

8,13,26 1 Tim. 4:1-16, It Is God Who Gives the Increase

When we remember that the first part of this chapter was something prophesied about our generation 2000 years ago, our goal would be to see how this would be applied now – in other words, what’s happening in the “Church” of 2026 that matches what Paul is warning about? Here’s vs’s 1-5;

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, 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. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

First, let’s clarify what some of the phrases mean. We’ve seen in past studies that having a definite article in front of the word “faith” means Paul is referring to the *object* of faith rather than the *act of believing* – in this context the object is the doctrine Paul committed to Timothy to safeguard. And a “seared conscience” means a deadened conscience – a conscience no longer able to identify or affect our decisions about good and bad, right and wrong.

From there Paul cites two specific (and somewhat unusual) doctrinal lies that would exist at the end of the Age:

- 1) Forbidding to marry
- 2) Abstaining from certain foods

The first one is obvious, and as an example, Catholicism mandates this for their priests, which is ironic considering that Peter, their so-called “rock” and “1<sup>st</sup>. Pope”, was married.

The second refers to abstaining in the context of a religious obligation; not as in “fasting” but as in avoiding a specific selection of foods, believing that doing so will make us more “spiritual”. So, then the question comes in – since we are in the last days, where do we see these things happening?

Deadened consciences result in 'lawlessness' and in 'doctrines of demons' which are so numerous, it would take too long to list them.

But as to the marriage and food issues, the more famous contemporary examples would be Catholicism, 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventists, Judaism, and movements that believe vegetarianism or veganism is evidence of spirituality. The bottom-line is that all of these (and I'm sure, more) attach works to either salvation or spiritual growth, or both.

The Gospel of salvation by grace through faith alone is always the target of demonic doctrines, and if it's not always something obvious like the ones listed here, it comes in more subtle forms like Calvinism, Reformed Theology, the Health and Prosperity movements, and the Charismatics who attach experiences and signs to spirituality.

Paul is warning us, through Timothy, to hold fast to the Truth that the Lord gave him and go Berean on everything that presents itself as the true Christian life.

You'll notice in vs. 4 that we can eat whatever we want – the issue for us would be health, not religious obligations;

For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

Then Paul begins to expand these things in our next section (vs's 6-11);

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. But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. 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. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. For to this end, we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. These things command and teach.

This section begins and ends with a very strong exhortation to not only teach what Paul is writing to Timothy, but also to “command” the obedience of those who hear him. We know Paul is “grace oriented” and that only Christ can do anything perfectly, but the reason Paul takes this approach is because of the *seriousness* of the dangers we face. These things aren’t something we should just (quote) “seriously consider” in relation to spiritual life, they are literally life and death issues.

We have to do everything we can to understand what the specifics of the dangers are and then we have to avoid them like the plague. Paul isn’t being legalistic or overly dramatic, it’s like Paul wrote in Acts 20:31; “. . . remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.” That’s not legalism, that’s love.

If I personally wax dogmatic about something, my motivation is to protect. I can’t do anything about those who think I’m over-reacting or riding a hobby horse about things that don’t seem that crucial. All I can say is that Paul felt that these things, especially as related to *our* generation, were extremely dangerous and subtle, and that if we take them lightly or if we only understand them superficially, we risk a great deal when it comes to spiritual life and growth.

In the section we just read, Paul repeats his warning about “fables” which, like we’ve seen before, just refers to any story or teaching that is false. In Paul’s letters to Timothy, it would refer to false doctrine. We may disagree with other believers on a number of things Biblically that we don’t need to worry about, and we saw some of those in Romans 14 when we studied that chapter. But the essentials are essential, and the impact they have on our spiritual lives is immense. If we are off on those, we are in a place where the danger to us is very real.

As Paul said in vs. 6, “. . . nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine.” The word for “nourish” (*entrephō*) means; “In a positive way, to form and educate the mind”. We’d die without the nourishment of safe food. And in the spiritual realm, we stagnate and die without sound doctrine “forming” a mindset or world view that matches God’s.

Stagnation or spiritual death doesn't necessarily mean we're the type who doesn't hear something taught each week or that we don't learn things in our personal study. It doesn't mean we aren't being busy Christians, helping the Church and trying to reach the lost. It just means that our minds are being formed or shaped by a type of education that is not what will take us to spiritual maturity or give us the discernment we need to survive the most deceptively powerful generation in this entire Age.

So, even though 'bodily exercise' (just trying to stay healthy physically) is a good idea; it's nothing compared to the time we need to put into spiritual exercise (AKA, "godliness" – the forming or shaping of the image of Christ in us), which is valuable for both this life and for that which is to come. And Paul adds something we must never forget – something that is going to be difficult and each step we take will be opposed; vs. 10-11, "... to this end (with this goal in mind) we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God."

We saw in a previous study that Timothy died as a martyr; he was beaten to death by a crowd of people who were enraged because Timothy told them it was blasphemous to worship any God but Christ. But the courage and determination we see in Timothy in his death is not the Timothy we see in most of his younger life. He had to learn, over time, that faithfulness to the Lord would be much costlier than he, by temperament, was willing to embrace. Here's some comments by author Steven Cole that shows us another side of Timothy and Cole applies this to all of us, regardless of our own personality;

William Carey, often called the father of modern missions, was a shoe cobbler by trade before he went to India. He kept a map of India in his shop, stopping every so often to study and pray over it. Sometimes, because of his preaching ministry, his shoe business suffered. One day a friend admonished him for neglecting his business. "Neglecting my business?" said Carey, looking at him intently. "My business is to extend the kingdom of God. I only cobble shoes to pay expenses." No matter what your occupation, every Christian should have Carey's mentality: "My real business is to extend God's kingdom; I just work to pay expenses." In other words, every Christian is in

the ministry. If you are a saint, then you're in the ministry! Some, who labor in study and teaching, may be financially supported by those they teach. But every Christian, like William Carey, should see their *main* business as serving God. Since that is the clear teaching of the New Testament, it ought to be of great concern to every Christian to know how to fulfill the ministry God has entrusted to him or her. It seems as if there are droves who are either burning out on ministry because they are exhausted, or bombing out because of moral failure. Timothy's danger was that he would just fade out because his timid personality had a tendency to want to avoid conflict. He was neither courageous or hard-working by nature. But you can't preach God's truth without confronting error and offending some people. So, Timothy was in danger of neglecting his ministry (1 Tim. 4:14). Maybe some of you are like Timothy; you are timid, tired, burned out or bombed out, or just faded out. Frankly, ministry is battle, and who likes war? The tendency of the flesh is to let someone else do it, especially if it's a hassle. Many of Paul's exhortations to Timothy related to not giving up. We can tell by the way Timothy's life ended that his timidity and potential slothfulness was eventually overcome by the steady formation of Christ in him as he remained steadfast in prayer and sound, nourishing doctrine.

One other example of this mindset is seen in something I shared a few years ago when we studied this principle in another epistle;

The Moravian missionaries under Zinzendorf did assert that they were willing to become slaves if it was the only way to reach the slaves. Many sources claim that they actually followed through, sold themselves, boarded a ship, and were never heard from again. In fact, after being sent out by Count Nicolaus Ludwig Zinzendorf, he and Nitschmann traveled from Herrnhut to Copenhagen, Denmark, where their plan initially met with strong opposition. When asked by a court official how they would support themselves, Nitschmann replied, "We shall work as slaves among the slaves." "But," said the official, "that is impossible. It will not be allowed. No white man ever works as a slave." "Very well," replied Nitschmann, "I am a carpenter, and will ply my trade." After some difficulty, the missionaries found support from the

Danish Queen and her court, and although the Danish West Indian Company refused to grant them passage, a ship was eventually procured. Leaving Copenhagen on Oct 8, 1732, they arrived in St. Thomas two months later on December 13. While in the St. Thomas, they lived frugally and preached to the slaves.”

Bottom-line is that there is hope for all of us in spite of who and what we are, if we heed Paul’s warnings and remain steadfast in prayer and sound teaching. If we (as Paul puts it) “trust in the living God”, we will suffer reproach and we’ll probably want to give up a million times throughout our journey. But like Timothy, our temperament doesn’t have to ultimately define us.

I want to spend a little time on that because we need to be able to determine how the Lord measures success and failure, and understand as best as possible how completely opposite His standards are than the way the world looks at this. When, in Isa. 55:8 God said “My ways are not your ways, and my thoughts are not your thoughts” it wasn’t an exaggeration. The mind of the natural man regarding these things is not even close.

Before we look at the temperament or personality issues, I’ll share the following comments by George Peck from his book, “Throne Life” which was written in 1881;

The fallacy in the faith of many is the common one of mistaking an intellectual apprehension of spiritual truth for a spiritual apprehension of it. Such fallacious faith has the shine and appearance of reality, but is like veneering and varnish, being surface, but not substance.

This is an age of cheapness. Get it as cheaply and as quickly as you can, with little cost and tiresomeness. "Get it quickly: get it easily." That thought governs the whole world system. It is that way in your kitchen, your household affairs, and in every other realm. What is true in the secular has now become very largely true in the spiritual. The standards have been terribly lowered. Bigness has become equated with greatness. Greatness, in the true meaning of the word, is no longer considered. Now, whatever is biggest, whatever is most popular- that is the most successful, but this is

absolutely contrary to the Bible. Easiness, lightness, glamorousness, excitement, emotion: this is the order of our day. This has come into Christianity.

I'm glad that there is a determined outreach in segments of the Church for reality. They are tired of unreality, (at least they were in 1881). That is a very good thing indeed if only they *find* reality and do not go in for the substitutes that are being retailed so lavishly, the substitutes which seem to be real, but are an illusion. There is a need of a recovery or reappraisal of the true nature of that into which we have come when we have come into Christ.... Paul opens a window and just gives us a glimpse in that letter to the Philippians when he says, "...Who, existing in the form of God." A long way back before anything else was this One to Whom we have come; and in the terms of fellowship, we are "called into the fellowship" of God's Son.... We have not come into some small, light, frivolous thing. We may joyfully sing our choruses and so on, but remember, this is no cheap thing. This is no small thing. This is no easy thing. This is a thing which embraces the universe, and we are called into that fellowship. I pray that you may have a new glimpse of the wonder of the One Whom we love and Whom we call Savior and Lord.

As Peck pointed out in his story, if we truly want to understand what God considers precious and what He considers real and true, we can't look at things through the lens of the world's view of life.

God only raises those to the throne who are first in the dust. The throne is accessed only through the Cross. The least will be the greatest; the meek inherit the earth, it will be humility and the knowledge of our poverty of spirit (the "poor in spirit") that will secure kingship in the coming Age. Pride, which often characterizes the greatest in our world, will be banished from God's world as the worst of all sins. June was "Pride Month" – I'm sure the enemy helped name a time when open rebellion against God (Sodomy) would be honored worldwide.

(Phil. 2:3-4) Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

The word “lowliness” or “humility” literally refers to (quote)

. . . humiliation of mind, the quality of unpretentious behavior, unassuming in the estimation of one’s abilities and totally without arrogance. The word indicates the esteeming one’s self as small and recognizing one’s insufficiency.

Barclay described lowliness as the “gem of all the virtues”. I think it’s because it moves us out of the way so Christ can come through. One lexicon, quoting Edwards, added something important on this in terms of practice;

True humility is not putting ourselves down, but rather lifting others up. If we concentrate on lifting up others, putting down ourselves will take care of itself. As we go through life exalting Christ and others, then genuine humility will be inevitable. If we exalt ourselves then God will take care of our humiliation, for He promises to humble the proud. It is much less painful to do it the first way.

Or, as Andrew Murray put it; “The humble person is not one who thinks badly of himself; he simply does not think of himself at all.”

The ultimate example of the principle behind this is the Incarnation, and Paul’s introduction to this in Phil. 2:5 is “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus”. If we can understand the mind and thoughts of the Son of God living the reality of true humility, we can have an idea of why the throne, God’s greatest bestowed honor, is accessed only through the Cross. Then Paul follows this with a description of the event itself;

(Phil. 2:5-8) Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. Who, being in the form of God, did not consider being equal with God something to be held onto, but made Himself of no reputation (literally, “emptied Himself”), taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the (exact) likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled

Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore, God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

There are mysteries about the Incarnation that we probably won't understand until we see Him face to face. But there are things we *can* understand in terms of showing us what the Lord was willing to do and how that applies to us.

As I mentioned before, the key verse for us in terms of personal application is vs. 5, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

In the Incarnation, God became Man and lived among us (John 1:14). In the beginning, God created Man in His image, but that image was shattered through sin. In Heb. 1:3 we learned that Jesus, as Son of Man, was the exact, expressed image of God in human flesh. Everything we see in Christ is God's ideal for the ultimate nature and essence of mankind in perfection.

The reason I stress this, is because what we see in Jesus in the Incarnation is what God has intended to be characteristic of us also. Commenting on vs. 8, which says, "He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death", C. G. Moule wrote;

"Jesus' self-giving humility is the essence of divinity in human expression. Anything and everything we could ever discover about the nature of God is expressed in Christ; and the foundation of that nature and expression is humility; the exact opposite of man's current nature and the nature of Satan."

Vs. 7 shows what the implications of true humility are in our relationship with God; "(He) made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant." The word used for bondservant is *doulos*, which means "a slave"; one who is the property of someone else; he is not his own.

Jesus' relationship with His Father is what our relationship to Him is meant to be. (1 Cor. 6:19-20) “. . . you are not your own for you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.”

Again, from Moule,

Slavery would deny a person the right to anything, even to his own life and person. Jesus so completely stripped Himself of all rights and securities as to be comparable to a slave, absolute and extreme self-emptying, even of basic human rights.

And because He did so perfectly, He is now exalted to the highest position possible in Heaven; more than anyone else, He perfectly expressed the nature of God in His life on earth.

This is what will distinguish us when we get to Heaven; those most emptied, will be those most exalted; (again, the least will be the greatest); because that which pleases God most, is His ability to see Himself reproduced in a man or woman – to see His image, and specifically His humility, lived out in His creation.

From Moule again, “Self-sacrifice toward one another is the most God-like thing you can do.”

Ok, that's the principle introduced in 1 Tim. 4 when Paul writes about “godly” exercise – to become like the Lord in our essential reflection of His image. Nothing clarifies that more than the full meaning of the Incarnation. Like Jesus said, “If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father” because in Christ, in the Cross, we see the ways of God- His mind, His love, His nature. This is simply Who He is.

Then Paul adds an interesting phrase in vs. 11, “Who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. These things command and teach.”

Paul is stressing two important truths in one statement. First, the salvation Christ provided is offered to “all men”, but it is only effective for “those who believe”. They are the “especiallys” as the *fruit* of the sufferings of Christ. Again, unlike Calvinism, we believe that even though not all will receive Him, Christ died for

everyone. The sin issue is removed for all who have ever lived; only one thing keeps them from heaven – refusing to trust in Christ for their salvation.

There are two books opened at the final judgment – the book of life and the book of works. If their name isn't in the book of life, they never received eternal life; and if their works don't add up to the righteous standards and requirements of heavenly citizenship, they remain disqualified. Those of us who have trusted in the Lord have been given Eternal Life and we have had Christ's own righteousness imputed to our account. We're as safe as Christ is and all of this is by the mercy and grace of God.

Now, vs's 12-16 finalize Paul's instructions to Timothy in chapter 4;

Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. 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. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. 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.

First, chronological age is not a determinate of spiritual age. There are definitely advantages to having decades of experience walking with the Lord and the development of a solid study and prayer life, but the Lord is the only one who knows for sure who is, and who isn't, spiritually mature enough to represent Him to His people.

Since Timothy was timid by temperament, he would have a tendency to back away from confrontation even when he knew that what he was trying to communicate was true and needed. So, Paul puts the responsibility on Timothy to not allow others to ignore his message by trying to intimidate him.

If you know the truth, tell the truth. It's not an issue of feeling the need to correct everyone over everything; but in instances where God has shown you something extremely important; something that is needed for someone to hear, don't hold

back because of fear or because of a selfish desire to be a people-pleaser. Our accountability isn't to others; it's to the Lord. Some will believe us; some won't, but we will still give account to the Lord regardless of other people's response to us.

We discussed that when studied the "... innocent of the blood of all men" comment Paul made in Acts 20:26-27, "I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not neglected to declare to you the whole counsel of God" (which Paul drew from Ezek. 3:17-21). If you want to refresh your memory about our responsibility before the Lord to tell others what He wants us to tell them, and the consequences of neglecting that responsibility, you can read through Ezek. chapter 3 to see how that warning is laid out.

So, Paul tells Timothy not to let anyone "despise his youth" – in other words, men older than Timothy might look down on him since he's younger chronologically, but Paul knew Timothy well enough to know that he had gained a great deal of knowledge that even older men would benefit from if they weren't biased against him because of his youth.

We obviously have to be careful with this. We often think we know more than others, even older others, just because we've learned something that amazed us. And we *might* know more, but showing respect to those older than us in the way we approach our relationship with them is always a wise move.

There's a tendency among young people to assume old people are backward and are not 'caught up' with the current flow of knowledge. That might be true in many cases, but there's a reason the Lord required elders to be "seasoned" before they were given that position. Anyone who has grown steadily over the years is going to have greater depth spiritually than those who just got off the boat (so to speak). One of the biggest dangers in this is the natural tendency of pride in the younger man versus humility in the older man who has experienced enough personal failure over time to be less likely to think he's a walking Bible encyclopedia. Failure and suffering tend to produce humility and God only gives grace to the humble – He resists the proud (Jas. 4:6).

God teaches the teachable; He blinds the unteachable. Timothy just happened to be one of those men who, even though he was fairly young, had been broken and brought to a place of teachability, so he had something to offer people of all ages, and he was being exhorted by Paul to give that something to them.

But Paul made sure Timothy knew that any platform he would have that would give him a hearing would have to be built on a very specific foundation, or he'd fail before he even began. That was vs 12 "... be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Until I come, give attention to *reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.*"

These things have to characterize someone who claims to have important knowledge or wisdom from God. They don't have to be perfect, but we all know that we are more likely to listen to someone we respect than to someone we either don't respect, or someone we don't know anything about. That's another advantage of the small group setting of the early church's fellowship; everyone knew at least a little about all their leaders. In the mega-setting, we can get a feel or a sense for the man on stage, and that *might* be sufficient to give us a degree of confidence in him, but it helps to have much more than a superficial knowledge of what he's like when he's off-stage.

Like I said, we aren't looking for perfection or awesomeness, we are looking for someone who is authentic, broken and one who has a genuine love for the Lord and for the scriptures. Remember how Paul came to the Corinthian church for the first time;

(1 Cor. 2:1-5) When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or impressive human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with an expression of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.

When people who were open and willing to listen heard Paul speak, they didn't walk away impressed with Paul. Paul was unattractive physically, just as Jesus was according to Isa. 53:2; Paul had a high-squeaky voice and worst of all, he was bald. When those who listened to Paul went home, they left with a greater understanding of, and appreciation for, Paul's Savior. Paul decreased; Christ increased. That was Paul's goal; he wasn't trying impress or please anyone; he was trying to be a vessel available to God; someone through whom the Lord could express himself.

I won't take off on why God knew it would be necessary to form what would eventually become an unattractive body in the womb of Mary, but I *would* guess that our Savior's eyes (the windows of the soul) must have been unimaginably captivating.

Ok, finally, in this last section Paul reminds Timothy (and us) of what it was that made Timothy so valuable to the Lord and to his Church.

... give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. 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. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save (literally, "deliver") both yourself and those who hear you.

Check the boxes;

Reading, exhortation and doctrine

Give yourself entirely to these things

Use the gift God gave you (involve yourselves in the lives of others, but let God decide what that involvement will look like)

And the result of this (which applies to all of us, if we do them);

Your progress will be evident to all (and) you will deliver both yourself and those you impact with what God gives you.

It's not long and complicated; it's simply the foundational spiritual exercises of the life of a disciple that result in deliverance from the deceptions of enemy and also evidential advancement and progress in spiritual advance.

God decides and provides the opportunities for each of us to 'check the boxes', so this life of study, prayer and service becomes our routine in however the Lord defines that for us. Paul described this way in 1 Cor. 3:6-7; "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase."

We can only do what we can with what we're given; and by faith we trust that God will give the increase. Our lives may be an outward storm and warfare, but they are also meant to be a life of openness and transparency to the Lord, and a life of restful expectation knowing that even in our deepest inadequacy, He will never leave us or forsake us.