

June 23, 2019

1 Timothy 4:1-13

Staying on Course

Introduction Paul has spent the last two chapters of this letter addressing issues in the church. He has written about prayer (1 Tim. 2) and characteristics for proper leadership (1 Tim. 3). Beginning in 1 Timothy 4, Paul turns to speak to Timothy himself. Paul encouraged Timothy to be vigilant in certain areas. What were they?

Be Aware (1 Tim. 4:1-5). Paul first encouraged Timothy to be aware of the signs of the times. God's Spirit had revealed to Paul that days were coming when some would "depart from the faith" (1 Tim. 4:1). The word translated "depart" here is a word which means "to abandon" or "to fall away." Days were coming, then, when some would fall away from the faith. What would lead them away? They would be led away by "paying attention to deceitful spirits and the teachings of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1). The teaching of the demons included two notions. They forbade marriage and demanded "abstinence from foods that God created to be received with gratitude" (1 Tim. 4:3). To help counter this erroneous teaching, Paul reminded Timothy that "everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving" (1 Tim. 4:4).

Be Disciplined (1 Tim. 4:6-10). Next, in the face of the tendency of some to abandon the faith, Paul gave Timothy some instructions. First, Timothy was to "point these things out to the brothers and sisters" (1 Tim. 4:6). Part of Timothy's responsibility, according to Paul, was to teach the truth, especially in light of the false claims being made by those who were teaching unbiblical concepts. As a corollary to teaching the truth, Timothy was also expected to reject "pointless and silly myths" (1 Tim. 4:7). Second, Timothy needed to train himself in godliness (1 Tim. 4:7). This is an interesting concept. For instance, people think about training their bodies for athletic events. How many people consider the fact that they should likewise be training themselves spiritually? The Greek term Paul used here (train) describes that type of process. Timothy needed to be disciplined.

Be an Example (1 Tim. 4:11-13). Third, Paul challenged Timothy to be an example in several areas as he served in Ephesus. Part of the issue that Timothy apparently faced was related to his age. Timothy was a young man when he went to Ephesus. In a culture that respected age, the tendency would have been for people to discount Timothy's leadership and teaching. To counter this inclination, Paul told Timothy to "set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12). Besides setting a positive example, Paul also commanded Timothy to "practice these things . . . so that your progress may be evident to all" (1 Tim. 4:15). Paul again employed athletic imagery to communicate a spiritual reality. In life, when athletes practice, people can see their progress. As Timothy "practiced" the things that Paul mentioned, his spiritual progress would be evident.

Conclusion As Timothy lead the churches and believers in Ephesus, Paul reminded him to be vigilant in three ways. First, Timothy needed to be aware of the times in which he lived. Second, Timothy must train himself in godliness. Third, Timothy should be a good example as he walked with the Lord. Those three truths can help modern day believers as they walk with the Lord, too. We must be aware of the times in which we live; we must train ourselves in godliness; and, we must be good examples so that our “progress may be evident to all.”