

# 1 Timothy 4

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 21 June 2015

Preacher: Paul Levy

[ 0 : 00 ] It's a good intro because we're looking at 1 Timothy to really remind ourselves what we're about as a church.! Why are we here? What are we doing?!

We're reminding ourselves if we are truly godly and if we are going to be a Christian church, then we ought to share God's mission statement. And we've been reminding ourselves that a church ceases to be a church when it loses that passion to see the lost one.

And that was what was happening at the end in Ephesus. If you look at the end of chapter 3 and the beginning of chapter 4, you can see it, look at verse 15.

Of chapter 3. It says that the church is the household of God. The household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and a buttress of the truth.

A pillar and a buttress of the truth. A church is to be a platform for the truth. It is the pillar and foundation. It is a bastion of truth in the world.

[ 1 : 23 ] The church is meant to hold up the truth to a watching world. And then you come to verse 1 of chapter 4. What do you find?

Well, in later times, which is the times we live in, some will abandon the faith. And they will follow deceitful spirits and the teaching of demons.

And that is what was happening. It is very serious that in the lifetime of the Apostle Paul, the church pattern, this church, this great church, which was such a centre for mission and for evangelism in the surrounding area, what are they doing?

They're abandoning the faith. And so Paul sends Timothy to kind of apostolic troubleshooter. To bring this church back to the faith. To drag it back to the gospel.

And that is what this letter is in the Bible for. Two things we've talked about. Number one, Satan's strategy to knock a church off course. Satan's strategy to knock a church off course.

[ 2 : 25 ] That's verses 1 to 5. And then secondly, God's strategy for keeping a church on track. So first of all, how does the devil do his guilty work? Do you remember Acts chapter 20?

The Apostle Paul has been working in Ephesus for three years as the church planter. He's planted that church at Ephesus. And there in Acts 20, on the beach at Ephesus, we see the Apostle Paul gathers together the leaders.

He gathers together the leaders of this church. And as he gathers together the elders at the beach in Ephesus, he takes his leave. It's a very moving occasion. But in the course of saying goodbye to those leaders, he says something quite shocking in verse 30 of Acts 20.

He says, even from your own number, from your own number, men will arise and distort the truth. It orders to draw away disciples.

So be on your guard, he says. And it's a very interesting statement because really that is exactly what's happened in chapter 4, verse 1 of 1 Timothy. That is who these people are in verses 1 to 3.

[ 3 : 32 ] He's talking about those who have taught, and by their teaching, they have drawn people away from the faith. And he describes this teaching as the teaching of demons.

The doctrine of demons. It's very strong language, isn't it? In other words, what you and I have got to see is we've got to see that the devil, who conservative evangelicals in the main have completely stopped talking about it, the devil is very subtle.

And he's never more dangerous than when he appears as an angel of light. He's never more dangerous, the devil, than when he appears as a messenger of the truth.

They are those whom Paul is addressing in Acts chapter 20. They are the elders. They are the leaders of the house church in Ephesus. They didn't have pawns going out of their head.

They were wearing red tights with cloven hooves and fork tails. They were like Grey Weeks. And Andrew Ray.

[ 4 : 40 ] And Chris Craddock. And Chuck Phillips. And Stuart Cashman and me. They were men who had been elected, recognised as the leaders of those churches.

They were men, presumably, because they were regarded men of spirituality and godliness, and they had the gifts of being shepherds in Christ's church. They'd been made leaders in those churches.

And the congregation had recognised them as leaders. And the devil is never more dangerous than when he comes as a messenger of light. As an angel of light.

Do you see what Paul says? Some very, very hard things. He says that spirituality is a sham, verse 2. It is a pretense, but it's worse than that.

Even though they probably didn't realise this. Their spirituality was actually satanic. It's not that they were in their spare time consulting with Ouija boards or spiritist mediums.

[ 5 : 39 ] It wasn't as if they got into the occult on the side or something like that. It was simply that their teaching was satanic. And you only have to take your eyes off the gospel a fraction to give the devil a foothold.

And these spiritual leaders in this congregation, from amongst your own number, says Paul, these men, they would have been horrified to think so. They were actually doing the devil's work. Through their teaching. That's the thrust of the argument. It was a bogus spirituality. And so instead of leading people closer to God, and getting people involved in God's great mission to the world, it was actually leading them away from that.

So let's take a look at what they were teaching. It seems to me to be a mixture of legalism and asceticism. It's spelled out for us in verse 3.

They were forbidding people to marry, and they were requiring abstinence from certain foods. And you might think, well, that's pretty harmless. What's wrong with that?

[ 6 : 49 ] Well, according to the Apostle Paul, he says everything is wrong with that. It appears so spiritual. It is so super spiritual.

It appears to be very, very disciplined. But Paul says, in fact, it is demonic. It is a tool of the devil to destroy the church, and the work of God in this world.

It is fiendishly clever. It is a brilliant strategy. Look at this false teaching that was coming through the false teachers in Ephesus. Look at where it leads. Look how this strategy works.

Look at verse 3. It spoils your relationship with God, first of all. It spoils your relationship with God. What do they do? They forbid marriage, and order them to abstain from certain foods, with God created to be received with thanksgiving.

Marriage and meat. They are two very good gifts from God. And they are not to be refused, but they are to be received with thanksgiving.

[ 7 : 57 ] So verse 4 and 5, do you get it? For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received for thanksgiving.

It's a wonderful verse for parents. Everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is to be received for thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

Think about that for a moment. What kind of relationship can I have with somebody if I refuse to receive what they want to give me?

Just think about that. Apply it in your own family. Father's Day today, isn't it? So when I got done for breakfast, slightly bleary-eyed, I was given nine bars of Mars chocolate, and four bottles of beer. It says something about the kind of man I am, doesn't it? Imagine I said, yeah, thanks for that. I walk over to the bin, and I put it in the bin. Or I smash the glass bottles.

[ 8 : 59 ] Try tossing a gift you've received into the bin, and see what that does to your relationship with your little boy or girl or your wife. Or your parents. Not a lot.

It would spoil the relationship, don't you think? And how are you going to do that with God? It sounds so spiritual, doesn't it? It sounds so disciplined. But these are good things.

Good things that God has given you, which you are to receive gratefully. And instead, what do we do? Well, we are more spiritual than God, aren't we? And we just throw them back. We don't need any of that, Lord.

Thank you very much. So beware. Be very aware of any teaching, any kind of spirituality, that drives a wedge between creation and redemption.

Because when there is a wedge driven between creation and redemption, it will spoil your relationship with God. Remember that the God who created you is also the God who redeemed

you.

[10:03] And when you were redeemed, when God redeemed you, you weren't taken out of this world that God has given you. When you were redeemed by his blood, you were put back into the world to live as God intended you to live.

You are recreated and being recreated in the image of Christ to live in this world. God is a good thing. And that includes marriage and meat. Godliness is to be truly human. Godliness is to enjoy your food. Godliness is to enjoy your wife and the children God has blessed you with.

That is the gospel. It is to be, that is godliness. It is to be authentically human. And any kind of teaching that drives a wedge between creation and redemption is demonic. And so no wonder Paul calls this doctrine of demons. He says it spoils your relationship with God. And not only that, it spoils your relationship with God. And how often have we seen this kind of down through the ages?

[11:17] What it does is it produces a kind of two-tier Christianity. Christianity. Doesn't it? A spiritual elite. Those that can manage without marriage.

And those that can manage without meat. And the rest of us ordinary Christians, well, we can't, can we? And before you know it, it is us and them.

It is the more spiritual and the more ordinary Christians. Christians. And instead of going to the world with the gospel, which we've seen by mentor in 1 Timothy, what we do is we start to proselytise one another.

That instead of trying to win the world for Christ, we try to win them over to our super spirituality. Whether it is, actually it's more godly not to marry, or it's more godly to be a veggie.

Or maybe it's Calvinism. Maybe it's creationism. Whatever it is we hold dear, instead of reaching the world, we're trying to proselytise one another. This is what you've got to believe.

[12:22] It's an ugly demonic thing. I am a Calvinist. I hardly use that phrase. But I use that as an example because that's closest to me. It may be something else for you.

Let me give you examples which aren't in this church and you can figure out. It may be that you're a charismatic state. I don't have a conference on that. There are all things going on about leaving. If only you receive the power of the homeschool. Homeschooling as well, isn't it?

If you're into homeschooling, good. I don't want to start fighting with you at all. It's a good thing. But there are those out there. There are Christians in there that if you're not homeschooling, well, you are wrong. You are sinful.

Now, in fact, I want this church to have a wide variety on those things. But we've got to be very careful. And when we start to divide with people over those who don't hold our position as theirs, there's an expression in there which is used particularly amongst ministers that that man is not one of us.

He's not one of us. When you hear that, just ask them, what do you mean by that? Divide people of those who hold a different position.

[13:37] And when we do that, we aren't doing the devil's work. And by taking our eyes off the gospel just a little bit and we kind of split into isms, we start talking about salvacy and salary.

And if that's not enough, not only does this bogus super-spirituality ruin our relationship with God and split the church, at the same time, it destroys our credibility with the world. Because the church becomes a freak show.

It's full of oddballs who can't eat this and won't eat that. And oddballs who can't relate to the opposite sex in a meaningful way.

Now generally speaking, if you've got a church which is teaching this sort of thing about singleness and vegetarianism, there is something very odd about it. And so what is beginning to happen here is that when you take your eyes a fraction off the gospel, the world doesn't listen to us anymore. Because it sees us as a bunch of religious freaks and oddballs. And we don't talk to the world anymore. We don't mix with the world anymore. And we don't know how to speak to the world. And we think that is godliness.

[14:52] And this is godliness. That is parasitism. We've gathered our skirts around us. And we've withdrawn from contamination with the world. And so actually we don't know how to speak to the man in the street.

And we think that's godliness. It's not godliness actually. It's demonic according to the Apostle Paul. Godliness is to share God's passion to see all kinds of people saved.

All sorts. The king on his throne on Timothy chapter 2 and the down and out on the street. That is godliness. And to share God's passion to see all kinds of people saved.

It's one of the great problems isn't it? Of splitting your congregation up into young families in the morning. People who are too lazy to get up in the morning at 11 o'clock. Four o'clock in the afternoon for families who want their kids to play sport in the morning and their dad who wants to watch Top Gear in the evening.

And then students and good looking yuppies in the evening. To do that pragmatically you can see reasons for doing it. It is fundamentally against the gospel. Because God's passion is to see all kinds of people saved.

[16:15] And all kinds of people who come to a knowledge of the truth. Let's not be freaks. Let's be people who can move in the world and commend the gospel to the people of the world. Now I know we're not all preachers are we?

We're not all evangelists. But we are here with whatever mix of gifts the Lord has given us. And we are here to promote the gospel in Ealing, Hamwell, Greenford, Brentford.

So that all kinds of people will be saved and come to know the truth. And we're all in this together. Do you see how clever the devil is? How clever Satan is?

He's quite brilliant, isn't he? Through one stroke, through these false teachers, homegrown false teachers, he spoils your relationship with God, he splits the church and he destroys the credibility in front of the world.

And it's so no wonder at all that there are these warnings in the Bible to be on your guard, be on your guard, be on your guard against false teaching. So what is the answer to this thing? What is, if Satan's strategy for knocking a church off course, what is God's strategy to keep a church on track?

[17:24] Well in verses 6 to 16 there are three things. There are three things that gospel of the Lord Jesus ministry does for us instead of false teaching. Number one, it nourishes us.

Look at verses 6 to 7, that's the picture. 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 you have followed. Have nothing to do with irreverent silly myths, rather train yourself for godliness.

He uses that picture of being brought up, it's a picture of a child, it's a child being fed at his mother's breast. It's the picture of a child growing up with a diet of healthy eating, no junk food.

No old wives tales and myths, but good teaching, great food. I was in Cambridge this week and one of the things that you notice about Cambridge when you go there is all the doors are short.

And so I read an article while I was there about National Trust properties and again you notice if you've been to one of the National Trust properties, if you are in that kind of sporadic society that owns the National Trust card, when you go into those properties what do you notice is that the doors are always short, aren't they?

[18:37] What is it with people in this country about 400 years ago that were so small, weren't they? Why is it? Why do we always have to kind of bend down when you go to an old pub? Have you noticed the beds that these people used to sleep in, they're tiny, aren't they?

Why is that? Well the reason this author gave was that their diet wasn't as good as the one we eat. You eat my diet. It's not something I don't recommend for anyone really.

Why are we so much bigger these days? Why are you going to wash your head? Well it's because of the diet. Our diet is ordinarily better than our parents and our grandparents.

That's Paul's point. What you consume is what you become. And what you consume to two means what you become.

So let me ask you what are you consuming? What are you feeding yourself on? Are you stunting your growth as a Christian? I do worry about it sometimes that we are not concerned to grow spiritually.

[19:46] To grow to maturity in our faith. Are you nourishing yourselves on the truths of the faith versus the good teaching? I want to say that there is isn't there more than any other time in the history of the Christian church there is more teaching available.

Do you know that? We have loads of it. Absolute masses of it. But lots of it is junk food. Not every book that is called Christian is good for you.

In lots of Christian bookshops do you know what the best section is? The best section in many Christian bookshops is the bargain section. Isn't it? I built my libraries so I'm going to the bargain section.

Why? Because people actually don't want to read good books. They're happy reading the junk. They want junk food. They want myths. We feel the same we Christian people are very, very gullible.

They want to be entertained. And instead of feeding them on the good teaching of their sex instead of devoting themselves to sound doctrine. So what are you reading? Man cannot live by bread alone but every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

[ 21 : 00 ] Gospel ministry being nourished. And that is why if you want to promote the gospel in Ealing, Hanwell, Greenford, Brentford, Norfolk, you've got to be here regularly.

That if we want to promote the gospel, if we want to see people safe and coming to a knowledge of the truth and coming to maturity in Christ, we need to be under that same gospel. That we need to be serving ourselves, big servings on Sunday morning and Sunday night and then nibbling away in house poop.

And ask your questions and encourage each other. Gospel ministry nourishes us and gospel ministry trains us, verse 8. And verse 8, it's interesting, physical training.

Look at verse 8, for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. Now I think, I've changed my mind on this this week, I think that is the faithful saying, actually.

As I've studied it, I've come to that conclusion that actually it's verse 8 is the trustworthy saying. Paul is saying you can bet your life on this. Physical training is of some value.

[ 22 : 12 ] I was with old friends of mine this week and one of my friends looked at my midriff and said, Levy, don't you think we should get to the gym?

Don't you think we should be doing a bit more exercise? And I quoted this verse back at him, I said, physical exercise profited a little. And he said, it's quick of a flash, yes, Levy, but that little, but it profited, you could do it.

Which is very true, is it? It's very true. There's profit in looking after yourself. And many of you, people are very health conscious this day, it's not just about eating the right food, it's about regular exercise and physical training.

So maybe you've taken a membership out of a gym, you've paid for a personal trainer, isn't it? Or to put along your life just for a few months and years, and that's a good thing to do. But what about the life to come?

What about the life to come? Isn't it crazy? In London, we live in a very health conscious age. People pay money, they pay money to go on an exercise regime, they pay money to have a personal trainer, you see them in the park.

[ 23 : 25 ] A personal trainer is like having a conscience outside of yourself, which tells you the things that you don't want to hear. people will go to enormous lengths in this life to prolong their life in the world by a few years.

But what about the world to come? Don't you believe it? Don't you believe that we're just passing through this world? There is a world to come.

As I want to ask you, are you training for that? I've been training for a run or for a marathon, but how many of us are training? Because the Bible says without holiness no one will see the Lord.

Godliness, training ourselves, not just cramming our heads full of some teaching, but are we actually training ourselves to be holy, to be godly?

Believe me, says Paul, godliness is worth working for, striving for. Isn't what he says in verse 10? He says for this to end we toil and strive.

[ 24 : 27 ] What is godliness? Well, do you remember it's not like the false teachers. They were wrong about what you eat and what you don't eat. It's not about the things you do or you don't do. Look at chapter 3 verse 16.

That is godliness. Great indeed we confess is the mystery of godliness. He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the spirits, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up to glory.

That is godliness, the story of Jesus. It's getting the story of Jesus and the person of Jesus out into the world. it's proclaiming it to the nations so that the world will believe in the story of Jesus and you

will become more like him.

The story about Jesus being made known to the nations, godliness is being like god. Godliness is being like god? How can you be like god? But you can't be like god, can you?

You can't be like god in every respect. God is everywhere. everywhere. He is everywhere at every time. And life is pretty hectic, isn't it? I wouldn't want to put that pressure on you.

[ 25 : 33 ] God knows everything about everyone. I'm sure you know people who are like that. They carry on as if they know everything about everyone. But we don't call that godliness the way we call it something else. So how are we to be godly?

We are to have a desire to see all kinds of people saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. We should have a desire to get the story out so that people believe it. Look at verse 10. We train ourselves.

For this end we toil and fight because we have our hope set on the living God who is the saviour of all people especially of those who believe. We labour and we strive, we work hard with the gospel. Why do we work hard with the gospel? Because we put our hope in the living God. It is the thankless task what you're doing. When you give yourself to the gospel, it isn't a day we put our hope in the living God that he will do this.

If I can put it like this without sounding kind of inappropriate, it is his thing to save people. Is it? Isn't that what his thing is?

[ 26 : 39 ] God wants all people to be saved but in order to be saved they have to believe. We're not universalists. We don't believe that everyone will be saved regardless. We don't believe that everybody's a Christian they just don't know it.

We believe that the gospel has got to get out to the world. That's what verse 10 means. God is the saviour of all people. He desires that all kinds of people are saved, both Jew and Gentile. But in order for people to be saved they've got to believe.

And how will they believe unless they hear the gospel? And godliness is getting the gospel. And that is what pleases God, chapter 2 verses 3 and 4. So brothers and sisters, are we labouring in this?

Are we striving hard at it? Are we toiling? Are we training ourselves in that? That is authentic Christian spirituality as opposed to the false teaching of the Ephesian elements.

So imagine you go to the doctor tomorrow morning. You go for a regular checkup, you have your blood test and the doctor goes absolutely mental. He says your cholesterol has gone through the roof.

[ 27 : 43 ] What do you do? The doctor slams his fist on the desk and he says you've got to make some lifestyle changes. You've got to make changes for your lifestyle. You've got to do some exercise.

You've got to change your diet. You'd do that wouldn't you? If your doctor was frightening enough. If your doctor was like my dentist would do it. My dentist is terrifying.

But you'd do that wouldn't you? You'd make those changes because your health was at stake.

You'd be a fool not to. But look at the end of verse 4. Look at the end of chapter 4. Look at what is at stake at the end of chapter 4.

Watch your life and doctrine closely in this climate where there's false teaching and bogus spirituality. Paul says Timothy watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them because if you do you will save all to yourself and your hearers.

That is what is at stake. It's more than our physical stake. Our own salvation and the salvation of our hearers.

[ 28 : 47 ] Salvation of men and women and boys and girls and generations yet unborn. That is what is at stake. And if we indulge in false teaching, if you or I or particularly the elders take our eyes for a fraction of the gospel and start going down this track or that track, then before we know it we've lost the plot.

And generations have come out here. And if you don't believe me, go around kneeling and see the buildings that are now Hindu temples, that are now carpet warehouses, that are now Sikh Guru Haras, and they were teachers which preached the gospel and they've gone off track.

So change your lifestyle for their sake. Change your lifestyle for your grandchildren sake, for your children's children's children, for your great granddaughters sake.

Won't you nourish yourself on some doctrine? Won't you feed yourself on healthy food? Won't you labour and strive so that people will hear about the Lord Jesus and be saved?

Won't we train one another up so that we as a community, as a church, as a team, can promote the gospel? Whether it's through somebody speaking, whether it's through somebody leading a Bible study, whether it's through somebody doing the barbecue next week, whether it's through somebody going on the road to the welcome, whether it's through somebody giving money, whether it's through somebody willing to kind of clean the church on Saturday when they can be doing much better things, especially I suppose through prayer.

[ 30 : 23 ] But together as a team, as a club, as a church, if I can use that language, we can promote the gospel and we can see people being saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. what is the cure for apostasy?

What is the cure for a church that is apostatizing? Is it reorganizing? Is it just getting better organized? Is it having a book of church order which actually is really good?

No, no. It's to get back to the gospel and to devote ourselves to that. That's fine.