**Some will fall away** 4/7/24 dkm md sg pm

Read: Colossians 2:11-23, 1Timothy 4

Text: 1Timothy 4:1-5

Psalms:

Have you enjoyed watching the Olympic Games in Paris? The athleticism and skill of some competoritrs is amazing. I watched the BMX freestyle competition. Most gorls did similar routines but I thinlk they got extra vpints if they added something tho the usual routine, and extra somersault or twist with the summersault. Olympoc medal winning is onething, but the Chroistain life is another. While other relgions , like the Olympics, focus on perpsaonla achoievement and or ascetism, the chroistain life m is not about such things; itn is about the grace of God. Nothing we do or can do by way of achievement and or ascetisms or self-denial will save us because it is by the grace of God akone that we are saved. This is the gospele preached by the apostle Paul and it si the gospel we prech, and which we believe, today.Attempts to add tpo the grace of God are offencsive to God who gave his only begotten Son to die on the cross , because there is no other way by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

The church in Epheus, where Paul had left Timothy to minster, was beoign led astray by false teachers. This was not unexpected by the apostle, or by jesus (Mat 7:15, Acts 20:29,30). Paul gives Timothy instrciutions about dealiogn with fasle teachers after explaining the origins and nature of ‘doctines of demons’ being taught by some in the church.

**1.Listen to and speak lies**

The apsotles had just given Timpothy directions for the conduct of worship in the church. Much of this was fcoussed on appointing elders and deacons as men tested and found blamless or above reproach. Thses men must, in the first place, ‘hold the mnystery of the faith with a pure conscicnce’ (3:9). In giving similsiar instructions to the church in Corinth, paul wrottes, ‘Let all tbigns be done decently and in order’ (1Cor 14:40). Having properly appointed elders and deacons goes a long way to maintaining order in the church. But men may still come with their own ideas and try to gain a personal following. Indeed, an elder or deacon can also start departing from the faith. Vigilance is an ongoing necessity in the church, vigilance for the gospel, vigilance exercised by prayer and discipline.

‘The Spirit clearly says that in later times’ (4:1 NIV). The ‘latter times’ or ‘last days’ refers to the time between the resurrection and the return of Jesus, the time in which we now live. Paul is not writing anythign new here as he warns about false false teacxhers coming into the church. He is claiming divine authoritiy for what he says, either by way of direct revelation , or more likely, his reference to ‘the Spirit’ is to Jesus or to Scripture. Jeusu warned agasint false propehts , calling them wolves in sheeps clothing (Mat 7:15). He also warns of salse prophets caliming , :I am the Choirst’ coming and deciving many as a sign of his coming (Mat 24:5,11).

Satan was defeated at the cross but he was not solecned. He is still active, redy to devour Christains who are not alert to hois decietoive ways. ‘For Datan himself transforms himself into an angel of ligth’ (Cor 11;14). Most false teaching does jot openly contradict the gosepel but adds to, or subtracts from the gosoep,m of grace. Sucjh deception occurs slowly and imperctibly, but ends of course, in disatster, in men and women departying from the faith. We will se how most in the church were led astray by false teaching prior to the Refoemraion, and that this deception , along with others, continues today.

While the hand of satan is behind flse teaching , men are gilty liustenign and giving heed to Satan’s suggestions. Satan, speaking through the serpent, deceived Eve and caused her to sin. She did not have tpo lusten heed to him! Jeusus spake agaisnt saying saying, ;Get behind me saytan, but not Eve or Adam (Mat 4:10). Jeusu quoted Scripture, and this is what we must dpo. Satyan knows how to maniputlate priud herats. In our pride we think we know more than other people, and evn more than God. Proud herats listen to the lies of Satan and then start spekaign lies-Satanb cannot spoeak the triuth. We see the lies of satan beign perptetred all around us , even in the church.

Hypcoritucal liars ‘ is the label Paul gives to people who losten tpo Satan. He is referrgin to men and women who know the truth of the gospel but prpduly proclaim and demand things not in the gosoeol. Indeed they undermoine the and destry the gospel with their lies. They usaly have a lot to say but little to communicate. They have a lot to say but their lives do not match their woirfds. They often twosit the menbaign of wordfs (2Tim 2:14). This is hycpoisy, saying one thing and dpoing anpther.

Paul has just stressed the imprtance of observignt the life and doctien of potential elders. Men who say one thing and another not be made office bearers in the church. Men giving heed to Jewish fables ansd the commandments of men were present in the church at Epheesus and on Crete (1Tim 1:4, Tit 1:14). We knw today how men develop their own teaching about the second coming of jesus and dececive mant even when the Bivle clerlay teaches that no man knows the day or the hour when the Son of Man comes (Mat 24:36). In Eophesus some men- Paul names two- wer saying that the rsurection is a;ready past (2Tim 2:18). This false teaching may well have fed into the asceticism beign prpomted inthios church.

**2. Cauterized conscicnes**

I recentyly met a stdent fried from fifty years ago. He spoek of a time while droppong me off at my histel and my bag was stolen from his car; he wanted to say sorry after all these years. I dod not remember but told him he had a very active conscicne, and that O would pray for him. God has given eveyoen a consicicne that telsl them, right from wrong- it it is properly infpormed. As Christains our consoiccne is informed by the word of God and by the Holy Spirit. But we can still quence or grieve the Holy Spirti by whom are sealed (Eph 4:30). We can refuse to listen to pour conscicne and listen to Satan instead.

The false teachers at Ephesus had gone even further to sear or cauterize their own conscience (4:2). Their God -given conscience was no longer informing them of the truth they once believed. They had not openly repudiated the gospel – that would not be hypocrisy. These men still claimed to be orthodox but in reality had departed from the faith.

3. Goddnes of God rejected

Paul identifies two ways inwhuch they had departed from the faith, namely, ofrbiding to marry and forbiiding certain fooods (4;3). Forbiidign things is one way to add to the gospel of G=grace- and destoy it. Legalism is another way , and even leaglsim is often about not dpoign certain things. The jews and Some Chorstains, suuroud the Sabbath day with all mea#anner of rules- nhegaitve rules. Acseticism is the word usewd to describe a person focused ion self- denial. Asceticism isn practiced in relgions like Hinduim and Budhism. Self-denial, and the resultant suffering gains favour with the gods, supposedly. Suferign is oart font he Chroistain life but has no place in lur salvation. Ascetism is an anathema to the gosoepl of grace.

Yet many Christains are decived into following this path and thinking they are pelasign God; I think this is what the season of Lent is all about. This idea comes from pagan Gentiles amd from leagalistic Jews. The philosophical basis is that the boy or the physical is evil and opposed to the matter sof the sprit or soul. This was the teaching devloed by the Gnostics int eh second centurySaying that the body is evil and has nbo pleace in saltaxction led to either scetism , denial of the flesh, or licentiousness, indulgence ofn the flesh. But ascetic rules and practices appraich the problem of human evil from the wrong direction and are based on wrogn assumtpions- ‘Get rid of the material object and you will save the himan subject’. Rather they should say – ‘change the human subject and you will coredct the usee to the material object’ (Milne).

In the beginning God cerated the world and ewvythign in ti . he cerated man in his image, male and female. He made the woman to complement the man. He pordained that one man and ine woman become one flesh and have chidlrlen (Gen 1:27, 2:18,24). While marriage is not mandated it is certainly not forbiiden byt jeusus or the aposltes. Yet the church in the midile ages stared teaching that a cekebate life was more holy , and by the sixteenth century demanded celebiocay of all priests in the church. It is almost as if Paul was wrtign in anticiapation of this eeor on the church. But this heresy was their in the first century. God made us make and female such that we woudl be attarcetd and procreate- not that sex is only for procration, as some, again in the church of Rome , teach.

With some in Ephesusu teaching that the reusrection was already past it is posoible they were then aptlchign onto what jeusus said about there beign no marriage in heaven (Mat 22:30). There is no shortage of Christains who think they are already perfect and cannot sin! But were are in the last days, not in heaven! To forbid marrtiage is to forbid what God created as good, evnn if the entrance of sin has corrupted marriage. The answer to this corruotion is not self-dneial but obedience, with God’s help, to the creataion ordinance.

The second focus of the false teachers was another ceration goodness of God, namely food. While the church of Rome focuses on abstince from sex , other focus on abstainign fro certin foods. The SDA chreuch and many other teach vegetariamsm as the way fo hoiliness.