

1 TIMOTHY CHAPTER 4

Warnings Against False Teachers

1 Timothy 4:1

“One afternoon in 1965, Daniel Waswa, a citizen of Kenya, struggled up a hill and was crucified by his wife at his own direction. As he hung on the cross, he told the gathered crowd, “I am dying for the sins of all Kenyans.” After nailing her husband to the cross, the woman collapsed on the ground and died, apparently from shock. Waswa’s neighbors knew this was no spur-of-the-moment act. He had talked about it for a year and had told them he had been called by God for this purpose. They begged him to let them take him down. He refused all requests. Finally he was taken down still alive, but he soon died from the nail wounds which had become infected.

“Superstitious people now make pilgrimages to the spot where Daniel Waswa died and pray for him to forgive their sins.”¹

“Ten years ago, McCall’s magazine reported on a survey of 3,000 Protestant clergymen. The McCall article stated, “A considerable number rejected altogether the idea of a personal God. God, they said, was the Ground of Being, the Force of Life, the Principle of Love, Ultimate Reality and so forth. A majority of the youngest group cannot be said to believe in the Virgin Birth or to regard Jesus as divine in the traditional way in which most Protestants were brought up.”²

1 Timothy 4:1-5 NAS:

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

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

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.*

⁴ *For **everything created by God is good**, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude;*

⁵ *for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.*

¹ Tan, Paul Lee: *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: A Treasury of Illustrations, Anecdotes, Facts and Quotations for Pastors, Teachers and Christian Workers.* Garland TX: Bible Communications, 1996, c1979.

² Baker

“The Spirit explicitly says.” There is no doubt who made this statement, is there? This passage in the Bible comes from the **HOLY SPIRIT**. But, of course, all Scripture was God-breathed. Paul refers here to a prophecy (prediction) provided by the Holy Spirit, and this prophecy contains things not spoken about anywhere else in Scripture. Paul’s words are essential in order to understand the ever present evil that Christ followers will have to face. “*Later times*” does not necessarily mean in the end times just before the return of Christ, although such conditions will apply then as well. But Paul is referring to how things will be from when he wrote this letter to Timothy until the time Christ returns.³

“Some will fall away from the faith,” (Αποστησονται).⁴ The original Greek word used here means **“to cause to rebel, depart.”** These individuals will renounce (abandon) their loyalty to the Christian faith. Liars and false teachers will lead “some” away by teaching them that the Bible is not the holy Word of God. These false teachers will substitute false teaching for God’s Truth, teaching which will undoubtedly include the denial of salvation by faith alone.

Deception comes in many disguises, all of which mask the different kinds of demons and evil spirits that are behind them. Deception uses these disguises to draw people away from the truth of God’s Word. This is the only place in the Pastoral Epistles where Paul speaks of demons and warns against them.⁵ But it is important to realize here that this demonic influence and these false teachers are in the Church.

Satan is a powerful force for evil in this world and he will stop at nothing to draw people away from Christ.

2 Corinthians 11:12-15 NLT:

¹² *But I will continue doing what I have always done. This will undercut those who are looking for an opportunity to boast that their work is just like ours.*

¹³ *These people are false apostles. They are deceitful workers who disguise themselves as apostles of Christ.*

¹⁴ *But I am not surprised! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.*

¹⁵ *So it is no wonder that **his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.** In the end they will get the punishment their wicked deeds deserve.*

³ Ibid.

⁴ “Cause to rebel.” *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Greek (New Testament):* 923 ἀφίσταμαι

⁵ Wiersbe, Warren. *Be Faithful.* Wheaton IL: Victor Books, 1981, p. 55.

Now to whom do you think the Spirit is speaking in 1 Timothy 4:1? It would appear that He was speaking to Paul. The Spirit is saying that some will *depart from the faith*.

Now it was the Spirit who was saying this. So there can be no doubt in Paul's mind, or anybody else's for that matter, that it is going to happen. Six years before, Paul was speaking to the elders of the churches in the exact same area where Timothy was now teaching. Paul said this:

Acts 20:29-30 NLT:

²⁹ *I know that false teachers, like vicious wolves, will come in among you after I leave, not sparing the flock.*
³⁰ *Even some men from your own group will rise up and distort the truth in order to draw a following.*

A few years later Paul was writing to the Colossians from a jail cell in Rome, and he cautioned them **not to accept any teaching** that suggested Christ's atoning death on the cross had to include any additional works or rituals.

Colossians 2:1-2 NLT:

¹ *I want you to know how much I have agonized for you and for the church at **Laodicea**, and for many other believers who have never met me personally.*

² *I want them to be encouraged and knit together by strong ties of love. I want them to have complete confidence that they understand God's **mysterious plan**,⁶ which is Christ himself.*

You may remember Laodicea from Revelation Chapter 3, where Christ severely condemned the church for its lack of faith and service. We are going to read that letter to you from "*The Message*," a contemporary translation in everyday language.

Revelation 3:14-22 MSG:

¹⁴ *Write to **Laodicea**, to the Angel of the church. God's Yes, the Faithful and Accurate Witness, the First of God's creation, says:*

¹⁵ *"I know you inside and out, and find little to my liking. You're not cold, you're not hot—far better to be either cold or hot!*

¹⁶ *You're stale. You're stagnant. You make me want to vomit.*

¹⁷ *You brag, 'I'm rich, I've got it made, I need nothing from anyone,' oblivious that in fact you're a pitiful, blind beggar, threadbare and homeless.*

¹⁸ *"Here's what I want you to do: Buy your gold from me, gold that's been through the refiner's fire. Then you'll be rich. Buy your clothes from me, clothes designed in Heaven. You've gone around half-naked long enough.*

⁶ There's that word mystery again. Do you remember what we discussed about the "mystery" earlier?

And buy medicine for your eyes from me so you can see, really see.

¹⁹ **"The people I love, I call to account—prod and correct and guide so that they'll live at their best. Up on your feet, then! About face! Run after God!"**

²⁰ *"Look at me. I stand at the door. I knock. If you hear me call and open the door, I'll come right in and sit down to supper with you."*

²¹ *Conquerors will sit alongside me at the head table, just as I, having conquered, took the place of honor at the side of my Father. That's my gift to the conquerors!*

²² *"Are your ears awake? Listen. Listen to the Wind Words, the Spirit blowing through the churches."*

This was a church that Paul had nurtured some thirty to forty years earlier. It does not take long for a church to fall away from God when they stop teaching the truth of the Word of God. That is exactly what happened to the church in Laodicea. They had declined to the point where God wanted to spit them out.

Now let us continue in Colossians 2:3-23 NLT:

³ *In him (Jesus)⁷ lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

⁴ *I am telling you this so no one will deceive you with well-crafted arguments.*

⁵ *For though I am far away from you, my heart is with you. And I rejoice that you are living as you should and that your faith in Christ is strong.*

⁶ *And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him.*

⁷ *Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.*

⁸ *Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ.*

⁹ *For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body.* ¹⁰ *So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.* ¹¹ *When you came to Christ, you were "circumcised," but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your sinful nature.* ¹² *For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.* ¹³ *You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins.*

⁷ Parentheses mine.

¹⁴ *He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.*

¹⁵ *In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.*

¹⁶ So don't let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new moon ceremonies or Sabbaths.

¹⁷ *For these rules are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ himself is that reality.*

¹⁸ Don't let anyone condemn you by insisting on pious self-denial or the worship of angels, saying they have had visions about these things. Their sinful minds have made them proud,

¹⁹ *and they are not connected to Christ, the head of the body. For he holds the whole body together with its joints and ligaments, and it grows as God nourishes it.*

²⁰ You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world. So why do you keep on following the rules of the world, such as,

²¹ "Don't handle! Don't taste! Don't touch!"?

²² *Such rules are mere human teachings about things that deteriorate as we use them.*

²³ *These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, pious self-denial, and severe bodily discipline. But they provide no help in conquering a person's evil desires.*

Now as Paul writes to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4, **the Holy Spirit told Paul that the seed has already been planted in the churches** and will grow and develop in the manner that Paul describes in 1 Timothy 4:3: *"They will say it is wrong to be married and wrong to eat certain foods. But God created those foods to be eaten with thanks by faithful people who know the truth (NLT)."*

When someone gets up in church and declares that believers should or should not do certain things, or they teach some doctrine, what are we to do? We do like the Christians at Berea.

Acts 17:11 NLT:

¹¹ *And the people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul's message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth.*

Yes, we are to search the Scriptures to see if what they are teaching is backed up by God's Word. If those teachers claim that the Spirit told them thus and so, John tells us what to do.

1 John 4:1-6 NLT:

¹ *Dear friends, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. **You must test them** to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For there are many false prophets in the world.*

² *This is how we know if they have the Spirit of God: If a person claiming to be a prophet acknowledges that Jesus Christ came in a real body, that person has the Spirit of God.*

³ *But if someone claims to be a prophet and does not acknowledge the truth about Jesus, that person is not from God. Such a person has **the spirit of the Antichrist**, which you heard is coming into the world and indeed **is already here**.*

⁴ *But you belong to God, my dear children. You have already won a victory over those people, because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world.*

⁵ *Those people belong to this world, so they speak from the world's viewpoint, and the world listens to them.*

⁶ *But we belong to God, and those who know God listen to us. If they do not belong to God, they do not listen to us. **That is how we know if someone has the Spirit of truth or the spirit of deception.***

2 Corinthians 4:4 NLT:

⁴ ***Satan**, who is **the god of this world**, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. **They are unable** to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.*

Revelation 13:11-14 NLT:

¹¹ *Then I saw another beast come up out of the **earth**.⁸ He had two horns like those of a lamb, but he spoke with the voice of a dragon.*

¹² *He exercised all the authority of the first beast.⁹ And he required all the earth and its people to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed.*

¹³ *He did astounding miracles, even making fire flash down to earth from the sky while everyone was watching.*

¹⁴ *And with all the miracles he was allowed to perform on behalf of the first beast, **he deceived all the people who belong to this world**. He ordered the people to make a great statue of the first beast, who was fatally wounded and then came back to life.*

So once again we see the importance of being well-grounded in the Word. Bible study is not an elective; it is a vital necessity. We must know what the Bible really teaches in order to discern whether someone is teaching Truth. Too many Christians today know too little about the Bible. Make it your aim to study the Bible regularly and even to memorize

⁸ This is the false prophet of the Tribulation.

⁹ This would be the Antichrist.

some of it. Then you will be better able to recognize false teaching and reject it.

Martin Luther warned:

“I am much afraid that the universities will prove to be the great gates to Hell, unless they diligently labour to explain the Holy Scriptures and to engrave them upon the hearts of youth. I advise no one to place his child where the Scriptures do not reign paramount. Every institution where men are not unceasingly occupied with the Word of God must become corrupt.”¹⁰

We have seen that prediction come true in many of our educational institutions. But the other aspect of Luther’s word is that any institution where men are “*unceasingly occupied with the Word of God*” is going to teach young people to do the same and to walk in God’s Ways. By God’s grace, let us purpose to be that kind of people.

¹⁰ Tan, Paul Lee: *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: A Treasury of Illustrations, Anecdotes, Facts and Quotations for Pastors, Teachers and Christian Workers*. Garland TX: Bible Communications, 1996, c1979.