

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

“The Defense of Church ”

1 Timothy 4:1-9

Before we really get into the passage, I want to give you a quiz. Does anybody know what this is? It's a hogan. Technically, it is a Navajo hogan.

This was in a small community (emphasis on small) which I spent a couple of summers in. It's shaped this way, in an octagon shape, for a reason. The reason for the shape is because evil spirits supposedly live in corners. They don't have their house in a box shape because that's an abode for evil spirits, so they have it in an octagon shape. Well, it seems rather superstitious.

Then there was an event that occurred one night. We were inside, it was dark out, and all of a sudden a bat flew into the room. Now, I'm from the suburbs and if you know me very well, the wild kingdom and I don't get along very well, so this was quite an event for me. I spray for bugs and things like that, because I want them away from me. But it was also quite an event for the people I was with, especially the mother, and they were Christians. But their view was this was an infiltration by a demonic spirit as the bat flew around.

Well all of us were joined together in one thing, getting the bat out of the room. But I believed then and still do today that they had adopted some superstition. How do we really know what is superstitious or not? How do we know what evil spirits are doing or not doing? Is God really opposed to bats flying in the room, or is the devil trying to attack us in that sort of way? Well this passage that we will be looking at today will touch on this and give us some idea of really where the attack is coming from and where it is going to.

Let's look together at **1 Timothy 4:1-9**. **“But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, (2) by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, (3) men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods, which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. (4) For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude; (5) for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer. (6) In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following. (7) but have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; (8) for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. (9) It is a trust worthy statement deserving full acceptance.”**

That's our passage this morning, and we see from the start that there is a demonic cause for the attack that's coming to the church. Now it starts off with this phrase, **“But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith.”** When is this? Is this some time in the distant future? Well, no. Actually the word for “times” is plural, and it means seasons, eras, or things that are coming and coming again. These times when we have doctrines of demons and deceitful spirits, that people will be paying attention to, drawing them away from the faith, will come around to us again and again.

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As seasons come and go and return again, so the demonic doctrines will continue to come around to us in the future. That's what we can expect. The Scripture describes this in many places, and that we have to beware of its coming and we can count on it. These doctrines of demons will continually come our way and we need to be careful.

There is a purpose for them, a goal in mind that they are seeking to accomplish, and it is desertion. The demonic target is for people to desert the faith, to fall away from the faith, so some will turn aside. As **2 Timothy 4** says, people will be teaching things that will be tickling the ears so that they that hear will turn away their ears from the truth and turn aside to myths. These doctrines are designed to turn people away.

Now, are the doctrines themselves turning people away, or is it their intention that is doing that? Let us look at this. The technique that they use is deceit--deceitful spirits. These deceitful spirits are from the father of lies according to **John 8:44**. Satan is the author of lies, and he chooses to attack us with deceit or the twisting of the truth, and the means is doctrine.

In **2 Corinthians 11:3** we see a glimpse of this. **“But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.”** Teaching things that the mind would grasp that would lead away from simplicity and devotion. The reason for the attack on the mind is because our belief will dictate our behavior. Over time, our behavior will follow our beliefs. So, if our beliefs can be undermined, then our behavior will follow. This is why the devil is working on this area of our life, our beliefs.

Now, here is how he gets this accomplished. Is it through bats flying in the room? What is the course of attack that the devil uses with us? Well, it's in **verse two**. The demons work through people. **“By means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron.”** These people are the vehicle, the agents of this deceit, this demonic deceit.

Let's go back to **2 Corinthians 11** for a moment. It goes on later in the chapter, in **verse 13**, about this craftiness that leads people astray. **“For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.”**

People are pretending to teach the truth and have a place to do this, but they are not. They are not teaching the truth, they are lying, they are propagating error, and they do so hypocritically by means of hypocrisy of lies.

Demons work through people, and the telltale signs of these people is their hypocrisy. The telltale signs of the devil's agents are their inability to perceive their own double standards. They have a double standard, they are hypocrites, but they are seared in their own consciences as with a branding iron. Their conscience is no longer able to see their own hypocrisy or their own double standards. We need someone to shine the light on this and to say this is not true, and Paul encourages Timothy to do this. So, the course of the attack is coming through people. That's how demons are working to undermine the work of God today is through people.

Now, how are these people going about attacking? They are doing this through content. **Verse 3**, **“Men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods, which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.”**

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This attack comes because people teach things that cause people to fall away.

What are these things? Well, here is an example of them here. **“Men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods.”** These are a class of things which we have surrounding us today, even in the Christian church, people that forbid things that God has created to be gratefully shared in. This happens, in one way, through legalism or a set of rules or regulations that must be followed that are not biblical. Its not what the Bible says but what people say, and they will say we must do this or we cant do that.

There's another version of it, which just exalts it into godliness. This is a form of asceticism, or self-abasement, or giving things up in the effort to become godlier. “If I just stop doing this, if I just stop doing that, then I will be godlier.” Well that may be part of it, but that will never do it. If you recall from a year and a half ago or so, when we were in the book of **Colossians**, there was a very key passage in the end of **chapter 2** that deals with people that were teaching, “don’t handle,” “don’t taste,” “don’t touch,” “don’t do this,” “avoid that,” things that are not biblical but opinions of men.

This is what **Colossians 2:23** said about those things. **“These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and sever treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.”** It appears to be religious, it appears to encourage people towards godliness, but here is the last statement, **“but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.”** In other words, the flesh will never be defeated by rules and regulations. By forbidding this and abstaining from that will not work.

Our faith is attacked when we believe that abstaining from what God has created is a means of godliness.

These man-made rules or these man-made encouragements to abstain will not accomplish godliness. They have no value against the flesh because God has given us another means of overcoming the flesh. It is not a rule and regulations approach. It is not a list of do’s and don’ts. We can find people who are not even Christians who are not doing this and not doing that. Does that make them godly? Of course not. You can abstain from everything you can think of and it will not make you anymore godly. Scripture is clear on that.

How do we accomplish godliness? Rather than avoiding what God has created, we must use what God has created for His purpose, with thankfulness. **“For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude.”**

What does this mean? This means that everything that God has created can be used if it is sanctified, set apart, or considered according to what God’s revealed will is in the Word. We communicate with Him through prayer so that we can become more sensitized to the truth of His Word as it applies to these things around us and how to use it effectively to accomplish God’s work on this earth. The list of do’s and don’ts do not serve that. What does serve that is knowing what God says, and that by sanctification, we are able to use these things for the service of the Lord.

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Now on to how to oppose this attack properly, that's coming again and again. This is the path of godliness; we will read it from verse 6 to verse 9. **“In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following. (7) but have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; (8) for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. (9) It is a trust worthy statement deserving full acceptance.”**

So what do we do to oppose this attack? Verse 6, the first thing we do is point out these fabrications. **“In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.”** Pointing out these fabrications helps us to minister to people. We are called to point these things out. When people are advocating a rules and regulations form of godliness, we should point that out, that these have no value against fleshly indulgence and then point them to the truth.

In pointing out these things, we will improve our ministry through our teaching. We are all supposed to be passing the truth of what we know about God to other people. Christ's servants, and hopefully you, are numbered among them that speak up for the truth. When they have the opportunity, they don't sit silent. They follow the Savior in what He did, and here is what Jesus did when He was encountering this in His day. **Matthew 16:11-12 “How is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (12) Then they understood that he did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”**

One of Jesus' agendas on this earth was to oppose the leaven or the teaching of the religious leaders of His day, and what was that teaching? It was a rules and regulations form of religion: if you do this, if you don't do that, you will be right and if you don't agree with us and you do other things, you are wrong. And Jesus had them in his cross hairs and attacked that. It was wrong, and it propagates itself today. In fact, it is very popular today. We find it very comforting as humans to have a list of things to do and not do and desire to just follow that list. I'm okay. I can do that. This is something I in my flesh can do. It's appealing and people can feel good about themselves; unfortunately it does not produce godliness. In pointing these things out, you will be a good servant. Speak up when you see this. Jesus did and you should be following the Savior in this.

The next thing is to provide feeding. **“In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.”** Nourish yourself on the pure milk of the word. We improve our teaching by learning. If you are not learning, your teaching is not going to be any better. If you think, “well, I think I know it, I don't need to learn anymore,” you are going to be not as effective. In fact, you are going to start degrading in your ability to communicate well because you are not a learner. What is a disciple? A disciple is a learner. That's the definition of it, and as a follower of Christ, you must be learning; and the way you are to be learning is to be constantly nourished on the words of faith and sound doctrine. To get that as a part of your life and inculcate that, it's essential in order to serve Christ.

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Christ's servants seek out the truth. **“In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.”** You should be as eager to know the truth God has revealed to you as you are for when you are eating lunch today and dinner and so on. We should be as eager for this or more eager because man does not live on bread alone. Constantly being nourished by the words of faith, that's how we confront this attack, which is coming our way. We must be prepared by nourishing ourselves on the word of God that delivers truth in putting out the error.

Speaking of putting out the error, **verse 7, “But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women.”** Now, fortunately, we don't have any old women in this congregation so no one will be offended by this, but nevertheless we should all be opposing, or putting away, putting out worldly fables. These myths are untrue and they abound. I cannot catalog for you all the worldly fables that exist.

I will give you one small example because it is by someone who writes a lot of stuff and sells a lot of books and it is evangelical. Neil Anderson has a book, *Spiritual Protection For Your Children*. I will just read a part of this because it hits close to my home, at least. He has lots of stuff in here I could talk about, but here is the one that captured me. It is “Prayers for People In Certain Circumstances,” prayer for your child in this, prayer for your children in that. Now, putting aside for the moment the obvious question, “is there value in Neil Andersons' prayers that we pray for these things?” Putting aside that for the moment, here's what he says on this section

“Adopted children are extremely vulnerable to demonic influences.” Boy, that would make you want to adopt! I don't know. Then he goes on to say if you were thinking of adopting a child, we recommend that you work with an agency that locates adoptive families, these adoptive parents, before the child is born and if at all possible, you should be present at the time of birth and bring the child home from the hospital. That doesn't make you too interested in taking a child you can't take home from the hospital.

There are just books and books and shelves and shelves of worldly fables. Where does this come from? It comes from his view that is being propagated as being truth, and because he is right about many things, it doesn't mean he is right about everything, and if we are not discerning we will not be learning. We improve our learning through discernment. We will understand things better, more clearly, by putting away things that are in error.

The things that are in error, these worldly fables, are not just dangerous because we adopt things that just are not true, they distract us from the nourishment of the Word because then we start looking at something else. Indeed, the more closely people align to the truth the more susceptible we may be to this sort of stuff, because they look like what we think they are supposed to look like and they say things that are true. The weird people that say all kinds of messed-up things are really the people that have less effect, but the people that look more like us and say more things like the Bible says can propagate fables and take us away from the true.

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We must be discerning. If we are discerning, which comes through practice by the way (**Hebrews 5:14**), it just doesn't come through reading, we will have our senses discerning good and evil and right and wrong. In that, we will improve our learning, and if we improve our learning, we will improve our teaching and be able to pass along the truth to others better, in order to protect them, to keep them from falling away.

Christ's servants shun error. They turn aside from error. If we are seeking to serve Christ, we will, according to the words of **1 Timothy 1:4**, put aside these things. **1 Timothy 1:4** “**Nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith.**”

And then finally, we will plan for the future. This is the rest of **verse 7** and onto **verse 8**. **On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; (8) for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.** We must plan for the future. The better we plan for the future, the better off we are.

Discipline yourself, that's how you get to godliness. Godliness doesn't come by wanting it to happen, it comes through discipline, through making some choices in life, or as Nike would say, “just do it,” discipline. What discipline is being spoken of, what things to be doing are in the context here. **Verse 6**, Constantly nourished on the words of faith, sound doctrine. **Verse 5**, These things are not to be rejected but are to be accepted with gratitude and thankfulness and are sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer. That is the context of what the discipline is about. What God says, His word, in communicating with Him, we should be disciplined in this.

Now, how to do this. I'll throw out some ideas to you. You should be reading the Bible, memorizing the Scripture, learning the things you are reading. If you just visit our web site under the resources link, you will find Bible reading plans that will take you day by day, to serve you and be helpful. There is a page on verses to memorize that will be helpful. There is teaching on every book of the Bible there that you can go through, which should all help you to be disciplined. There are classes that we teach that, if you don't attend any of these, you won't make any progress in terms of the things that are being talked about there.

You have to avail yourself of something. It's not just going to happen. You must discipline yourself, somehow, someway that works for you. You need to get busy, because we improve our discernment through discipline. We will be better able to discern what's right or wrong if we spend our efforts learning about it, disciplining ourselves.

I have been disciplining myself bodily. It says bodily discipline is only of little profit. Since it is only of little profit, I do a little exercise. For the past six months, once a week, I have been running. Slowly, I think I'm at a ten-minute mile pace. I used to be able to go about half a mile and I would have to stop, but now I'm up to three miles. That's about all I really want to do before I start getting aches and pains in my knees and my back, and I figure since bodily discipline is of little profit and I don't want to die in my mid fifties,

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I should do something about this. I can't promise you how long this is going to last because it's of little profit. Maybe as it gets cold and starts getting dark in the morning, I may fade away. I also play Valley Bible softball, by the way. Every summer, I get out there and run around the bases. So I'm trying to discipline my body, but I view this as of little profit in the big scope of things.

The Greek word for "discipline" gives us our English word "gymnastics." People that are disciplining their bodies seriously are doing more than their jaunt around the neighborhood. Here's Paul Hamm. I don't know how many hours of discipline it took him to do this, I don't know if I could ever do this, but certainly it wasn't a "I think I'll try gymnastics" and there he goes. I think he spent many hours, many days, many years disciplining himself in order to accomplish the ability to be athletic in this manner, and even to succeed. He was disciplined for the bodily discipline.

What's even more important than that? More important than that is Christ's servants striving for godliness, for godliness is profitable for all things. Ducks quack, birds fly, Christ's servants strive for godliness. This is what we are about doing, we want to be godly, to know Christ, and to know Him better. We are not going to know Christ and know Him better apart from what He says to us in communicating with Him through prayer. We must be active in this, it doesn't just happen.

I'll give you a passage that has been meaningful in my life. **Proverbs 6:6-11 "Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise, (7) Which, having no chief, Officer or ruler, (8) Prepares her food in the summer, And gathers her provision in the harvest. (9) How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? (10) 'A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest'- (11) And your poverty will come in like a vagabond, And your need like an armed man."**

If we are not disciplined we will reap what we will sow. We would be a slug, instead of an ant, we would be un-industrious and we will reap the consequences of that. Or, if we are disciplining ourselves for the purpose of godliness to strive to be godly through a constant nourishing on the Word of God, then we will be like the ant, preparing for the future. **"Bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come."**

Godliness is profitable now. It holds promise for the present life. It's more profitable to be godly right now than it is to be healthy right now. In fact, the people that are not godly often have health problems because they've been so tossed around by the life that they live and the trials around them that they are unable to deal with that, and it effects their health. But it's not just important for now to be godly, its even important later. In fact, this is where the rubber really meets the road. It's also profitable in the life to come. How healthy you are, how fit you are, what your diet is now, makes a little difference presently; it makes no difference in the future except in how it is sanctified by the means of the word of God in prayer, that's it. Godliness is more profitable now and later.

Here's another athlete. You probably don't recognize him. I didn't recognize him when I was with him in 1988 cutting down the hedges that separated where I lived from where he lived. He was my neighbor. I didn't know this at the time but he won the gold medal in the 1936 Olympics in the 110 meter hurdles. At the time, he was just an elderly gentleman who needed to have his hedges cut down and I was there helping.

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My \$250-a-month duplex, what a deal that was. He was my neighbor and all of his discipline, regiment, what did it mean at that point? I'm sure it meant something to him still, but at that point he was just one more elderly gentleman who needed some work done with his hedges, and as his life was passing away, how much was all that discipline meaning then? I hope he had a perspective that bodily discipline is only a little profitable, but godly discipline is profitable in all things. If he did, then he was well served.

There's a story I came across that I would like to share as we close up. This is an event that happened about 100 years ago, just before the start of WWI. In fact, it was a catalyst for the start of WWI. There was an ocean liner called the Lusitania. This was a very fast ocean liner. It traveled between America, New York, and England carrying thousands of people and cargo. As the turmoil of the world was occurring, ships were beginning to be sunk by Germans because there was a blockade of Germany. The Germans were trying to get rid of that by threatening ships, so it became apparent that shipping was dangerous. In fact, warnings were even put out saying be careful.

There was this head of an art firm. His name was Lord Joseph Duveen. He was very famous actually and his art firm sent people back and forth to study art. There was one of his younger experts being sent to England from New York to examine some pottery and he booked a passage on the Lusitania. The German embassy issued warnings saying be careful the liner may be torpedoed. This fellow was concerned and came up to his employee and said I can't risk you departing on this trip. The man said don't worry, I'm a strong swimmer. I've been practicing and I'm prepared, and I've been hardening myself by spending time everyday in a tub of ice water. At first, I could sit only a few minutes, but this morning, I stayed in that tub for nearly two hours. Well it sounds ludicrous and the guy laughed, but as the ship went out, as you may know, it was torpedoed and sunk and 1,200 people perished. But one person who didn't perish was the fellow who had prepared himself. He was pulled out of the Atlantic Ocean after nearly five hours in excellent condition because he prepared himself.

Now at the point of the departure was he sure that the ocean liner was going to sink? I don't think so, but nevertheless he prepared himself. I can tell you one thing, the ocean liner of your life is going to sink. The time is coming when your life is going to draw to an end. Are you disciplining yourself for the purpose of godliness? Bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things since it holds promise for the present life as well as for the life that is to come. It's profitable to be busy about preparing yourself for the future, not just for something that may happen, but something that will happen, and to be busy about accomplishing your preparation to plan for the future.

This is true for everybody here. And this is this last verse. **“It is a trust worthy statement deserving full acceptance.”** There is a desire and consent that we all must adopt. The disciplined opposition to the devil's desire for people to fall away from faith is the responsibility of everyone, each one of us. The more we are pulling together in this the more we are disciplined as a fellowship. The more we are nourished by the word of God, the better off we will be to protect people from falling away from the truth and paying attention to the doctrines of demons.

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Let's close in a word of prayer. Lord God, we just thank You for giving us Your truth, Your revelation of Your Word to us. Lord, we pray that You would give us a better and better insight of how to accomplish this in our lives, how to discipline ourselves, what works for us, how to become godly through attention to what You say and communicating with You in prayer. We pray that the sense of importance of this would be elevated in our mind as it really should be, and that we would not be a sluggard but that we would be like the ant, industrious, busy. In Jesus' name, Amen.