

## THE GREAT DEPARTURE

Text: 1 Timothy 4:1-5.

Delivered on: October 14, 2012. Streetsboro.

- I. THE DEPARTURE PREDICTED. 1 Timothy 4:1-2.** Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, **2** speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,
- A. The first word of verse 1, “Now” tells us that this thought is connected to the previous thought.
1. Paul had just finished discussing the “mystery of godliness.”
  2. The mystery of godliness is just another term for God’s scheme of redemption.
- B. Now Paul says that the Spirit has predicted that some would depart from the faith.
1. “The Spirit expressly says...”
    - a) This was a revelation from God Himself.
    - b) **John 16:13.** However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.
    - c) **Galatians 1:11-12.** But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. **12** For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.
    - d) **1 Thessalonians 2:13.** For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.
  2. “In the latter times...”
    - a) At some point in the future.
    - b) As we are going to see, this departure has already occurred.
  3. “Some will depart from the faith...”
    - a) By implication, we see that it is POSSIBLE to depart from the faith.
    - b) We have numerous examples of individuals departing from the faith. **1 Timothy 1:19-20.** Having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, **20** of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.
    - c) This prediction of “some” departing from the faith has to be referring to more than just some individuals.
    - d) It is talking about a “movement” or a “Great departure” from the faith.
- C. The cause of the departure...
1. Some would give heed to deceiving spirits.
    - a) Not talking about literal spirits.
    - b) These “spirits” ... “forbid” and “command” - we are talking about religious leaders.
    - c) They speak lies in hypocrisy.
      - (1) Some religious leaders would (and still do) speak lies.
      - (2) **Acts 20:29-30.** For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. **30** Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.
    - d) They have their conscience seared.
      - (1) Just as scar tissue from a burn loses it’s feeling, their conscience no longer functions as a reliable guide for them.
      - (2) Their wickedness would not bother them.
      - (3) We still have people like this in the world today.
  2. The teachings of these deceiving spirits are called “doctrines of demons.”
    - a) Doctrine - teaching.

- b) Some teaching is good and healthy. *1 Timothy 4:6*. 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.
- c) Some will cause you to lose your salvation.

## II. THE DEPARTURE DEPICTED. *1 Timothy 4:3a*. Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods...

- A. The Spirit gives two identifying characteristics of this great departure.
  - 1. From these two identifying characteristics, we can pinpoint when this departure took place.
  - 2. Quite frankly, the answer was shocking when I first learned it.
- B. These deceiving spirits would forbid to marry.
  - 1. Some have come to the conclusion that to remain unmarried is a holier life.
  - 2. In part, this is from a misapplication of Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 7.
    - a) *1 Corinthians 7:1*. Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.
    - b) *1 Corinthians 7:8*. But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am;
    - c) *1 Corinthians 7:32-33*. But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord. **33** But he who is married cares about the things of the world—how he may please his wife.
  - 3. As a result, for example, the Catholic church has, for hundreds of years, forbidden priests to marry.
    - a) Council of Elvira (c. 305) (Canon 33): It is decided that marriage be altogether prohibited to bishops, priests, and deacons, or to all clerics placed in the ministry, and that they keep away from their wives and not beget children; whoever does this, shall be deprived of the honor of the clerical office.
    - b) Council of Carthage (390) (Canon 3): It is fitting that the holy bishops and priests of God as well as the Levites, i.e. those who are in the service of the divine sacraments, observe perfect continence, so that they may obtain in all simplicity what they are asking from God; what the Apostles taught and what antiquity itself observed, let us also endeavour to keep... It pleases us all that bishop, priest and deacon, guardians of purity, abstain from conjugal intercourse with their wives, so that those who serve at the altar may keep a perfect chastity.
- C. The deceiving spirits would command to abstain from certain foods.
  - 1. Again, the Catholic church has done this throughout much of its history.
  - 2. The new Code of Canon Law brought out in 1983 says about the matter: Canon 1251 Abstinence from meat, or from some other food as determined by the Episcopal Conference, is to be observed on all Fridays, unless a solemnity should fall on a Friday. Abstinence and fasting are to be observed on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. <http://www.catholic-pages.com/life/fridaymeat.asp>
  - 3. The current regulations concerning Lenten fasting and abstinence for Roman Catholics in the United States generally are as follows.
    - a) Abstinence from all meat is to be observed by all Roman Catholics 14 years old and older on Ash Wednesday, on all Fridays of Lent, and on Good Friday (which is not part of Lent, but rather part of the three day Paschal Triduum).
    - b) Fasting is to be observed on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday by all Roman Catholics who are 18 years of age but not yet 59.  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fasting\\_and\\_abstinence\\_in\\_the\\_Roman\\_Catholic\\_Church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fasting_and_abstinence_in_the_Roman_Catholic_Church)

## III. THE DEPARTURE CONTRADICTED. *1 Timothy 4:3b-5*. ...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 sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

- A. First of all, the scriptures teach that marriage is a good thing.
  - 1. It was instituted by God Himself. *Genesis 2:24*. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

2. **Hebrews 13:4.** Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.
  3. Furthermore, the Scriptures not only say that marriage is a good thing but they say that marriage is a requirement for one who would serve as a bishop. **1 Timothy 3:2.** A bishop then **must be blameless, the husband of one wife**, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach
  4. What about 1 Corinthians 7?
    - a) Paul was giving specific instructions to Christians in Corinth who were undergoing some kind of distress. **1 Corinthians 7:26.** I suppose therefore that this is good because of the present distress—that it is good for a man to remain as he is:
    - b) His instructions were not meant for all Christians of all times.
    - c) Notice that, even in these instructions, he made it clear that getting married would not be a sin.
      - (1) **1 Corinthians 7:2.** Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.
      - (2) **1 Corinthians 7:8-9.** But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am; **9** but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.
      - (3) **1 Corinthians 7:28.** But even if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Nevertheless such will have trouble in the flesh, but I would spare you.
    - d) The Catholic church takes these passages and argues that “clergy” must not marry; whereas, Paul was not writing to “clergy” but to all the saints in Corinth.
    - e) In a nutshell, he is saying, “It is better not to marry because of this present distress. However, if you marry you have not sinned; but be aware that your life will be more difficult as a married Christian.”
    - f) To take these passages and use them to enforce **mandatory** celibacy is a horrible distortion of the meaning of Paul’s words.
- B. Second, as to the commanding to abstain from eating certain foods...
1. Paul says that every creature is good and is to be received with thanksgiving.
  2. Any type of food is sanctified with God’s word and prayer.
  3. Fasting, in the Scriptures, is always a voluntary and very personal thing.
  4. Nowhere in Scriptures is anyone ever commanded to fast.
  5. To command such of anyone is sin.