

“Apostasy’s Constant Threat”
Letters to Timothy—Part 8
1 Timothy 4:1-6

For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect—if that were possible. So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time. Mark 13:22-23

1. Paul states the facts about apostasy.

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. 1 Timothy 4:1

Let’s define our terms:

Later times: The time between the ascension of Jesus to the return of Jesus.

Abandon the faith: Apostasy, a willful turning away from the truth of the Christian faith.

At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Matthew 24:10-11

The Lord saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. Genesis 6:5

First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” 2 Peter 3:3-4

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Ephesians 6:12

2. Paul declares the nature of apostasy.

Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. 1 Timothy 4:2

Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Matthew 7:15-16a

3. Paul exposes the problem of apostasy in Ephesus.

They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.

1 Timothy 4:3-5

The issue was marriage and food or legalism and asceticism.

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

Colossians 2:8

The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

Genesis 2:18

He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord.

Proverbs 18:22

Those who believe and know the truth are not impressed with do's and don'ts of legalism or asceticism.

A word of caution:

"Everything is permissible for me"—but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"—but I will not be mastered by anything.

1 Corinthians 6:12

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10:31

4. How do you deal with apostasy?

If you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, brought up in the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed.

1 Timothy 4:6

Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.

2 Timothy 4:2

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

James 1:22

Application: The constant threat of apostasy reminds us that we are living in the last days. The acceptance of false teaching by many who call themselves Christians should not come as a surprise. End of days – the time between ascension and Christ's return, will be marked by false teaching that leads to behavior the Bible condemns.

Satan is the source of all lies. He is good at what he does. False teachers will come looking and sounding like the real thing. We must always compare teaching we receive to the truth of God's Word.

The lies fueled by false teaching are hard to resist. The lies are subtle and, more than that, give our fleshly nature exactly what we want. But, rather than building the church, they separate believers from the church, those who understand the "*real truth*" and those who are not so enlightened.

But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, "In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires." These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit. But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

Jude 17-21