

# Later Times Teachings of Demons

*The Pillar of 1 Timothy*

**1Tim 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,

<sup>2</sup> through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared,

<sup>3</sup> who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

<sup>4</sup> For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving,

<sup>5</sup> for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths.

(1 Timothy 4:1-7a)

## Socrates' Dæmon.

**Socrates** (470 – 399 BC) is considered by many to be the father of philosophy. He was put to death by the Athenian city government which had charged him on two counts. **The first** was that he had corrupted the youth of Athens through his impious and incessant questioning of everyone in the city. These unceasing interrogations through what we now call the Socratic Method earned him the nickname,

“**The Athenian Gadfly.**” (A gadfly is a person who interferes with the status quo of a society or community by posing novel, potentially upsetting questions, usually directed at authorities.) **The second** charge was that he had failed to acknowledge the gods of the city and was instead **introducing “new gods.”** They gave him a choice: exile or death; Socrates famously chose to drink poisonous hemlock.

It is **this second charge** that interests me now. What could this mean, *introducing new gods*? Someone writes, “**If you track the history of Greco-Roman philosophy, how it influenced civilizations, how it influenced emperors and kings, how it spawned natural philosophy and thus natural science, it is easy to forget that at the start of it all was an Oracle.**”<sup>1</sup> An Oracle is a person considered to provide wise counsel or prophetic predictions, as inspired by deities. As such, they are diviners. This particular Oracle was the famous **Oracle of Delphi**—a high priestess called Pythia (from *puthein*—“to rot”; referring to the sickly sweet smell of the decomposing body of Python who was slain by Apollo). The story goes that some of Socrates’ friends went to the Oracle to inquire the name of the wisest person in the world. The Oracle replied, “**Socrates.**”

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<sup>1</sup> **Equanimous Rex**, “Socrates’ Daemon and Ancient Oracles,” *Modern Mythology* (July 1, 2017), <https://modernmythology.net/socratess-daemon-and-ancient-oracles-c5c080641ae5>. The short history of what follows in this paragraph comes from this paper.

When Socrates got wind that his name blew her lips, he set out to prove her wrong. This ironically began his life-long quest to search out wisdom in the form of his Socratic Method, which got him into so much trouble.

As curious as it is that western philosophy emanated from the mouth of a supernatural Oracle, what is even more curious to me is how Socrates constantly mentions how he has been guided throughout his life by a *daemon*. It is from here that the charge of introducing new gods really seems to have arisen. He tells us, “You have heard me speak at sundry times and in diverse places of an oracle or sign which comes to me, and is the divinity (*daimonion*) which Meletus ridicules in the indictment. This sign, which is a kind of voice, first began to come to me when I was a child; *it always forbids* but never commands me to do anything which I am going to do. This is what deters me from being a politician” (Plato, *Apology* 31D).

What this *daemon* was has been the study of speculation for millennia. Apuleius called them, “Intermediate powers of a divine order” who “fashion dreams” and “inspire soothsayers.” Maximus of Tyre called them “gods of the second rank, placed between earth and heaven.” Madame Blavatsky said his daemon was “the god or Divine Entity which inspired him all his life” (I’ll say more about her and

her ilk later). **Plato**, who first told us about it, seems to think of it as **a kind of spirit which is separate from us**, is received by man at his birth, and which follows him in life and after death. Given that it would always warn Socrates if he was doing something inappropriate, but remain silent if he did good, he and others after him<sup>2</sup> seem to have identified it with *the conscience*.<sup>3</sup>

A problem with this identification, however, is that Plato tells us that very few men are in possession of it, so **how could it be the conscience?** One exception seems to have been **Apollonius of Tyana**.<sup>4</sup> He seems to have possessed it, or perhaps been in possession by it. Apollonius (ca. 1-97 AD) lived some 400-500 years after Socrates. In fact, he was **a contemporary with both Jesus and Paul**. Even more curious, Apollonius, who was born in Tyana (modern Turkey), studied in **Tarsus**, the birthplace of Saul/Paul, some sixty miles to the south. Still more curious, having apparently travelled extensively to the east (perhaps all the way to India), the end of his life is tied directly to **the city of**

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. **Plutarch**, *De Genio Socratis* or *On the Genius [or Demon] of Socrates* 10. XX: Conscience in Ancient Thought, in **Henry Chadwick**, *Studies on Ancient Christianity* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), 15, <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=Nh0rV-GJ-ZIC&pg=PR20-IA14&dq=De+genio+Socratis&hl=en&sa=X&ei=pyk5VvH5M4LkaMr5gOgD&ved=0CDoQ6AEwBA#v=onepage&q=De%20genio%20Socratis&f=false>.

<sup>3</sup> These are from the summary at “Socrates & the Daimon,” <https://daemonpage.com/socrates-daimon.php>.

<sup>4</sup> This suggestion comes from “**Nature of the Daimon**: Voice of the Higher Presence,” *Alchemy Lab*, <https://www.alchemylab.com/daimon.htm>.

Ephesus where on Sept 18, 96 AD, the emperor Domitian was murdered, Apollonius was said to have seen the event while in Ephesus “about midday” even though it occurred in Rome, saying, “Take heart, gentlemen, for the tyrant has been slain this day.”<sup>5</sup>

Apollonius is a fascinating figure in world history.<sup>6</sup> He became a devoted Pythagorean philosopher, and it was at this time that he began to hear his daemon. He was an ascetic vegetarian, mystic, and supposed miracle worker. Besides the impossible knowledge of Domitian’s death, he was also said to have warned the citizens of Ephesus of an impending plague, but they ignored his warning until it struck them. Having remembered his prophecy, he told them they needed to stone a wretched beggar to death. They heeded his advice and having removed a pile of stones under which he laid, they found a black dog which Apollonius explained was the real cause of the plague.

Sometimes, Christian writers were sympathetic towards him because of his “lifelong chastity, avoidance of alcohol, and devotion to a religion that rejected sacrifices to the Roman gods.” Some scholars have looked at the remarkable

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<sup>5</sup> Cassius Dio 67.18; Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii* 8.26–27.

<sup>6</sup> The following facts are taken from “Apollonius of Tyana,” *New World Encyclopedia*, [https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Apollonius\\_of\\_Tyana](https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Apollonius_of_Tyana).

similarities and tried to conclude that Apollonius actually was Paul!<sup>7</sup> Even more bizarrely, occultists like Alice A. Bailey try to identify at least his spirit as an Ascended Master and/or the embodiment of Jesus. Blavatsky again said that he is “perhaps less metaphysical and more practical than Jesus” but he taught the same “high moral truths” that Jesus did. This direct comparison of Apollonius to Jesus goes all the way back to the beginning and it caused the church Historian Eusebius to write an entire book dedicated to showing that “Apollonius was not fit to be classed, I will not say, among philosophers, but even among men of integrity and good sense, much less to be compared with our Saviour Christ” (Eusebius, *Against Hierocles* IV). Instead, his miracles were performed “with the co-operation of a demon” and his premonitions came, he said because of the “lightness and purity of his diet”<sup>8</sup> but “were imparted to him in intercourse [contact] with a demon” (XXXI).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> For example, see the Editorial Note in *American Journal of Philology* XXXV.137 (1914), ed. Basil L. Gildersleeve, 85-87. [https://www.google.com/books/edition/American\\_Journal\\_of\\_Philology/Y5LPA4AAAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=apollonius+paul&pg=PA86&printsec=frontcover](https://www.google.com/books/edition/American_Journal_of_Philology/Y5LPA4AAAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=apollonius+paul&pg=PA86&printsec=frontcover). Alvin Kuhn (a Theosophist?) suggests that Apollonius might be Apollos of the NT ([Acts 18:24-26](#); [1Cor 3:6](#); [16:12](#)), but the preview in Google Books doesn't continue and so I can't tell if he thinks this is valid. Based on what we know of Apollonius, I would say absolutely no, not the same man. See Alvin Boyd Kuhn, *A Rebirth for Christianity* (Wheaton, IL: Quest Books, 1970, 2005), 179ff.

<sup>8</sup> Found in *Life of Apollonius*, by Philostratus, Eusebius recalls that when Domitian put him on trial and asked him how he made his predictions, he replied, “Because, my prince, I use a very light diet, I was the first to scent the danger.” (Eusebius, XXIII).

<sup>9</sup> **Going Deeper.** It appears to me that much of Apollonius' biography was fabricated to mirror Christ, not to say that he *was* Christ, but to *discredit* Christianity and Jesus as a god. What better

The [Socrates connection to a demon](#) provides an interesting comparison to our passage today, especially as it relates to the interpretation of the [conscience](#). But the Apollonius connection of the same, along with his lifelong [chastity](#), strict [vegetarianism](#), and overlapping [Ephesus](#) connection [contemporary](#) with Paul and Timothy is really something to think about. It seems to me there is just too much here to be a coincidence and we will think more about it as we move along.

## 1 Timothy 4:1-7a – Context and Structure

We are coming into [the second half of 1 Timothy](#). We need to recall that we have just looked at what is certainly

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way to do that than to greatly embellish an already famous mystic's story? Sadly, what Eusebius dealt with, we still have to deal with today. For example, Bart Ehrman—the famous Fundamentalist turned Agnostic—tells us he begins his New Testament class (gotta love those Agnostic's who teach the Bible for a living) by describing an important figure from the first century, without revealing who it is. The person he describes is Apollonius, and his purpose is two-fold. 1. To show that both men really existed; 2. To show that neither man was actually a god (for the record, he says he does not believe Apollonius was born of a virgin or raised the dead (contra the quote below); and of course he doesn't believe either for Jesus as well). [“Even before he was born, it was known that he would be someone special. A supernatural being informed his mother that the child she was to conceive would not be a mere mortal but would be divine. He was born miraculously, and he became an unusually precocious young man. As an adult he left home and went on an itinerant preaching ministry, urging his listeners to live, not for the material things of this world, but for what is spiritual. He gathered a number of disciples around him, who became convinced that his teachings were divinely inspired, in no small part because he himself was divine. He proved it to them by doing many miracles, healing the sick, casting out demons, and raising the dead. But at the end of his life, he roused opposition, and his enemies delivered him over to the Roman authorities for judgment. Still, after he left this world, he returned to meet his followers in order to convince them that he was not really dead but lived on in the heavenly realm. Later some of his followers wrote books about him.”](#) [Bart D. Ehrman](#), *Did Jesus Exist?: The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth* (Harper Collins, 2012), 208. Another short recounting of the parallels is the beginning of [H. P. Blavatsky](#), “Apollonius Tyaneus and Simon Magus,” *Theosophist* (June 1881), <http://theosophy.org/Blavatsky/Articles/ApolloniusTyaneusAndSimonMagus.htm>.

the theological heart of the letter, if not also its structural heart. In three verses the Apostle tells Timothy that he is writing so that he might know how one “ought to behave in the household of God,” that is “the church of the living God” (1Tim 3:15). Godliness is how the church and its leaders are to be known to those inside and outside its confines.

However, at just this point, he gives Timothy a great mystery. Godliness, he says, comes from *doctrine*, right doctrine, apostolic doctrine. Specifically, godliness is created in the heart of a person who has believed the central message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ—his incarnation, his life and ministry, his sacrificial death, his resurrection, his ascension, all done for them ... and how this proclamation has been proclaimed and believed by so many (16).

This movement from *behavior to doctrine* is now mirrored in reverse order in the totality of 1 Timothy 4, which moves from *demonic doctrines* that teach *false godliness*, to right doctrine that promotes true godliness. As such, 1 Tim 3:14-4:16 form a single unit of thought that we might call “True Godliness vs. False Godliness.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Jonathan Menn, “The Thematic Structure of 1 Timothy 3:14-4:16,” *The American Journal of Biblical Theology* 21(52) (Dec 27, 2020), 8, <https://www.biblicaltheology.com/Research/MennJ01.pdf>.

When you read through the chapter, it seems at first glance like vv. 1-5 dealing with demonic doctrines are their own unit, vv. 6-10 which climax in the saving work of Christ are a second, and vv. 11-16 dealing with instructions to Timothy on how to train himself for godliness is a third. And this is how some break it down.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, some have noticed that there seems to be a kind of thought for thought parallel between 1-5 and 6-10, thus seemingly forming one unit.<sup>12</sup>

<b>A A'</b>	<sup>1</sup> Now the Spirit expressly says	<sup>6</sup> If you put these things before the brothers,
<b>B B'</b>	that in later times some will depart from the faith	you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith
<b>C C'</b>	by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons,	and of the good doctrine that you have followed.
<b>D D'</b>	<sup>2</sup> through the insincerity of liars	<sup>7</sup> Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths.
<b>E E'</b>	whose consciences are seared,	Rather train yourself for godliness;
<b>F F'</b>	<sup>3</sup> who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods	<sup>8</sup> for while bodily training is of some value,
<b>G G'</b>	that God created to be received with thanksgiving	godliness is of value in every way,
<b>H H'</b>	by those who believe	as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.
<b>I I'</b>	and know the truth.	<sup>9</sup> The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance.
<b>J J'</b>	<sup>4</sup> For everything created by God is good,	<sup>10</sup> For to this end we toil and strive,
<b>K K'</b>	and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving,	because we have our hope set on the living God,
<b>L L'</b>	<sup>5</sup> for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.	who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

<sup>11</sup> For example, Ryken.

<sup>12</sup> The following chart comes from Joseph Norris, "Heretics in the Latter Days: The Structure of 1 Timothy, Part III," *Theopolis* (June 16, 2014), <https://theopolisinstitute.com/heretics-in-the-latter-days-the-structure-of-1-timothy-part-iii/>. Norris also sees these two passages as K, K' chiastic center of the letter. See Joseph Norris, "Heretics in the Latter Days: The Structure of 1 Timothy, Part I," *Theopolis* (June 4, 2014), <https://theopolisinstitute.com/heretics-in-the-latter-days-the-structure-of-1-timothy-part-i/>.

Then again, some have seen the entire chapter as **chiastic**, with the center being perhaps **vs. 10**,<sup>13</sup> or **vv. 7-8**.<sup>14</sup>

- 1a) 1 Tim 4:1-5, Some will **depart from the faith**, **heeding** deceiving spirits + **doctrines of demons**;
- 1b) 1 Tim 4:6-8a, **Instruct** + **good minister** + **word and doctrine** + **exercise godliness**;
- 1c) 1 Tim 4:8b, The promise of **eternal life**;
- 1d) 1 Tim 4:9, This word is **faithful and true**;
- central axis) 1 Tim 4:10a, **For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach**;
- 2d) 1 Tim 4:10b, We **trust** in the living God;
- 2c) 1 Tim 4:10c, The **Savior** of all men, especially those who believe;
- 2b) 1 Tim 4:11-15, **Command and teach** + **good example** + **word and doctrine** + **exercise gift**;
- 1a) 1 Tim 4:16, Take heed to yourself + **doctrine, so you will save yourself** + those who hear you.

The best analysis I found breaks the passage in the middle of **vs. 7**, seeing an **outline format**:

- A. Introduction: The Spirit explicitly tells us this message (4:1a)
- B. When apostasy will occur: in “later times” (4:1a)
- C. Who will fall away: those who pay attention to deceitful spirits (4:1b)
- D. Source of apostasy: deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons (4:1b)
- E. Means used to cause apostasy: hypocrisy and lies (4:2a)
- F. Effect in those who pay attention to the false godliness: a seared conscience (4:2b)
- G. Examples of false godliness (4:3a)
  - 1. Forbidding marriage
  - 2. Abstaining from foods
- H. Solution to apostasy and false godliness
  - 1. Know the Word of God: test doctrine by the Word (4:3b-5)
  - 2. Teach the Word of God: expose false godliness by means of the Word (4:6)
- I. Summary: Have nothing to do with false godliness (4:7a)<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> **Christine Smith**, “1 Timothy 4,” *A Little Perspective* (Sept 28, 2016), <https://www.alittleperspective.com/1-timothy-4-2016/>.

<sup>14</sup> **Paul S. Jeon**, *1 Timothy: A Charge to God’s Missional Household* vol. 1 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017), Kindle Edition. His is:

- A. 4:1-6 (faith/ful) (holding-toward) (teach/ing) (faithful) (words)
- B. 7-8a (toward) (godliness) (profitability)
- B’. 8b (godliness) (toward) (profitability)
- A’. 9-16 (faith/ful) (word) (teach/ing) (hold-toward)

<sup>15</sup> This is in Menn, 9. It seems confirmed to me by chiasmic themes:

This has the benefit of not only having Paul bring up the bad, but also in the same section, offering a solution before moving on to Timothy’s actual behavior. Therefore, we are going to look at 3:1-7a today.

## The Warning: Doctrines of Demons (1Tim 1:1-5)

We begin with an introduction to the counterpart of Apostolic doctrine that creates life: false doctrine which leads to apostasy. “Some will depart from the faith” (4:1). We’ve seen a movement back and forth in the letter between “the faith” and “faith,” that is the body of doctrine to be believed vs. belief (i.e. faith) in that body of doctrine. This time we return to “the” faith—the faith once for all entrusted to the saints (Jude 3).<sup>16</sup> Paul is saying that some will depart, fall away,

<p>A. 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,</p> <p>B. <sup>2</sup> through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared,</p> <p>C. <sup>3</sup> who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods</p> <p>D. that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.</p> <p>E. <sup>4</sup> For everything created by God is good,</p> <p>D'. and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving,</p> <p>E'. <sup>5</sup> for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.</p> <p>C'. <sup>6</sup> If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus,</p> <p>B'. being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed.</p> <p>A'. <sup>7</sup> Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. (me)</p>	<p>“a”. 1-2 (faith) (teachings)</p> <p>“b”. 3 (reception) (thanksgiving)</p> <p>“c”. 4a Because all creation of God is commendable and nothing is to be rejected,</p> <p>“b’”. 4b-6a (being-received) (thanksgiving)</p> <p>“a’”. 6b (faith) (teaching)</p> <p>(Jeon)</p>
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<sup>16</sup> “And Baruch stood up and went out of the tomb and found the eagle sitting outside the tomb.  
<sup>2</sup> And conversing in a human voice, the eagle said to him, ‘Hail, Baruch, the steward of the

apostatize, renounce their faith in Christ. He **doesn't say** they will lose their salvation (i.e. personal faith), only that they will depart from the objective doctrine of belief that true Christians actually believe in their heart.

*When will this happen?* “**In later times**” (*en husterois kairois*). There is a parallel to this in **2Tim 3:1** when Paul says, “**But understand this, that in the last days** (*en eschatais hēmerais*) **there will come times of difficulty...**” A lot of people are under the very mistaken impression that the last days refers to a time only in our own future. But that makes no sense, given that Paul is writing to Timothy about something *he* is to be on the lookout for, has already mentioned by name two individuals who had done this very thing (**Hymenaeus** and **Alexander**; **2:17**; see also **Philetus** in **2Tim 2:15**), and, in fact, by vs. 3 is using **present tense** verbs to describe what is taking place.

In other words, the “last days” or the “later times” are **the times of the church** of Jesus Christ, as Hebrews says, “***In these last days* [God] has spoken to us by his Son” (**Heb 1:2**). They extend from Christ’s **incarnation to his eschaton**, from his First Coming to his Second. And that means not only**

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faith!”<sup>a</sup> (4Bar 7.1-2). Note <sup>a</sup> in Charlesworth reads, “This use of “the faith” to mean correct doctrine is similar to the use of the term in the Pastoral Epistles. See e.g. 1 Tim 3:9; 4:1.” James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2 (New York; London: Yale University Press, 1985), 422.

must Timothy beware of apostasy, so also much the church today, for Jesus has not yet returned in judgment and glory.

*How does Paul know this?* Perhaps the most important point of the chapter: “The Spirit expressly says...” (1Tim 4:1). Paul isn’t making this up. The Holy Spirit said this. That leads to a question. *When* did the Spirit say this? While it is possible that Paul was told this directly by the Spirit (as an Apostle he had this kind of prerogative; cf. Acts 20:29-30), it is more probable that he is interpreting the Scripture. Perhaps he is getting it from Jesus in Matthew 24:10-11 where the Lord says, “Then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.”<sup>17</sup> Perhaps he is getting it from the prophets, such as Isaiah 19:14 where a “spirit of error” will be poured onto the Egyptians by God.<sup>18</sup> Whatever the case, we know that there was a well-known motif of end-times apostasy that many were commenting on, and people were getting that from God’s word through the Holy Spirit who inspired it.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Philip Graham Ryken, *1 Timothy*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Daniel M. Doriani, and Philip Graham Ryken, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007), 153.

<sup>18</sup> Philip H. Towner, “1-2 Timothy and Titus,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 898.

<sup>19</sup> Lloyd Gaston, *No Stone on Another: Studies in the Significance of the Fall of Jerusalem in the Synoptic Gospels*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum XXIII (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 433-68.

*Why does this matter?* Because the apostacy comes from those “devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons” (1Tim 4:1). Notice, *spirits vs. The Spirit*. A friend of mine who teaches in Ethiopia recently described something far too common in too many parts of this earth. He said,

In my classes at ETC, we regularly discuss the importance of the authority of God’s word. Here is one student describing (in his own words) an all-too frequent attitude in *some* Ethiopian churches: “I heard many people in the church and on television claiming they receive [a] special message from God. This I think is the main source of problem for the church. Since many claiming they are prophets [are] involve[d] in the most shocking and sometime[s] funny type[s] action they perform in the church. At some point a person hold[s] a Bible in his right hand and raise[s] his left hand pointing figuratively to the heavens and ask the people, “Do you want a message from this (the Bible), or from this (from God)?” ... so challenging the authority of the Bible. So in my experience there are many people in my country who claim they have special ability and receive special message from God.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Quoted from *Jeff Krohn, Newsletter* Feb 2022.

There are **only the two options**. Either it comes from the Holy Spirit or it comes from a deceitful spirit, and it is difficult to think of a worse problem for the church if it is the latter that people think is the former, for how could they ever correct it?

**How serious** is this? “**Deceitful spirits**” are parallel to “**teachings of demons**.” This now takes us back to Socrates and Apollonius. When most Christians hear the word “demon,” they think “fallen angel” and something very evil. I’ll return to this in a moment. First, when **an ancient Greek** (and this would certainly include the people at Ephesus) heard the word “demon,” they could have thought of many different things: **a supernatural power** sometimes being a synonym for *theos* (god), **intermediary spirits** of the air, **lesser gods**, **dead heroes** of the Golden Age, an **unknown superhuman factor** such as fate or destiny, and as we have seen, even the **conscience**. As it regards the conscience, it is more than interesting to me that in the very next breath, Paul says, “... **through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared**” (**1Tim 4:2**). You better believe that Paul knew full well about associating demons with the conscience. I do not think that he is equating demons with the conscience, but rather that he is playing off of the idea to

show that demonic activity often occurs when someone's conscience is seared.

The word “**demon**” is of unknown origin. **Plato** derives it from a Greek word *daémōn* meaning “**knowing.**” **Homer** derived it from *daimōn* meaning “**divinity.**” **Eusebius** derived it from *deimainein* meaning “**to fear.**” Modern dictionaries derive it from *daiō* meaning “**to divide (destines),**” hence the idea of fate or the ability of the spirit to control your fate.<sup>21</sup> To a Greek, demons were like men and could be either good or bad.

But **closer to home**, the biblical worldview views demons as **entirely evil personal entities**, calling them (here) “**deceitful spirits,**” or elsewhere “**evil spirits**” (e.g. **Luke 11:26**) or “**unclean spirits**” (e.g. **Matt 10:1**) as associating them with the wastes of the **Egyptian** (**Deut 32:17**) and **Babylonian deserts** (**Isa 13:21; 34:14**). Now, it is possible that a few of the instances where the term occurs, it refers to something more akin to the gods that rule the nations (cf. **Deut 32:17 LXX** and **Ps 105:37 LXX; 1Cor 10:20; Isa**

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<sup>21</sup> See **Augustine**, *City of God* Books 8-10. **G. J. Riley**, “Demon,” in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst (Leiden; Boston; Köln; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge: Brill; Eerdmans, 1999), 235-40; **Charles R. Smith**, “The New Testament Doctrine of Demons,” *Grace Journal* 10, no. 2 (1969): 27-39; **Michael S. Heiser**, *Demons: What the Bible Really Says about the Powers of Darkness* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), esp. 48-56.

65:11 LXX),<sup>22</sup> but most of the time, they refer to the disembodied spirits of the Nephilim. This was the universal understanding of a demon in the early church and Jewish church prior to the time of Christ.

The Nephilim were the offspring of the heavenly sons of God and the human daughters of Adam (Gen 6:1-4). Curiously, these “sons of God” were said in both Jewish and pagan sources, to have been the source of *secret teachings* that were forbidden to mankind. For example, 1 Enoch says that they “taught them sorceries and enchantments and root-cutting, and explained the plants to them” (1En 7:1). They taught “all the unrighteousness upon the earth” and “revealed the mysteries of the ages, the things in heaven which the people were pursuing and learning” (9:6). Heiser explains of our very passage, “The notion that ‘demons’ led people astray by ‘teaching’ arises from the Second Temple Jewish theology of the Watchers, who are repeatedly blamed for leading humanity astray via forbidden knowledge.”<sup>23</sup> It most likely isn’t that the demons Paul has in mind are the Watchers, but rather that there is a conceptual and historic overlap that the sons of the

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<sup>22</sup> For a future study, Heiser (*Demons*, 220) connects 1Cor 10:20 directly to the *shedim* of Deut 32:17. DDD (“Demon,” 238) connects it to Isaiah 65:11.

<sup>23</sup> Heiser, *Demons*, 220.

Watchers had intimate knowledge of their father's secret teachings and that in the afterlife, **they love to spread that information** to any they can, because they hate Christ and his church.

*So how do they do that?* The term “**deceitful**” (*planos*) gives you a hint. The word means “**wandering**” or “**leading astray**.” And so there is a word play between those who “will depart” or “fall away” because of “deceitful spirits” who “lead astray.” They lead men astray and cause them to fall away through deception. But **vs. 2** gives us more. It tells us that the means of apostacy used by the demons is that they seek men who are **insincere liars** who have **seared consciences**. While we have no idea what Paul thought of Socrates' morality, from the great philosopher's own mouth he tells us that the daemon would only “speak” to him if he was doing something bad. This is a major reason why some identified his daemon with the conscience. But if Socrates often had to rethink his actions in light of that “inner voice,” it means that his conscience was much more like the one in Romans 2 than the one here in 1 Timothy 4. In Romans Paul says of the Gentiles, “**They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also**

bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them” (Rom 2:15).

If Socrates’ daemon might be something else, Eusebius wanted to make it crystal clear that Apollonius’ demon corresponded to the man’s own wicked heart. It is fascinating to compare Eusebius’ take on Apollonius to that of his opponent—Sossianus Hierocles. Hierocles was a deeply rooted pagan and occultic Roman aristocrat and office-holder. He held so much sway that he was chiefly responsible for getting Emperor Diocletian to sign an edict that rescinded all legal rights of Christians and demanded that they comply with traditional religious practices, which in turn led to perhaps the greatest persecution of Christians in the early church. In other words, he was a dangerous enemy of Christians. This same man would dare to compare Apollonius to Jesus himself by writing a book called *Lover of Truth*, itself a brazen critique of Christianity! And in this vein, to this day, occultists like Madame Blavatsky want to call this strict vegetarian teetotaler, principled in chastity and abstinence, “the great thaumaturgist [miracle worker, magician] of the second century AD”<sup>24</sup> and others urging a universal, non-denominational religion rooted in reason

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<sup>24</sup> Blavatsky, “Apollonius Tyaneus and Simon Magus.”

and/or *gnosis* use him as their chief example of an early forerunner of their own ethical and religious ideas.<sup>25</sup> As we go through the next couple of verses, you will see exactly why I find this so fascinating, and this will in turn lead to an **extremely practical point** in all this.

Paul is saying that the time will come when insincere liars who have zero conscience will worm their way into the churches, teaching the doctrines of demons and deceitful spirits. That is, these wicked spirits find wicked men to do their bidding. **Bad theology comes both from seductive spirits and lying men**, and the two go together. This in turn will cause many to fall away from the faith. **But just what might some of those doctrines of demons be? Vs. 3** gives us two, and I believe they are most unexpected. As Ryken says, “**We might well have expected the apostle to say that these men were denying the deity of Jesus Christ, or adding works to faith as the basis for justification, or advocating some other heretical doctrine. But before talking about their theology, Paul first locates their heterodoxy in two areas of everyday practice.**”<sup>26</sup> Instead, the examples he gives are that these men “**forbid marriage**” and “**require abstinence from**

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<sup>25</sup> From “Apollonius of Tyana,” *Wikipedia* (accessed Feb 16, 2022), [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apollonius\\_of\\_Tyana#cite\\_ref-34](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apollonius_of_Tyana#cite_ref-34).

<sup>26</sup> Ryken, 160.

foods” (1Tim 4:3). We find in Apollonius both [celibacy](#) and [vegetarianism](#), and though I do not know for certain if he demanded anyone else follow this,<sup>27</sup> it is an easy thing, given what we know people have done with him over the last 1800 years, to at the very least see how someone in Ephesus itself could have taken Apollonius’ ascetic and ram-rodged through the doors of the church there.

Philip Ryken has some very wise comments on this,

If Satan’s favorite strategy is deception, it follows that the church is in real danger of being fooled by false doctrine. Some theology is [so bad](#) it can be spotted a mile off. But most false doctrines contain [enough truth to resist detection](#). The most dangerous heresies often sound the most like authentic Christianity. Consider a few examples. The distortions of the signs and wonders movement hide behind the truth of the need for people to make a personal commitment to Jesus Christ. The distortions of Roman Catholicism hide behind the truth of the value of good works. The lies of Mormonism

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<sup>27</sup> The New World Encyclopedia has this fascinating story on Apollonius and marriage. “Apollonius is also said to have stopped one of his former students, Menippus of Corinth, from marrying a vampire. Apollonius appeared as a guest at the wedding festivities before the banquet. He then made all the banquet’s amenities and even some of the guests disappear, proving that they must have been an illusion created by the evil bride. He then made the young woman to confess her true identity, thereby rescuing Menippus from a terrible fate on his wedding night.” Clearly, the stories about this man evolved into legend. But this one may hint that Apollonius actually didn’t look fondly upon the very idea of marriage. More study is needed.

hide behind the truth of family values [isn't it interesting that the Mormon's are called the "Later Day" (think 1Tim 4:1) Saints?]. The lies of the International Church of Christ hide behind the truth of the necessity of baptism. Every false doctrine tries to find some truth to hide behind.<sup>28</sup>

So what makes these two doctrines so harmful? Just as so many Christians functionally if not theologically think that demons are no threat or not even real, so also many people think that *these ideas aren't harmful*. That's their greatest danger ...I'm not talking here about people who willingly, with no outside coercion, decide they want to become vegetarian or never get married. There's nothing inherently wrong with either of those things. Daniel ate only vegetables (**Dan 1:12**); Paul said there were times when it was better not to get married (**1Cor 7:26**). Vegetarianism can actually be good for you; and for some, getting married is a true distraction to their calling from God.

But this is not what Paul is talking about. Remember how Socrates said that his daemon "always forbids but never commands me to do anything?" It always forbids. Read as the conscience, that's not a bad thing. We want the conscience to tell us it is wrong to steal that person's coat just

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<sup>28</sup> Ryken, 157.

because we like it. Paul also uses the word forbid. These people “forbid marriage.” This is not a personal decision, but something that the false teachers are telling others in the church that they must do for *religious* reasons. Likewise, they “require abstinence from foods.” Again, they forbid foods. That is, if you eat such and such a food, you will not be a spiritual person. This kind of teaching takes away the free grace of God in Christ and turns religion into not just a work, which is bad enough, but causes people to seek after signs and visions and wonders that often accompany asceticism. Remember how Apollonius said he could predict the future because of *his diet* (men have also used celibacy to increase a heightened sense of the other-world). It is easy to see how he, with his altered state of consciousness due to his diet could have been teaching this right there in Ephesus. And people flocked to him like flies to dung.

Why would I use such a horrible metaphor? Not only does this kind of teaching destroy grace and incite people to look for spiritual highs in the wrong place, **they also do something more basic.** Paul essentially says that they are **messing around with creation.** He says, marriage and foods are what “**God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth**” (1Tim 4:3b).

It is interesting to think about how some of the heretics at this church may well have been **Jewish rabbis** who were regressing away from Christ and back into legalism. We thought about this way back at the beginning of the first chapter when we looked at the myths and genealogies. They could easily have looked at the law of Moses, say something like Leviticus 11, and required that the Christians in Ephesus not eat a host of “**unclean**” foods. And what would that mean, after all? It would mean that they were being biblical! Curiously, even Apollonarius “**declined to live upon a flesh diet, on the ground that it was unclean, and also that it made the mind gross.**”<sup>29</sup>

The problem is, no one understood **the temporary nature** of the old covenant and how it was put in place ... *to lead a person to Christ*. That is, the Law taught them about the need to be absolutely clean, and through the endless cleanliness laws demonstrated how impossible it was to keep yourself clean by keeping Torah. But when Jesus came, he taught the truth of the matter. “**It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person ... what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person**” (**Matt**

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<sup>29</sup> **Philostratus** (the Athenian), *Life of Apollonius*, Book I.VIII.

15:11, 17). In saying this, Jesus declared **all foods clean** (**Mark 7:19**), which showed the temporary nature of the covenant. In this way, a Christian may receive with thanksgiving any food put before them, even if it has been offered to an idol (**1Cor 10:19**).<sup>30</sup> He says “**God created**” them to be received with thanksgiving. This was their original purpose, going all the way back to before the fall, when there was nothing inside of man that would come out and make him unclean.

He adds an allusion to Genesis 1 for good measure. “**For everything created by God is good.**” Genesis says, “**God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good**” (**Gen 1:31**). Therefore, “**nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer**” (**1Tim 4:4b-5**). He adds this, not because marriage and food are suddenly bad at the fall, but because humans are, and now all that they touch make things unclean, until they are redeemed by Christ. But when that happens, suddenly, the word and prayer are able to sanctify that which was created good, became subject to uncleanness, and renew them for the glory of God and the benefit of the Christian.

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<sup>30</sup> See n. 20 (Heiser and *DDD*).

Now, it's important to see something. What Paul gives here are *simply two examples*. They do not exhaust the list. But what are they examples of? They are examples of how humans who *deny God's good creation* and pervert it for spurious, pseudo-godly purposes con others into giving up the faith of Christianity in favor of a forgery, a counterfeit Christianity and christ. One can deny the good creation by either *making the creation evil or simply just off-limits* (through either legalism or because one is attempting to ascend into the spiritual, the good) or by *blurring the lines of the created order* itself. Paul's examples can be used any of those purposes!

But there are *other examples*, many others. Almost endless. People have made many other good things bad, from drinking and dancing (because they can be and have been abused and twisted), they have blurred creational lines like male and female and all the lunacy taking place today denying binaries, gender, the created order of sexuality, and so on.

Now, you must understand that what these false teachers do, *they do in the church*. They throw their artificial cloak of Christianity onto unsuspecting Christians in the name of freedom (freedom from marriage) or legalism (you are a

better Christian if you don't ...) or spirituality (do this and watch yourself become a Christ like Jesus). *Such things have an outward appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and ascetism but are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh* (cf. **Col 2:23**). It is in the church that Timothy is warned to beware. Outside the church, there have been and always will be such teachings. But it is not to be here. Why? I think for several reasons. **Two of these** we will look at next time. **First**, they do not in fact promote godliness at all. Rather their roots are satanic and demonic. **Second**, they prevent people from being saved by Christ. **A third thing** that Paul has already mentioned is that it causes professing Christians to fall away. It does this, I believe, by bringing a true uncleanness into the church, sin that comes from wicked lying hearts. It then acts as a kind of leaven that works its way through the hearts and minds of people, causing them to veer away from the truth, steering themselves straight into the abyss.

**A fourth thing** it does has to do with the churches' impact upon the world. Yes, the world is always filled with such pseudo-spirituality. However, when the church is pure in doctrine and deed, this has **a sanctifying influence** upon the culture at large. Conversely, when she is not, the common

grace blessings that accrue because of it retreat with the vanishing light, and societies are given back over to the darkness. In turn, those **demonic forces** return with a vengeance. I very much believe that the deception, pseudo-science, irrationality, crazed governments intoxicated with power, secret cabals doing unspeakable things to children, silence of the church, and the inability of people to think rationally about the most basic facts of human existence (disease, real human depravity in governments, people dropping dead like flies on soccer fields) is due in some measure to the church not heeding this warning. Has the visible church unwittingly been accomplice to the unleashing of the hordes of hell upon this world because of our refusal to deal with these things in our own midst?

Think about a couple of historical points in this regard. **The German church** in in WWII was **silent** about the atrocities taking place in that nation. But 100 years prior to this, the Lutheran church in Germany **refused to expunge** the dastardly Liberalism, with its attacks upon the created order and the person of Christ, and it quickly infected everything it touched. There was a reason the Lutherans were not able to say anything. *They were themselves guilty of spiritual apostacy.* Much longer ago, **Hierocles** used

Apollonius and Jesus as a means of attacking Christianity though a book he deceptively called *Lover of Truth*. My point here is not that he was ever a Christian, but he used Christian teaching against itself. Perhaps this had its roots in church at Ephesus not taking Paul's warning here seriously enough, including stopping what potentially could have been Apollonius himself from infecting the minds of the Christians there. That's my speculation, but it is rooted in some pretty interesting historical coincidences that we've seen today. Whatever the case, the result was **the greatest persecution the church had ever known up to that time**. Is history about to repeat itself?

## The Remedy (1Tim 1:6-7a)

What can the church do? This is the reason not to stop at vs. 5. **6-7a** appear to be part of the unit of thought. Paul gives the first answer, and the only one we will look at today. **"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. Have nothing to do with irreverent silly myths."** Essentially, he gives **two points**. First, **put these things**

before the brothers. What things? The truths of “the good doctrine,” that is, those apostolic teachings summed up in the creed at the end of the last chapter. Christians must know these basics and they must know that the church refuses to compromise on them for any reason. (We can also add to this the other teachings about elders, deacons, women, men, worship, and so on that he has discussed, but they are only supplemental to the more immediate and pressing need for the creed).

Doing this, Paul says, causes Timothy to be a “good servant,” that is, he carries out his Lord’s wishes in the church. It also causes him to become trained himself in the words of the faith. Even pastors and elders do not ever go beyond their need for these basic truths. By not putting them forward to the congregation on a regular basis, both they and their hearers grow fat and lazy, making them the perfect targets for demonic doctrines to begin infiltrating the church.

The second point returns to the myths (1Tim 1:4), and this time I can’t help but think of myths that might have already been popping up about Apollonius as a kind of ascended master that lessened the claims of Christians about the God-man. We know this happened shortly after. Were

the seeds already being sewn in Timothy's day? The Apostle tells him to **have nothing to do with such things**, be they attacks from Jews upon the OT that destroy the gospel or attacks from Gentiles that do the same.

Have nothing to do with them **does not mean** that he is to be *silent* about them, however. He is not to entertain them, but he is to understand and know about them, perhaps even intimately if need be, so that he can teach how and why they are so destructive and demonic. Otherwise, if such things were completely taboo, never to be spoken about, how could he “**put them forward**” to the congregation and thus be a faithful teacher? Surely, “**these things**” that he is to put forward must include the warning we've looked at in **1Tim 4:1-5**! Listen to Luther:

When God's holy Word arises, it is always its lot that Satan opposes it with all his might. At first, he rages against it with force and wicked power. If that promises no success, he attacks it with false tongues and erring spirits and teachers. What he is unable to crush by force he seeks to suppress by cunning and lies. This was his strategy at the beginning. When the Gospel first came into the world, he launched a mighty attack against it through Jews and Gentiles, shed much blood, and filled Christendom with martyrs. When this did not succeed, he raised false prophets and erring spirits

and filled the world with heretics.... And we must be prepared for this, and by no means allow it to disturb us, for so it must be.<sup>31</sup>

And so, to that end I have endeavored myself today to do the same. **We must not compromise** on these things, because the consequences are disastrous. Take these thoughts home with you and think much on them in the coming days and weeks as you watch some of them unfold before your eyes in the broader world. Then, **give thanks** and praise to God that he has seen fit not to let these horrible lies completely infiltrate his church. Thanksgiving is a major theme of this passage (see left chiasm in n. 15). We received God's good gifts *with thanksgiving*. Ryken extends the idea, "The last thing to be said about the origins of bad theology is that gratitude is essential to sound theology. Thanksgiving is so important to daily Christian life that anyone who rejects God's good gifts runs the risk of abandoning the faith."<sup>32</sup> Give God thanks and worship him anew, because you have been taught and have received the only Gospel that leads to salvation and a godly life.

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<sup>31</sup> **Martin Luther**, *What Luther Says*, ed. Ewald Plass (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), 395–96. Quoted in Ryken, 156–157.

<sup>32</sup> **Ryken**, 166.

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