

**Dear Son**  
**Part Six**  
Bill Rogers

Last week, Ted shared that he had asked me to share with him in this series because he needed an elder to come along side the young elder. I thought about that. When I was Ted's age now, I had completed the University of Florida, went to the army for four years, got married, had four boys, had moved five times, and had changed careers three times. That's what elders do. They get older and that is why I'm sharing this with you.

There are a couple of things before we get started. Starting Point is September 12<sup>th</sup>. That is the ramp into church membership. Another thing we need to do is to be praying for our kids who are on the road as we speak, going to Texas. We are going to pass the offering buckets and fill those up before they get to the back. If you would start these right now, we would appreciate it.

I always try to give you something to take away, so this morning, I'm going to do the same thing. A highway patrolman pulled along side a speeding car on the freeway. Glancing at the car, he was astonished to see that the blond behind the wheel was knitting. Realizing that she was oblivious to his flashing lights and siren, the trooper cranked down his window, turned on his bull horn and yelled, "Pull over!" "No," the blond replied, "it's a scarf." Ask a blond, they'll tell you how that goes.

This morning, we are going to deal with some interesting topics in 1 Timothy 4, the first eight verses. It has to do with the Gnostics, those who generally believe that they have secret knowledge about God, humanity, and the rest of the universe of which the general population is really unaware. It gets us into talking about some things this morning.

Before we get there, I just want to remind you that if you are a believer, you can read some things like this and say maybe I'm not really a Christian. Let me tell you what I'm talking about. In John 10: 27-30, Jesus said this: ***My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup>My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. <sup>30</sup>I and the Father are one.***"

If you are a child of God, remember what Jesus said. You are eternally his; no one can snatch you or take you out of his hand. We want to just settle that up front because there are some who teach that when you have salvation, you can drift completely away from salvation. That's not true, according to the Bible. Paul's prediction in the Verses 1-8 is a continuation today; it's still going on. There are examples of false teaching sited in our text that are still problematic in our churches and in our country. The Gnostics today are in various groups throughout the country that I just Googled this week. Google has all kinds of stuff.

One group is called The New Consciousness Groups. They are an interesting group. I just read some of the reviews of some of the books that have been written on The New Consciousness Groups. One of the books was written by a fellow named Robert Simmons. The review on this book is really interesting. It says in his book, *Stones of the New Consciousness*, Robert Simmons takes us deeper in the realm of stone beings and teaches us how to relate to the stones in new ways and shows us how to procreate with the soul of the world to help us on the earth evolve. I have no idea what that means, but it's not what we would even think of, and it's in our culture today. It's people who believe in stone beings and wants us to learn how to relate to stones.

I know that years ago, kids had things called pet rocks, but I don't even know what that was. I didn't have kids then. But that's what is out there and those who focus on demonology are becoming common on the American scene. I don't know if you know this, but there are 100,000 practicing witches in the United States. Of that, there are those who set themselves apart. In our colleges today, we have seven universities that are teaching courses in witchcraft. Interestingly enough, there are some who have a false piety and they go by the standard of living that says no meat, no impure foods and no sex. No thank you. It's crazy, but that's where we are; that's what is happening in our world today.

Paul comes along and gives Timothy some thoughts on the present danger. He says Timothy, you are going to face some things in your ministry. We are still facing those things in our ministry. Look at Verse 1 of 1 Timothy 4. ***The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.*** The Spirit clearly says... Some believe that takes us back and Paul was inspired at that moment to write about this because, in the previous verses of Chapter 3, that we looked at last week, he says that he may delay his coming. But in that sense, he says "I just want to write to you some important things that you need to remember so that people will know how to behave in the house of God." So this is part of that. He feels an impression of the Holy Spirit to not delay teaching this; the Spirit clearly says something. This is prediction; it is something that is going to happen and it's going to happen in Timothy's life. It's something where the Spirit announces there is trouble ahead.

No pastor, I don't care who they are, likes to hear that. I used to go away from ministry and go on a vacation and then I almost hated to go back to my office. That's because when you reach that door and open that office, you can walk in and find all kinds of things. There are letters that you received and things that are happening. Most of it is good news, but some of it is not good news. To Timothy, this was not good news. Even being forewarned did not make what he was about to hear less threatening.

Paul says "that in later times." This does not imply the end of the age of grace, but he is simply saying later on, in your ministry, you are going to run into people who are deceivers and you are going to have to handle that. That threat is ongoing today. Some have abandoned the faith and the faith he is talking about there is the Christian doctrine. He says some have abandoned that.

Before the savior's body was even cold, there was a plot to mislead and misguide etched in the hearts of people who were following Satan's plan. When we go back and look at that, that movement is still alive today. Many denounce the doctrines that we teach.

One of the essential doctrines of the Christian faith is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Gnostics never believed in the resurrection and there are those who do not believe that today.

So Paul says it's going to happen. Later in your ministry, you are going to see that. If you would, go back in your mind to Matthew 27. There is a plot that is being hatched by the chief priest and the Pharisees. They go in and see Pilate and Jesus is dead; he's been placed in a tomb. They said "We remember that, while he was alive, that deceiver said 'After three days, I will rise again.' So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day, otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. The last deception will be worse than the first." So there is this message. Pilate tells them to secure it; to do whatever they need to do.

They put a big stone in front of the tomb, sealed it off, and put guards there. You know the story. The angel of God came down, there was an earthquake, and he simply rolled the stone back and sat on top of it. He was like lightning and his clothes were white as snow and the guards guarding that tomb, fell down like dead men.

Later in Chapter 28: 11, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priest everything that had happened. **...some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened.** <sup>12</sup>**When the chief priests had met with the elders...** These are the same that went to Pilate and said we need to guard this tomb. **...and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money,** <sup>13</sup>**telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.'** <sup>14</sup>**If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble."** <sup>15</sup>**So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.**

Isn't that interesting? They come to Pilate and say, "Hey, we need to seal this off because his disciples could come and steal the body away and tell people that he rose." Then, when he arose from the dead, the angel rolls the stone back, not to let Jesus out, but to let us see in and it is empty; he's not there. Then the guards stand back and then guess what happened. They talk about it and the same group that said we've got to get this sealed off, now come up with the same story. They said "Hey, his disciples came while we were asleep and they stole the body" and that circulated. That's false doctrine.

How many abandoned the faith? We don't really know. In 2 Timothy 1: 15, Paul says this: **You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me...** and he includes the names of two leaders at that time... everyone had deserted him. They may have held that truth intellectually and when the pressure came on, they abandoned truth. It could have been a group of people that were just hanging around the Christian community and when the pressure was on, they took off, but Paul says everyone in the province of Asia had deserted him.

It's interesting to think about counterfeit Christians in the church today, but I'll be honest with you; you have to believe that's true. There are some in the church who have made a profession, but it doesn't check out in reality. Otherwise, we would not be arguing over the color of carpet and the color of pads in the pews and all of the minor issues that churches fight about. There are some folks in there that kind of stir that up.

The simplicity of the gospel is that the most distant from God can be reached through the power of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There are some who don't believe that; they've taken the truth and twisted it to fit their lifestyle. We hear about those things all the time.

It says "and follow deceiving spirits." Deception has her spiritual emissaries of every kind and if they can do so, they come in and darken the hearts of men and destroy them. For tinders of inspiration, these false teachers draw foolish men away and keep them until their destiny is sealed.

My wife's step-father's name is Otto and Otto is a brilliant man. He is an aeronautical engineer. He worked at the Cape in Florida at the first moon shot and he stayed down there after they lost some astronauts on the pad. Do you remember that? He designed the escape route for them to get out if something ever happened. He is a brilliant guy. One day, I had the opportunity to sit down and talk to Otto. I said, "I just want to share something with you." He knew I was in the ministry. He was really a very proper guy. I said, "Otto, I'm going to be her all week; don't do that." Every time I would walk into the room, he would stand up. "Otto, I'm here; don't do that."

So I got down and started explaining to him the simplicity of the gospel and he looked at me and he said, "Bill, that's too simple; there's got to be more." I said, "No, there's not any. Jesus' death on the cross was enough." To my knowledge, he never became a believer because he was deceived. He followed that deceptive spirit that was there.

In our church in South Florida, we had a man who became a believer and he was a big guy; he was about 6'4", 230 or 240 pounds. He owned a body shop and an auto repair shop. He put his kids in our Christian school and he really started growing. He was so excited that he would go anywhere to hear anything. He ended up in a camp somewhere in the state of Florida and came back with new knowledge of the return of Christ.

He came into my office and he was all excited to tell me that he knew when Jesus was coming back. He said I don't know the date, but I know the year. He said "You've got to start preaching on that." I said "I can't do that. I don't believe that." I said, "I'm sorry, but you are confused." He got extremely angry with me. I said, "I will never let you say a word to any of our people in our church and if you continue to do so, I will call attention to you."

He left our church. He went to another church. That pastor called me and said, "Hey, do you know this guy?" I said, "I sure do." He said, "He's nuts." I said, "Okay... you got it."

But he was confused. I'd love to go back and talk to him now because his date has passed 15 or 20 years ago. He was so convinced by these deceiving spirits that this was true. I said no, it's not true; it's not according to the word of God.

He goes on ...***follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.*** The first demonic doctrine is in Genesis 3. When you look at that, it is Satan speaking, through a serpent, to Eve. God had forbid them to eat this particular fruit of this particular tree.

Satan, in the form of a serpent, told Eve this: ***You will not surely die...<sup>5</sup> "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God...*** Since then, every demonic doctrine goes back to that route of being your own God. "You can call your own shots, you can do your own thing, and you can justify your own soul. There's no such thing as a God you worship; you can be that." These demons have a tremendous hold on those that believe that error. The route is take charge of your life, do your own thing. That's a demonic doctrine.

1 Timothy 4 – ***<sup>2</sup>Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.*** Such teaching comes through hypocritical liars. The word *hypocrite* comes from the Greek language. It was a popular term that was given to actors in plays that they had in Greece at that time. It was these Greek culture actors. They acted a certain part on stage, but when they left the stage, they were an entirely different person. When you translate that into the church today, there are some who have that appearance of being a Christian; they show up for one hour a week, but when they leave, they become who they really are and he says they are hypocritical liars, whose conscience has been seared as with a hot iron.

There is a real danger in continuing to do what is wrong, knowing it's wrong. As you continue to do that, the conscience becomes numb to that. I've never been burned badly, but I've met people who have. They will show you an ugly scar where they've been burned and you can touch it and they do not feel it; it's dead. The nerves underneath that burn are dead and they don't feel it. It's like it is being seared; it's being burned. As it does that, the longer you go on, the easier it becomes to continue down that path and the devil sucks in people that way.

The Holy Spirit convicts them and they shy away. Sometimes we see that conviction in the lives of Christians when we go away. But hear me, if you are a child of God, he will get your attention and sometimes, it's very painful. But he will get your attention if you are his child.

In our church in South Florida, my wife and I were talking this week about how many strange things we ran into in our church. We had a young man who was Australian. He was born in Australia to an Australian lady and his dad was an American officer in the military. His name was Christopher Wilder. Chris came to South Florida and got into the building trade and made a ton of money at that time. He lived in a mansion. He drove the most expensive cars I've ever seen and he dressed nice.

One of the guys that worked with Chris invited him to come to a men's fellowship. He came to a men's fellowship. I met him and talked to him and realized that there was a guy that had it all. He had that Australian accent, the good looks, the nice car, the mansion; it was amazing. He came back to our church several times.

One of the treasurers of our church came to me and said, "Pastor, I don't want to alarm you, but someone in our church has a guilty conscience." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Not every week, but every now and then, we will have an envelope with seven one hundred dollar bills in it." We tried to figure out who it was and then all of the sudden it dawned on us that it was probably Chris. We don't know that for sure, but every time he came, there as seven one hundred dollar bills in an envelope.

To make a very long, sad story short, Chris Wilder was a serial murder and a sex offender. He was killed, I think, in New Hampshire, trying to get to Canada. He had killed at least eight women in South Florida. I went back and Googled his name and reread that. I thought “good grief; can you believe that?” How can you do that? How can you so sear your conscience so that you have no feeling about anything? That is the work of the devil. I say to you, as a Christian, keep shorts and accounts. Don’t let things go that the spirit of God convicts you of.

**<sup>3</sup>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.** These hypocritical priests pretended that the single life was more favorable to devotion to God and that it would lead to perfection. As you look at that, that’s the favorite sentiment of some sects of the Jews at that time. Singleness, don’t get married. Later it became predominant in the Romanist church who demanded of their clergy that they remain single and celibate and that they take a vow to do so.

When I was in the army, I met a young man and we just started talking about school. I found out that he had been in a seminary for years and was almost a priest, but he said he just struggled with the thing about singleness for the rest of his life. He said “I said all the prayers and all the things I was supposed to do and one day I was out skiing in Colorado. I was coming down the slopes and there were some girls there and I just kind of started showing off.” He said, “I just stopped myself and thought ‘whoa, you can’t do that.’”

He said, “Okay, I’m going to put that out of my mind and I’m going to give it one more shot.” He went back to the top of the hill and came down. He said, “I’ll be honest with you; before I got to the bottom of the hill, I was doing everything I could to attract attention to me.” He went back and quit.

Those hypocritical priests said don’t get married and abstain from certain foods. There are some that stick to that today. They can’t eat meat on certain days and they can’t eat certain meats. It describes the legalistic teachers who depart from the faith and they are there around us.

Listen, it’s not about forbidding certain things to get right with God. It’s admitting certain things to get right with God. It’s admitting that you are a sinner and Jesus Christ died for your sins and if you will accept him, your sins are forgiven. And then it becomes self-discipline after you are saved. It becomes self-discipline to be what you need to be as a child of God so you can grow in your faith.

In Verse 4 he says ***For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving...*** I will let you in on a secret and you’ve heard this before from this pulpit. Marriage is God’s idea. That doesn’t mean everybody is going to get married or has to get married, but it is God’s idea. He came up with it. ***For everything God created is good.*** Marriage is good. We defend marriage and fight for the family at Woodland Hills. That’s why we changed our name from Woodland Hills Community Church to Woodland Hills Family Church. When your pastor, Ted Cunningham, is not here, he is somewhere defending and teaching on marriage. That’s our heartbeat as a church.

When you look at what some people do, they set out rules that have no meaning; they are ritualistic. And if you have a problem with food, it’s not about abstaining from food, it’s about control.

When you look down in Verse 5, he says, ***because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.*** Genesis 2: 18 says ***The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."*** God gave us marriage and marriage is between a man and a woman. That's kind of confused sometimes in our culture, but it is between a man and a woman. Then he says not everyone, as I said before, has to be married. Some will and some will not, but life was meant to be shared with others. You can't live life by yourself. You need others to challenge you.

Then, in Genesis 1: 29 - ***Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.*** God says everything that I've given you is yours for food.

And then in Genesis 9: 3 - ***Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything.*** God's provision for us in a mate and in food is to be set apart with thanksgiving. It's appropriate for us; it's something that we should take on.

I have done a lot of weddings and in every wedding, you stand before your family, your friends, and God All Mighty, and you make a vow to another individual to be there until death parts you. It's a solemn vow. It is to be received from God with thanksgiving. I thank God for my wife. I am amazed that she is still sane, living with me as long as she has. I'm so grateful. Then food is to be received with thanksgiving. It's from the hand of God to you.

Then here's the duty that Timothy is to have, beginning in Verse 6. ***If you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, brought up in the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed.*** I'll be honest with you; I usually have no problem at all pointing out your problems. It's pretty easy for me to say hey, you need to get your act together here or straighten this up. But when someone comes to me, I'm a little bit more sensitive to that. That's just who we are. But he says I want you to point these things out to your brothers; I want you to be a good minister of Jesus Christ, a good servant. You need to take the truths that you have learned and point them out because, Timothy, you've been brought up in the truths of the faith and of the good teachings that you have followed. Take those things that you've learned and share them with someone else.

That's why we are big believers in life groups, small groups. It's so that we can see our truth with one another. You will grow if you are put under pressure to get into a life group and study the word together. It will help you; it's that pressure. He says, Timothy, you've been taught these things, you've been brought up in this; now teach them to other people. It would be a tremendous experience for you just to get involved, one on one, with someone and learn and grow together.

***7Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly.*** The reference there is to some of the writings of the Jewish people. Back then they were just ridiculous fables. I was raised in the south and my grandparents were blue collar farmers. They used to do all kinds of things that were myths.

I can remember one time a cardinal flew into the window of their house when I was visiting my grandparents out on the farm. My aunt, an older lady, took my shirt and ripped it. She said that was a bad sign. She said that cardinal means blood. You have to do this. I thought that was the dumbest thing I had ever heard.

That's what he's talking about. Some of these foolish fables... He said don't have anything to do with that, but rather train yourself to be godly. That word train comes from the Greek word *gymnazo* where we get gymnasium or gymnastics. It pictures physical training that's hard and difficult. He takes that from the Greek culture where they were big on all of those kinds of things and he brings it to us as Christians. He says you need to be active in training yourself to be godly. That verb is in the present tense, which indicates it is a constant pursuit. Timothy has to continually do that.

It's amazing how when we get to those disciplines, we are following Christ, following his example. In 1 Corinthians 11: 1, Paul said this. ***Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.*** In 1 Peter 2: 21, Peter said ***To this you are called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow his steps.*** In Philippians 2: 5, Paul said ***Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.*** Romans 12: 2 – ***Do not be conformed any longer to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.*** That's our model – follow Jesus. When we look at that, he is saying don't hang onto these fables, follow Jesus.

***<sup>8</sup>For physical training is of some value...*** And it is. A friend of mine, Eddy Lions, was a missionary to the Philippines for many years of his life, and now he pastors a church. He has lost about 100 pounds, maybe not that much, but he has worked on it. Physical training has some value; there is no question about that. ***...but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.***

It's spiritual training, godliness, putting God in the proper perspective in his holiness. Just as the body needs proper nutrition, so does your soul. Matthew 4: 4 says ***Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"***

I used to ask all my kids, and I'm sure you do too, what they learned when they get out of Sunday school or a Bible study. My little guy, Tim, one day he said "Dad, I learned we have to eat lots of meat." I said "Really? You learned that in Sunday school?" He said, "Yea, the teacher said you can't live by bread." We feed our soul.

Jesus said this in John 6:48-51. ***I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup>Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. <sup>50</sup>But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. <sup>51</sup>I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*** How do you do that? You do that by believing in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus is God who came down from heaven and died on the cross for us. The second thing you need to do is to daily read his word. One of the greatest steps to spiritual fitness is taking the word of God and reading it.

EV Hill, a black pastor of years ago, preached one time and he got to this point in his sermon and he said the word of God is the best food for the soul. He said when you are down, the word of God will lift you up. When you are lost, it will help you find your way. When you are fearful, it will give you courage. When you are weak, it will give you strength. When you are hurting, it will give you healing. You need to believe, you need to read the word, and you need to spend time with God in prayer. It's a relationship, not a religion; it's time with God.

It's interesting that we can train our bodies to do all kinds of exciting things, but if you train doing the wrong thing, you won't get the end result you are looking for. That's why the Holy Spirit is your guide as you read the word of God. If you will just yield yourself to his guidance, you will get it right.

What happens when a person who has been training hard just quits all of the sudden? Does that same level of proficiency still exist? No. You've seen football players after football and their careers are over. They balloon up to big guys. They are not as proficient as they used to be. You will not be either, spiritually, if all the sudden you just stop reading the Bible, stop spending time with God, or stop praying.

Be what God wants you to be. Listen to the Spirit of God; it guides you. If you've never accepted Christ, today could be that day for you.