

# FIRST TIMOTHY

## Chapter 4

*Some Will Depart from the Faith*

**Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, 2 through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, 3 who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving 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 thanksgiving, 5 for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.**

**4:1** *The Spirit expressly says.* As, e.g., in Mt 24:11; Mk 13:22; Ac 20:29–30; 2Th 2:3. Paul, however, is perhaps speaking here of a specific revelation made to him by the Spirit. (CSB)

Perhaps through direct revelation to Paul. Jesus' warnings concerning apostasy are also echoed here. Cf Mt 24:10–11; Mk 13:22. (TLSB)

*In later times.* The time beginning with the first coming of Christ (see note on Heb 1:1). That Paul is not referring only to the time immediately prior to Christ's second coming is obvious from his assumption in v. 7 that the false teachings were already present at the time of his writing. (CSB)

Not only the last days before Christ's return, but the entire NT era. (TLSB)

*depart from the faith.* Those who were once believing members of the Church will turn away from Christ, thereby rejecting the gift of salvation. (TLSB)

*deceitful spirits.* Their wicked work is to deceive and lead astray the faithful; or perhaps this is a reference to the false teachers through whom these spirits speak. (TLSB)

*devoting.* Giving full attention to something in an active, intentional, ongoing way. (TLSB)

*teachings of demons.* Satan is "a liar and the father of lies" (Jn 8:44). False doctrine in all its forms comes from him. (TLSB)

**4:2** The consciences of those peddling demonic doctrines have either been "branded" by Satan to show his ownership of them or "cauterized," leaving them unfeeling and unable to distinguish between right and wrong. (TLSB)

**4:3** *forbid marriage ... abstinence.* False teachers demanded that marriage and certain foods be rejected, but in so doing they were rejecting God, who gives the gifts of marriage and food. "We expect that at some point churches will lack pastors if marriage continues to be forbidden.... It is incredibly cruel that the marriage of priests is forbidden. God has commanded that marriage be honored. Marriage is most highly honored in the laws of all well-ordered commonwealths, even among the heathen" (AC XXIII 17–20). (TLSB)

*received with thanksgiving.* Believers are to receive all of God's gifts gratefully, including marriage and food. (TLSB)

This unbiblical asceticism arose out of the mistaken belief that the material world was evil—a central belief of the Gnostic heresy (see Introduction to 1 John: Gnosticism). (CSB)

**4:4–5** All that God has created is inherently good, as we express with every prayer of thanks. “That is, ‘by the Word,’ by which consciences become certain that God approves, and ‘by prayer,’ that is, by faith, which uses it with thanksgiving as God’s gift” (Ap XXIII 30). (TLSB)

**4:1–5** God daily and richly provides us with all that we need. To reject God’s good gifts, or to receive them thanklessly, is a sin against His graciousness. But God promises His gift of forgiveness to those who turn to Him in repentance and faith. Because of Jesus’ sacrificial death for our sins, God does not reject us but receives us as His own children through faith. • Father in heaven, teach us to recognize Your gifts in every realm of life. Lead us always to receive them with thankful hearts. Amen. (TLSB)

*A Good Servant of Christ Jesus*

**6 If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. 7 Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; 8 for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. 9 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. 10 For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. 11 Command and teach these things. 12 Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. 13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. 14 Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. 15 Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, [c] so that all may see your progress. 16 Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.**

**4:6** *these things*. The teachings in 1:3–4:5. (TLSB)

*words of the faith*. The objective content of the faith that all Christians are to believe. (TLSB)

*good doctrine*. Or, “good teaching”; the same “words” that are to be believed and taught. (TLSB)

**4:7** *train yourself for godliness*. Godliness requires self-discipline. (CSB)

Lit, “Continue exercising yourself with respect to godliness.” Rather than waste time in long discussions with proponents of “silly myths,” Timothy is to continue training himself in the active pursuit of God’s purposes. (TLSB)

**4:8** *bodily training is of some value*. Physical exercise and discipline are beneficial in many ways. (TLSB)

*value in every way*. In contrast to physical exercise, the benefits of godliness bless other people and reach into eternity. Ambrose: “In the holy Scriptures, if we look carefully we shall often find that what is virtuous is called useful” (NPNF 2 10:47). (TLSB)

**4:9** *the saying is trustworthy*. Although the NIV understands the expression in this instance to refer to what follows, it is possible that it refers back to the seemingly proverbial statement in v. 8. The words “labor and strive” in v. 10 may refer to the training mentioned in vv. 7b–8. (CSB)

The wisdom in v 8 regarding godliness. (TLSB)

**4:10** *this end*. Godliness and its promise for the life to come (v 8). (TLSB)

*hope*. This is either God's ability to bring the Christian's "hope" to fruition or His ability to give eternal life to "those who believe." Cf Mt 22:32. (TLSB)

*Savior of all*. Obviously this does not mean that every person will be saved from eternal punishment, for such universalism would contradict the clear testimony of Scripture. God is, however, the Savior of all in that he offers salvation to all and all believers will be saved. (CSB)

Jesus is the Savior of all because He "desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2:4). His sacrificial death as the Lamb of God was for the reconciliation of the world (2Co 5:19), to take away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29). (TLSB)

*especially of those who believe*. Believers already enjoy the benefits of everlasting life. (TLSB)

**4:11** *these things*. Paul's teachings in vv 6–10. Paul used this phrase frequently in 1Tm (cf v 6; 5:7; 6:2). It usually refers to the teaching that immediately precedes it. (TLSB)

**4:12** *because you are young*. Timothy was probably in his mid-30s or younger, and in that day, such an influential position was not usually held by a man so young. For this reason, perhaps, his leadership had been called into question. (CSB)

In other contexts, the word refers to people in their 30s; Timothy's age is uncertain. In first-century Jewish culture, people were considered youth up to age 40. (TLSB)

*example*. By his exemplary conduct, Timothy would be able to silence those who might be inclined to despise him because of his youth. (TLSB)

**4:13** *Until I come*. Paul's journey had taken him from Ephesus to Macedonia, but he hoped to rejoin Timothy soon at Ephesus (3:14). (CSB)

A concise summary of the pastor's service: worship, preaching, and teaching. (TLSB)

*public reading*. Paul is not saying that Timothy himself must be the one to read the Scriptures in public worship, but that he should exercise care in which portions of the Scriptures were being publicly read in the Ephesian congregations. (TLSB)

*exhortation*. Words of admonishment and encouragement (Law and Gospel), based on publicly read portions of Scripture; preaching. (TLSB)

**4:14** *gift*. Gk *charisma*, a special gift of God's grace that enables the recipient to carry out a particular role or task in the congregation. Timothy's gift enabled him faithfully to fulfill the tasks of his ministry in Ephesus, summarized in vv 11 and 13. (TLSB)

*prophecy*. This denotes the proclamation of the Word when Timothy was publicly placed in his position as pastor, comparable to the ordination and/or installation of pastors today. (TLSB)

*council of elders*. God's gift to Timothy was mediated through the Church and her official representatives. (TLSB)

*laid their hands on you.* This visible act signaled Timothy's placement in the Office of the Holy Ministry, showing that his gift is to be used publicly on behalf of the congregation. "A most common custom of the Church also testifies to this. Formerly, the people elected pastors and bishops [Acts 14:23]. Then came a bishop, either of that church or a neighboring one, who confirmed the one elected by the laying on of hands [1 Timothy 4:14]. Ordination was nothing else than such a ratification" (Tr 70). (TLSB)

**4:15** *progress.* A reference to Timothy's future advancement in the faith (Php 1:25) or perhaps to the progress he has already made. (TLSB)

**4:16** *close watch.* Cf Gal 6:1. (TLSB)

*you will save ... your hearers.* God alone saves, but Christians can be God's instruments to bring about the salvation of others. (CSB)

God alone saves (v 10), but the NT often depicts human beings as instruments in His saving work. Cf 1Co 9:22; Jas 5:20; Jude 23. (TLSB)

*will save.* Salvation is both an event and a process. We are saved by God's grace at the time of conversion but are still being saved in the sense of being made more conformed to Christ's image (1Co 1:18). (CSB)

**4:6–16** Paul prepares Timothy to contend against the "teachings of demons" (v 1). Pastors are to command and teach true doctrine, while condemning doctrine that is false and deceitful. This runs counter to the spirit of the present age, which downplays the importance of true doctrine and avoids condemning all but the most extreme examples of false doctrine. The doctrines of Scripture are God-given, because He loves us. Each individual doctrine testifies to and supports the most important doctrine of all—that we are saved by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith. • Lord Jesus, bless Your Church with pastors who are wholly devoted to the teaching of Your Word in all its truth and purity, that by Your mighty power, many souls might be saved. Amen. (TLSB)