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## 1 Timothy 4:1-5 (Departing from the Faith)

### 1 Timothy 4:1-5 (NKJV)

<sup>1</sup> Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some *will depart from the faith*, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,

<sup>2</sup> speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,

<sup>3</sup> forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

<sup>4</sup> For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it's received with thanksgiving;

<sup>5</sup> for it's sanctified by the word of God and prayer.



The first two verses of the above text state that in the last times some people will depart from the faith by giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, not realizing it of course, and out of hypocrisy they will speak lies, their conscience being marked with a hot iron. Many Christians believe

that the apostasy in these verses refers to the loss of eternal salvation, because they interpret deceiving spirits and the teachings of demons as immoral sins that will eventually

cause some genuine Christians to lose their salvation. However, I invite you to take things one at a time and see first what these wrong teachings consist of and then who are those “some” who will fall away from the faith, what kind of faith they are referring to, and what this distancing means.

Verses 3 and 4 describe some of the things and doctrines these people promote, namely: the prohibition of marriage and abstinence from certain foods. The things related here are not immoral sins and carnal pleasures in which people usually like to indulge in, but rather “other apparently good ways” and ascetic ways of attaining righteousness. They are teachings and doctrines, but not sins.

These teachings are clothed in an appearance of holiness which makes them very subtle and deceptive. Judging by their nature, it seems that those who propagated them were trying to be holy by works instead of faith. They believed that holiness came from strict adherence to a set of rules. These doctrines seem to resemble very much the Law of Moses and to be Jewish in nature. Who can these people be? Since the passage speaks of a falling away from faith it means that those people had contact at some point with the pure teaching of salvation by faith alone in Christ. They were either so convinced that they were also born again, or they only joined the church for a while, but they could not fully renounce the Law of Moses and were never born again. Paul calls them hypocrites and liars because they preached one thing to others, but they did the exact opposite in their private lives, and their consciences became numb because of their constant living in that lifestyle. They no longer saw the seriousness of the contradiction in their lives from the desire to appear before men as religious and holy. Just as the area where an animal is marked with a hot iron becomes numb and insensitive to pain, so the conscience of these people had become desensitized. Because of this, the apostle Paul describes their conscience as being marked with a hot iron.

It is very possible that those “some” influenced by the teachings of the Jews were even leaders (pastors and teachers) of the church of Christ in Ephesus, since the heresies had to do with doctrines that are usually preached from the front. Moreover, in 1 Timothy 1:7, they are described as wanting to be teachers of the Law. If they were born again, they probably loved God, were eternally saved by grace, but from time to time were “bitten” by the self-

righteousness propagated by the followers of the Law of Moses, and focused mainly on their good works in order to please God here on earth, and this was because of a lack of understanding and revelation. They were not yet fully established in Christ and believing the truth in all areas. This does not mean that they had lost their eternal salvation, but that in their daily lives, they relied more on their self-righteousness to attract God's favor, instead of applying the same simple faith that they had at the moment of salvation. Therefore, their departure from the faith was not an irreversible fall from the faith, but a temporary distancing or limited to only some aspects of their faith life. The same is happening today with many genuine Christians in the body of Christ who slip from time to time into self-righteousness or do not have full faith in the truth in all areas of their lives. Paul did not have in mind here the loss of eternal salvation. Lots of born-again Christians who are still legalistic and self-righteous will still go to heaven because they put their faith in Jesus for forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation.

From this passage we can also draw some general principles of faith.

For example, the devil's lie will always result in a works-based salvation.

This is appealing because a religion oriented toward good works seems impressive, holy, and righteous for others. We can examine religion by religion and we will see that they are all based on what you do or don't do. It is believed that thus God is tempered in His demands, or, in other words, good human works temper Him, they appease God. However, all these teachings are satanic and demonically fueled. True Christianity is not based at all on human works, but only on the grace of God.

False religions teach that we must work for salvation, but true Christianity teaches that God has done everything in Christ.

This is one way to identify falsehoods in teachings. Satan's lies always refer to the same thing: spirituality achieved through human effort and not based on Christ alone.

## Revelation 3:1-5 (The Book of Life)

Revelation 3:1-5 (NKJV)

<sup>1</sup> And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, “These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: ‘I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but *you are dead*.’

<sup>2</sup> *Be watchful*, and strengthen *the things which remain, that are ready to die*, for I haven’t found *your works perfect* before God.

<sup>3</sup> *Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent*. Therefore, if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

<sup>4</sup> You have a few names even in Sardis *who haven’t defiled their garments*; and they shall walk with Me in white, for *they are worthy*.

<sup>5</sup> *He who overcomes* shall be clothed in white garments, and *I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life*; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.’”

These verses seem to focus on good works, on the idea of being watchful, not defiling our garments, and overcoming. Verse 5 specifically says that only those who overcome will be clothed in white, their names will not be blotted out of the Book of Life or the book of the saved, and Jesus will confess their names before His Father and before His angels. One of the most common interpretations of this verse in the Christian world is that some born-again people will not be watchful enough, will not overcome, and eventually their names will be blotted out of the Book of Life, even though they were once truly saved. At first glance, this seems a plausible conclusion. But let’s take a closer look at each verse.

These words were addressed to the pastor of the church of Sardis, who represented, in fact, the whole church from that city. It consisted of two kinds of people: (1) genuinely saved, (2) and those who called themselves Christians and did all kinds of good, moral works, but they didn’t have a relationship with Jesus Christ and had never been born again spiritually.

In Verse 1, Jesus told this church in Sardis it had some works and a reputation for being alive, but it was dead.

What is a dead church? It is a Christian community where most people (but not all) present themselves as good Christians, but in reality, have a dead faith.

The church in Sardis consisted mainly of such people. They were doing a lot of good works and activities for their community, and probably that is why the church of Sardis had such a good reputation, but all those things they were doing were dead works because they were not coming from faith in Christ and were just some good works. Verse 2 mentions their works were not perfect (or completed in the NASB translation) before God, strengthening the idea that these people were not born again. Galatians 5:6 says the only thing that counts in Christ is faith working through love. For any work to be alive, it must be worked out from a faith-based relationship in Christ through love. Moreover, Colossians 2:9 says whoever is in Christ is complete in Him already.

Only someone in Christ is complete and perfect and, so, can perform perfect works before God.

There might have been a time when the church of Sardis was fully alive, meaning most of the people in it were born again and effective in the Kingdom. However, in time, through teaching that was maybe too inclusive and too negatively influenced by the society's culture, the church became dead. That doesn't mean people who were born again lost their salvation, but it means the church as a whole became dead in the sense that some believers left from there, new people were added, and in time, the spiritually dead outnumbered the spiritually alive. Verse 4 highlights that even in that dead church of Sardis, a few people still didn't compromise their faith and relationship with Christ by doing works out of self-righteousness. This says they were worthy. Nobody can ever be worthy by works, even if those works are done through faith.

The only thing that makes people stand worthy before God is Christ's righteousness and faith in that righteousness.

So, these people kept their conviction strong and their simple faith in Christ's righteousness. They hadn't diluted or defiled that conviction by mixing it with human efforts.

In Verse 2, Jesus encourages the church to be watchful and strengthen the remaining things that are ready to die. What does it mean to be watchful? Let's suppose being watchful refers to good works born-again people do to maintain their salvation. This means the people in that

church had to watch over themselves and over their actions to make sure they were as holy as possible in order to overcome and remain saved. This presupposition creates a few significant problems. First, we add their imperfect works to the faith in Christ as a condition of maintaining salvation. God's standard is perfect holiness, which no man can attain even after salvation. Only Jesus accomplished this. Second, they couldn't have known if they were still in or out of salvation at any moment in time. They would have always wondered: "Are we watchful enough, or do we need to be more watchful? Are we above the average 'unknown' threshold of watchfulness that God has, if there is such a thing?" They could not have known. So "being watchful as a church" cannot refer to born-again people and good works as a condition of salvation.

Verses 2 and 3 expand on what being watchful means as a church. First, strengthen the things that remain, which are about to die. What are these things? They are related to accurate teaching about faith in Christ, righteousness, and repentance so people can first be born again and become alive spiritually. Second, remember how you first received and heard the message of salvation, and then hold fast to that and repent as a church, not as an individual. The writer doesn't refer to what you received and heard, but to how you received and heard the message of salvation—that is, by faith alone and by the confession of the mouth. Third, another proof the target audience consisted mainly of unsaved people can be found in the last part of Verse 3, which says the following: "Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you." However, 1 Thessalonians 5:4-5 says the day of the Lord will not catch like a thief those who are in Christ because they are not in darkness, but they are sons of light:

1 Thessalonians 5:4-5 (NKJV)

<sup>4</sup> But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that *this Day should overtake you as a thief*.

<sup>5</sup> You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.

This passage clarifies that, for people, watching or being watchful, meant coming into Christ and making sure they were in Christ. In that way, Jesus's second coming would not take them

by surprise like a thief in the night.

Verse 5 from our initial passage (Revelation 3:1-5) says he who overcomes will not have his name blotted out of the Book of Life. Overcome what? The temptations to forsake God and forsake salvation because of the many problems and trials in the world that might come their way? No, of course not, but rather overcome sin, the devil, death, and the world. Who are the overcomers in the Bible? Who has already overcome all these things? Those people who first and foremost have come into Christ and have become born-again believers. Without this, nothing can be overcome, no one can even attempt to overcome anything. 1 John 5:4-5 says this:

1 John 5:4-5 (NKJV)

<sup>4</sup> For whatever is born of God *overcomes the world*. And this is the victory that *has overcome the world—our faith*.

<sup>5</sup> Who is he *who overcomes the world*, but he who *believes* that Jesus is the Son of God?

According to this passage, it's certain that those born of God overcome the world, there is no question about it. Faith in Christ is what assures that victory, and these people are the ones whose names will not be erased from the Book of Life. Let's see a few more passages about being victorious.

1 John 2:13 (NKJV)

<sup>13</sup> I write to you, fathers, because you have known Him Who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because *you have overcome the wicked one*. I write to you, little children, because you have known the Father.

In this verse, the verb “overcome” is in the past tense, meaning those young men have already overcome the evil one, just by being in Christ. This is furthermore proved by Romans 8:37:

## Romans 8:37 (NKJV)

<sup>37</sup> Yet in all these things *we are more than conquerors* through Him who loved us.

Christians are more than conquerors through Him Who loved them. They don't overcome, but they have already overcome in Christ because He has conquered the world. So, overcoming means coming into Christ, not them trying to keep their salvation to the end through good works. In the light of everything said so far, Revelation 3:5 can be understood in the following way: "Those who are born again of God and believe in Him are the ones who overcome and will never be blotted out of the Book of Life." It's a promise and a blessing, not a threat.

Now, since we are on the topic of the Book of Life, let's try to shed a little more light on it and on who and when gets to be recorded there. Most Christians believe God has a so-called registry called the Book of Life, where He adds people as they become saved throughout human history or deletes them when they lose their salvation. Only those who remain recorded there will get to inherit the new heaven and the new earth. Let's see what the Bible has to say about this and if these assumptions are valid.

First, according to Revelation 20:15, 21:27, and Philippians 4:3, it's true that God has a Book of Life, and born-again believers are for sure written in that book, also called the Lamb's Book of Life. It's also true that only saved people will remain recorded there until the day of judgment. Let's read these passages:

## Revelation 20:15 (NKJV)

<sup>15</sup> And *anyone not found written in the Book of Life* was cast into the lake of fire.

## Revelation 21:27 (NKJV)

<sup>27</sup> But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but *only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life*.

## Philippians 4:3 (NKJV)



<sup>3</sup> And I urge you also true companion, help these women who labored with me in the Gospel, with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, *whose names are in the Book of Life.*

Second, according to Revelation 13:8 and 17:8, it seems there is a certain category of people who were not included at all in the Book of Life from before the foundation of the world:

Revelation 13:8 (NKJV)

<sup>8</sup> All who dwell on the earth will worship him, *whose names haven't been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*

Revelation 17:8 (NKJV)

<sup>8</sup> The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, *whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world*, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

Third, the Bible doesn't mention anywhere that people, throughout history, have been added, or are being added, in the Book of Life at the time of their salvation. Based on these Revelation scriptures, we can safely conclude the rest of the people outside of those who worshipped the beast were written in the Book of Life from before the foundation of the world, irrespective of whether they were going to be saved or not (I will explain this later).

Fourth, in Luke 10:20, Jesus tells the seventy disciples, rejoicing that the devils were submitted to them, rather to rejoice that their names were recorded in heaven.

Luke 10:20 (NKJV)

<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless don't rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because *your names are written in heaven.*"

We can again safely assume Jesus was referring here to the Book of Life, otherwise, there would not be any reason for rejoicing if they were just recorded in the general book of the living or in the books for judgment. At that moment in history, none of the disciples were yet saved because Christ had not died yet on the cross. However, it seems they were already recorded in the Book of Life. To complicate things even more, Judas Iscariot was among those disciples, and it's known clearly he ended badly and didn't get saved, although he was recorded in that book. He was the son of perdition:

John 17:12 (NKJV)

<sup>12</sup> While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; *and none of them is lost except the son of perdition*, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

Then we have people in the Old Testament, like Abraham, King David, Daniel, and so on, who died physically before Christ died on the cross, and yet the Bible reveals they are saved for sure and thus must have been written in the Book of Life. To summarize: (1) some people were registered in the Book of Life before they became saved (i.e., the disciples of Jesus); (2) other people were written in the Book of Life but didn't get saved ultimately, although they had the opportunity to do so, and we know about them that they are forever lost (i.e., Judas Iscariot); (3) and other people didn't have the opportunity to get saved during their lifetime, but they are forever saved and written in the Book of Life (the Old Testament fathers and prophets).

Now, if we attempt to put all these facts together, one possible interpretation that would connect all of them logically and consistently, without contradicting any of them, and would make sense of all these verses in the context of the security of salvation, is the following one:

God either foreknew clearly or He determined specifically (for His purposes) that some people will never be saved. So, He didn't include them in the Book of Life from before the foundation of the world. These are the beast worshippers from the end of times.

The rest of the people from all human history who would either get saved OR NOT, He included them all anyway in the Book of Life from before the foundation of the world. This assumption is supported by 1 Timothy 2:3-4, where God says He desires all men to be saved, although they will not all be saved. He gives a chance and the benefit of the doubt to all people:

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (NKJV)

<sup>3</sup> For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,

<sup>4</sup> who *desires all men to be saved* and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Then, starting from there, God has been erasing from the Book of Life the people who died physically and left this world without ever having a saving faith or manifesting any type of trust in God, corresponding to the level of revelation they had during their lifetime. What I mean by that last phrase is that the Old Testament people who lived before Christ's Crucifixion had a limited revelation of God and of salvation and didn't have the possibility of redemption. However, according to the revelation they had, they made some steps of faith toward God during their lifetime, they came into a covenant with Him, and that faith was counted to them as righteousness. So, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Enoch, Noah, Moses, Joshua, David, Daniel, Rahab, and others like them, remained written in the Book of Life because, after the cross, salvation was granted to them even though they were already dead physically. Now, the erased people were never saved in the first place—it's not that they were saved and then lost their activated salvation, but they lost their potential salvation. They didn't take advantage of it during their lifetime.

This interpretation displays God's abundant love and mercy toward all people, ensures those who received Christ will never be erased from the Book of Life, and explains why the disciples, including Judas Iscariot, were already in the Book of Life before their actual

salvation. I believe Judas Iscariot was removed from the Book of Life after his physical death.

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