiply his image on the earth. "And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it" Genesis 1:28. This is the God's wonderful plan for the family. Through the covenant of marriage, to perpetuate God's image. And how sad it is today that we see so many co-habiting or living together without any regard for the plan of God. And what else do we see? Precious lives never see the light of the day. In Florida, a recent statistic said that in the year 2020, 74,868 abortions were performed. Out of these, 74.9% gave no reason to abort. There were about 20% who gave economic reasons but not the 75 %. They did it just because. I wonder how many of these were church going Christians. Now Jesus offers forgiveness when we confess our sin. God is faith and just to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). Do you know that the birth rate in the U.S is very low? Trending lowest back to what it is used to be in the 50s'. Marriage is God's gift. It is not to be rejected but promoted in the church. Authors Chad and Emily Van Dixhoorn say that *"we ought to encourage people to marry.. Christians need to be advocates for marriage maximalism, not marriage minimalism, as is the unhappy trend in some modern societies"*. Do you also know that marriage is ultimately a picture of the perfect union we will have with Christ one day? So what an opportunity for us to display the Gospel through marriage?*

2. Abstinence from food

- a. Here again there is wonderful Christian liberty to enjoy food that God has created. Two helpful Scriptures to understand.

In Mark 7:19, we see Jesus telling the people at the time that you have to worry about your heart condition than the food that goes into your stomach. So, we see this verse *"he declared all foods clean"*. There is some debate whether this statement was originally there in all manuscripts. Some respected scholars say it is a trustworthy statement. Another scripture to help us is from Acts 10, God tells Peter *"What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy."* Peter was hesitant to eat with Gentiles and he is told if God makes it holy, then it is holy. There was a time when dietary laws were applied to the people of Israel. And those don't apply to us anymore.

So, false teachers work through the operative power of lying spirits and demons. Their hearts are insincere by the searing of their conscience. They prohibit marriage and insist on abstaining from certain foods. But these are gifts from God not to prohibited but promoted. You don't need to heed to prohibition for the sake of prohibition. Receive it with thanks giving.

Remember when Jesus fed the five thousand with give loaves and two pieces of fish? Jesus gave thanks.

In John 6:11 “*Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given **thanks**, he distributed them to those who were seated*”. This is not the only place Jesus gave *thanks* but when he was at the last supper, he broke the bread and gave thanks. How wonderful to see our Lord Jesus taking time to give thanks. This ought to our posture as well.

Now, what reasons does Paul give for pointing out false teaching – prohibiting marriage and abstinence of food. Verses 4 and 5.

⁴For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, ⁵for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

We go back to Genesis to see what God said when he had finished making animals and plants, God saw that it was *good* (Genesis 1:24). But when God saw *everything* he had made, God saw that it was *very good*.

By the word and prayer, it is made holy.

Psalm 136 verse 25 tells us that God provides food to all flesh because his steadfast love endures forever.

Receive God's gifts with thanksgiving.

----- Discipleship Questions-----

MESSAGE SUMMARY: **Receive With Thanksgiving.** 1 Timothy 4:1-5

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. What does Paul say about false teachers, the source of their teaching and their heart condition?
Go around and share.

HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.

2. What the two elements of false teaching that Paul highlights in this passage? And why should they be promoted and not prohibited?
3. What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

4. For personal reflection: How is the Biblical definition of marriage relevant for our times? How do you consider life to be a witness for Christ in times like these?