

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

## Heresy Revealed

*1 Timothy 4:1-5*

**Keywords:** Creation, Legalism, Heresy, False Teaching, Apostasy, Freedom

**PowerPoint Presentation included:** NONE

**SermonAudio Blurb:**

## Dismiss

### I. Introduction.

- A. Last week we learned that the Church is the present day incarnation of Jesus to the world.
  - 1. The church is described as the church of the living God.
  - 2. And the pillar and support of truth.
  - 3. That truth is then defined as the person of Jesus Christ.
  - 4. And it is in Jesus that the mystery of godliness is found.
- B. This is important to remember because seldom will you hear a person describe the secret of godliness to be Jesus.
- C. And that is at the heart of today's message (read 1 Timothy 4:1-5).
  - 1. What you have here is a very revealing passage that is as helpful today as it was in the day it was first read to the church at Ephesus.
  - 2. It speaks to the battle for truth, and how the enemies of truth fight against it.
  - 3. Remember again, at the core of truth is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Take out Jesus and you lose truth. And that is what is happening in Ephesus, and what is happening in America.
- D. Today we will learn how the gospel is attacked in the church and how we are to fight against it. We will do this by asking three questions related to heresy.
  - 1. Where does heresy come from? (1)
  - 2. What are marks of heresy? (2-3)
  - 3. What is the antidote to heresy (4-5)

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- E. Heresy is simply false teaching that claims to be true. And at its core it is an attack against the glory of God and the sufficiency and power of the gospel to save mankind. It comes in many shapes and colors, but at its core it is an attack against Jesus.
- F. Notice by way of introduction how vs 1 starts out:
1. “But the Spirit explicitly says . . . .”
    - a. When this prophesy happened is unknown specifically.
    - b. However, Jesus spoke of it clearly in "And at that time **many** will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. And **many** false prophets will arise, and will mislead **many**. And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved.” (Mat 24:10-13 NAS)
    - c. Paul warned the elders of Ephesus of this in “I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.” (Act 20:29-30 NAS)
    - d. No Christian should ever be surprised at the constant pressing in of false teaching. Saddened? Yes. Surprised? No.
    - e. The Ephesian church itself had witnessed the shipwrecking of the faith of Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Timothy 1:19-20).
    - f. Therefore, there is no excuse for the leaders of a church to not be vigilant, knowing that this is the common tactic of Satan. No tolerance is to be given to anyone who seeks to teach falsely.
    - g. This is one of the reasons why your elders refuse to allow people to teach at MDF without becoming a member. And why you should be very cautious being taught by anyone who rejects that standard.
  2. The time frame given that the Holy Spirit testified to is in “later times”
    - a. This is not something future but rather the days we live in now.
    - b. It was inaugurated with the incarnation of Jesus and continues until He returns.
    - c. Peter spoke of the outpouring of the Spirit in the last days in Acts 2.

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- d. In Hebrews 1:2 we find that in these last days God spoke through His Son.
- e. So when you read about this happening in the last days, understand that biblically that is a very long period of time.

## **II. Three Questions regarding Heresy in The Church.**

- A. Where does heresy come from? (1)
  - 1. The reality is that this is spiritual warfare. The real kind rather than the silly things you see on tv and hear about at some many supposed revivals.
  - 2. And that battle is regarding truth.
  - 3. Demonic influences is very real within any church.
    - a. Two common errors related to the doctrine of demons.
      - (1) The first is to give Satan greater power than he really has. To blame all sickness, unpleasant events, or even our own sin upon Satanic activity is to contradict the bible and to give him too much due.
      - (2) The second error is to diminish him and his power to the point that he doesn't exist in any real way.
    - b. Ephesians 6:12 is clear, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places." (Eph 6:12 NAS)
    - c. 2 Corinthians 4:4; 11:3, 13-14.
    - d. James 3:14ff gives us a glimpse of how the presence of Satan's wiles are found in our lives and in the church. Notice how this flows right into chapter 4 and how our prayers are affected and how it moves us toward apostasy (adulteresses) and enmity with God..
  - 4. There is no real differentiation between deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons. Same reality with a slightly different emphasis.
  - 5. Notice how the people give "attention" (devote esv) to these things.
    - a. It is not the casual hearing but the careful attention paid to false doctrine.

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- b. That is how you fall away from faith in Jesus. You begin to listen to other voices.
  - c. An illustration of this is how a person can walk away from a marriage after so many years. The person finds an old friend on FB, they start to joke and reminisce. After a bit a message or two is sent sharing more personal things. Before long a heart is given to another who has no right to it. A private meeting just to see each other after so much time. And so it goes.
  - d. I cannot count how many times I have warned men and women from conversations with people I know are dangerous, holding to deadly doctrines. But what I am amazed to watch is how many of them will ignore that counsel and continue in those conversations and relationships.
6. We cannot diminish in influence of Satan.
- a. Jesus called Satan "a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44).
  - b. Paul tells us that we are not to be unaware of Satan's scheme and plottings (2co 2:11; Eph 6:11).
  - c. He is a worker of false miracles, signs and wonders (2th 2:9).
  - d. This deception is something he has done from the beginning. In Gen 3:1 he is lying about what God has actually said.
  - e. And even with Jesus in Matthew 4 we find him twisting the purpose of God's Word as he tempts Jesus Himself.
  - f. This is simply what he does. He takes truth and then changes it to suit his purposes it.
7. Notice then the result of allowing false teaching in the church and the lives of people—apostasy.
- a. Apostasy comes from bad theology, simple as that.
  - b. Show me a church that diminishes truth, waters it down, limits the depth of it and you will see a church ripe for a large scale apostasy.
  - c. Apostasy is simply the act of separating yourself from the living God after having previously turning toward Him.

# M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p

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- d. It is not an accident—you don't find yourself in the state of apostasy by surprise. And it is never by accident.
  - e. It is a willful act of rejection both by will and by action. Apostasy occurs when someone who once claimed to be a Christian has now renounced the gospel.
  - f. In our passage Paul calls the gospel "the faith."
- B. What are marks of heresy? (2-3)
- 1. First, through hypocrisy.
    - a. Though at the core, these false teachings are demonic, they eventually are disseminated via humans.
    - b. Paul describes them as hypocrites who have seared their own consciences and now are pressing others to follow suit.
    - c. This hypocrisy is deadly to a tender conscience. It kills it.
      - (1) Conscience is something Paul speaks much of in this book 1:5, 19; 3:9. It speaks on one's self-awareness.
      - (2) Paul speaks of "the testimony of our conscience" (2co 1:12) It is a testimony given to oneself, and then passed on to others.
      - (3) Paul speaks again of a "Good conscience" in v. 19. He can speak of "a perfectly good conscience" (Acts 23:1) and a "blameless conscience" (Acts 24:16).
      - (4) The conscience is a gift from God, but is distorted through sin. As a result it can be "weak" through immaturity (1co 8:7), wounded through wrong (1co 8:12), "defiled" by sin (Titus 1:15), and, as here, "seared" to the point of insensitivity by embracing falsehood.
      - (5) This is something that a person does to himself, note the "own" in vs 2.
        - (a) Our conscience is a gift and it is to be guarded, strengthened and treasured.

# M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p

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- (b) To entertain false teaching is only to put your soul at risk, and the longer that you flirt with it the greater the chance of apostasy.
  - d. Key passage is Jeremiah 23:9-28.
  - e. This charge of hypocrisy was a common one from our Lord to the Pharisees.
    - (1) The holy external appearances only hid the filth that was in their motives and intentions.
    - (2) They were lovers of self, lovers of money, lovers of power and of recognition.
    - (3) They were described a graves that was painted white on the outside, but on the inside was filled with every foul thing death brings to the body.
  - f. The false teacher and those who then take hold of that false teaching ultimately are hypocrites.
    - (1) They are not standing on the truth anymore. That truth is Jesus Christ.
    - (2) They are standing in their own devices and standards, and they have become a law unto themselves.
    - (3) The problem is that no man can keep the law. And they become a hypocrite as a result.
2. Second, through moralism.
- a. The things listed are probably not the only things taught, but they reflect the idea and the emphasis that these false teachers were bringing.
  - b. It is nothing less than the deadly lie of moralism.
  - c. Moralism is a lie that puts nice acting people into hell.
    - (1) Shall a pleasant husband and wife be under any less of God's condemnation that a homosexual couple? Shall a police officer faithfully carrying out his duties be found less guilty before God than a child molester?

# M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p

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- (2) The moralist in each of us tends to want to say yes, but the bible says the opposite. It is utterly devastating in the lives of Christians because moralism destroys the gospel message.
- d. Moralism is another way of describing legalism.
- (1) Such a common term that is misunderstood by so many.
  - (2) Moralism in the church is the process of taking biblical standards of living as regulations we are to obey to gain favor from God.
  - (3) It is anti-gospel because it sees the ability to obey and the ability to please God as resident in their own strength rather than the mercy of God.
  - (4) The moralist does not understand this. They can see the sin of the immoral man a mile off.

Piper says it well, “. . . morality serves the same function that immorality does for the antinomian, the free-thinker, the progressive, namely, it serves as an expression of self-reliance and self-assertion. The reason some Pharisees tithed and fasted is the same reason some German university students take off their clothes and lie around naked in the park in downtown Munich. The moral legalist is always the elder brother of the immoral prodigal. They are blood brothers in God's sight because both reject the sovereign mercy of God in Christ as a means to righteousness and use either morality or immorality as a means of expressing their independence and self-sufficiency and self-determination.” (<http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/flesh-tank-and-peashooter-regulations>)

- e. A moralist emphasizes right behavior but it is not first and foremost concerned with the heart motive.
- f. The behavior is simply demanded and it is not out of faith, believing that it is honoring to God.
- g. But more importantly, the moralist is not rightly viewing himself.
- (1) When you are gospel-centered then you understand that you cannot view yourself as superior over anyone.
  - (2) You, yes you, are the chief of sinners. In your heart lies the fullness of wickedness. You know that only by the grace of

# M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p

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God you have been saved and that you live anything  
remotely honoring to God.

- (3) The gospel drives you to see yourself as incredibly needy of God's continuing grace.
- h. And this is why the hypocrisy of the moralist is something to be decried and rejected.
  - (1) The gospel is the mystery of godliness (3:16). And that gospel is Jesus himself.
  - (2) And so godliness begins and ends with Jesus, our savior, our sin-bearer, and our Lord. The gospel moves us toward a ministry of reconciliation.
  - (3) We are not to be known as denouncers of people, but rather we are to be kind, gentle, and patient. Pointing people to Jesus rather than our own good works or theirs.
3. Third, through diminishing a thankful heart.
  - a. Notice that God gave these things for a purpose. What is it? [To be gratefully shared in.]
  - b. God has given use good things, how much we will see in a moment.
    - (1) But right now it is key to grasp that what a legalistic teaching does is diminish the goodness of God and His gifts.
    - (2) It is funny how this works.
    - (3) I find this true in my premarital counseling over the years as well as marriage counseling. How often the sexual aspect of the marriage is a topic at best whispered and often avoided. It is something that is desired, and yet it is something that they often feel they should be embarrassed over. And so a messed up, twisting of their hearts occur. They struggle over realizing it is a good and glorious gift of God and that he invites them to take up and delight in with thanksgiving to Him. That the act itself becomes worship

# M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p

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as it is done with the remembrance that God has given it to the couple for their joy.

- (4) This is how a cheeseburger is eaten to the glory of God, when you give thanks for it, knowing that it is a gift of your Lord. This is how a fishing trip becomes a time of worship. And how the planting of flowers becomes a time to delight in the mercies of God.

G.K Chesterton, a number of years ago wrote,

You say grace before meals. All right.  
But I say grace before the play and the opera,  
And grace before the concert and the pantomime,  
And grace before I open a book,  
And grace before sketching, painting,  
Swimming, fencing, boxing, walking, playing, dancing;  
And grace before I dip the pen in the ink...

- c. The Christian should be marked by a life of thanksgiving, seeing the multitude of blessings as gifts to be enjoyed and shared.
- d. The false teacher does one of two things. Either makes the thing be an end in itself, forgetting God as the giver of all things. Or, calls what God made as good to be evil and abstained from.
- C. What is the antidote to heresy (4-5)
1. Truth is the antidote. Always and ever it is truth. I want to make some simple but far-reaching observations in this section:
2. First, note that if it was created by God then it is good.
- a. This is not something you and I can debate legitimately.
- b. God has declared His creation both on a macro level and on a micro level as very good.
- c. Therefore, we are corrupting God's word to call something in itself as bad, or evil.
- d. Think about what is going on in this passage.

# M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p

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- (1) The false teachers are saying that marriage is bad, that certain food is bad, etc.
  - (2) But God is saying the exact opposite.
  - (3) So the false teachers are doing what their father Satan always does, setting their own teaching as truth rather than God's word.
- e. Let me make one point here to help protect against us going too far to the other side that we fall into sin and false thinking.
- (1) God is the one who created all things, and therefore God is the one who defines how these things are to be used.
  - (2) The gift of sex is given within the realm of marriage and only marriage. It is defined as good only when it is between a husband and a wife.
  - (3) Food is a gift.
    - (a) We are to eat it as a gift.
    - (b) But gluttony is as great a sin as anorexia. Both are not receiving food as it is intended.
  - (4) Alcohol is a gift of God. Drunkenness is not.
  - (5) The list can go on and on, but realize that all things created are still under the Lordship of Jesus and we are to honor Him is using and enjoying them properly.
3. Second, nothing is to be rejected by us.
- a. We need to see that we live in a creation and we live in it as creatures.
  - b. Here we see that there is no such thing as secular vs sacred. Everything is sacred.
  - c. We must learn to see the massive number of gifts given to us by our Creator and receive them willingly.
4. Key qualifier—"if received with thanksgiving."
- a. Gratitude is a key ingredient to all of this.

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- b. Can you give thanks for it?
- c. If not, why?
  - (1) Here is a place where you need to become brutally honest with yourself before the Lord.
  - (2) Can you give thanks that others receive it with thanksgiving even if you don't?
5. All things become holy when two things are present:
  - a. Word of God and prayer.
  - b. What is meant by this is that as we receive something, food, drink, clothes or otherwise, we give thanks to God.
    - (1) This is the prayer.
    - (2) And the Word of God declares it to be good. We believe what God has declared about His creation.

### **III. Conclusion.**

- A. We cannot tolerate false teaching.
- B. But we do this best when we cling to the gospel of Jesus Christ.
  1. When we remember that we are sinners saved by God's rich grace.
  2. When we remember that we are creatures living in God's creation.
  3. And therefore when we are men and women filled with a thankful heart for all the good gifts given to us.
  4. And when we then invite others to come to Jesus that they might finally be free to delight fully in the creator of all things.

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## Small Group Questions

- What are common teachings that people begin to hold to when they fall into apostasy?
- What are ways that the hypocrisy of moralism can infect your group and personal lives?
- What is the difference between self-control and legalism/moralism?