

1 TIMOTHY 4:1-6

False teaching had distracted the local church in Ephesus from its mission of preaching the gospel and making disciples.

So Paul writes to Timothy and the big message of his letter is: "Sort out the church for the sake of the gospel!"

The big reason why this is vital we saw in verses 14 to 16 is that the church puts on display the truth about Jesus.

Paul now addresses Timothy directly and talks about how he is to be an example or a good servant of Christ Jesus (v6).

For us it will teach us what it means to be a group of faithful elders.

"Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer. If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed." (1 Timothy 4:1-6)

What does Paul say to Timothy?

A. People will abandon Jesus because of false teaching

"Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth."

1. Key problem is people depart from the faith.

This is more likely to be a gradual process.

Unlikely for a person to wake up one morning and renounce it all.

It is more likely a drift that happens over time.

History of the church is full of men and women who started with small deviations from the truth.

2. Key cause of this departure is buying into false teaching.

Interestingly Paul doesn't spend a whole lot of time in his letters talking about persecution.

He says that it will come but there seems to be the assumption that all Christians will be persecuted so we don't need to spend a lot of time on it.

Paul has a greater concern about false teaching and false teachers because they really harm the church.

The false teaching that was plaguing Ephesus was a form of asceticism whereby teachers were saying that to be more acceptable to God you need to be celibate and a vegetarian.

This teaching whereby two gifts God has given are denied is described here as being demonic and coming from the mouths of liars.

3. A present danger.

This is a danger this local church faces because there are false teachers and false teaching that our flock will hear.

Books, TV, radio shows, google, friends from different branch of Christianity may have ideas that slightly depart from the faith – sometimes be out and out false teaching.

Constant diet of this will cause harm over time – it will influence them.

Teaching which offers a deeper relationship with God is very attractive.

B. People need to be taught the truth

“For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer. If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed.”

1. Timothy was to teach the church in Ephesus the truth.

Marriage and meat are good gifts from God to be enjoyed.

Marriage and meat are good gifts to thank God for.

2. Timothy was to do that so that the church in Ephesus could spot false teaching.

Especially when Timothy wasn't around.

3. But for Timothy to teach the church in Ephesus the truth, he needed to be trained in the truth.

He needed to know God's Word so that he would be able to spot error and falsehood.

4. This will require hard work and effort.

Trained in the words of the faith – training is never easy!

C. Applications

1. We need to be aware of the things our flock is hearing.

Listening out for the things they say – moans about the church, way they prayer, the things that excite them.

2. We need to call out the wolves.

There is a time to speak up and say that some form of teaching or some teacher is wrong.

3. We need to be filling them with truth.

This will enable them to spot false teaching.

Recommending good books for them to read.

4. We need to be training ourselves in the truth as well.