

Day 179, 1 Timothy 4

by David Servant

David Servant emphasizes the importance of self-discipline and guarding against demonic influences to maintain a strong faith in Christ.

Scripture: 1 Timothy 4:1-4, 1 Timothy 4:7, 1 Timothy 4:10

Topics: "False Teachings", "Christian Discipline"

Description

David Servant emphasizes the warning in Paul's words that some will fall away from the faith, indicating the possibility of drifting from belief in Christ. He highlights the influence of deceitful spirits and human agents used by demons to lead believers astray, cautioning against being swayed by false teachings and hypocritical liars. Servant underscores the importance of self-discipline for godliness, refuting the notion of solely relying on grace without personal effort. He challenges the idea of limited atonement, affirming Jesus as the Savior of all, especially believers, questioning the inconsistency of a doctrine that limits Christ's salvation.

Transcript

Paul's words, "In the later times some will fall away from the faith" (4:1), clearly indicate that it is possible to "fall away from the faith." In order to fall away from the faith, one must first be "in the faith." If I said, "Mr. Smith fell away from his belief in communism," that would indicate that Mr. Smith at one time believed in communism.

Moreover, Paul wrote that the reason some will fall away from the faith is because they pay attention to "deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons" (4:1). Those who were never in the faith in the first place have always been paying attention to demonic doctrines.

All this being so, we would be wise to guard ourselves from being influenced by anything that might pull us away from our faith in Christ. In reality, we need not concern ourselves with demons, but with the human agents whom those demons use to attempt to pull us away. Paul described them as hypocritical liars, "seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron" (4:2). They are, foremost, unholy, yet they are also hypocrites, preaching what they don't personally practice. Thus, in order for us to judge them, we must be able to observe and know them, which is essentially impossible in our age of media ministries and mega-churches. So even greater caution is advised! Beware of TV preachers!

Those demonic human agents who deceive the unsuspecting may appear to be quite committed in their devotion to Christ. Paul mentions that some may "forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods" (4:3), impressing their followers with the self-denial which they advocate or even practice. Self-denial is, of course, the essence of following Christ. We should beware, however, of those who deny themselves what God intended for us to enjoy, such as food (4:3), yet indulge in that from which God intended us to abstain.

I feel I must mention that when Paul wrote this letter to Timothy, there was basically no such thing as processed food. Sugar and white flour, for example, were unheard of. People ate food that God created in its natural form, not food that man had stripped of its God-given nutrients and then chemically altered. Junk food is not what Paul had in mind when he wrote, "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" (4:4-5). Try praying, "Lord, bless this poison," and see how He answers!

"Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness" (4:7). Both experience and Scripture teach us that if we want to be godly, self-discipline is required. Holy people are holy because they want to be holy, and they take action to reach their goal, just as physically fit people are fit because they want to be physically fit, and they take action to reach their goal. Imagine a coach exhorting his team, "This season, we are not going to work out or practice, lest we foolishly try to get in shape in our own strength, and rob God of glory! This season we are simply going to 'Let go and let God!' This isn't about 'works' or self-effort, which would doom us to failure. No, this is all about grace!"

Sounds ludicrous, doesn't it? Yet we've probably all heard sermons about holiness that parallel similar logic.

"But I'm just not a self-disciplined person!" some claim as their excuse. The real problem is with desire. If we want something enough, we will do what it takes to get it. So Paul admonished Timothy to "take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all" (4:15).

Jesus "is the Savior of all men, especially of believers" (4:10). Why then do Calvinists claim that Jesus only died for a limited number of people whom God allegedly pre-selected for salvation? If that were true, how is Jesus in any sense, as Paul says, the Savior of unbelievers---for whom He supposedly did not die---those unfortunate folks allegedly destined from eternity for damnation?

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