

# Striving to Become Who We Are In Yeshua

Thoughts on 1 Timothy 4:6–10

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notes by Tim Hegg

**6 - In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Messiah Yeshua, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.**

The opening line points to “these things,” which have been taught throughout this epistle of Paul to Timothy, but are summarized in verses 1–5.

- v. 1 – The last times will be characterized by some who had professed belief in Yeshua, denying the faith, and becoming apostate (*ἀποστήσονται*) because they have believed “deceitful spirits” (*πνεύμασιν πλάνοις*) and “doctrines of demons” (*διδασκαλίαις δαιμονίων*).
- v. 2 – The cause of such defecting from the faith they once confessed is the teaching of hypocrites who teach lies, having been convinced in their own minds (i.e., “seared in their own conscience”) that the Gospel message is false. Such “searing” is affected by a “branding iron,” which surely describes the diabolical work of Satan himself. They claim to know God but by their actions deny him (Tit 1:16); their actions seem spiritual but they live immoral lives (2Tim 3:5).
- vs. 3-5 – These teachers have been convinced of a gnostic teaching, that essentially taught that the material world is imbued with evil and the only way to avoid such evil was to deny one’s physical desires, which included taking pleasure in one’s food as well as the relationship between a husband and wife. Thus they forbade marriage and sought to exist only on essential food. This gnostic heresy is absolutely contrary to what God has revealed as right and holy. For all that God has created is good and therefore ought to be received with gratitude and praise and recognized as honoring God when sanctified by the word and prayer.

Now in v. 6 Paul admonishes Timothy to expose the error of the false teachers and even though such teaching may be rejected by some people, his boldly teaching the truth will identify him as a good servant of Messiah Yeshua. This must, therefore, be the mindset of any one who takes up the role of a teacher within the body of Messiah, the *ekklesia*. While surely the one who teaches must strive to emphasize the love and goodness of God in making eternal salvation a reality for all who come to faith in Yeshua, the teacher must also be willing to teach the truth of the word even if this may result in some rejecting him and his teaching.

In order for Timothy to fulfill his appointed task as teacher within the body of Messiah, he must be “constantly nourished on the words of faith and sound doctrine.” And this is likewise true of all teachers who labor in

the word and teaching: it essential that they commit themselves to teaching the “sound doctrines,” that is, what fully aligns with the Scriptures.

It is amazing how many “teachers” in the “messianic movement” are teaching things that “tickle the ears,” that is, choosing to teach that which only makes people feel good about themselves. It would seem that the text in 2Tim 4:3–4 is very appropriate in our times even as it was in the 1st Century.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. (2Tim 4:3–4)

Here, once again, the Apostle Paul admonishes us to accept the Scriptures (66 books) as the final and ultimate “measuring rod” by which all matters of our faith and practice are judged to be what God intends.

## **7 – But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness;**

First, we must understand Paul’s words here to describe “worldly fables” to be a translation of the Greek βέβηλος (*bebailos*) “worldly,” that which is “of the world” in contrast to being the true revelation of God Himself through the created world, the incarnate Yeshua, and His inspired word. The phrase “fables fit only for old women,” when combined with the previous word “of the world” translates γράωδεις μύθους παραιτοῦ. When combined with the previous word “of the world,” offers a literal translation such as “godless and old-women’s myths.” This apparently was a common way in the Greek world of Paul to mean “stories that circulate” but have no real measure of verifiable truth.

In contrast to this, Paul admonishes Timothy (and us) to live a disciplined life with the goal of living in a manner that pleases God and enables one to be a true witness and testimony of His grace in Yeshua.

In our times, the fact that information via the internet, facebook, etc., etc., is so prevalent and often received without true verification of the facts, the snare of simply believing what one has heard or read is ever present. Here, once again, we see the utter necessity of being well grounded in the word of God, for it is His divine truth, revealed to us in the Scriptures, that will enable us to live righteously in our modern world. We must “take every thought captive to the obedience of Messiah” (2Cor 10:5). In order to do so we must “discipline” (γυμνάζω, *gumnazo*) ourselves. The Greek word is the basis for our English word “gymnasium,” the place where athletes would train for the Greek games. It is interesting to take that metaphor and

to put it into a way of expressing our “spiritual exercise and training.” Do we recognize that we are in a race that requires us to be in “spiritual shape” in order to finish well? How much effort do we expend in order to become better equipped to run the race that is before us?

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.  
(1Cor 9:24–25)

**8 - 9 for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance.**

Paul does not downplay “bodily discipline,” for he states that it does profit us. Indeed, to do all within our power to maintain health and well being is to honor God in Whose image we are created.

But when compared with the glories of eternity, dwelling in the very presences of God and enjoying Him and basking in the incomparable joy and wonder of His glory eternally, that which we gain from our bodily discipline is miniscule compared to what we gain by growing in our obedience, worship and service for the Lord. And this service for the Lord is the privilege we have to care for one another within the believing community as well as being witnesses of God’s truth to a lost and dying world.

Here we see, once again, the balance that Paul brings as he wrote these words, being carried only by the Ruach HaKodesh. There is nothing in his words that diminish the value, the wonder, and the necessity of living well in this world. There’s no need to sequester oneself in a monastery or to think that gaining pleasure from the good things God has given us is somehow less “spiritual” than depriving oneself of that which is ours to enjoy in this world. Nor does Paul teach us that to be content with what God continues to provide in this life means we don’t have a proper love and desire to be with Him in eternity. The Gnostic heresy gave rise to people “who were so heavenly minded that they were of no earthly good.” In God’s purpose, He has provided our needs and for that we praise Him and care for ourselves and each other, while still having the glorious expectation of being with Him for all eternity in which there will be no death or sorrow of any sort.

The question of whether v. 9 refers to what has been stated in v. 8 or if it is to be grouped with what comes in v. 10 has been a question among the commentators. It seems to me that v. 9 is a divinely placed “explanation mark” on what Paul has taught us in v. 8. We are to live our life on earth with all of our strength and desire to both serve Him and each other, and in

the mix of it all, we are to find great enjoyment, happiness, and meaning, in spite of the fact that we live in a fallen world. Thus, to live a full life while at the same time having our eyes upon eternity, we have followed the statement of Paul as “deserving full acceptance.”

**10 - For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.**

To what does the phrase “it is for this” refer? It doubtlessly refers to the present life we have in Yeshua as well as the future life that is promised to those who believe and thus evidence their faith by living godly lives. It is this two-fold reality that Paul states is the focus of his labor and striving as an Apostle of Yeshua. Such a focus is constantly supported by having one’s perspective fixed upon the eternal and living God Who has revealed Himself in truth and given us His word so that we know His will and so that by the power of the Ruach we can remain steadfast in our goal to serve Him and each other in our lives of faith.

The phrase “we have fixed our hope” incorporates the Greek verb ἐλπίζω (*elpizō*), “to hope,” cast in the perfect active indicative. This emphasizes that it is a hope that is on-going and constant. This is why the NASB adds “we have fixed our hope,” meaning “we have an on-going, constant hope” in the living God.

Here, once again, we see a regular emphasis in the Scriptures that one who is truly born again will remain faithful even if, at times, there are weaknesses and faltering. The Scriptures clearly teach that if a person is truly born from above and granted faith to believe in Yeshua, that person will never be eternally lost but will inevitably remain faithful, for they have been purchased with a great price and Yeshua loses none whom the Father has given to Him.

All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. (Jn 6:37)

When Paul writes that Yeshua “is the Savior of all men,” he clearly does not mean that everyone will be eternally saved. The phrase “all men” must therefore mean “all manner of people,” i.e., He did not come only to save Jewish people but to fulfill the Abrahamic covenant, that through His saving work people from every nation, family, and language group would be saved. And that is why Paul concludes with the fact that Yeshua is the Savior of “believers.” The word “especially” (μάλιστα, *malista*) could just as well be translated “particularly.” Thus, Yeshua came to save “all kinds of people” and particularly those to whom the gift of faith is granted.