

Reflections on 1 Timothy 4:1-5
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Now the Spirit¹ expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed ^ato deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, ²^bspeaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience ^cseared 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 ²sanctified by the word of God and prayer.¹

After giving an early hymn of the church (in three couplets) in 1 Timothy 3:16 which states:

God was manifested in the flesh (incarnation of Jesus Christ)

Justified in the Spirit (Holy Spirit's work in Jesus ministry and resurrection)

Seen by angels (Refers to the angelic witness of Christ's ministry and resurrection)

Preached among the Gentiles (Gospel proclamation of Jesus Christ to the world)

Believed on in the world (The response of individuals to God's plan of salvation)

Received up in glory (Ascension of Jesus Christ),

Paul begins a new series of instructions in chapters 4-6. In the first five verses of chapter 4 he warns Timothy that there will be those who will depart, i.e., “*stand away from*” the faith (the body of truth; cf. Rom. 1:8; Eph 2:8; Gal 1:23; Jude 3). To be sure, to “*depart*” or “*abandon*” is not concerning the loss of salvation but a failure to walk obediently (see John 19:25-27; 1 Cor. 3:1-2). Those who abandon the faith will do the following:

1. Depart from the doctrine of the faith (vs. 1)
2. Give heed to deceiving spirits and occult beliefs and practices (vs 1)
3. Speak lies in hypocrisy (masks of deception) (vs. 1)
4. Sear their consciences “with a hot iron” (vs. 2)
5. Forbid Christian liberties (e.g., marriage; food) (vv. 3-4)
6. Possibly be ungrateful to the Lord (vs. 4)

Because we live in an age that declares Christian truth and practice to be bad and hedonism, mysticism, narcissism, and spiritism to be good, exchanging truth with lies,

¹ explicitly

^a 2 Tim. 3:13; Rev. 16:14

^b Matt. 7:15

^c Eph. 4:19

² set apart

¹ *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. 1 Ti 4:1-5

and authenticity for deception, how should we then live? Here are fifteen life applications I gleaned from Paul's warning to Timothy:

1. Be alert because there will be those who will abandon the faith.
2. Be observant of those who compromise doctrinal truth and/or godly conduct.
3. Be aware that there will be those people who will add to or restrict biblical Christian liberties by abusing grace or advocating legalism or even non-Christian asceticism.
4. Be careful of consorting with hypocrites whose ways and motives are hidden.
5. Be watchful of subtle self-deception in your own life by tolerating habitual sin.
6. Be suspicious of those who don't speak truth in love and love in truth.
7. Immediately flee from those who attractively repackage heresies for contemporary audiences; do you even know what heresies have followed the Christian church since its beginning?
8. Resist the temptation of promises that are too good to be true; they are truly "empty" promises.
9. Stay away from those whose "consciences" are seared; these are people who are not pro-actively dependent upon the Holy Spirit.
10. Routinely examine your intimacy with God, asking Him to scrutinize any "searing of the conscience" in your own life.
11. Thoroughly know biblical doctrine; be meticulous, judicious, and well thought-out.
12. Refuse to associate with those who neglect the body or neglect the soul whether they are antinomians (grace abusers), ascetics, or legalists.
13. Be wary of those who are not grateful to the Lord for every blessing they receive from His hand.
14. Be cautious of those who refuse to tell you their doctrinal positions.
15. Always be vigilant of your surroundings.