

1 Timothy Lesson 10

1 Timothy 4:1-5 – Falling Away

INTRODUCTION / REVIEW

Paul wrote 1 Timothy to Timothy around AD 62-67, after his release from Roman imprisonment, to guide him in confronting false teachers in Ephesus and establishing proper assembly function. This letter, preserved for us, helps us understand God, Jesus Christ, and proper conduct in God's household. Paul begins with his apostleship by God's command, addressing Timothy as a beloved, faithful protégé.

We are in the second half of 1 Timothy. The first half establishes Timothy to lead, encourages him to perform as instructed, guarding the faith and living a life of godliness and love. Paul also instructs the local assembly on how to function and then tells them how to identify elders and servants of the church.

In this second part, entering chapter 4, Paul will instruct Timothy and, by extension, elders (pastors, overseers) on their responsibilities in leadership.

Chapter 4 is about the responsibility to proclaim the truth. Chapter 5 is about guiding the assembly in how they love and honor one another. Finally, Chapter 6 is about the life of the leader and their responsibility to live a godly life.

The next section is a word of caution and awareness. There will be opposition, and there will be some who will fall for the false doctrines of false teachers.

FALLING AWAY

First, let's make some observations, then ask some questions.

Observations:

1. Paul is speaking but is giving credit to someone else.
2. He mentions later times, seemingly indicating a future time.
3. Some will “fall away”; for someone to “fall away,” they must first be present.
4. How they “fall away” is by “paying attention” to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.
5. How this is accomplished is by the hypocrisy of liars.
6. This hypocrisy is “seared” into their conscience.
7. The false doctrines are exemplified in two false rules:
 - a. Forbidding marriage
 - b. Abstaining from foods
8. There is nothing forbidden by God.
9. Everything is sanctified by “the Word of God” and “prayer.”

1 Timothy Lesson 10

1 Timothy 4:1-5 – Falling Away

Questions

1. Who is speaking?
2. How did communication happen?
3. When are the later times? Is Paul referring to the distant future?
4. What are the implications, aspects of “falling away?”
5. How do you recognize deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons?
6. Who is spreading these false teachings?
7. Why are marriage and food the examples?
8. Is everything sanctified?
9. Is food unsanctified?

Verse 1

Says - λέγω (legō)

To say, speak, declare, express in words; to affirm or assert something plainly; to mean or intend; in contexts of divine revelation, to proclaim or reveal explicitly (often with authority, as in prophetic or scriptural utterance).

Later times - ὕστερος καιρός (husteros kairos)

ὕστερος: Later, latter, subsequent (comparative, pointing to what comes after in sequence); καιρός: a marked season, appointed time, opportunity, or epoch (not mere chronological time but qualitative periods with significance). Together: subsequent or latter periods/seasons, referring to times following the apostolic era.

Fall away - ἀφίστημι (aphistēmi)

To stand away from, withdraw, depart, desert, remove oneself; to revolt, or abstain from association. A deliberate personal action of separating oneself. Semantic range includes physical departure, defection from allegiance, or abandonment of a position/doctrine.

Faith - πίστις (pistis)

That which is believed, conviction of truth, body of truth/doctrine. With definite article (τῆς πίστεως): the objective faith, i.e., the apostolic body of doctrine or the truth of God (not subjective personal believing). Semantic range: content of what is believed (doctrinal system) vs. the verb, believe.

Paying attention – προσέχω (prosecho)

With the dative (as in here) - occupy oneself with, devote or apply oneself to; an active clinging to, hold on to.

Verse 2

Hypocrisy - ὑπόκρισις (hypokrisis)

Pretense, play-acting (from a theatrical term for assuming a role); outward show that masks true intent. Semantic range: deliberate dissimulation or feigned piety; teaching what one does not believe/practice.

Liars - ψευδολόγος (pseudologos)

Compound of pseudēs (false) + logos (word/speech) - False words: a person characterized by false statements or deceptive teaching; this is an adjective, one who utters lies; emphasizes not telling a lie but a systemic falsehood, especially in doctrinal matters.

Conscience - συνείδησις (syneidēsis)

Joint knowledge (with oneself); inner faculty of judgment/evaluation; consciousness of right/wrong based on known standards. Semantic range: not feeling but cognitive discernment.

Verse 5

ἁγιάζω (hagiazō)

To set apart, consecrate, purify a common or (thought of as) profane

ἔντευξις (enteuxis)

Intercession, petition, supplication, formal appeal, or intercessory prayer.

Another Observation on the Greek Text and Syntax

This is one complex sentence (vs.1–3) with explanatory “γάρ gar” clauses (vs. 4-5). Present tenses throughout (λέγει, προσέχοντες, κωλύοντων, ἀπέχεσθαι, λαμβανόμενον, ἁγιάζεται) emphasizes ongoing reality from Paul's perspective. Adversative δέ signals contrast with prior instructions on sound doctrine and godly leadership (3:14–16). The section warns of internal threats to the assembly, preparing Timothy for his charge to teach sound doctrine.

Verse 1: But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will depart from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,

Paul writes, yet attributes the declaration to the Holy Spirit (Question 1: Who is speaking? The Holy Spirit). There is an article, and there is no other explanation for who it is that reveals future information.

ῥητῶς retos (adverb, hapax legomenon) – "explicitly/plainly," underscoring unambiguous divine revelation. Present tense λέγω (legō) – ongoing speech (Question 2: How did

1 Timothy Lesson 10

1 Timothy 4:1-5 – Falling Away

communication happen?). This is a prophetic revelation, either already given in the churches, expressed by the Holy Spirit and communicated by an apostle or prophet. Currently, the Spirit speaks through Scripture.

"In later times," ὕστερος (husteros) is comparative: latter/subsequent + καιρός (Kairos) indicates appointed seasons/opportunities, not mere chronology.

When are the later times? Is Paul referring to the distant future? (Question 3): No – these are the “last days,” seasons beginning with the apostolic era and continuing through this current evil age (Acts 2:17 "in the last days"; Hebrews 1:2 "in these last days"; 1 John 2:18 "it is the last hour... many antichrists have appeared"; 2 Timothy 3:1 "in the last days difficult times will come"; Jude 18 "in the last time"). From Paul's vantage (AD 63–65), future-oriented ("will depart"), but already incipient and ongoing; this has nothing to do with eschatology. This concept is echoed in Acts 20:29, when the spokesmen for God are gone, droves of false teachers will come in.

"Some will depart from the faith." Deliberate personal separation.

“The faith” (articulate objective) – the body of apostolic doctrine (1:19, 6:10, 21; Jude 3). Implications/aspects of "falling away" (Question 4): These are individuals already in association with the faith/assembly; these are believers. Departure is a functional abandonment of sound doctrine resulting in shipwreck concerning the faith-life (1:19–20).

This verse often causes confusion. Some say that this states that when they depart, they lose their salvation. This is evidence of one of the most dangerous hermeneutic fallacies. Some believe that the inference is the same as understanding. What does it say? The verse says that some will depart from apostolic doctrine.

Which doctrines? Is this about believing in Jesus as the Messiah? Is this about the nature of salvation by grace through faith? Is this about origins or eschatology? None of that is present in the immediate context.

Obviously, we can state that this is true for any doctrine, but in the context, it is about some false teaching about marriage and food. Are these salvation issues?

Those who are believers often fall for some very silly, unbiblical doctrines that rob them of their freedom and lead to a belief system and a life of legalism.

But let's assume that a believer leaves the doctrines of Jesus Christ. Does it say that they stop being a child of God, or that they no longer have life and have returned to death? There is not one verse that says that. Even if we are unbelieving, He remains faithful. Eternal life remains secure, but the believer suffers severe dysfunction, loss of potential reward, and potential dismissal from the assembly.

1 Timothy Lesson 10

1 Timothy 4:1-5 – Falling Away

"Paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons." – As already alluded to, this false teaching may include any false teaching. But in this context, the examples are marriage and food.

“Paying attention to” (προσέχω prosecho + dative) active clinging. Not just giving recognition to but holding for themselves doctrines of deceitful spirits (Question 5): Content originating from demons – anything contradicting creation goodness, promoting legalism over grace, or distracting from the faith, the doctrines of God, is demonic (here: treating God's provisions as defiling; Colossians 2:16-17, 20-23).