

Sermon or Lesson: 1 Timothy 4:1-2 (NIV based)

[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: Promoters Of Deception And Masquerades In Our Church

READ: 1 Timothy 4:1-2, with vv.3:14-15 for context

BACKGROUND:

- - God has assigned that His household, the true church, and its genuine believers are to appropriately be the custodian, guardian, and herald to the world of the foundational truths of the faith in Jesus. (v.3:15)
- - But now God's Spirit is warning us that our church has been infiltrated and infused with agents who work covertly on behalf of and in conjunction with the Kingdom of Darkness.
- - Let's study the details of this infiltration in our church.

v.1 - READ

[Lesson Question: Describe what the Holy Spirit is saying about phenomena that are occurring in our church.]

SECTION POINT: The Holy Spirit says we should be aware that deceiving spirits are extensively active in our church, counterfeit manifesting and teaching false doctrines through our wayward congregants.

- - Even though God's household, the church and its members, are suppose to be custodians and guardians of the foundational truths of the faith, there are some persons in the church who will not fulfill this functioning. (v.3:15)
- - Some persons in the church "will abandon the faith", "departing from and deserting" genuine faith by adopting corrupt principles that in effect render their faith a false faith, even though they erroneously think their faith has been enhanced. (Strong's #0868)
- - The Holy Spirit is herein giving "clear" "distinct" advance truthful information and "explicit" warning about two detrimental phenomenon realities that produce this apostasy, this abandoning of the faith. (Strong's #4490)

"follow deceiving spirits"

- - One phenomenon listed here is people in churches will "follow deceiving spirits".
- - Demons or spirits are in some form or forms supernaturally manifesting, which is designed to deceptively imitate, look like, and counterfeit the manifesting or activities of the Holy Spirit.
- - These counterfeit manifestations are attractive, appealing, and desirable to possess for oneself because they appear to be supernaturally powerful and very impacting within religious situations, events, or gatherings.
- - But in reality and by design, the demon-generated supernatural manifestations masquerade as activities the Holy Spirit is doing, when in actuality the Holy Spirit is not doing these supernatural activities.

- - These masquerades thereby effectively build and fortify in the follower person a false sense of elevated spiritual maturity due to apparent supposed extraordinary spirit-empowering.
- - So the follower person thereafter ignores and dismisses the foundational truths and disciplines of the faith in favor of paying attention to, then focusing on, and then pursuing, and then "adhering to", and then being consumed by experiencing the supernatural manifestations that in reality are demon-generated, along with its accompanying self-generated spiritual high. (Strong's #4337)

"follow... things taught by demons"

- - Another phenomenon listed here is people in churches will follow "things taught by demons".
- - Demons or spirits are producing or extending forth false or deceptive teachings and instruction, accomplished through the natural verbal speaking of host humans. (cf. v.2)
- - These false or deceptive teachings and instruction sound reasonable, attractive, appealing, and desirable to possess for oneself because they seem to produce or give the person some religious benefit or advantage.
- - But in reality and by design, the demon-generated teachings and instruction supplant the truth and/or the Word of God, effectively dissolving the foundation upon which genuine faith is based and replacing it with a false foundation upon which a false faith is based.

Direct Involvement of the Kingdom of Darkness

- - Both of these phenomena, following deceiving manifestations of spirits and following deceptive teachings of demons, imply that someone is listening, someone is or becomes open, someone is spiritually immature and not grounded in the faith, someone is naive or gullible, someone is undiscerning (cf. v.3), someone is discontent and wanting something more or different.
- - And working in cooperation with these spiritually immature humans, the Kingdom of Darkness has a direct active role in the generating of these phenomena, which ultimately leads to the follower's faith becoming shipwrecked, resulting in the abandoning of genuine faith in favor of embracing a false faith. (v.1:19)
- - This replacing of genuine faith with false faith is not only detrimental to the follower person, it is also dangerously threatening and potentially destructive to other people in the church as well as to the church as a whole.
- - The follower persons, or apostates, abandon personal belief in and holding of genuine truths of the faith, but generally do not leave their church.
- - Instead the follower persons usually stay in their church, outwardly professing the possessing of genuine faith in order to promote the false doctrines and false teachings they believe in for the explicit purpose of converting others to personally believe and adopt their false doctrines and false teachings as well. (Scofield, p.1266; 2 Peter 2:1; cf. Jude 1:4)
- - In effect and perhaps unbeknown to them, these follower persons thereby become actual ambassadors for the Kingdom of Darkness and active promoters of its deception agenda within the church. (2 Peter 2:1-3)

- - The Holy Spirit wants for us believers to not fall into these deceptions, which is, of course, exactly contrary to what the deceiving spirits want for us - that we fall victim to their deceptions and become their captive participants and promoters. (cf. 2 Timothy 2:25-26)
 - - However, in these "later times" today, sadly this phenomenon is common and pervasive in Christian churches and denominations - just as was prophetically foretold by the Holy Spirit in this verse.
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v.2 - READ

[Lesson Question: Describe what the Holy Spirit says are the characteristics of the people in our church who deceiving spirits are using to promote their agenda of deception.]

SECTION POINT: The Holy Spirit says that those congregants in our church who are being used by deceiving spirits are hypocrites, deceptive, and spiritually un-discerning.

- - Deceiving spirits or demons manipulate, influence, control and use follower apostate humans as their loudspeakers, their verbal salesmen through which their false teachings and instruction are propagated, dispensed, and dispersed.
 - - Close examination of these human verbal salesmen for the Kingdom of Darkness will reveal that they are "hypocritical liars", themselves professing some spiritual aspect in public but then practicing the opposite in private. (AHD - 'hypocrisy')
 - - Furthermore, they intentionally make false statements in an effort to contend and persuade that their beliefs, teachings, statements, and/or principles are truth or valid. (Strong's #5272)
 - - The extent or range of their hypocrisy and deception is perhaps limited to only what they and their demonic controllers can dream up and convince others to believeable.
 - - These hypocritical liars can generate a seemingly limitless range of spiritual topics that they promote to deceive others because their "consciences have been seared".
 - - They have seared their "own" conscience, essentially making themselves un-sensitive to awareness, perceiving, and discerning in spiritual matters of what is true and good and what is false and evil. (Strong's #2398 (omitted in NIV); #2743; AHD - 'conscience')
 - - Apparently, opening oneself up to false manifestations and/or teachings from deceiving spirits simultaneously opens oneself up to being made un-sensitive to discern spiritual rightness.
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IMPLICATIONS:

- - A huge problem and danger is that the subject these hypocritical liars are playing with pertains to spiritual matters, which in the extreme can result in being locked into eternal torment for some of their affected victims.
- - Another huge problem and danger is that these hypocritical liars are promoting their hypocrisy and deception within the walls of the church, to anyone and everyone who will listen. (Strong's #5573)

- - A third huge problem and danger is that the intentionality of their deception indicates these hypocritical liars are intentionally trying to lead people astray religiously and spiritually. (AHD - 'lie')
- - A fourth huge problem and danger is that identifying the wayward activities of these hypocritical liars intermixed in congregations can be difficult to distinguish.
- - - - Outwardly, they appear to conduct themselves satisfactorily but close examination of their personal life is required to reveal their significant hypocrisy and corruption.
- - - - Outwardly, the contents of their teaching sound satisfactory but close examination and comparison to Scriptures is required to reveal the falseness in their teaching and abandoning of truths of the faith.

- - Because of these numerous serious dangers, therefore, it is crucial that these hypocritical liars not be given or allowed any group speaking platform in the church from which to promote their hypocrisy and deception.
- - And it is likewise crucial that these hypocritical liars be confronted and instructed not to promote their deceptions to anyone in the church or its ministries.
- - Their potential for inflicting damage is so great that if necessary, it is better to have these hypocritical liar salespersons leave the church than it is to have them destroy the church by leading any of its congregants astray.

BIG IDEA: The Holy Spirit says there are congregants in our church who are being used by deceiving spirits to promote their agenda of deception and masquerading.

APPLICATIONS:

- - Can you determine who in our congregation have abandoned the faith?
- - Can you determine who in our congregation are unwitting agents of the Kingdom of Darkness because they promote its agenda?

- - Can you identify any supernatural counterfeit manifestations that are being incited and/or practiced in our church or ministry?
- - What have you done or are appropriately doing to thwart supernatural counterfeit manifestations in our church or ministry, which come from deceiving spirits through deceptive persons?

- - Do you diligently watch for and have you identified false spiritual and/or religious teaching in our church or ministry?
- - Can you determine who in our congregation are quite vocal and active in promoting spiritual and/or religious falseness? Or intentional deception? Or hypocrisy?
- - What have you done or are appropriately doing to thwart deceptive teachings in our church or ministry, which essentially come from demons through the salesmanship of deceptive persons?

- - Have you allowed, recruited, approved, or endorsed any covertly deceptive persons to teach or lead in our church or its ministries? If your answer is "No!", are you sure?

[Additional Lesson Questions to ponder (optional, if time allows):

- - In some churches today, what deceiving spirits are getting attention and being followed by people in the church, in effect causing those people to abandon or fall away from the faith? In other words, what are the manifestations of the deceiving spirits that are getting attention and followers in churches?
 - - Discuss Ephesians 4:19 in its context and theorize other possible consequences that may stem from having a seared conscience through following false manifestations and/or teachings from deceiving spirits.
 - - How can a believer self-detect and self-determine that his or her own conscience has been seared in some regard? Hint: see Psalms 139:23-24 and 2 Timothy 3:16]
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