



2 TIMOTHY

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For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;
2 Timothy 4:3

The word “For” is given to show Timothy why he needed to preach the word, and to be ready at all times to convince, rebuke, and exhort. The time of judging the living and the dead (verse 4:1) will come, but people don’t want to think about such things. They push it out of their minds and instead pursue another path. Instead of caring about what God expects, Paul says that “the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.”

His words show the depravity of man in the presence of God quite well. He is speaking of people who are Christians, or who supposedly are Christians, who simply want to hear what they want to hear. When they go to church and hear a message they don’t like (sound doctrine), they get upset and leave, vowing to never return again. This is obviously something that is much easier in a town with many varied churches. At some points in history, the state ran the church, and the message was kept unified. There was little chance of “church shopping.” In some towns, even today, there may be only one church. The same is true in such a case as that. One is left with either attending a church or not attending at all. However, with the advent of the internet, people can ignore these things and find what they want online.

Paul says that there is a reason for not wanting to hear sound doctrine. It is because they want to come to God, “according to their own desires.” What this means is that they have rejected the word of God, and thus the God of the Bible. They have created a god in their mind which will suit whatever fancy they follow. Some people hate the order outlined in Scripture that defines men as those who are to be leaders in the church. And so they, according to their own

desires, find a church that is led by women. The same is true with countless pet peeves. Some are sexually immoral, and so they will, according to their own desires, find a church which condones a sexually immoral lifestyle. Pick any immoral activity or false doctrine and there is a church which will meet the desire – drugs, abortion, reinserting the law, salvation with no expectation of holiness, the prosperity gospel, etc.

Paul says they will follow such perverse teaching “*because* they have itching ears.” They have it in their minds what they want to do with their lives, not what God instructs them to do. Their ears itch to hear that what they desire is acceptable. And so they shop for someone to meet what they desire. However, such an attitude is completely at variance with God’s will. One must take in the whole counsel of God, accepting that He is the Creator and that we are the created. It is God who sets the parameters for salvation, righteousness, holy living, and so on. But because they don’t want to conform to God’s standard, Paul says that “they will heap up for themselves teachers.”

The more voices who will validate what they desire rather than what God expects, the more reassured they become. The idea is, “Surely all of these wonderful teachers can’t be wrong!” Instead of going to the source, meaning God’s word, they rely on whatever the false teacher says. In this, they can continue to live out their lives as they see fit, and feel comfortable that there will be no condemning voice from their spiritual leader.

It must be contemplated that the direction of the church will generally follow the direction of the surrounding culture, or vice versa. The church may cause the people to turn to God, or the morals of the culture may cause the church to fall away from the truth. This is why those who hate God abhor Jesus Christ. Those who despise the truths contained in Scripture work both in the church and in the surrounding society to attack the word, question its reliability, tear apart the message of Christ, and exalt any false teaching which will diminish true Christianity in the process.

Life application: The ideologies found in communism, socialism, fascism, the progressive left, and a host of other ideologies which form political movements are based on principles which are contrary to the word of God. When people from these ideologies can get into church leadership positions, they will naturally work to destroy the truth of Scripture through false teaching. The same is true with people who may be apolitical, but who want to exercise whatever false belief suits their mores. When people with such values get into church leadership positions, those who follow the same false ideologies will flock to them. Paul showed us, right at the beginning of the church age, exactly what could be expected. Let us pay heed and be extremely careful to hold closely to the word of God, never deviating from its precepts.

...and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

2 Timothy 4:4

Paul now describes the result of what will come upon those who will not endure sound doctrine, who have itching ears, and who thus heap up teachers for themselves. He says that “they will turn *their* ears away from the truth.” The Greek literally reads, “the hearing *they* will turn away.” The word is “used of the inner (spiritual) hearing that goes with receiving faith from God” (HELPS Word Studies). This is the same word used in Romans 10:17 where it notes that faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

And so what Paul is saying is that they turn their spiritual ears from the eternal, beautiful, and life-giving truth of Scripture, and they turn “aside to fables.” The Greek word is *muthos*. In it, one can see where the English word “myth” is thus derived. This then is reflected in Paul’s words of Romans 1:25 where people exchange “the truth of God for the lie.” It is also seen in 1 Timothy 1:4 where he urges Timothy to not “give heed to fables and endless genealogies.”

This is a constant problem, even with saved Christians today. Conspiracy theories are held to as if sound and reliable. Evolution is accepted as truth. People believe that the earth is flat, they accept that one version of the Bible is divinely inspired, and all others are of the devil, they accept Jewish tradition over the words of Scripture, and they constantly watch videos which predict (for the ten-jillionth time) the day of the rapture. There is little discernment among a vast swath of the Christian community because of turning from the truth and turning aside to fables.

Life application: The more Bible you put in your life, the less time you will have to accept fables. Be wise and discerning with your time. Read! Study to show yourself approved! Don’t listen to those who would pull you into their box and then close it around you. Pursue Christ, fix your eyes on Jesus, and live out the word in a holy, reasonable manner.