



Sermon: 07/30/2017

1 Timothy 4:1 – 5

2 Timothy 4:6 - 7

Colossians 3:1 - 2

Revelations 3:20

So we are walking through 1 Timothy. We're in chapter 4. I understand I'm the oldest man in the Ph.D. I did deal with that though I took him out to golf and now he's going to the grave having been drummed by the oldest man in the Ph.D. I did get to teach for two weeks some students 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus. Got to listen to 20 sermons so I don't want to hear any whining about you having to listen to one. Twenty. Great kids. Great young men. There was a guy in there, an African-American pastor and a principal, who's about my age. We had this kid preaching, young kids, he's associate pastor at a friend of mine's church, I won't say where. But in the middle of the sermon he said, dead serious, he said, "I've been married two years and I've learned a lot." Which was our reaction in the room. Which sort of stumbled him. He wasn't sure why we were laughing. When it was over he said, "Why were y'all laughing?" I said, "Because, boy, you're dumber than dirt. If you think you've learned a lot in two years, you really haven't even started." And the African-American pastor over in the corner said, "Let me tell you something boy, been married 36 years and it's different every day." So we had to help him through some things. And so we walked through 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus though. It was intriguing. There's an over-riding, over-arching, concept in all three books. They're called, the reason we did those three, they're called the pastoral epistles. That is, Paul writes to Timothy and Titus. He has Titus appoint elders on the island of Crete and tell them what to do and how to run their churches. And he does the same thing in 1 & 2 Timothy. There are letters to tell them how to be over-seers and what their church ought to be. There's a list for the widows in 1 Timothy, we look at in chapter 6, that are all sorts of things about what an older man is to be, what an older woman is to be, what a younger man is to be. There are all these descriptions but the bottom line is, there's an interesting thing that he says over and over and over. As a matter of fact, I told the guys don't ever preach book by book, verse by verse, go from 1 Timothy to Titus because you're just beating your people into the ground because there's a repetitive theme of that, now remember when Paul's writing these they have no New Testament. The Gospels aren't written until after Paul's dead. They don't even start to be written. So when Timothy and Titus get these letters, for example, when Titus gets his letter on the island of Crete he doesn't have 1 & 2 Timothy. But it's an interesting thing that he says. Because he says to both guys, he says,

“Look,” and he uses words, the teaching, the deposit, what you know, he says basically, “Look I gave you a box and in it is God’s truth.” Now they had that, even though they didn’t have it in writing, you see a little bit of it when you go back to what we looked at before in chapter 3, verse 16. He said he was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, appeared to angels, preached to the Gentiles, believed on the world, received up in glory. That’s kind of a mini-systematic theology and they worked off these pneumatic tools, but they had this box. And I don’t care what systematic theologian you read, that’s the new rage. The box has two things in it. Now number one, this is the box. We fortunately have it written. We have the box written now. But the box really has two things in it; the truth about God and the truth about us. That’s what it has. It has those two things. Everything in the Bible revolves around that. And the Old Testament is as much part of the box as the New Testament. As a matter of fact, if you go to the Old Testament it teaches what the New Testament teaches. Genesis is a book about God creating us and us blowing it. Exodus is a book about we can’t redeem ourselves and he redeems us. Then Leviticus is God giving us his character, but he doesn’t give us his character in the rules until he’s redeemed us out of our failure that he didn’t cause. So the Old Testament’s part of the box. And so when we come to the New Testament we hold in our hands the box. We have the teaching.

Now the passage today is going to be a little hard. It’s not going to be a feel good thing. We’re not going to go home and go, “I want eight of those sermons.” So but this is why I preach book by book, verse by verse. Because it forces me into the text I wouldn’t go to otherwise. This text, though, is powerful. It is protected for us, but difficult. Listen carefully. 1 Timothy 4:1.

¹But the Spirit expressly says

No obviously they knew, and Paul knew what he was talking about, we don’t, but he says, “Listen it is clear from the Holy Spirit that in later times” now that may well be us, may have been a little time after Timothy, but I think it’s at least us.

in later times, now listen to this, some will depart from the faith

That doesn’t mean they leave church. And I don’t really think it means that they cease being Christians. The faith is just another word for what’s in the box. Except here’s the distinction. The teaching is what is in the box. The faith is my belief in what is in the box. If I believe what the box tells me about God and about myself then that’s my faith. The teaching can be by itself whether I believe it or not. So I have to make this choice to believe what’s in the box. Then it becomes my faith. He says in the latter days, he says, there will be some, not everybody, but there will be some that depart from the faith. I don’t think they lose their salvation but it simply means they walk away from certain truths in the box. Now listen to what he says:

by holding fast to deceitful spirits,

Now there’s the first great word picture. Greek word is the word we get planet from. It’s the Greek word for deceit. Now the reason the Greeks used that word for deceit; the Greeks were great astronomers and they noticed something. That when you looked up in the sky you can see constellations that are always the same. The stars are always in the exact same place. But that

there were lights that there were two things true of. They looked like they were part of the constellation, but they were two things. They didn't blink and they shifted. The next night they'd be just a little off. Next month just a little off. And pretty soon they'd be out of the constellation entirely. And so they used the word *planés*, planet, to talk about something that shifted in its orbit slowly so it looked like it was part of the constellation, but it wasn't. He says there's going to come a day when people will shift sort of gently away from their faith. It's not like they're going to come up one day and say, "You know I think I'll become an Atheist. I think I'll become an Agnostic. I think I'm into Deism." No. It's the idea that they just kind of shift away from what's in the box. You go to work Monday. Last Friday you gave your boss, or a couple weeks ago you gave your boss this really brilliant idea that's going to aid the company. It's going to make a difference. And your boss says, "Man this is a great idea. I'm going to take it to the people above us. I'll take it to the board. I'll make sure you get, this is great." You come into work a couple weeks later and you discover that your boss is in a position higher. And he's making \$150,000 a year more than he was. And you ask somebody, "What in the world?" They say, "Well he came up with this great idea that he's pitched to the board." And you realize that's the idea you gave him. He's taken it to the board, given you no credit, and now you, just the week before, you and your wife are sitting down and you're struggling check to check and now he's making \$150,000 more than what he was making because of your idea. Now the natural reaction, there's nothing wrong with the emotion, but the natural reaction is fury, anger, just.... And then you pick up a box and he's not a believer and in the box it says that you have to forgive him and pray for him. But behind you, look at the next phrase:

[and the teachings of demons,](#)

I know we don't buy into that, but there are demonic forces. And so what happens is behind you there are these demonic forces stepping up and going, "Dude he ripped you off. He cheated you. You're struggling check to check. He took your idea. He's milking it. You need to..." And the box says, "No. I've got to forgive him." And what happens is you listen to this and pretty soon you're making a shift. You don't leave Christianity. You don't come out of the box and say, "I don't believe in Jesus. I'm not an Atheist." That's not what happens. But you come to this place where you go, "I know what God says, but this guy doesn't deserve forgiveness." And now you left the other part of the box which says, "You didn't either." So you don't quit being a Christian, but you begin to move away from the box; not in this massive move, but like a planet in the constellation. You just shift a little. And you begin to step away. Now how does that happen to us? Look at this.

[²by means of the hypocrisy of liars](#)

That's how it happens. You have people that come in. Hypocrisy, remember the Greek word that means an actor, and in that day they wore a mask and you made your mannerisms and your gestures in your voice fit the mask that you were wearing as an actor. And so in the acting of liars, in other words, there are going to be people in later times who will be in our church, who will sit next to you, and they've got a mask on that looks just as good as your faith. It's not legit because their consciences have been burned up and are still burned up. They are not believers, but they're going to sit next to you, look like it, and lie to you. And so they're so good at it that

what happens is, particularly if we're hurt or we're struggling, their lying with demonic activity pulls us away from the faith.

I remember college, we were in philosophy class in a Christian school, Baptist school, and so they bring in this Christian philosopher who was well known. Now the only people that know philosophers that are well known are philosophers. No one else knows who those people are. So this guy comes in, sits down, and he begins to lecture us in class. And it's kind of, you know he's talking about Jesus, he's not denying the faith, he's not asking us to be an Atheist, and I don't remember how the question came up or why, but the kid sitting next to me, and there were about 30 or 40 of us in the class and one of the, and there are about 10 or 12 of us ministerial students. Kid sitting next to me, he was a ministerial student with me, same grade, same age, and so he asked this guy a question. He said, "So what do you believe about, what do you believe about heaven?" And the guy said, he said, "You know, what about when we die and we go there." And the guy said, "Hey, man, listen I don't think heaven's a place out there. I think it's what you are inside you with Jesus. It's just what you are inside. And if you, if inside you, you're righteous, you do the right things, it's some place you go, it's what you are inside you." And I'll never forget this kid going, "Wow! That's great." And you can hear the gasps around the room of people going, "That is profound." He didn't say to us give up on Jesus, he didn't say to us quit being Christians, he didn't say to us become Atheists. But he did do this. I want you to listen to the last words of the Apostle Paul. He's in jail. He's already faced the first part of his trial. And now he's coming out for the sentencing and the death. This is what he writes Timothy right before this. Now listen. Think about what this guy said. He didn't tell us to quit believing in Jesus. Listen to what he just did because listen to Paul's last words.

[⁶I'm already being poured out like a drink offering, the time of my departure](#)

That Greek words means the lines on a ship being let go. The time my ship's being let go and I'm going back to heaven. I'm no longer moored to this planet.

[has come. ⁷I have agonized the good agony, I have finished the race, I've kept the faith. There is one thing remaining for me, the crown of righteousness which the Lord shall give to me and that day the righteous judge,](#)

And not just to me, but to every single person who has loved his appearing. He says, "I'm in a jail cell. They're fixing to take my life but I'm OK with that because I know where I'm going. I know I'm going to face the righteous judge. I've done what he asked me to do. He's blessed me in Christ and he's going to give me a crown of righteousness and he'll give it to anybody and I'm telling you that's how I'm willing to face what I face from this ungodly guy, Nero." That one day they will name their dogs after and their sons after Paul. But I'm willing to face it because I know what is coming. And that man in that class who was suave, who was winsome, who was brilliant, who was clever, who was appealing never told us to give up on Jesus, but he took away from us the fundamental belief that enabled Paul to face his dying moment. That's what they do. They sit in our churches. They look like us. They don't get up and say, "Hey, you need to give up on Jesus." They just shift us. Even the little six-line thing that we looked at a couple Sundays ago. I've had people say to me, you know what, it says he was manifested in the flesh, I've had people say to me, "You know what, I don't know if I really buy into the virgin birth." He's not

born of a virgin, he's not God, and if he's not God, don't listen to him. These things do matter. They shift us subtly and then pretty soon you don't even realize it; we've stepped away from what's in the box. And here's how good they are. I love the last part. Listen to this. Verse 3:

³hindering to marry and to abstain from certain foods which God has created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. ⁴Because every creation of God is good, and nothing is to be rejected when received with thanksgiving, ⁵for everything is sanctified through the word of God and prayer.

Now I will give you one exception to that. OK. Cottage cheese does not fit there. Just felt led to say that. That doesn't belong in that text. You can pray until you die and you are not going to holy and sanctify cottage cheese. So he says, now listen to what he just said, it's brilliant because that's what these guys are doing. Now we're all used to the Sadducee idea. Most of the people we'll deal with that come into our churches that look like believers, that kind of get us to shift a little are generally Sadducees. They're pulling us away from certain truths in the box. But then you have the Pharisees who add to truth in the box. That's what these guys are doing. They're coming up and saying, "Listen, if you want to be spiritual, don't marry. You give your whole life to Jesus." Let me tell you something. God calls people to be single. That doesn't mean there's something wrong with them. It means there's something right with them. He calls people to be single, but the bulk of people he calls to be married. And so when they're forbidding this what they're saying is, "Listen marriage will take away from you. Give it up so you can be more spiritual." And then he says the same thing with the food. Don't eat these foods because you can be more spiritual if you stay away from them. That's the Pharisee idea. It's the brilliant idea. It's the idea that, you're going to deal with Sadducees who pull you away from truth and then you, they're going to take truth out of the box and throw it away. Then you've got the Pharisees who come along and add truth. God designed marriage to bless us, not to abstain from it. And everything's good except you know what.

Now, and that's the problem that we face today. I wonder now when I look at verses 3 and 4, I wonder if the latter times is us today because it's the Pharisee issue we really wrestle with. If I, as a matter of fact, let me read you something. Colossians 3. What they're trying to do is make you more spiritual by giving you extra rules. Now here's what Colossians 3 says. Listen to this:

¹Since therefore you have been raised with Christ, now listen, seek the things above,

Now if you stop it right there then who knows what that means. But here's what it says:

where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. ²Think the things above, not the things on the earth.

So if I want to see God, here's what I do. I seek Jesus, not spirituality, I seek Jesus and I seek what's in the box because what's in the box comes from up there, not from on down here. So what's in the box is what he says about me and about him. So I seek two things. I seek truth. I seek him. I don't seek to be spiritual. Oh don't get married so you can be spiritual. Not getting married has nothing to do with knowing God's truth and seeking him. As a matter of fact, if I seek him and know the truth I will probably get married. So understand that's not how it's

played out. Again, we've talked about this some before. It says to seek Christ, right. So how many times a day should I pray? It's not in the box. Now you can go over here to Lifeway and they'll have a book that will tell you how many times a day you ought to pray. How long should you pray when you pray? Whoops! It's not in the box. But if you go to Lifeway and pay some money they'll give you a book you can put in the box in addition to what is in the box. There are all sorts of books on how to seek God. But it's interesting to me the Bible only tells you two things. It does say Jesus said get in your closet, you focus away from people and so when you do that you seek two things. You seek his presence and you seek in that presence what he tells you about himself. Listen to this and then I'm done. Listen to this. I love this. We know this verse. We use it as Baptists in evangelism and it's wrong to do that. Listen to what Jesus says.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock.

What door is he at? Church door, right. What's he doing? He's knocking. He's knocking at the door of his bride. He's knocking at the door of the people he bled and died for. One of the repetitive themes in the Pastoral Epistles is that he is a ransom payment for our sin. He died for us because he loves us. His grace and his mercy is there. It's been poured on us and yet if we push him out that door, he will not push himself back in. He just knocks. Now you have to decide whether you open the door or not. Now listen to this:

If anybody should hear my voice and open the door,

Now there's two things you may not hear his voice because you're so busy with so much junk. You hear his voice; you open the door. I love this. Now listen:

I shall come into him and I shall have dinner with him, and he with me.

Here's what he says. He doesn't give any rules. He didn't say, "Listen, if you'll open the door we're going to spend about three hours together, three hours, ten minutes. We're going to do it at five o'clock in the morning because really holy people are up in the morning praying. And we're going to be so holy we're going to get rid of cottage cheese." He doesn't say any of that. OK. All he says is, not the church, he says, "Anybody in the church individually that when I'm knocking if they'll hear me and they'll open the door, here's what we'll do. We'll sit down and we'll have supper together." Now if you go with somebody, just you and one other person, to supper what do you do? You talk about each other. I set down with Jesus, he knocks on my door, I open the door, we have supper together. How long does supper last? Doesn't say. Where are we going to eat? Doesn't say. When he and I sit down together what he does is we dialog and in the dialog I will learn two things. I will learn about his father and I will learn about myself. Everything in the word of God centers around those two things. And what he will tell me is, listen, my Father loves you. He proved that in my dying. The Holy Spirit indwells you and if you'll let him, he'll reestablish who you and I are and he'll put you away from the Pharisees. He'll take the books you've added and throw them out. And he'll take all the other stuff in the box and bring it into your life so that when I come to the end of my life no matter how I die, whether Nero cuts my head off or I'm laying dying of cancer at home, doesn't matter how I die, heart attack, doesn't matter, that when I die I will have finished the faith, kept the

faith, fought the fight, and receive the crown of righteousness because I honored what was in the box.

Let's pray.

Father thank you for writing down and putting on print, putting in print, what we have before us. We can know about you. We know about our self and how that makes our relationship work. So Father can't stop people who are going to look like us that are going to try to move us, let us stay in your teaching and in your truth. Bind us to that. Not so we can be legalistic, but so we can know you in a way we were meant to. I ask you that in Jesus Christ name.