

1 Timothy 4 Sliding Away or Slogging Toward

Which are you doing?

- Spiritually, we live on a moving sidewalk that is headed away from God. Stop intentionally making progress forward and you will begin to drift away.
- Physical fitness is the same – if you stop exercising for long periods of time you don't just stay where you were, you lose what you had – you need to stick with it if you want to see progress

Paul is writing to Timothy to correct some problems that were going on in Ephesus – people were teaching some funky stuff and it was leading people astray, moving them away from God, and amazingly, it was all being done in the name of religion.

It wasn't just a problem in Ephesus, Paul writes to the Galatians:

3:1 “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?”

4:9 “But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?”

Incredibly, this is a problem we still have today – there are churches and speakers and authors who teach some really funky stuff. ***And people believe them!***

I'm not even going to take the time to go into all the weirdness you can run into out there, because I want to deal with two issues this morning – why we go astray, because it's kind of amazing to me that we do, and how we can prevent it from happening.

So let's start reading in 4:1

1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, 3 forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. 4 For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; 5 for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

Paul is going back to the beginning of the issue – why he sent Timothy to Ephesus in the first place

Ch 1 – the nature of the problem, and what should be believed instead

Ch 2- what the church should be doing instead of what it was doing

Ch 3 – requirements for church leaders so the church would be led in the right direction

Ch 4 – he comes back to core issue that started all of the problems – bad doctrine

Paul isn't surprised by this – the Spirit “expressly says” it would happen

- could be revelation to Paul
- could be referring to teaching by Jesus (Matt 24:10, Mk 13:22)

“latter times” – days since the coming of Jesus, everything before was the ‘former times’

- like BC and AD
- there will be ‘last days’ which will be the last days of the latter times – IOW, end times

in the latter times, some will “depart from the faith” – Grk apostatize – used freq in the LXX to describe Israel's turning away from Yahweh

- The Big Question – were they really saved?
 - o Calvinism vs. Arminianism – TULIP – Perseverance of the saints is what's questioned here
 - o so, what about it? The Scriptures aren't entirely clear. If they were, there would be no room for debate.
 - o What is clear –
 - God will never cast you out of His hand
 - John 6: [37](#) All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. [38](#) For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. [39](#) This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.
 - No one/nothing can snatch you out of His hand
 - John 10: [27](#) My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. [28](#) And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. [29](#) My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father's hand. [30](#) I and My Father are one.”
 - o What is unclear – can you jump out of it? I don't know.
 - Qualifier - Maybe they were never saved. There is a HUGE difference between knowing something and believing it. You don't believe something until you take action on it. Until it begins to affect the shape and texture of your life. There's this three piece flow that has to be involved from your head to your heart to your hands – we'll come back to that later.

- What matters: in the choices you make – stick close to Him, not your self.
 - And the way to God is the same, whether it's the first time you've come or whether you're 'coming back' – you recognize your sin, confess it and repent (turn) from it, you ask for forgiveness, declare your loyalty and ask for guidance and strength.
 - And remember, if you come to Him, He will by no means cast you out!
 - And He forgives – 70 x's 7.
 - But, this doesn't mean you get saved every Sunday – we're talking about the overall inclination of your heart here

Why do people apostatize?

- remember, we're not talking about total heathens here, we're talking about *people who know the truth* but drift away from it.
- Three directions we head when we drift away from God
 - legalism/asceticism – because we want measurable and observable results
 - something to be feel confident about, to trust in
 - what we see here in Ephesus
 - abandon marriage
 - adopt a strict diet in order to be more Godly
 - How we manifest today
 - Some groups wear certain clothes – head coverings, skirts, etc
 - Avoid certain foods – SDAs – no meat and no condiments or spices like pepper or vinegar, because they arouse your 'passions'¹ eating meat has a tendency to “deaden the moral powers”
 - Problem – We typically deny ourselves things that are allowed by God
 - Paul points out that marriage and food are a gift from God
 - What is important is that we use things as God intended
 - which leads us to our next direction
 - liberty/hedonism – because we want quick and easy enjoyment or satisfaction from otherwise good things – we want to take shortcuts or establish our own conditions

¹ “Our tables should bear only the most wholesome food, free from every irritating substance. The appetite for liquor is encouraged by the preparation of food with condiments and spices.” Cited in RH NOV.06,1883 - Accessed at <http://www.ellenwhitedefend.com/subjects/pepper.htm> From the same site, regarding meat: “Meat should not be placed before our children. Its influence is to excite and strengthen the lower passions, and has a tendency to deaden the moral powers. Grains and fruits prepared free from grease, and in as natural a condition as possible, should be the food for the tables of all who claim to be preparing for translation to heaven. The less feverish the diet, the more easily can the passions be controlled. Gratification of taste should not be consulted irrespective of physical, intellectual, or moral health. 2T 352”

- In relationships – we establish too close of emotional ties before we are ready to commit in marriage; we indulge in physical relationships – good things, but on our own schedule
 - An overall approach to life – I do what I want to do, and then we compartmentalize our lives and still try to have our “God time” like He doesn’t know about, or He’s cool with all the other choices we are making in life – this might going on at the same time as you are headed in our third direction
- Mysticism/emotionalism – where you go overboard in chasing after ‘super-spiritual’ experiences – you want God-tingles all the time
 - Hyper emotional worship; deep, deep meditation; reading all kinds of books about people who have been to heaven and back or had encounters with angels; prayer labyrinths; holy laughter, holy barking, ‘slain in the spirit.’
 - **The motive is not bad** – a desire to be more connected to God, but desire overtakes doctrine and passion overcomes truth and slowly we start heading off into whatever direction will tickle us and give us the super spiritual sensation we’re looking for
- This is true of all the directions we head away from God – our motive, or our desire isn’t necessarily for bad things – but we are so focused on what we want, or how we think it should be obtained, that we are willing to ignore true doctrine in order to get there.
 - We take slow, incremental steps toward a place where we would never have gone directly. All addictive behavior is like this – you start with tiny little compromises, but over time they add up and you start doing things that once would have completely shocked you and yet you find a way to explain it all away so rationally. Your conscience has become “seared with a hot iron.”

Along the way, you become an apostle of heresy. You begin to preach a false gospel to yourself and to others as you explain why this is OK and you actually encourage others to try it to. Instead of leading others toward God, you are leading them away.

By your words, or by your witness, probably both, you promote a lie.

And here’s the really troubling part, the part I don’t fully understand myself – the Bible says that all of this is influenced by “deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.” There is a demonic, Satanic, influence to it all.

After all, Scripture calls Satan the Father of all Lies. Remember, it all began with him in the garden tempting Adam and Eve to do something that they knew they shouldn’t do. But he made it all seem so desirable and plausible – it wasn’t that they hated God, it’s just that what they were told not to do seemed like such a good thing to do. So beneficial. It would get them what they wanted.

But, just like our own lie believing sins, it didn't lead them closer to God, it drove them farther away.

So, what's the key to avoiding all of this? What's the key to not going astray? Paul tells Timothy the answer next:

[6](#) If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. [7](#) But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. [8](#) For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. [9](#) This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. [10](#) For to this *end* we both labor and suffer reproach, [\[fn1\]](#) because we trust in the living God, who is *the* Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. [11](#) These things command and teach.

[12](#) Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, [\[fn2\]](#) in faith, in purity. [13](#) Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. [14](#) Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. [15](#) Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. [16](#) Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

So we saw a process with movement away from God.

- Evil spirits influence or introduce ideas
- Somehow the ideas come to us
- We slowly believe them, we act on them, we spread them
- All of which separates us from true doctrine and God.

There is a flow from the head, through the heart, and out the hands

Paul says we need to have the same process, but with totally different influences

- under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit
- we receive the apostle's doctrine and Scripture = the Bible
- By God's grace and with His help, we live it out
- People see and hear us and are encouraged to grow in Godliness
- It's a blessing to us, to those who see and hear us, and it glorifies God

So how do you know what is true and what isn't? How do you know what teachers to listen to? Simple – stick to the Book. Instead of trying to master some new truth or experience, be mastered by Scripture and let God lead you – he can give you discernment.

Paul stresses, in vs 10 that all that is really necessary for salvation is to “trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.”

- You don't need to strap on all these other requirements to earn salvation or experience God

As you do all of this, let your light shine, and “be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, and in purity.” Instead of a lying hypocrite with a seared conscience who is leading people astray, be an example of godliness that people can follow.

Have true doctrine in your head, let it sink into your heart, and let people see it all over your life. “Let your progress be evident to all.”

As people watch your life over time, are they watching you increase in godliness or watching you fall farther away?

If you want the answer to be more Christlikeness, then the key is to “give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.”

- whatever you feed in your life will grow – what are you giving your time and interests to? And do you see that there are consequences to the choices you make? Not only will doing these things save you, but it will also save “those who hear you.”

Day by day, choice by choice you are giving your life away – the question is: who are you giving it to, and what direction are those choices taking you?

The gospel is simple and pure, it’s not full of excuses or explanations, it’s gained through your own efforts – it is a free gift – are you receiving it?

“Exercise yourself toward godliness” – There’s nothing inherently wrong with some of the stuff the heretics were teaching – yes, physical exercise is good, but it’s not a requirement for salvation as they were teaching.

- remember this is the danger of all false teaching and false reasoning, it starts with a little bit of truth, but it mixes it with error.