

“Every Creature of God is Good”: A Lexico-Syntactical and Theological Analyses of 1 Timothy 4:1-5

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Abstract

False teaching in the Ephesian Church was alarming. The tone of 1 Timothy 4:1-5 shows Paul's seriousness about these false teachings, which could ruin his Ephesus ministry. Paul stated that the Holy Spirit gives end-time deception warnings. The nature of the false teachings has puzzled Paul's readers. The study investigates the nature of the false teaching, the use of βρωμα, and Paul's meaning of ὅτι πᾶν κτίσμα θεοῦ καλόν. Paul's handling of the Ephesian church's false teaching has also been analyzed in modern Christianity. The following key difficulties were addressed through lexico-syntactical and theological study. The study concludes that the erroneous doctrine was asceticism, which posited that the material world was evil and excessive engagement with it could jeopardize one's salvation. In the Ephesian church, this doctrine was situated in a setting where certain members believed that marriage or the consumption of food could impede salvation. Consequently, they adopted fasting and celibacy as methods for attaining salvation. They asserted that self-restraint was the most reliable means of achieving salvation. According to Paul, the truth, as the gospel of Christ, which false teachers forsook, remains the reliable path to salvation. Paul teaches that God created everything for a purpose; thus food and marriage should be gratefully accepted and followed according to the Bible. Paul does not say in the verse that clean and unclean meat are no longer distinguished in Christianity. To stay truthful, scripture must guide our doctrines and practices.

Key Words: βρωμα, asceticism, truth, creature, God's word.

Introduction

Paul's letter to Timothy, who oversaw pastoral duties, shares invaluable instructions for church administration, leadership, doctrine, and practice for the Christian.¹ However, it is undoubtedly true that some knotty passages need attention for better understanding and practice, which is valid for 1 Tim 4:1-5.

Paul's instructions with a prophetic tone Timothy on the church taking an extreme position against the false teaching on abstinence from marriage and food in 1 Tim 4:1-5 has received several interpretations. The following texts suggest that the letter was an indirect instruction to a church at Ephesus through Timothy (1 Tim 1:2, 3-4, 2:1-15; 3:1-

¹Samuel Hardy, “Biblical Theology Exegesis of 1 Timothy 4:1-5,” *Biblical Studies* (2020): 1.

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13; 4:6, 13). Some have interpreted and often used the passage as proof text against and so often used to denounce veganism as being anti-Christian.² Some commentators are of the view that Paul is talking about meat. George R. Knight argues that βρωμα is used in this context to refer to meat. He continues to express that in this case, the false teachers are urging abstinence from meat and are intimating that meat is intrinsically wrong.³

Another view intimates that Paul deleted and abolished the line or difference between clean and unclean meat, as every creature of God is good.⁴ Some are cautious and conclude and take the term “food” as a general term, and nothing concludes that nothing in the text indicates that βρωμα refers to meat.⁵

A cursory reading of this passage clarifies that some people were easily deceived and gullible to fall for various false teachings, leading them to choose from one extreme position or the other. Some documents report on the licentious and ascetic lifestyles in the NT times and the ensuing centuries.⁶

The passage in 1 Tim 4:1–5 appears to hint at asceticism.⁷ In this regard, Marcello

Newall writes:

1 Timothy 4:1–8 appears to be a point-by-point rebuttal of the proto-Gnostic view of creation, which is contrasted with the account in Genesis. In particular, the apostle is denouncing a harsh asceticism and food restriction/deprivation, described as “bodily exercise,” which by severely mortifying the body sought deliverance from the material world. The article goes on to analyze ancient forms of asceticism as well as dietary patterns in the ancient Mediterranean in order to show how contemporary veganism differs sharply from the kind of mortification that is being condemned.⁸

In essence, some members of the Ephesian church were of the view that partaking

² Marcello Newall, “Biblical Veganism: An Examination of 1 Timothy 4:1–8,” *Journal of Animal Ethics* 11 (2021) (1): 11.

³ George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 187.

⁴ Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin Jr., *1, 2 Timothy, Titus* (Nashville, TN.: Broadman and Holman, 1992), 127–128.

⁵ Benjamin Fiore, *The Pastoral Epistles: First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 90.

⁶ Craig L. Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, Tennessee: B & H, 2009), 31–33. One can do a good analysis of the thought of this movement by reading from T. Brennan, *The Stoic Life: Emotions, Duties, Fate* (Oxford and New York, OUP, 2005). See also William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of Thessalonians, the Pastorals, and Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 147; Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (TNTC), rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 104. According to Blomberg, in the first century AD and beyond, the two extremes were rigid asceticism, (Stoicism) and licentious antinomianism (Epicureanism). This is attested to in Acts 17:18ff about food and sex. These practices were later associated with Gnosticism.

Newall, “Biblical Veganism: An Examination of 1 Timothy 4:1–8,” 11.

⁸ Newall, “Biblical Veganism: An Examination of 1 Timothy 4:1–8,” 11. See also Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 238.

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in food was evil and might have resorted to starving and some forms of self-restraint, even to the point of suppressing sexual desires to be spiritually approved by God.

With the views presented above, the study seeks to reinvestigate the nature of abstinence and the extreme position taught by the false teachers in 1 Tim 4:1–5. The thrust of this paper will be on the correct understanding of Paul’s warning and instructions in 1 Tim 4:1–5 as cast in the prophetic and imperative tones. The study will help formulate sound doctrine and practice on food and marriage in contemporary Christian practice.

Virtually, scholars and commentators on the Pastoral Epistles acknowledge the presence of opponents known as false teachers in the churches.⁹ Such is the case for 1 Timothy 4:1–5. However, considerable disagreements exist concerning the nature and details of those false teachings in those pastoral communities. This study seeks to address the four key issues:

1. What was the nature of the false teaching in 1 Timothy 4:1–5?
2. What is the meaning of βρωμά as used by Paul in the passage?
3. What is the meaning of the phrase, ὅτι πᾶν κτίσμα θεοῦ καλόν?
4. What is the theological implication and application of Paul’s counsel in 1 Timothy 4:1–5?

Method

The study employs lexico–syntactical analysis to examine the nature of erroneous teachings in 1 Timothy 4:1–5. This method will examine the passage’s historical, linguistic, syntactical, and theological contexts. The study analyzes certain terms and their definitions within the context of the paragraph. The syntactical analysis will examine phrases and their relationships in constructing meaning within the paragraph. This analysis will examine significant theological concerns in the passage for coherent exegetical and theological comprehension. Thus, a comprehensive grasp of the false teachings Paul cautioned against, together with his guidance for proper doctrine and practice in modern Christianity, will be effectively illustrated.

Background of 1 Timothy

The main issues covered here will be authorship, occasion and purpose of writing and the addresses of 1 Timothy. That there is debate on the authorship of 1 Timothy is an undeniable fact.¹⁰ Because authorship does not affect this study, the study assumes that

⁹ For a discussion on this, see, Dillon T. Thornton, “Hostility in the House of God: An Investigation of the Opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy.” (Doctoral dissertation, University of Otago, 2014), 13–31.

¹⁰ In the work of Christopher M. Date, “By Command of God Our Savior: A Defense of the Pauline Authorship of the Pastoral Epistles,” *Diligence: Journal of the Liberty University Online Religion Capstone in Research and Scholarship* 1.1 (2016):1, the author writes by citing the work of Stanley Porter’s work, Stanley E. Porter, “Pauline Authorship and the Pastoral Epistles: Implications for Canon,”

Paul wrote 1 Timothy.¹¹

On his way to the Philippi from Rome, as promised (Phil 2:19–24) during his house arrest, he stopped at Ephesus to evaluate the church’s spiritual health. He left Timothy at Ephesus to charge certain people not to teach false doctrine (1 Tim 1:3). The above statements clearly show the occasion and purpose of 1 Timothy. On the addressee, the internal evidence shows that the letter had Timothy as the immediate recipient, who was, in turn, to instruct the church in Ephesus with Paul’s letter.

Literary Analysis of 1 Timothy 4:1–5

The section focuses on the literary context of the passage. It also determines the genre and its significance in understanding the passage. These literary issues will be treated as they will impact the understanding of the subject under study.

Literary Context of 1 Timothy 4:1–5

In 1 Timothy 1:3, it is evident in Paul’s letter to Timothy, his younger colleague in the Ephesian church, that he was left to deal with the issues of false teachings that appeared to threaten the church.

Before addressing the false teachers in Ephesus teaching heresy head-on, Paul provides the yardstick for selecting church leaders entrusted with the responsibilities of church administration and teaching (1 Tim 3:15–16). Within this vein, Paul explicitly reminds them of the prophecy concerning the coming of false teachers who will teach people to abstain from what God has provided through creation (1 Tim 4:1–5). The nature and purpose for such abstinence and rejection of God’s creation lie in the heart of this study to give proper interpretation, which is consistent with the exegesis and theology of the passage.

Bulletin for Biblical Research 5 (1995), 105, “It is one of the received traditions in New Testament scholarship,” writes Stanley Porter, “that Paul is not the author of the Pastoral Epistles, a view held by the vast majority of scholars.” Date writes by making it clear that the authorship of the Pastoral Epistles is contested. In his article, he writes extensively to adduce supports for Pauline authorship from both internal and external evidences.

¹¹ See the following Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1990), 20; Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, 8 vols. (Buffalo, NY: The Christian Literature Company, 1885–6), 1:32; Kenneth Berding, “Polycarp of Smyrna’s View of the Authorship of 1 and 2 Timothy,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 53, no. 4 (1999):349–50; Arthur G. Patzia dates it to the late second century (*The Making of the New Testament: Origin, Collection, Text & Canon*, 2nd ed. [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011], 96; Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Second Series*, 14 vols. (New York, NY: The Christian Literature Company, 1890–1900), 1:45; Robert W. Wall and Richard B. Steele, 1 and 2 *Timothy and Titus*, *Two Horizons Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 5.

Genre and its Significance for Interpreting 1 Timothy 4:1–5

First Timothy is a letter or an epistle with a specified sender to an audience with a message to solve issues. It is a personal and occasional letter, in that matter, where the letter was addressed to Timothy to touch on some issues related to his duties in the Ephesian church and also addresses prevailing issues (1 Tim 1:1, 3). The passage genre found in 1 Timothy 4:1–5 is an eschatological prophecy on apostasy where Paul reminds the audience of his letter of the coming of the false teachers and warns about their false teachings. He, therefore, gives instructions on how to deal with the false teachings.

The word ῥητῶς, translated expressly or clearly, is an adverb talking about the manner in which the Spirit speaks. Since the Spirit reveals clearly what is to happen in the last days with the use of the Greek words ὑστέροις καιροῖς translated last appointed days.” Paul, in 1 Timothy 4:1, is talking about events that the spirits reveal to happen in the last days. This makes revelations or promptings on what will happen in the last days. This makes this part an eschatological prophecy.

The genre is significant to the interpretation because it helps with how the text should be treated. Since the passage is in a letter with sub-genres of eschatological prophecy, instruction, or warning, the reader must understand the literary type of the text to get the concept or ideas expressed by the author. Since they are instructions, they must be treated as such and applied accordingly.

Lexico–Syntactical and Theological Analyses of 1 Timothy 4:1–5

This section is dedicated to analyzing some keywords as they are used in the context of the passage as they impart the overall meaning of the passage. Under this section, words as they stand with other words to inform meanings will also be analyzed, and conclusions will be drawn towards understanding the passage.

The use of πνευμα in 1 Timothy 4:1a

Paul in 1 Timothy 4:1 starts the prophecy regarding apostasy due to false teachings. The word “spirit”, as used here, controls the passage’s meaning. What is the meaning of πνευμα as used as used in 4:1? The articular πνευμα, “the spirit”, as used elsewhere in the NT and especially Pauline epistles, stands for the Holy Spirit, the third person in the Trinity (2 Cor 3:6, 17; 4:13; 7:14; 11:4; Gal 3:2, 5; 4:6; 4:29; 5:17; 6:8; Eph 4:30; 1 Tim 4:8; 5:23; 2 Tim 1:7; Heb 3:7; 10:15; James 4:5; 1 Peter 1:11; 1 John 4:2; Rev 2:7; 2:11; 22:17 and others).¹² In Ephesians 4:30, Paul admonishes believers not to grieve the Spirit (το πνευμα). The Spirit, as used, refers to the Holy Spirit.

Here, Paul confirms what the Holy Spirit has taught through God’s people (John 14 and 16). The phrase “according to the Spirit, means what the Holy Spirit testifies through God’s people concerning the end times of false teachings. Paul shares this

¹²See also, Johannes E. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed. (United Bible Society, 1989), s.v. “πνευμα.”

understanding as the Spirit guides him in warning his audience. It can, therefore, be said that this warning has been necessitated by the revelation of the truth concerning the end time through the Holy Spirit. The source of such revelation is God.

Meaning of ἀποστήσονται in 1 Timothy 4:1b

The phrase in the Greek, ἀποστήσονται, “they shall depart” or “fall away” in Greek, is construed as departure, falling away, or withdrawal. Ανφίστασθαι is used to talk about those who depart from God with their hearts turning from the maker (Heb 3:12). The word could also mean to cause someone to move from a reference point, translated in our about mean altering allegiance or cause to revolt, mislead.¹³ The word could also mean to distance oneself from some person or thing and to turn away or withdraw.¹⁴

This is an apostasy on the part of the individuals in the Ephesian church. In 1 Timothy 4:1b, the word is used by Paul to talk about those who will depart from the faith and rather cling to or take heed to the spirits of deception and demons. It must be understood that when anything stands in contrast to Scripture, it may be a demonic teaching. This can be seen in the subtle nature of the deceiver in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:4). The devil is subtle through the deceivers in the Ephesian church, causing them to depart from the truth.

Here, the author seems to intimate that the falling away or the apostasy has its roots in the departure from the faith, which is the teachings of Christ as used in the NT (Luke 22:32; 1 Cor 2:5; 15:14; Rom 10:17; Eph 4:5; 1 Thess 1:8; Rev 13:10). Here, the one behind that is the devil and his fallen angels (demons).

The use of κεκαυτηριασμένων in 1 Timothy 4:2b

The word appears only once here in the NT (1 Tim 4:2), and Paul used it to denote the hardening of the heart or searing of the conscience. What this means is that they have been rendered insensitive to the testimony of the Holy Spirit concerning the times and go on with the false teaching agenda. They have chosen to depart from God, the revealer of truth. This concept of Paul on the state of the false teachers is patterned after the motif of Pharaoh hardening his own heart (Exod 4:21, 7:3) when he decided to continually disobey God’s revelations and commands as was made known through Moses. Such was the case of the false teachers and their adherents in the Ephesian church.

Elsewhere in other Pauline epistles, God caused foolish people’s hearts to become darkened (Rom 8:21). This motif from the OT and the NT depicts people who choose to disobey God that acts as the source of warnings to the reader to guard one’s heart against falling away. This is so because these false teachers pretend to teach the truth (the faith)

¹³See Herodotus 1, 76 et al; Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 8, 198; 20).

¹⁴Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed, Trans. and rev. by William R. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), s. v. avfisthmi. See also Barclay M. Newman Jr., *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/German Bible Society, 1993), s.v. “ἀφίστημι.”

they have fallen or departed from. The use of ὑποκρίσει, “through lying,” depicts pretense or hypocrisy, suggesting how the teachers pretend to know the truth but have wandered far from it.

The use of γαμεω and βρωμά in 1 Timothy 4:3a

The present participle κωλύοντων denotes an action in the linear and not punctiliar. This indicates that the false teachers continuously and eagerly enforced the believers they could deceive to keep those teachings permanently. The two infinitives that are also present are γαμεῖν (active voice) and ἀπέχεσθαι (middle voice). These two words in the infinitive carry the contemporaneous effect where the two were practiced together simultaneously.¹⁵

The teachings on abstinence from food or forbidding marriage among the false teachers in the Ephesian church have no parallel in the NT. Nowhere does the NT instructs that one should abstain from marriage, nor does it forbid it or teaches that sex is sinful or defiling (1 Cor 7:1–5). In 1 Corinthians 7:6–11, Paul appeals on the level of free–will choice, where those who have lost their spouses may decide to stay, but if they cannot practice self–control, they can marry. However, for the issue of burning with lust, Paul advised them to marry to avoid fornication.

The teachings of the false teachers sound like the ascetic life of the Greek philosophy emanating from Plato’s dualistic view of life. In this, it appears clear that the false teachers taught that “marrying (having sex actually) was sinful or something close to that.”¹⁶

The phrase above, translated as “forbidding to marry and abstinence from food that God has created to be shared”, has a significant bearing on understanding the phrase, “everything created by God is good” in 4:4. The first question to ask is, what is the nature and origin of this teaching in order to know what this false teaching was about.

The word Greek word βρωμα, in the first place, should be understood to mean food and not meat, as used in the OT and NT in the generic sense to refer to all kinds of foods. In the LXX, βρωμα is used twelve times to refer to food (Lev 11:34; 2 Sam 13:5, 7 10; Psalm 68:22, 73: 14; 106:18; Sir 30:18*2, 51:3; Isa 3:6; Ezek 4:10). Elsewhere in the NT, βρωμα could be used literally or figuratively. In the following passages, the word is used to refer to literal food (Matt 14:15; Luke 3:11, 9:13; 1 Cor 6:13; Heb 9:10, 13:9).¹⁷ The word is also used by Paul to express spiritual immaturity in 1 Cor 3:2. The word is used figuratively in John 4:34 and Heb 13: 9.¹⁸

In 1 Tim 4:3, the context makes clear that Paul here was referring to food in the

¹⁵ See F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. rev., Robert W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 700; A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the New Testament Greek in the Light of Historical Research* (Leicester: Holder and Stoughton, 1919), 823.

¹⁶ Elijah Baidoo, class notes for RELT 126 History and Literature of the Intertestamental Period, Valley View University, January 2024, Accra, Ghana. See Blomberg, 31–33.

¹⁷ Walter Bauer, *A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (BAGD), trans. and adapt. by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, 2nd ed., rev. and augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (1979), s.v. “βρωμα.”

¹⁸ Bauer, BAGD, *A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, s.v. “βρωμα.”

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generic sense. In 1 Tim 4:3, Paul was talking about the false teaching that required people to abstain from food (fasting in view here). The false teaching was on enforcement of an ascetic lifestyle rather than it being a teaching that discourages people from eating meat.¹⁹ The word βρωμα used here does not refer to meat. The word βρωμα as used in the LXX and the NT, usually refers to food in the generic sense, referring to all kinds of foods unless the context indicates otherwise.²⁰ In this same line of argument, Gordon Fee observes that:

“It is not altogether easy to see how these items relate to the “myths and wearisome genealogies” of 1:4 or the teaching that “the resurrection has already taken place” (2 Tim. 2:18). Some kind of asceticism, perhaps similar to that in Colossae (Col. 2:16–23), is probably involved. This may have also been mixed with a kind of over-realized eschatology (that the end had not just begun but had arrived in fullness; cf. 2 Thess. 2:1–2; 1 Cor. 15:12).²¹

The issue of abstinence from meat, as in Romans 14, is different from the one found in 1 Timothy 4:3 in the sense that Paul never addressed those promoting nor condemning vegetarianism. In Romans 14, He instead instructed tolerance and forbearance for one another. Romans 14 instructs that what each decides what to eat should not be a stumbling block to cause the fall of others. As referred to in Romans 14, the weak and the strong coexist peacefully, uplifting one another in the faith.

Regarding the nature and origin of false teachers, John MacArthur believes that the influence could have come from the Essenes of the Qumran Community that taught self-denial on a physical level. They practised asceticism, celibacy, and other special dietary regulations.²² However, it must be noted that the fact that Ephesus was a Greek colony speaks volumes about how its background could have affected the church. William D. Mounce believes that the nature of the false teaching is more of an ascetic lifestyle. According to him, the opponents taught that godliness could be attained through an ascetic lifestyle, abstaining from marriage and food. While Paul, in contrast, instructed Timothy to train himself in godliness (v 8).²³

Corroborating with Mounce, the intent of Paul in 4:8 appears to suggest that these were ascetic practices that the false teachers taught and promoted as a form of godliness emanating possibly from the Greek dualistic view of life, where the physical or the material world is inherently evil and abstinence from them was the ideal. That was a deception because the false teachers made those elements essential and substitute for the way to salvation. They then forsook the faith, representing the gospel of Christ (4:1). The focus was on human means of salvation, as that was one of the hallmarks of all

¹⁹See Jay Twomey, *The Pastoral Epistles through the Centuries*, Blackwell Bible Commentaries (Hong Kong: Utopia Press), 68.

²⁰ See Gerhard M. Schneider and Horst Balz “Food,” *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Erdmann, 2004), 1:228; Gerhard Kittel, “brwma,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (TDNT), trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976), 1:634

²¹ Gordon Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011),

²²John MacArthur, *1 Timothy*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press), n.p.

²³William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol 46 (Grand Rapids, MI: Thomas Nelson, 2000), n.p.

false religions. In Christianity, Christ is the surety of salvation.

The false teachers taught that to attain spiritual growth; one had to avoid marriage and abstain from food. Those teachings contained some elements of truth. There is nothing wrong with staying single faithfully. Those were not wrong in themselves as they could facilitate spiritual growth and service. First Corinthians 7:25–35 is dedicated to the discourse on faithful singlehood.

Notwithstanding, it should be noted that sex is not evil; God created it to be received with thanksgiving. Also, there is nothing wrong with fasting or abstaining from food for spiritual assignments. Abstaining from food should mean denying the body of food, sometimes for some ritualistic purpose and possibly with prayers (cf. Matt. 6:16–17; 9:14–15).

Syntactical Analysis ἃ ὁ θεὸς ἔκτισεν and τὴν ἀλήθειαν in 1 Timothy 4:3b

The phrase, ἃ ὁ θεὸς ἔκτισεν εἰς μετάλημψιν μετὰ εὐχαριστίας τοῖς πιστοῖς καὶ ἐπεγνωκόσιν τὴν ἀλήθειαν, “which God has created to be shared with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. This is a relative clause that is dependent on the previous section (4:3a). The ἃ, being a neuter relative pronoun in the plural, stands for food in 4:3a. This is due to the agreement of the gender and number of this relative pronoun with the genitive neuter plural noun βρωμάτων. The Greek term κτίσμα (Js 1:18; Rev 5:13, 8:9) contextually denotes both animate and inanimate beings. This is qualified by ὁ θεὸς ἔκτισεν εἰς μετάλημψιν “which God has created to be received.” The use of εἰς with the accusative expresses purpose.²⁴ In this case, it was created purposely by God to be received or enjoyed. In this case, not all things created by God can be taken as food and shared or received, but those created for food should be received. The author says food is purposely created for food using the relative pronoun ἃ.

The phrase κωλύοντων γαμεῖν, “forbidding to marry,” is conceptually related to, but not grammatically linked with the relative pronoun, ἃ, since marriage is in the infinitive but not a noun. Marriage was not created but was subsequently institutionalized after creation. The assertion is that food and marriage were divinely “created or given” for human reception. In this passage, Paul criticized both the prohibition of marriage and the abstention from eating. This thus categorized both food and marriage as entities to be received. This can be substantiated by Jesus' teachings on marriage. In Matt 19:4–6 and Mark 10:6–9, Jesus states that God created man and woman for the institution of marriage, and hence, a man shall forsake his father and mother to unite with his wife. They shall no longer be two but as one flesh. In these verses, Jesus emphasizes the divine origin and endorsement of marriage by God. Paul later put food and marriage in the same category of what is to be received and enjoyed (1 Tim 6:17).

Looking at μετὰ εὐχαριστίας τοῖς πιστοῖς καὶ ἐπεγνωκόσιν τὴν ἀλήθειαν, translated, “with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.” Here, μετὰ is used to

²⁴ See Daniel B. Wallace, *The Basics of New Testament Syntax: An Intermediate Greek Grammar* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 166. Wallace discusses the use of εἰς with the accusatives to express spatial, temporal, purpose, result, reference/respect, advantage, and disadvantage and sometimes in the place of ἐν. Weighing the options, while looking at the use in the context of Paul's discourse, the possible option for this usage is the purpose.

denote the manner in which what God has created is to be received. One ought to thank God for the provision since He is the one who created it and not an evil matter, as the stoics from the dualistic point of view teach. Those who know the truth have been exposed to the truth about Christ and are willing to accept them as absolute truth. They resist all forms of false teachings in order to abide in Christ (Eph 4:21; Rom 1 18; 2 Tim 2:12). As in other epistles of Paul, in 1 Timothy, the truth typically stands for the gospel of Christ, grace through the salvific death of Christ that one gets saved through faith.²⁵

Syntactical and Theological Analyses of *ὅτι πᾶν κτίσμα θεοῦ καλὸν* in 1 Timothy 4:4

The *ὅτι*, “for” is a conjunction used by the author to follow up on the discourse of the false teachers. The author uses the word “for” to introduce his opinion by appealing to the creation account.²⁶ As he wrote to Timothy concerning the authority of scripture in 2 Tim 3:16, he had made it clear to them how the authoritative word of God reigns supreme as the foundation for all instructions and teaching (1 Tim 1:3; 2:7; 3:2; 4:11, 13, 16; 5:17; 6:1; 6:2,3).

The phrase, *πᾶν κτίσμα θεοῦ καλὸν*, “for every creature of God is good,” is the one main thrust of the study. The question is, how is the creation of God good? This is a reminiscence of what God, the creator Himself, said in Genesis 1:31. In Genesis 1:31, God pronounced that everything He had created was very good after the six days of creation.

The statement in the present, all creatures of God are good, is the gnomic present,²⁷ which talks about a statement generally as a timeless fact. In essence, this statement is true *all* the time. The following are examples of its usages (Matt 7:17; 2 Cor 9:7; Heb 3:4). Examples of gnomic present or general truth are found in the statements of Jesus and Paul. In Matt 7:17, Jesus says that every good tree bears good fruit. This statement is true for all times. Also, in 2 Cor 9:7, Paul makes a timeless statement, “God loves a cheerful giver.” In 1 Tim 4:4, Paul reiterates the statement that is a timeless truth, as the creation of God has been and will continue to be good.

This has the force of refuting the claim of the false teachers that marriage and food in themselves are evil, and hence, involvement with them makes one evil or unholy. This is hammered by Paul’s prohibitive command with the phrase, *καὶ οὐδὲν ἀπόβλητον μετὰ εὐχαριστίας λαμβανόμενον*, “and nothing is to be rejected but they are to be received with thanksgiving” to instruct the believers not to reject food or marriage as they

²⁵ The following passages in the Pauline Epistles read that the truth refers to the gospel of Christ (Rom 1:18; 2:2, 8, 20; 3:7; 9:1; 15:8; 1 Cor 13:6; 2 Cor 4:2; 6:7; 7:14*2; 13:8*2 11:10; Gal 2:5; 5:7; Eph 4:21, 24, 25; 6:14; Phil 1:18; Col 1:5,16; 2 Thess 2:10, 12; 13; 1 Tim 2:4, 7; 3:15; 4:3; 6:5; 2 Tim 2:15; 18,25; 4:4; 3:8; Titus 1:1, 4; Heb 10:26).

²⁶ Barclay Newman Jr., *A Concise Greek–English Dictionary of the New Testament* (Stuttgart: United Bible Society), 1993, s.v. “gar.” See also Johann Lust, Erik Eynikel, and Katrin Hauspie, *Greek–English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, rev. ed., (Stuttgart: United Bible Society), 2003, s.v. *A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament*, trans., rev., enl., Joseph Henry Thayer (International Bible Translator), s.v. “γὰρ;” Bauer, BAGD, s.v. *A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament*, trans., rev., enl., Joseph Henry Thayer (International Bible Translator), s.v. “γὰρ.”

²⁷ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 253–54.

are God’s creation to be received with appreciation and gratitude to God for the provision. The phrase, “and nothing is to be rejected”, has the force of instructing the believers to partake or receive food with thanksgiving as against the ascetic lifestyle that categorized marriage and food as evil in the Christian teaching and practice.

Syntactical and Theological Analyses of ἀγιάζεται γὰρ διὰ λόγου θεοῦ καὶ ἐντεύξεως in 1 Timothy 4:5.

The word γὰρ is used as a conjunction to link the previous verse on the teaching of the forbidden to marry and the abstinence from food. It is used to express cause or reason.²⁸ It is used exegetically to introduce an explanation of the reason why nothing is to be rejected because it has been sanctified by the word of God and prayer, διὰ λόγου θεοῦ καὶ ἐντεύξεως. The διὰ, as used with the genitive, has the force of “means.” The creation of God has been made holy or clean by God’s word.

Thus, Paul in 4:5 is saying that through God’s word (Gen 1:31) and prayer, through that means, every creation is sanctified. “It is sanctified” is in the present indicative passive. This tense usage hints at the continuity of the effect of the sanctification of God’s creation. The sanctification is permanent so far as God’s creation exists.

The word ἀγιάζομαι means “sanctified,” “to make holy,” “to consecrate,” or “purified.” What it means in the passage is that God has set all His creations to be pure and has no issue of inherent evil with them. It could also be construed that God has commanded what is to be eaten (meat) and what cannot be eaten as food (Lev 11; Acts 10 15). There are also rules set on marriage. The word of God and prayer (Matt 6:9–11) serve as clear guidance on God’s creation, and no human teaching or judgment can render it evil or impure.

Implications for Contemporary Christianity

As leaders and members of the Christian church today, one thing remains true: teaching informs practice, as it is evident that sound teaching will come with sound practices, and the opposite is true. Falsehood is like wildfire as it spreads quickly. The church should know when to deal with false teaching and how to go about it. Church leaders must ensure that church members are in touch with the teachings of the Bible to help ground members in the faith.

False teachers must not be taken for granted, for they can mix truth with falsehood, as the devil did in the beginning, making it somewhat challenging to resist. In 1 Timothy 4:1–5, a clear case is presented as the teachings of the stoics appeared to be true in some ways, but the focus was wrong. Well-trained Police officers and other security officers do not struggle to identify quickly what fake currencies are because they know the original so well. In the same vein, one must be ready to be conversant with the

²⁸ Barbara Friberg, Timothy Friberg, Neva F. Williams, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), s.v. “γὰρ”; *A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament*, trans., rev., enl., Joseph Henry Thayer (International Bible Translator), s.v. “γὰρ.”

word of God for a healthy Church with sound biblical teachings and practice.

Church leaders must be on guard in noting and addressing false teachings to help protect the vulnerable members who may be gullible and susceptible to the false teachings they face daily. False teaching in today’s twenty-first-century world need not be present in the church per se. Due to the nature of our digital world today, information and idea flow is faster and easier than the time of Paul. They may be available even on church WhatsApp groups and other social media that members visit daily. As Paul took the pain to deal with the false teachings of his day, so must church leaders be ready to safeguard the flock through the guidance and leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Summary and Conclusion

Summary

The study investigated the nature of the false teachings that Paul cautioned against in his letter to the Ephesians, communicated through Timothy. He unequivocally stated that the Holy Spirit predicted that one should maintain faith and be vigilant against falsehoods—what is not true. This was being fulfilled in the Ephesian church as per Paul's account. Numerous interpretations exist on the admonition against false teachings that advocate abstinence from food and marriage as a means of salvation. This study aimed to elucidate the nature of the false teaching in 1 Tim 4:1–5, the significance of *βρωμά*, and the interpretation of *πᾶν κτίσμα θεοῦ καλόν* by lexical, syntactical, and theological analyses.

Conclusion

False teaching was an issue in the Ephesian Church (1:3; 4:1–8; 6:20). Paul wrote to address these false teachings that tended towards bringing to naught the works of Paul in Ephesus. He had to leave Timothy behind while he left for Macedonia. In 1 Tim 4:1–5, we are introduced to false teachings that prohibited members from food and marriage (sex in particular). This teaching appears more of the ascetic lifestyle, which could be summarized as “minimize pleasure and maximize pain.”

Stoicism taught that happiness could be obtained through contentment and self-restraint. This crept into the church and became Christianized by the false teachers. This teaching intimated that one ought to restrain himself or herself from food, sex and other material things that bring joy or pleasure. It could be seen from the passage that these were seen as physical exercises that merited one’s salvation and were mistaken for godliness (1 Tim 4:8).

This philosophy of stoicism was thus made an option in the Ephesian church to help achieve salvation by neglecting the truth of the gospel, which is salvation through Christ Jesus (1 Tim 2:4, 15; 2 Tim 1:9; Titus 3:5). In 1 Tim 4:8, salvation comes through faith and true godliness but not an exercise of outward self-restraint.

On the other side, the passage does not suggest that one can eat any food and have

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sex indiscriminately because it is good. God has created everything for its purpose, including marriage, and they are suitable for their purposes. God’s word serves as a guide (it sanctifies) on food, marriage, and other practices per the context of 1 Timothy 4:1–5. In the OT and the NT, the word of God, as Paul adduces, is clear on what is to be consumed in God’s wisdom (Lev 11; Acts 10:14). This passage cannot be used to preach deletion of the distinction between what is to be consumed as food as some contemporary Christians claim.

Paul’s instruction is simple: God created food for its purpose, and it is suitable for human consumption and does not defile anyone; so far, the word of God makes it so. Marriage is also God’s plan, and it is good so far as it is made so by the authoritative word of God (Gen 1:26; 2:18, 24; Exod 20:14; Prov 18:22; Matt 19:2–6; Mark 10:2–12; I Cor 7:3–5; Eph 5:22–23).

This is corroborated by Paul’s saying in 2 Tim 3:16–17 that Scripture has God as its source, and it is good and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and righteousness training. Paul says that with this, the man of God will be perfect and be empowered for every good work. One will not subscribe to and be led astray by false teachings if God’s word leads them.

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