

Session 5 The Forerunner Message in 1 Timothy 4 & 2 Timothy 3-4

I. INTRODUCTION

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- 4:1-3 The end-time falling away
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B. Outline of 2 Timothy 3-4

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II. THE END-TIME FALLING AWAY (1 TIM. 4:1-3)

- A. Paul prophesied that there would be a falling away in the end times (4:1-3).

¹Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, ²speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, ³forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth...

*⁶If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ...
(1 Tim. 4:1-3, 6)*

- B. *The Spirit expressly says*: Paul sets forth the urgency and importance of this prophecy.

- C. *In latter times*: Paul again prophesied perilous times in the “last days” (2 Tim. 3:1).

- D. *Depart from the faith*: The most tragic reality in Church history is the end-time falling away from the faith (2 Thes. 2:3; 1 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:1-7; 4:3-5; 2 Pet. 2:1-3; cf. Rom. 11:22; 1 Tim. 5:15; Heb. 3:12; 6:4-6; 10:26-31, 39; Jas. 5:19-20; 2 Pet. 2:20-22; 3:17).

³Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin [the Antichrist] is revealed... (2 Thes. 2:3)

1. Some will fall away by choosing to indulge in sin (immorality, drunkenness, drugs, the occult, etc.), others by fear of persecution, and still others will drift away by unbelief under the cover of “intellectual honesty,” concluding that God's judgments, His one way of salvation, and His holy standards (sanctity of life, marriage, sex, etc.) are a contradiction to love.
2. Once they have confidence to dismiss the parts of the Word that speak about His judgments, then they will find it easier to challenge the authority of the Scripture. Later, they will accept the heresy of universalism and reject that Jesus' death provides the only way of salvation.

- E. **Giving heed to deceiving spirits:** They will embrace deceiving spirits and their doctrines of demons. Deceiving spirits are demons who seduce and then work through individuals. Jesus and Paul gave more warnings *about deception* in the end times than tribulation and persecution (Mt. 24:4-5, 11, 24; Mk. 13:5-6, 22; Lk. 21:8; 2 Thes. 2:3-10; 1 Tim. 4:1).
- F. **Speaking lies in hypocrisy:** They will lie about God's Word, and their happiness and freedom, etc.
- G. **Seared conscience:** Having their conscience seared with a hot iron so it no longer responds to God.
- H. **Forbidding to marry:** The Supreme Court decision to legalize gay marriage on June 26, 2015 goes far beyond what people do in the privacy of their bedroom. It is normalizing immorality in our culture and institutionalizing it in our legal system, demanding the systematic promotion of homosexual lifestyle in every public elementary school. This law opened a door for the systematic presentation of an immoral agenda. This unholy momentum is accelerating as many seek to remove moral boundaries from society, including the sanctity of life, marriage, and sexuality.
- I. **Commanding to abstain from foods:** They will command people to refuse foods which God created for them to receive (4:3). This is a much bigger issue than legalism and asceticism. It may include some kind of denial of food to achieve some form of enlightenment.
- J. Paul called attention to two issues—*forbidding marriage and various foods that may be linked together along with being connected to being seduced by deceiving spirits.*

III. EVERY CREATURE OF GOD IS GOOD (1 TIM. 4:4-5)

- A. God's creation is good (Gen. 1:31; Rom. 14:14); thus, we can eat with gratitude what He created.
⁴Every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; ⁵for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. ⁶If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ... (1 Tim. 4:4-6)
 - 1. God's gifts can be abused by immorality, gluttony, addiction to drugs and alcohol, etc.
 - 2. Paul was not saying that everything is good for us (poisons, drugs, etc.), but he promoted the idea that what God created is fundamentally good if it is used in the way that God intended.
- B. ***Nothing is to be refused:*** Paul taught that a believer can eat anything as long as it does not cause another believer to stumble (1 Cor. 8:8-9). He did not promote a theologically-based asceticism.
- C. ***Sanctified by the Word and prayer:*** We learn from the Word that God set apart food for our good and enjoyment. We acknowledge this via prayer. We sanctify or set apart food for God's purpose when we pray for it and gratefully partake of it in a way that agrees with the Scriptures.

IV. PERILOUS TIMES WILL COME (2 TIM. 3:1-5)

- A. Paul described the perils in society in the end times (3:1-5), highlighting false teachers (3:13; 4:3).
¹Know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ²For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away...¹³Evil men and impostors [of genuine Christianity] will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. (2 Tim. 3:1-5, 13)
- B. ***Know this***: Paul wanted Timothy to “know” that perilous times will come in the end times and that great resistance to the truth would get worse and worse as Jesus’ return approaches (3:13).
- C. ***In the last days***: The New Testament writers used the phrase, “in the last days,” five times and in two different ways. In 2 Timothy 3:1 and 2 Peter 3:3, it refers to the generation that Jesus returns. In Acts 2:17 and Hebrews 1:2, “the last days” include the period extending from Jesus’ death and resurrection until His return. James 5:3 could be used in either way.
- D. ***Perilous times will come***: Earlier, Paul wrote of the falling away in the latter days (1 Tim. 4:1-3). Paul used the future tense, writing that perilous times “will come” (3:1), men “will be” lovers of themselves (3:2), and that evil men “will grow” worse (3:13) instead of saying that the perilous time “had come” and evil “had grown” worse. Paul used verbs in the future tenses (3:1-2, 13), giving a prophetic tone to his message here while also applying it to Timothy’s generation.
1. Paul saw the difficult events at that time as tokens of the end times or last days. Timothy was already facing many of these pressures, but they would grow worse in the last days.
 2. Paul did not encourage Timothy or those after him to embrace an overly optimistic view about evil diminishing in society across the nations before the return of Jesus.
- E. Paul prophesied concerning sinful attitudes and activities—He gave 20 descriptions highlighting facets of loving pleasure and self-centeredness. We are to act in the opposite spirit and teach others to do so and to be alerted instead of surprised and offended when mistreated by such people. The call to resist these sinful actions parallels the call to the “Sermon on the Mount” lifestyle.
- F. ***Lovers of themselves*** (1): Sociologists agree that this is the most narcissistic generation in history due in part to being empowered by social media and other contemporary realities. It is the first time in history that people make a media page to promote themselves aggressively—this seems normal to many. Loving who we are in the grace of God results in godly self-esteem (Mt. 22:39).
- G. ***Lovers of money*** (2): Self-centeredness leads to greed, materialism, and accumulation of more things to gratify ourselves. Many seek to lure people into their churches by promising them more money if they will serve God.
- H. ***Boasters*** (3): Selfishness is expressed in boasting that is rooted in an inflated sense of importance.
- I. ***Proud*** (4): This includes a defensive attitude that automatically resists being corrected by others.

- J. **Blasphemers** (5): This expression of pride boldly profanes God and people with fierce criticism.
- K. **Disobedient to parents** (6): Failure to honor parents is an expression of rebellion against God. Once one lacks gratitude for benefits given to them by their parents, they soon consider nothing sacred.
- L. **Unthankful** (7): They are unappreciative and ungrateful for good that God and others have done.
- M. **Unholy** (8): To be unholy or impure includes disregarding foundational, sacred values and norms.
- N. **Unloving** (9): The Greek word *astorgoi* can be translated as heartless, callous, or hateful. Such wicked people will become almost beastlike in their loss of love for their families and friends.
- O. **Unforgiving** (10): They will be unwilling to forgive or to seek to reconcile relationships. This will lead to great pain and destruction of many lives, families, and the social order itself.
- P. **Slanderers** (11): They will find it easy to gossip and malign others to damage their reputation.
- Q. **Without self-control** (12): Without self-control, people quickly yield to anger and temptation, and will seek pleasure and comfort at any cost. Self-control is a foundational element of true spirituality.
- R. **Brutal** (13): Such people will be like wild animals in their lack of mercy and empathy for others.
- S. **Despisers of good** (14): They will openly criticize and oppose those seeking to walk virtuously.
- T. **Traitors** (15): They will be treacherous to betray even the closest relationships—including fellow Christians to the authorities in times of persecution—for personal gain and protection.
- U. **Headstrong** (16): They will act boldly in rash and reckless ways towards other people.
- V. **Haughty** (17): They will over-value themselves and under-value others in conceited self-delusion.
- W. **Lovers of pleasure** (18): They will love pleasure and comfort because they love themselves.
- X. **Rather than lovers of God** (19): They will have no regard for loving Jesus in the hour of history when the Spirit establishes the first commandment in first place in the body of Christ worldwide.
- Y. **Having a form of godliness** but denying its power (20): They will make a pretense of godliness and have the appearance of having a devout relationship with God, but they will lack its power. It is possible that the apostasy will not be Christians becoming secular atheists so much as Christians embracing other spiritual expressions (while probably using non-religious language).
- Z. **From such people turn away** (3:5): Paul told Timothy, and thus the body of Christ today, to have nothing to do with people of such hardness of heart. This seems to contradict Paul's command in 2:24-25 to correct people in gentleness, humility and patience. "*Such people*" is not a general reference to sinners but specifically to those who apostatize from the faith and attack Christians.

²⁴A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all...patient, ²⁵in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance... (2 Tim. 2:24-25)

V. THE CORRUPT WAYS OF FALSE TEACHERS (2 TIM. 3:6-9)

- A. Paul included the false teachers in Ephesus in these verses, though it applies to all false teachers in the end times who will be part of causing society to be perilous and dangerous (3:1).
⁶For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, ⁷always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁸Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith... (2 Tim. 3:6-8)
- B. **Creep into households:** Deceptive men will “worm their way” into homes under false pretenses. They will gain entrance into households in which gullible women (married and single)—who are dominated by sinful desires—are vulnerable to being deceived by false teachers and teachings.
- C. **Gullible women:** They will target and seek to make captives of gullible, weak, vulnerable women by enticing them with false ideas that are novel and exciting spiritual ideas and experiences. Paul is not describing women in general but specifically warning us that vulnerable people will be targeted.
- D. **Loaded down with sins:** False teachers will gain psychological dominance over their victims who are overwhelmed under the weight of guilt and difficult consequences related to their past sins.
- E. **Jannes and Jambres:** Paul compared these deceptive spiritual leaders with corrupted minds to the Egyptian magicians in Pharaoh’s court who resisted the Lord and Moses (Ex. 7:11; 9:11).

VI. HOW GOD’S LEADERS ARE TO RESPOND (2 TIM. 3:10-17)

- A. The conduct of godly leaders like Timothy is in direct contrast to false teachers. He was deeply encouraged by Paul’s example of steadfast faithfulness (3:10-15) and by the Scriptures (3:16-17).
*¹⁰You have carefully followed my [teaching]...manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, ¹¹persecutions...which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra...
¹²Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. ¹³But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. (2 Tim. 3:10-13)*
- B. **All who live godly will be persecuted:** All Christians who are determined to live a godly life will suffer persecution because they live and speak in a way that is opposite to the world system.
- C. **Grow worse and worse:** Paul was emphatic that evil would continue to intensify in the end times.
- D. In the face of pressure, Timothy must continue in the Word and not turn aside to evil men (3:14-15).
¹⁴But you must continue in the things which you have learned...¹⁵that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation... (2 Tim. 3:14-15)
- E. Meditating on scripture empowered Timothy to withstand evil men (3:16-17).
¹⁶All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine [teaching], for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

VII. PROCLAIM THE TRUTH OF GOD'S WORD (2 TIM. 4:1-2)

- A. Paul commanded Timothy to proclaim the truth (4:2) with a solemn charge (4:1): that the Father was watching him and that Jesus would eventually evaluate him at the judgment seat of Christ. Paul knew that his death was near (4:6), so he gave Timothy one final exhortation with five imperatives.
- ¹I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: ²Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. (2 Tim. 4:1-2)***
- B. ***Judge the living and the dead:*** The *living* are those alive when Jesus returns, and the *dead* are believers who died in Christ and will be resurrected at that time (1 Thes. 4:16-18).
- C. ***Preach the word:*** The primary responsibility of every believer is to speak the Word faithfully.
- D. ***Be ready in season and out of season:*** Be prepared to speak at any occasion, whether it is convenient or inconvenient, whether he felt inspired or not, and not to speak the Word only on special occasions. Thus, he was to take advantage of every opportunity to make the Word known.

VIII. DO NOT BE INTIMIDATED BY THOSE WITH ITCHING EARS (2 TIM. 4:3-5)

- A. Timothy was so charged in 4:1-2 because “they,” or many who hear the Word in the future, would not tolerate the truth but would only listen to speakers who told them what they wanted to hear.
- ³For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine [teaching], but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴and they will turn their ears away from the truth and be turned aside to fables. ⁵But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (2 Tim. 4:3-5)***
- B. ***The time will come:*** Paul spoke of the future, particularly in the end times (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1).
- C. ***They will not endure sound teaching:*** To endure sound teaching is to receive and apply it. Sound doctrine teaches self-discipline, humility, and purity; thus it will not satisfy their itching ears.
- D. ***Itching ears:*** Itching ears speaks of an irritation in the ears that demands relief and cannot be easily satisfied. This metaphor implies that the false teachers will “scratch” or satisfy their itchy ears.
- E. We see Paul’s confidence in facing death and his encouragement that Timothy be faithful (4:6-8). Paul described his life using three metaphors—being poured out, fighting the good fight, and finishing his race—and thus, keeping the faith while loving Jesus’ appearing at His coming.
- ⁶For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. (2 Tim. 4:6-8)***
- F. There are two Greek words translated as “crown.” The crown of a ruler (Gk. *diadema*) who possesses political authority over a region and the crown of a victor (Gk. *stephanos*) given as a prize in athletic games to honor them for being victorious— e.g., receiving a gold medal at the Olympics.