

DON'T WALK OUT; WORK OUT

1 Timothy 4:1-10

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Note: The following are the pastor's notes used in preaching this message. This is not a complete, word-for-word transcription of what was preached. These notes serve as a companion to the complete message, which is available by listening to the audio version. Bible quotes are primarily from ESV.

INTRODUCTION

This morning we'll hear the Spirit tell Pastor Timothy and the church that some in the church will walk out on the faith, so Timothy must work out the faith in personal godliness.

I. SOME WILL WALK OUT (1 Timothy 4:1-5)

A. The Spirit is speaking to us today (1 Timothy 4:1)

The verb is present tense, signifying that the Spirit is speaking in the present.

1. When is He speaking? *In the later times.*

- The apostle John states, "*Children, it is **the last hour**...*" (1 John 2:18).
- The apostle Peter states that "*Christ was made manifest in **these last times** for you...*" (1 Peter 1:20).
- The author of Hebrews states that "*...in **these last days** God has spoken to us by His Son...*" (Hebrews 1:2).

The time between Christ's first coming and His second coming are the later times. This text is not only about what the Spirit said to the church back then, it is also about what the Spirit is saying to this church this morning.

2. What is He saying? *Some will walk out.*

The word for depart from the faith is where we get our English word *apostasy*. Literally, it means *to not stand*, thus the meaning *falling or walking away from a previously held position*. Jesus said that apostasy would happen. He told us not to be led astray by false Christs and prophets (Matthew 24:4, 10-11), who will lead many astray.

Here in 1 Timothy 4, the Spirit echoes Jesus' teaching by stating that false teachers in the church will cause professing believers to walk out on the faith. This is someone who has chosen to walk away from what they had professed (e.g., Luke 8:13). This happens today—it's happened in this church—where people who seem to be on fire for God end up walking out on Him. And as the book of Hebrews tells us, we all need to be on guard, lest we become hardened by the deceitfulness of sin in our own life.

B. How is it happening? (1 Timothy 4:1-3a)

When some pay attention to:

1. Demonic leaders - their cause

False teaching is not merely man-made—it is demonically-inspired. Those who walk out on the faith are those who devote themselves to—who pay attention to—deceitful spirits and teachings of demons. Paul attributes false teaching to demonic deceit.

2. Deceiving leaders - their consequence

What a wicked combined description of these false teachers! Driven by demonic influence, they know how to put on a vain show of godliness, which enables them to gain a hearing for their war against the truth of the gospel.

3. Deadened leaders - their conscience

Seared is the Greek term *kausteriadzo*, which is where we get the term *cauterized* from. When you cauterize something, you destroy all feeling. A cauterized conscience no longer feels the sting of sin. Once conscience is seared, false teachers are especially effective at leading some to walk out on God.

4. Dictating leaders - their content

Two errors specifically in the Ephesian church context...

a. Messing with marriage

- *This was a problem here in Ephesus* (1 Timothy 5:11-15)
- *This was a problem in Corinth* (1 Corinthians 7)
- *This was a problem in Colossae* (Colossians 2)
- *This has been a massive problem down through church history*
 - Monasticism in the 300s A.D.—present
 - Celibate priesthood
- *This is a problem today*, with the issue not being about the forbidding of marriage, as much as it is about messing with marriage as God designed it. This false teaching has crept into the church with devastating effects, with false teachers dictating their error to the church.

b. Messing with food

This ascetic practice of abstaining from certain kinds of food crept into the church in Paul’s time, but took off in the second century under the influence of something called Gnosticism. This error taught that holiness is equated with asceticism.

It is a subtle, but dangerous, downward path from the deaf ear and the seared conscience, to the hypocritical lie, to the deception of demons, and finally walking out on God.

C. What is the solution? (1 Timothy 4:3b-5)

1. To remember what God has said: “It is good”

Recall that at the end of every creation day, God said it was good—including plants and animals eventually enjoyed for food (although meat was enjoyed post-flood [Genesis 9:3])! In fact, everything that God created is good (1 Timothy 4:4) and is worth enjoying with thanksgiving. Remembering this truth is part of the solution to avoiding false teaching in these areas.

2. To thank God for what He’s given: “This IS good!”

Application: There is a principle of application that is worth drawing your attention to. Have you observed how good it is to give thanks for the food we enjoy? We should! Jesus consistently gave thanks before every meal we observe Him to eat. Paul likewise offered thanks. Since we eat and drink to God’s glory (1 Corinthians 10:31), we assume some acknowledgement of thanking the Lord in the simple pleasure of a meal. Plus, Paul states that God sanctifies the food we give thanks for (1 Timothy 4:5), such that His Word that “It is good” is affirmed by us back to Him with, “It is good.” So give thanks to God for the food you enjoy. Simply put, a heart of sincere thanksgiving is one of the ways Paul says we can avoid walking out on God.

II. SO YOU WORK OUT (1 Timothy 4:6-10)

Paul says that some people in the church will walk out on the faith, so we must work out our faith in godliness.

A. Eat well! (1 Timothy 4:6-7)

Paul wants Timothy to pass along the Spirit’s admonition to the church. Part of a pastor’s job description is to not soft-pedal on false teaching, for in so doing, Timothy will prove to be “a good servant of Christ Jesus.” Paul tells Timothy what a good servant does.

1. Eat the good food (1 Timothy 4:6)

The word “trained” in 1 Timothy 4:6 is actually better translated “nourished” or “fed.” What does a good servant of Christ feed on? “The words of the faith and good doctrine.” In other words, a good servant feeds on the Word of God.

2. Ditch the junk food (1 Timothy 4:7)

One commentator writes, “The history of the Old Testament was overlaid with ridiculous legends, its genealogies were given absurd symbolism, and then it was sugarcoated with demon-inspired asceticism that promised spiritual superiority through sexual and dietary abstinence. Junk teaching!” Don’t have anything to do with it, says Paul.

If we’re to be good servants of Christ and not walk out on the faith, we must watch what we eat.

B. Work out hard! (1 Timothy 4:8-10)

1. Here's how

a. Think “gym” (1 Timothy 4:7b-8)

The verb train, of course, in the root form is *gumnadzo*—*gym*. The gym back then was where men would strip down and work out. The gym's single purpose then, as today, was to discipline your body through exercise to get in better shape. Paul acknowledges that that kind of training has some value (1 Timothy 4:8), especially in this life, but the concept spiritually implies a purposeful regimen.

b. Think “hard work” (1 Timothy 4:10)

The word in 1 Timothy 4:10 for *toil* is simply *hard work*. The term is used through the New Testament for either manual labor or ministry labor. The point is: ministry labor is manual labor.

c. Think “all out” (1 Timothy 4:10)

This is what *strive* means in 1 Timothy 4:10. You go *all out*. When it comes to spiritual training, some of us are in danger of walking out on God because we never work out! How will you work out more purposefully? Harder? More all out (Philippians 2:12-13)? Notice the context for Timothy—this is about working out in the words of the faith and in doctrine (1 Timothy 4:6). This is about you working out in the Word of God and in doctrine! How are you growing stronger in the Word and doctrine?

2. Here's why

Gospel: Listen, some of you hear this command in 1 Timothy 4:7 and you get all fired up about it—yeah, let's do it! Let's get after it! More discipline, more hard work, more all out, let's go! Others of you hear 1 Timothy 4:7 and recoil at it, because it sounds legalistic, or wearying, or like every other religious system of working your way to God. But brothers and sisters, don't forget the gospel here! This isn't about legalistically working out to earn God's favor, nor about getting fired up in your own strength. Your pursuit of godliness is energized as you look back to the mystery of godliness in Christ in 1 Timothy 3:16. “*The great mystery of godliness in Christ is the fuel for the great pursuit of godliness in you.*” Your pursuit of godliness is grounded in what you believe about the gospel. It is a gospel-driven godliness! With the gospel as your foundation, then, you can build strength for the pursuit. And there is more grace for your training in godliness. Building off the grace of the gospel is the promise looking forward that...

a. It's infinitely valuable (1 Timothy 4:8)

God's promise to you is this: what you do in working out in the Word and in doctrine will bless you forever.

b. It's definitely true (1 Timothy 4:9)

Do not doubt that you need to heed the command to workout, and do not doubt God's eternal blessing when you do. Both the command and the promise are definitely true. And lastly,

c. It's especially certain (1 Timothy 4:10)

The hope of blessing in this life and the life to come due to gospel-driven godliness is certain, because we *set our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe*. Paul can't mean that everyone in the world is saved, because he emphatically refutes that elsewhere. So what does he mean? Well, I strongly recommend that you read the very good, thorough, biblical treatment of this verse in William Hendricksen's commentary on 1 Timothy. However, for our time and purposes this morning, let me quote his helpful conclusion:

What the apostle teaches here amounts, accordingly, to this, “We have our hope set on the living God, and in this hope we shall not be disappointed, for not only is he a kind God, hence the Savior (Preserver) of all men, showering blessings upon them in His common grace, but he is in a very special sense the Savior of those who by faith embrace him and his promise, for to them he imparts salvation, everlasting life in all its fullness.”

CONCLUSION

Amen. We will never be disappointed when we set our future hope in God. We have His promise that He will eternally reward those who workout in the Word and in doctrine. And we already have the fuel for training in godliness in the godliness of Christ. So let us not walk out on the faith, but work out in the faith—with all the strength of Christ’s gospel to you and with all the hope of promised blessing before you.