

HOW TO ADDRESS A SOCIETY THAT'S TURNING AWAY FROM THE TRUTH

1 Timothy 4:1-6

Broze and Gronseth's *Sea Kayaker, Deep Trouble*: On a hot summer day, Bryan rented a kayak and headed for San Juan Island. Though not an expert kayaker, Bryan was in good shape. He stowed a life jacket under shock cords and headed toward a favorite spot for viewing orcas.

When he got there, 6 whales and a calf surfaced. People on shore watched Bryan maneuver among them. One whale came close several times. The orcas rolled, shot their heads above the water, and leaped into the air. As sun set, the crowd could see Bryan paddle toward open water with the whales. In the morning Bryan's kayak was found 6½ miles offshore, his life jacket still secure.

Bryan anticipated an evening of easy paddling on inland waters. Tides weren't tricky; breezes were mild. The orcas were playing. Nothing appeared alarming. Yet Bryan ventured into waters he was ill-equipped to handle, among untamed animals he knew little about. The thrill of being among these beautiful, leaping giants dulled Bryan's alertness to danger.

Like calm, inviting inland waters, deception appears in appealing ways. False ideas seem reasonable, charming us with desire to earn approval. False teachers beckon us to follow in paths that don't seem harmful. Paul warns us against paddling in among deceptive ideas. Toying with legalism sets us on a dangerous course toward the open waters of spiritual ruin.

**Paul counsels a trusted disciple how we should live
and carry out our ministry.**

He warns Timothy about a coming day—like ours—

when a culture that has known the truth,
 turns its back on God and His Word,
 inventing a “religious fervor” for God-rejecting legalism.
 It comes up with its own rules, rejecting things God calls good.
 It rejects marriage and family values.
 It prohibits eating meats and animal products. *Sound familiar?*

***In a legalistic culture that denies the truth,
 a godly minister (God’s people) **must take a stand**
 for the solid teaching of God’s Word.***

PRESERVATION OF SOUND DOCTRINE 4:1-6

Paul tells Timothy about false doctrine he must face.
 In Acts 20, Paul warns Ephesian elders:
 false teachers are about to invade.

Now they’ve done what Paul warned about.

Paul promises: it’s going to get worse!

This isn’t just something that *might* happen.

God explicitly announced it beforehand.

*“In the last days some will depart, following deceptive spirits,
 demonic doctrines taught by hypocritical liars ...*

People will depart from the truth. He calls it **apostasy**.

These are people within the church.

They’ve known the truth.

They profess to know Christ; they’re part of the church.

But, they’re leaving—making choice to abandon the truth.

Paul tells Timothy: “Don’t be surprised when it happens!”

God’ Spirit has clearly indicated it **WILL** happen.

People you know in church are going to walk away!

Though Paul says this will happen in later times,
switch to present indicates it's already started!

Timothy faces this issue in his day;

it's repeated throughout church history.

False legalistic systems develop among God's people until
heresy is presented as truth and truth is viewed as heresy!

That trend isn't going to go away.

False legalistic teaching will arise with increasing intensity.

Evident among Judaizers.

Shows up in Gnosticism.

In dark ages it's evident in Catholicism.

Cults propagate their own form of legalism.

Now it shows up in a strange, perverse form.

It fits Paul's words in Rom. 1.

People turn their backs on the Creator,

=> worship and serve created things (*mother earth*)

We see it religiously promoted by "*Green-earthers*"

They've developed their own brand of legalism.

That's accompanied by another issue from Rom. 1:

People reject God's plan => they exchange natural
physical relationships for unnatural ones.

They develop religious zeal for "*alternative lifestyles*"
and establish *their own* standards.

Where does doctrine they're turning to come from?

SOURCE OF THIS FALSE DOCTRINE 4:1-2 4:1

*"The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the
faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.*

Supernatural source: demonic lies! 4:1

Their teaching is *demonic*.

They turn to the teaching of spirits (demons)

Swindoll: “Be careful, though. Not every false doctrine comes packaged with label that reads “*Danger: Satanic doctrine enclosed. Open at your own risk.*” False teaching is often promulgated by attractive, friendly, convincing individuals.”

Tony Evans: “If I would ask you to give me the address and phone number of the Mafia, what would you tell me?” “The Mafia is an invisible system of well-camouflaged evil.... It is an invisible system designed to promote evil often under the camouflage of good.” That’s how demons work!

Have you noticed how common it is to seek “spirit guides”?

Old stats (*Psychology Today*): 11 year period, adults claiming to have spoken with the dead rose from 27% to 42%!

People who have known the truth bail out theologically;
they start listening to demons!

Human source: hypocritical liars 4:2

“Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.”

People who talk religious but live in sin

“*Hypocritical liars*” indicates they deliberately deceive.

It’s a conscious deception.

Their conscience is damaged; it doesn’t work!

That warning should make us aware: people who know truth can ignore the warnings of conscience.

Refusing to listen to our conscience can result in a seared conscience—no longer sensitive to the truth.

Wiersbe: “‘Seared’ means ‘cauterized.’ Just as a person’s flesh can be ‘branded’ so it becomes hard and without feeling, so our conscience can be deadened [*anesthetized*] . Whenever we affirm with our lips something that we deny with our lives (whether others know it or not), we deaden our consciences just a little more.”

“An apostate is not just wrong doctrinally; he is wrong morally. His personal life became wrong before his doctrines changed. It’s likely he changed his teachings so he could continue his sinful living and pacify his conscience. *Believing* and *behaving* always go together.”

Tozer: “We wonder how a person brought up in the Word of truth can turn away from it to false religion.... False doctrine has no power over a good conscience. But when a conscience has been seared, when a person has played with fire and burned his or her conscience, searing it until he or she can handle the hot iron of sin without cringing, there’s no longer any safety. He or she can go off into strange cults, into heresy, into any false religion.”

*False teachers **sound good**, but their lifestyle reveals **it’s a lie!***

CONTENT OF FALSE DOCTRINE 4:3 = legalism

They lay legalistic regulations on others.

“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.”

Their doctrine: legalistic prohibitions of things God made and declared good (Acts 10)

They pervert what God has given for our good.

“They forbid what God created.”

They forbid marriage.

Their logic isn't given. *Doesn't say why.* May change!

They affirm that it's better NOT to marry.

God created marriage and He calls it good.

They prohibit certain foods.

Again, it doesn't provide their logic. That may vary.

It just says they prohibit eating certain foods.

Always seems to focus on eating meat.

There's nothing wrong with being vegetarian.

But, vegetarianism won't make us godly!

Legalistic rules and systems supporting them change:

Judaizers => Gnostics => Cults => Environmentalists

Legalists try to inhibit two desires God created for good,
urging us to avoid them *in our strength. It won't work!*

In Col. 2, Paul warns: **rules can't control desire!**

They keep coming back to the same themes:

prohibiting what God created and called good.

They switch, replacing God's standards with their own.

They don't keep the prohibitions themselves,
except in public! It's fake—it's a show!

They impose on others what they themselves don't follow.

Sounds like “global warming” advocates!

As Christ said about Pharisees:

*They heap heavy loads on people already loaded down
with guilt, but don't lift a finger to help those carrying the
load, nor do they carry the load themselves!*

Those who believe and know the truth aren't impressed
by the *do's* and *don'ts* of the legalists.

How should we respond to this false doctrine?

RESPONSE TO FALSE DOCTRINE 4:4-6 *"For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, 5 because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer. 6 If you point these things out to the brothers, you'll be a good minister of Christ Jesus, brought up in the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed."*

Answer to their legalism:

all things are good if God created them.

Enjoy what God made with thanksgiving.

Acknowledging God as the source of everything good,...

Expressing an attitude of gratitude for what God has given,...

...Leads to a godly lifestyle—*enjoyment* of marriage and food.

G.K. Chesterton: *You say grace before meals. All right.*

But I say grace before the play and the opera,

And grace before I open a book,

And grace before sketching, painting,

Swimming, fencing, boxing, walking, playing, dancing;

And grace before I dip the pen in the ink.

Our lives shouldn't be lived in the negative,

But in the positive—set apart by thanksgiving for everything.

**Submit use of them to God's Word and God's will—which
we seek in His Word and in prayer.**

God's Word is our final authority.

Any teaching that contradicts what God says leads to sin;
it can *NEVER* be made holy!

Such things are made holy by God's Word & prayer

Everything God made is good, but the fall made its impact.

Don't blame sin—the result of the fall—on God!

Sin isn't made holy by blaming it on God!

Sin is the result of an anesthetized conscience!

Submission to God's Word and prayer lead to holiness.

God's Word and prayer turn a marriage relationship

and an ordinary meal into an act of worship!

Godly people appreciate and celebrate gifts of the Creator!

TWO MARKS OF A GODLY MINISTER:

1. Godly minister points out truth to God's people.

A good minister teaches the truth:

God has created all things good . . .

... to be received with thanksgiving

... not to be rejected if it's received with thanksgiving.

All things are made holy by God's Word and by prayer.

Wiersbe: "As we travel the highways, we see two kinds of signs: those that tell us where we're going ("Boston 45 miles") and those that warn us of danger ("Bridge Out!"). A pastor must teach positive doctrine so people will know what they believe and where they're going. But he must also expose false doctrine so people will not be seduced and led astray."

Don't let legalists set up a bunch of rules to keep you from enjoying what God created!

Legalists: "*Don't touch! Don't taste! Don't enjoy!*"

God's Word: "*God gives us all things richly to enjoy.*"

God's people gratefully accept His good gifts and remember where they come from.

2. Godly minister is nourished

by words of truth and sound teaching.

He enjoys God's Word—*best defense from heresy!*

Feed yourself a regular diet of solid food from God's Word.

He feeds on God's Word

so he can teach others the truth.

To oppose demonic teaching and hypocritical liars, that bombard our society, we must **feed on God's Word**.

WHAT IS PAUL'S LESSON FOR US?

Enjoy with gratitude *good* gifts God created and gives us.

Warning: even people who know the truth can be seduced by demonic teaching—lies of legalists who enslave us.

Our defense: Be well-nourished, feeding on the truth.

"Best defense is a good offense."

Knowing the real thing will help us avoid counterfeits.

As was true with requirements for leaders,

Paul's desire for Timothy reflects **God's desire for all of us:**

That we be nourished by the truth of God's Word.

Are we feeding on God's Word; seeking to become so familiar with

His voice that we know His will

and recognize the counterfeit of demons and liars?