

Doctrine and the Warnings of the Spirit (1 Timothy 3:15-4:8)

1. (3:15-16) Doctrinal Statement: Paul gives Timothy counsel on the setup of the church. We must remember that the church was a new thing in this time. Paul and the other apostles were literally developing the worship service as they preached and taught. The Ephesian Christians had come out of idolatrous practices. Unlike us, they were not raised in a Christian society. Everything was new. So, Paul had to help Timothy understand the order of the church as he had been instructed through the Spirit. This explains why he gave an understanding of the posture of worship for men and women (2:8-15) and the need for bishops and deacons (3:1-15a). Paul sums the foundation of the church, however, on which any and all rules of order must stand. Jesus came into the world in flesh, was victorious through the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed on by many different people, and ascended up into heaven. Short dicta like this were said throughout the early times in the church to give people the scope of the faith in a nutshell. They were also memorized.
2. (4:1a) The Last Days... : Paul perceived his own time as the last days. We have to be careful not to assume our time is any different. Paul explained that the Spirit had been speaking of the rise of evil in the world. This is part of living in the world where Jesus is Lord.
3. (4:1b-8) Doctrines of Demons: Paul dealt with the problems of misinterpretations of the Law of God. As he began explaining in chapter 1, there were some who tried to keep and teach the Law and misused it. He further explores the problems that came with their teachings. Some were being turned from the faith with these doctrines. One in particular seems to have been the exclusion of certain foods. Paul explains that all foods can be eaten with prayer and thanksgiving. In the same vein, some seem to have been teaching that through asceticism and excessive self-denial (bodily exercise) people would get closer to God. But again, though fasting and prayer are essential, they must be done with the right point of view to be effective.