

1 Timothy Lesson 11

1 Timothy 4:1-16 – Liars and Truth-Tellers

INTRODUCTION

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. And here in chapter 4, Paul will instruct Timothy and, by extension, elders (pastors/overseers) on their responsibilities in leadership, specifically, the responsibility to proclaim the truth.

REVIEW

In verse 1, we established that the Holy Spirit explicitly revealed that the "later times" (the entire period from the apostolic era until now) states that some will depart from "the faith." This refers not to a loss of salvation, but to believers abandoning the objective body of apostolic doctrine. We saw that this defection is driven by "deceitful spirits" and "doctrines of demons," which in this specific context are denials of Jesus or even, but subtle entrapments of legalism and asceticism regarding marriage and food. Crucially, we corrected the dangerous hermeneutic that views this "falling away" as a return to spiritual death. Instead, we understood it as a functional separation where a child of God, secure in their eternal life but seduced by error, exchanges the freedom of grace for religious bondage, resulting in a shipwrecked faith-life rather than a forfeited sonship.

EXPOSITION CONTINUED

Verse 2: by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron,

"through hypocrisy of false-worders having been cauterized in their own conscience." They are deceived by false doctrines, it becomes seared in their thoughts, and it is difficult to persuade them otherwise.

Who spreads these teachings? Initially, it is wolves who infiltrate the assemblies and lead believers astray, and then the unwitting believers begin to spread false doctrine – Acts 20:30 "from among your own selves"). The original false teachers are systemic liars (ψευδολόγων: professional false-worders); they teach things that they themselves do not believe. False teachers will often come in proclaiming similar messages as believers, but they have ulterior motives.

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1 Timothy 4:1-16 – Lairs and Truth-Tellers

Verse 3: men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.

Why marriage and foods? The dietary restrictions are probably holdovers from false Judaism (teachers of the Law). Forbidding marriage is not clearly represented in Ephesus, but we do have records of the Jewish Essenes, who taught that celibacy was a higher spiritual state. So, this seems to be a direct push back on the false Judaic influences of that time.

Also, it is an interesting observation that all religions, even Christian adjacent ones and some evangelicals, have some dietary restrictions or views on marriage that they claim lead to higher spiritual status.

Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist, and Mormonism all have food restrictions. Catholics restrict marriage for priests, and Mormonism historically taught polygamy.

Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism all have dietary restrictions, and most have some unbiblical views on marriage.

The "doctrines of demons" that Paul warns about in 1 Timothy 4 are not limited to the false Judaism and Essenes of that day. They are the universal tendency of man-made religion to do two things:

1. **Attack Foundational Biblical Truth:** Treating human attachments or physical pleasure (sex in marriage) as sinful or at least less optimal.
2. **Install Legalism:** Replacing spiritual maturity and the love of the saints with external dietary and marital codes.

Verses 4–5: For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.

Is everything *good*? The word here is “καλός kalos;” this means advantageous, helpful, okay. And we have learned that nothing is off the table as far as food goes, with respect to what is sinful or holy. Is food unsanctified without the Word of God and prayer? No, food is not inherently defiling (Mark 7:14-23; Rom 14:14, 20). *Sanctification* here is instrumental/practical. If you think a food is defiled, then purify it. There are two ways. First, learn what the Word of God says about it. Second, not “prayer” but “ἐντευξις enteuxis” which is intercession, petition, supplication, formal appeal, or intercessory prayer with thanksgiving (gratitude).

1 TIMOTHY 4:6-16 EXPOSITION

The Good Servant's Discipline (4:6–10)

Paul shifts from warning about the departure from the faith to instructing Timothy on how to insulate the assembly against it. He begins by characterizing the "good servant" not by his activity, but by his intake.

Pointing out is ὑποτίθημι (hupotithēmi) – it means to lay something down, to provide instruction, to provide information to something to someone else

The participle *nourished* is ἐντρέφω (entrephō), meaning brought up, rear, or trained in. This indicates that Timothy must be continually nourished with the words of the faith.

This spiritual sustenance is not merely about studying but about understanding, believing it, and using it to function. One cannot dispense truth if one is not actively consuming it. This positive nourishment is contrasted with a negative command to refuse "worldly fables," likely the Jewish myths and genealogies mentioned in Chapter 1.

"fit only for old women" is one word in Greek, and it is an idiom similar to "old wives' tales." It is not "fitting" for old women to talk about, meaning it is deemed superstitious, trivial, or folklore.

Instead, Timothy is to discipline himself for the purpose of godliness. The verb *discipline* γυμνάζω (gymnazō) implies rigorous, athletic exertion. This word choice adds depth by stripping away the idea that spiritual service is passive or accidental; it requires hard work and the intentionality of an athlete.

While bodily discipline has some value for the present life, *godliness*, translated from εὐσέβεια (eusebeia) and defined as a specific reverence that directs one's life toward God, is profitable for all things. It enhances the quality of life in the present and maximizes rewards in the life to come.

This labor is motivated by the understanding that the living God is the "Savior of all men, especially of believers." This has caused some difficulty, but it is not an issue when understood correctly.

God is the Savior of all provisionally, as Christ's work satisfied the debt for the entire world through His atoning work for all. However, He is the Savior of believers specifically, as the benefits of that work are only applied to and realized by those who are convinced of the truth.

The Minister's Authority and Example (4:11–13)

Timothy, likely in his thirties, is commanded to "prescribe and teach" these things with authority, despite his relative youth.

Paul instructs him not to let anyone look down on him, but rather to silence criticism by becoming a τύπος (typos), meaning a "model" or "pattern." This noun clarifies that Timothy is not just to be a good person, but the literal mold that the flock should fit into. This example is to be evident in speech, conduct, love, faithfulness, and purity.

Paul then instructs that his ministry is to be focused on three specific duties.

1. The public reading of Scripture, which was essential in a mostly illiterate culture
2. Exhortation, which applies the text to the mind and behavior
3. Teaching, the systematic instruction of doctrine.

The Result: Progress and Preservation (4:14–16)

Paul concludes by urging Timothy not to neglect the spiritual gift within him, which was objectively verified by prophetic utterance and the laying on of hands.

The term *spiritual gift* is χάρισμα (charisma), which is rooted in grace; this is a gift given freely. The text does not indicate what it is. This should be translated "grace given," the gift is "in you," which indicates a specific mission or ability.

Timothy is to be absorbed in these matters. The word *absorbed* is not in the Greek text, but the phrase *be in them* implies total immersion, with the result that his doctrinal immersion and dedication to reading, exhortation, and teaching are evident to all.

The final instruction to "pay close attention" to himself and his teaching contains a promise often mishandled. Paul writes, "For as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you."

Contextually, this has nothing to do with eternal justification, which is a finished work of grace. Rather, the verb σώζω (sōzō), meaning "to save," "deliver," or "preserve," here refers to deliverance from the consequences of the false teaching described in verses 1–3. By adhering to sound doctrine, Timothy delivers himself and his listeners from the shipwreck of faith, the deception of demons, and the wasted life of legalism. This is a functional salvation that preserves the assembly's health and future rewards.