



Text: 1 Timothy 4:1-10 (reading 1 Tim 3:14-4:10)¹
Series: Part 10 ... Living the Gospel
Title: Living the Gospel with Gratitude & Discipline
Date: April 18, 2010
Place: First Baptist Church, Olds, AB

This morning we return to Paul's First Letter to Timothy, a portion of God's Word that we've been thinking about off and on since October. When I began our study back in the fall I actually started in the middle of Paul's Letter and I did that because it's there that Paul gives us his reason for writing it. So this morning, to refresh our remembrance of that purpose and because it also connects with what follows, I'm going to read from Paul's First Letter to Timothy, beginning in chapter three verse 14 and reading through to chapter 4, verse 10.

This is God's Word. Paul wrote...

1 Timothy 3:14 I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, ¹⁵ if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. ¹⁶ Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of

godliness:

**He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated by the Spirit,
seen by angels,
proclaimed among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up in glory.**

1 Timothy 4:1 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, ² through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, ³ who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving 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 thanksgiving, ⁵ for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

⁶ 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. ⁷ Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; ⁸ for while bodily training is of

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some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.⁹ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance.¹⁰ For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

The reading started out in chapter three because there are two key truths there that we need to grasp if we're doing to understand what Paul says in chapter four.

First of all, in chapter three Paul referred to "the mystery of godliness" and then he describes "the mystery," not as a mysterious idea, or as a religious practice, but as a Person who has been revealed to us. **The "mystery of godliness" is none other than Jesus Christ**, sent from heaven, made flesh, who lived and died, and rose again and is now seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven. "The mystery of godliness" is the message about the life and death and resurrection of Jesus that has been proclaimed and believed on by people all over the world. "Godliness" is personified in Jesus. So when Paul challenges Timothy in chapter four to "train yourself for godliness" (4:7) he is telling him to direct his efforts to become like Jesus.

Second, Paul wrote about the importance of behaviour. He told Timothy that he was writing so that Timothy might know "how one ought to behave in the household of God." (3:15) When we began the study in the fall I emphasized the Bible truth that...

True belief always precedes godly behaviour

We don't "behave" our way into God's house. Acceptance by God comes through belief in Jesus Christ. But Paul is also concerned that we understand that ...

True belief always produces godly behaviour

When we truly believe in Jesus Christ, God's Spirit comes to reside in us and with us and he begins the process of making us like Jesus from the inside out. Paul's concern in this letter is about the behaviour of believers in Jesus and his concern is to make sure that we understand the importance of living in a way that corresponds with what we say we believe. And if we don't, not only will the good name of Jesus be tarnished, but our faith will also suffer! We cannot long live in God's house saying we believe one thing, while living another. Something will give. Either we will repent and bring our faith and our lives together or our faith and our lives will separate.

And that's the warning Paul gives us this morning...



“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...” 1 Timothy 4:1-2

When God makes something crystal clear, it’s because he wants to get our attention. He doesn’t want us to miss it. The warning is real; the warning is serious; and the warning applies to you and me. It’s not a warning for someone else; it’s a warning for you; and it’s a warning for me.

The Spirit warned us through Jesus. Jesus said...

“For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand.” Mark 13:22-23

The Spirit has warned us through Paul. Paul said ...

“I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert...” Acts 20:29-31

The Spirit has warned us through John, again and again. John wrote...

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22

Sit up; take notice; there’s danger about. And don’t think that the “later times” that the Spirit is speaking about are some far off day in the future. These are the “later times.” The “later times” are the days between Christ’s first coming and his return... those are the days in which we live! (cf. Heb 1:2; 1 Peter 1:20)

And don’t think that his warning is about people outside the household of God. It’s not. His warning is about “fierce wolves,” as Paul said, who will arise “from among your own selves....” Already in this letter Paul has named two such wolves: Hymenaeus and Alexander (1:20), and down through the centuries the list of wolves and their victims has grown steadily. Sadly, these men had been leaders in the church but they had rejected the faith and a “good conscience” (1:19) and, as Paul said...

“have made shipwreck of their faith” 1 Timothy 1:19

And they had contributed to the shipwreck of many others who had listened to their teaching.



“Oh,” you might say, “but it won’t happen to me!” Won’t it? Why? Why do we think it won’t happen to us? Why does the Spirit warn us so intensely if we don’t need to be concerned? The essence of what the Spirit is saying to us through Paul is this...

Unless we intentionally direct our lives to becoming increasingly more like Jesus in our thoughts and in our actions, the Holy Spirit warns us that we run the risk of making “shipwreck” of our faith!

You might say, “But these teachers were involved in demonism. I’m not involved in that!” Paul doesn’t say that these teachers were involved in demonism; he says that what they taught had its origin with demons. They weren’t necessarily involved in occultism; but they were teaching spiritual ideas that were actually birthed in hell.

What was it that they taught? There are **two streams of false teaching** that Paul addresses. These aren’t the only possible ways that people can be led away from true belief by they are very common means of deception.

The first stream of false teaching concerns those, Paul wrote, who...

“forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving” 1 Timothy 4:3

You might say: “That’s not a problem for me! I affirm marriage. I don’t have any particular food issues. I don’t find either of these teachings attractive. Why should I be concerned about them?” But I want to suggest to you that there is a root problem that makes these teachers very dangerous to our spiritual lives and the root problem is sadly common.

Paul tells us that...

“everything created by God is good” 1 Timothy 4:4

That is a statement rooted in Genesis chapter one where God declares every aspect of his creation to be “good.” God created the light and called it good. (Gen 1:4) God created the earth and the seas and called them “good.” (v.10) He created the vegetation, the sun, moon and stars, the creatures of the sea, the air and the land and he called each of his creations “good.” (v.12, 18, 25) And finally, he created the human race as male and female and he called his entire act of creation “very good.” (v.31)

In creating us as male and female **God created marriage**. Jesus, “the mystery of godliness” reminds us of that when he said...



“Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’ [Genesis 2:24]? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” Matthew 19:4-6

God has spoken; marriage is good! If God calls you to singleness, that’s good, too, according to what Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians chapter seven, but to reject the union of a man and woman as unspiritual and ungodly directly contradicts God. **God has called marriage “good.” But these teachers said, “No.”**

And food was created by God. When God created seed-bearing plants and fruit trees, the Bible tells us that he declared them “good.” (Genesis 1:12) And when Jesus addressed the issue of acceptable and unacceptable foods when he said...

“Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?” Mark 7:18-19

And the Gospel writer, Mark, added this note...

“(Thus he declared all foods clean.)” Mark 7:19

God has spoken: It’s all good! But these teachers said, “No.”

The central problem with these supposed teachers was that they set themselves against the authority of God and His Word. And that leads me to this warning...

Spiritual shipwrecks happen when we invent our own “rules for God’s household” in direct contradiction to the authority of God’s Word

You might not fall prey to people who create spiritual rules that forbid marriage or certain types of food, but have you considered the possibility that you have invented your own “household rules” for being a Christian? You see, the root issue is the authority of God’s Word in our lives. Let me give you a simple, non-threatening example that serves to make the point.

Next week we’re holding a baptism service. Over the years, I’ve heard numbers of people tell me that the reason they’ve put off being baptized is because it’s not essential for salvation. That’s true. Baptism is not essential for salvation. However, Jesus specifically commands that people who believe in him are to be baptized. (cf. Matthew 28:18-20) So when we say “Yes, I’m a believer in Jesus, but I won’t follow his command to be baptized because it’s not essential for my salvation” in essence we’re creating our own “house rules for the family of God.” When you think of it in those terms, the root danger represented by these false



teachers is really much closer to home than many of us realize! If we were to take a thorough inventory of our spiritual lives we may well find several areas that are out of line with God's Word. The Spirit's warning is real and it applies to you and me. We need to take it to heart.

The **second stream of false teaching** that Paul warns us about is found in his command...

“Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths.” 1 Timothy 4:7

The word “silly” translates a Greek word that literally means, “old wives’ tales.” Now, by Paul’s day it had come to be a figure of speech, not a direct assault on the wisdom of elderly women. In fact, later in this letter Paul commends elderly women and calls on the church to honour them for their faith and quality of life. (1 Timothy 5:2ff) “Silly” is a good translation of the word. It refers to people who are willing to believe anything. As one Bible scholar points out, it suggests “limitless credulity.” (Knight)

Let me give you an example. Some years ago I took a course on hospital visitation. It was intended for lay people and pastors who visited regularly in the hospital and so there were people in the course from a variety of churches in the city. During one of the class discussions we got talking about the challenges of ministering to people of different faiths in hospital and one of the class members suggested that, of course, we should be open to other faiths. After all, she informed us, Jesus had been trained in eastern meditation when he studied Buddhism in India.

That caught my attention. Not having read that in my New Testament, I asked her where she got that idea. “I saw it on the Discovery Channel,” she replied. Let me just say, there is absolutely no evidence in the New Testament to support what she said she saw on TV. The Jesus of the New Testament is steeped in the world of Judaism and the Torah, God’s Word. Jesus’ prayer is Father-focused and content-filled while eastern mediation focuses on emptying the mind. “Silly” is a good word to describe the suggestion that Jesus had travelled to India to study meditation.

Why would anyone fall for this stuff? Perhaps because they’re ignorant of what the Bible says about Jesus. They have no frame of reference to evaluate these kinds of suggestions. Perhaps it’s a love of novelty and mystery. These new ideas seem so “cool” and “counter cultural.”

But Paul warns us that...

Spiritual shipwrecks happen when we invent our own “mystery of godliness” rather than glory in the wonder of Jesus as he’s revealed in God’s Word!



And sad to say, “the Discovery Channel Jesus” and “the Da Vinci Code Jesus” are becoming increasingly popular. In a culture that loves the latest gadget and the newest things, these obscure, bizarre ideas have the appearance of novelty. The reality, however, is that most of them are very old ideas that were proven false centuries ago and discarded as nothing more than “irreverent, silly myths.” The reason we haven’t heard about them isn’t because someone in some secret society doesn’t want us to know the real truth about Jesus. It’s because these ideas were thrown out long ago because they’re trash!

Are we susceptible to this stream of thinking? Yes, I believe we are. We need to realize how much we absorb from what we see and hear on TV or in the movies; often, we take in far more than we realize.

Years ago Ruth and I took our kids to see the animated version of the story of Moses entitled, “The Prince of Egypt.” (Dreamworks, 1998) It’s fun; it’s entertaining; it was nice to see a Biblical story given such prominence in our culture.

As we left the theatre we talked with the kids about the film and asked them to compare it with what the Bible said about Moses. During the conversation, one of the kids mentioned that the movie had missed a key character but as we talked about it, it became clear that the character to which they were referring wasn’t found in the Bible, either. In fact, it was a character found in Cecil B. deMille’s movie, “The Ten Commandments,” (Paramount, 1956) which of course is also about Moses. *The Ten Commandments* finds its way onto our TV screens several times a year, and while the story is in broad brush faithful to the Biblical story, it takes liberties with the characters and dialogue. What had happened was simply that our kids had absorbed the Cecil B deMille “Moses” that they had seen on TV.

I say this simply to point out that we need to make sure that the Jesus we worship is not “the Discovery Channel Jesus” nor “the Da Vinci Code Jesus” nor the Jesus we invent in our own imaginations. We need to make sure that the Jesus we worship is the “mystery of godliness” revealed to us in the Bible.

So what do we do? How do we keep from making shipwreck of our faith? Let me suggest **five spiritual strategies that can help us keep our spiritual boat afloat.**

The first strategy I want to propose is that we...

Increase our knowledge of God’s truth

Paul suggests that the false teachers wouldn’t be able to sway those ...



“who believe and know the truth.” 1 Timothy 4:3

And where is “the truth” found? It’s found in God’s revelation, the Bible. In these few words to Timothy, Paul has cast his Biblical net very wide. He references the first chapter of the first book of the Old Testament, the Book of Genesis, when he declares that “everything created by God is good.” And then Paul commends Timothy as someone who is...

“being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed.” 1 Timothy 4:6

When Paul uses the expression “the words of the faith” he is referring to the Gospel story about Jesus (cf. 1 Tim 6:3) and when he uses the phrase “the good teaching” he is referring to the apostles’ doctrine and teaching (cf. 2 Tim 1:13; 4:15). (cf. Knight) In short, Paul has covered the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation.

Notice that Paul commends Timothy as someone who has followed God’s Word. He had been taught God’s Word by his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 3:15) and he had a long history of immersion in God’s truth. But Paul also refers to him as someone who is “being trained” in God’s Word. In other words, Timothy is continuing to immerse himself in God’s Word. It’s a process that never stops.

When I was in high school our pastor told us what his dad told him when he began his ministry. He said “Son, the secret to the ministry is to read the Word, and read it again, and read it again. Never stop learning the Word.”

Let me recommend a resource to you to help you with lifelong learning in the Word. It’s called “Explore” and it’s produced by a publisher called, The Good Book Company. It’s a daily Bible reading guide that leads you systematically through God’s Word, asking you questions and inviting you to respond to the truth you discover. I’ve got three copies of the April to June notes and I’ll let them go to anyone who promises to use them. You can purchase the notes online at...

www.thegoodbook.com

A year’s subscription will cost you about \$25 ... a great investment in your spiritual life!

The second strategy I want to encourage is that we...

Broaden our practice of God’s truth



The term “spirituality” is one that is quite common today. It essentially refers to viewing and living life from a spiritual point of view and the Bible encourages a very practical spirituality and we find it here in Paul’s letter. Whenever we take God’s truth and live by it, we’re engaging in “spirituality.”

Paul was talking about a spiritual view of life when he wrote...

“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.” 1 Timothy 4:4-5

Marriage is one of the most foundational human traditions around the world. Eating is one of the most basic activities of life. Both of these common, daily necessities are “spiritual” activities because God created them and has declared them to be “holy” according to his Word.

Even the most basic human act of eating our meals can be done in a spiritual manner. Paul is speaking about the spiritual practice of praying before meals when he talks about our food being “made holy by the word of God and prayer.” Even Jesus gave thanks for his food! (Mark 8:6-7)

All of created life is made holy because God’s Word has declared it to be “good.” G.K. Chesterton had a wonderful awareness of the spirituality of all of life. He wrote...

**You say grace before meals. All right.
But I say grace before the play and the opera,
And grace before the concert and pantomime,
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.²**

All of life is holy because God’s Word declares it so!

The third strategy I want to recommend is that we...

Reduce our distractions from God’s truth

Paul exhorts Timothy...

“Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths.” 1 Timothy 4:7

²As quoted in John R. W. Stott, *Guard the Truth : The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus*, Includes Study Guide: P. [215]-232., The Bible speaks today (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 115.



Let me free some of you from what seems to be an increasing obsession of the “information age.” We seem to think we need to explore every rabbit hole; we must chase down every rabbit trail; we must respond to every red herring ... NO WE DON'T!

You know it must be either Christmas or Easter when the Discovery Channel runs a two-hour special investigation designed to question a central teaching of the Christian faith. This Easter was no exception. The Discover Channel ran a two-hour probe into the question: Who Framed Jesus?

This was their advertising lead...

For two thousand years, blame for the murder of Jesus has rested squarely on the shoulders of Judas Iscariot and the Jewish High Priest. This gritty crime thriller exposes all-new suspects and asks whether we have condemned the wrong men?³

I won't bore you with the supposed revelations of this “crime thriller expose,” except to say that if you draw your information about Jesus' trial from the New Testament, well, the Discovery Channel thinks you might not have the real picture! Am I shocked? Not really. Did I watch it all? No. When it became obvious that they were doing their “same old same old” number on Jesus, I picked up the remote and changed the channel.

Why? Because God's Word frees me from having to listening to “irreverent, silly myths.” There are good questions about the Bible that deserve to be answered, but not every question is a good one and not every question deserves an answer. Jesus didn't answer every question and you and I don't have to either. By the way, if you're looking for good answers to the “rabbit holes and red herrings” of the Discovery Channel or the Da Vinci Code variety, check out...

www.thetruthaboutdavinci.com

Fourthly, I want to challenge us to...

Discipline our engagement with God's truth

Paul challenges Timothy and us to...

“Rather train yourself for godliness.” 1 Timothy 4:7

This calls for a little more than a passing knowledge of the information contained in the Bible. It involves some serious effort and serious study. The word “train”

³ <http://dsc.discovery.com/tv/discovery-sunday/episode-guide.html>



in Greek is the word from which we draw our word, “gymnasium.” The Greek gymnasium was a place of serious effort and training.

Paul often used athletic word pictures to describe the effort that the Christian life and ministry called forth. He wrote to the believers in Corinth...

“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.” 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Bible scholar and pastor, Kent Hughes, notes that we often recoil from the word “discipline.” He wrote...

Discipline sounds so much like legalism. But such thinking is mistaken. Legalism is self-centered, but discipline is God-centered. The legalistic heart says, “I will do this thing to gain merit with God.” The disciplined heart says, “I will do this thing because I love God and want to please him.”⁴

Billy Graham tells the story of his father-in-law, Dr. Nelson Bell, who, despite the fact that he ran a 400-bed hospital in China, often on his own, made it a point...

“to rise every morning at four-thirty and spend two to three hours in Bible reading. He didn’t do his correspondence or any of his other work. He just read the Scriptures every morning, and he was a walking Bible encyclopedia. People wondered at the holiness and the greatness in his life.”

Kent Hughes notes that he “asked a personal friend, Dr. Ken Gieser, who worked with Dr. Bell about this, and he affirmed every word.”⁵

Finally, I want to confidently encourage us to...

Set our hope in the One Who Is the Truth

Paul wrote...

“For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God...” 1 Timothy 4:10

⁴R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus : To Guard the Deposit.*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2000), 108.

⁵Billy Graham, as quoted in R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus : To Guard the Deposit.*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2000), 108.



All this training is for him and for his glory. And in the final analysis, it isn't our effort or our preparation that will keep our spiritual boat afloat and stop us from making shipwreck of our faith. It's God and his promise to keep us that is our true source of hope and confidence. Paul understood that his hope wasn't rooted in his toiling and striving for godliness. His confidence was rooted in "the living God" because, as Paul said...

"I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto *him* against that day." 2 Timothy 1:12 (KJV)

Have you "set your hope" in Him? If you set your hope in him, you can trust him. I love Paul's words of benediction to the believers in Thessalonica. He wrote...

"Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it." 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

- **Invitation to Prayer**
- **Final Song: #527 I Know I Have Believed**
- **Benediction**