

Fighting the Warfare of Faith **By Isaac Guess**

I Timothy 4:1 “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;”

Some concepts in Scripture are difficult to comprehend. The Trinity, the Sovereignty of God, His Omnipresence come to mind as truths that far surpass our abilities to fully grasp. The above passage, however, is not in that category. Paul emphasizes that the Spirit “speaketh expressly;” in other words, it is a clear, unambiguous certainty that instead of earnestly contending for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 2), as we are exhorted by Jude, some will depart from the faith. This passage should cause the child of God to pause and examine himself. Why does this happen? The passage clearly tells us. People depart from the faith because they listen and fall prey to ungodly, seductive influences that corrupt from the simplicity that is in Christ. How can this happen to me? It happens when I fail to obey the command to love the Lord with all of my mind. (Mark 12:30) The battle for the mind is not a battle we often contemplate. We too often battle our actions, restraining our words and deeds. The truth is that if we only battle our actions, we are only fighting the effect, not the source. The mind is the source of the sins of action. Individuals do not depart from the faith spontaneously. Instead, the departure comes as a result of the mind not being brought to the obedience of Christ (II Cor. 10:5)

In coming articles, we will discuss several issues of our present day that may be seductive attempts by Satan to cause God’s people to depart from the faith. Our prayer is that God’s people would not only not depart from the faith, but not even slip in the faith, and if we have to any degree slipped in the faith, to be spurred by these articles to again earnestly contend for the faith. In this article, we will examine three dangers in the battle for the mind.

The first danger in the battle for the mind is being naive. Notice in our text that Paul uses the word “seducing.” Consider the example of Satan’s seduction of Eve in the garden. His appeals to her were alluring and appealing to her ego. She would be wise. However, from the moment that Adam and Eve partook of the fruit, it is certain that they would have given anything to not have the knowledge of the shame of their nakedness, the ever present reality of sin. In Proverbs 7, the simple youth had no guard against the seductive lies heaped upon him by the harlot, who was “subtil of heart.” (Proverbs 7:10) It was not until the dart struck his liver did he realize just how naive he had been. Thus, John would exhort us in I John 4:1 to not believe “every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out in the world.” Paul had a pastor’s heart for the Corinthians. In II Corinthians 11:3, he confessed that his fear was that “as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” We must not be naive regarding the presence of evil ideas present in our world. We must test every teaching we hear by the word of God.

The second danger closely relates to the first, and that is the danger of ignorance. If we do not know the word of God thoroughly, we are helpless to confront erroneous teachings which may result in our departing from the faith. After warning young Timothy of the existence of “evil men and seducers” in II Timothy 3, he then gives Timothy the following weapons to use: “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation

through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”(II Timothy 3:14-17) Paul gives Timothy two related instructions. First, he tells Timothy to trust what he has been taught because he knows the people who have taught him. What wonderful instruction this is. We should be very wary of any teaching or idea that runs counter to what our parents, pastor, and faithful children of God have taught us. Is there perfect safety in this? No, because parents, pastors, and faithful children of God are not perfect. However, this is an excellent starting place when testing ideas. The second instruction, however, is perfect. Paul points Timothy with unreserved confidence to the Word of God. It thus follows that we must be students of the Word of God if we are to have victory over seductive spirits and doctrines of devils. We cannot have any confidence of walking worthy of our vocation without constant time gleaning from God’s Word.

The last danger we will ponder is the danger of instability. Hebrews 13:9 instructs: “Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace...” Being close minded is seen as one of the greatest evils of our day. However, when it comes to the truths of God’s Word, we should be so established in the truth that we are not as “...children, tossed to and from, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;”(Eph. 4:14) Paul criticizes those in II Timothy who were “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”(II Timothy 3:7) Stability in the midst of conflicting and confusing ideas is a tremendous virtue. Confidence in the Lord and confidence in the timeless relevance of the Word of God will keep us and will alert us to the seductive influences of our day.

This message relies completely on our confidence in the Word of God. In our next article, we will examine the value of the word of God and the importance of handling it properly.