

## PASTORAL GLEANINGS ON GUARDING OUR HEARTS

### II. Watching Our Attention To Avoid Apostasy

(1 Timothy 4:13 et al.)

#### I. Introduction

- A. Apostasy is on the rise: “Rick Warren” has sat “on the advisory board of the Tony Blair Foundation, which seeks to bring the religions of the world together.” (Brannon Howse, Religious Trojan Horse, 2012, p. 4)
- B. We thus need insight on countering apostasy effectively, and the pastoral epistles help us (as follows):

#### II. Watching Our Attention To Avoid Apostasy

- A. The pastoral epistles use the Greek verb *prosecho* six times that is rendered, “pay attention to” (Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 721) and the Greek verb *epecho* once that is rendered “pay attention to; take pains with” (Ibid., p. 285).
- B. The pastorals use these verbs both in a negative way as well as in a positive way, revealing the importance of watching what we do with our attention in order to avoid apostasy (as follows):
  1. Paul used *prosecho* to reveal how one’s attention can be misused to lead toward apostasy:
    - a. The apostle warned Timothy and Titus to avoid Jewish myths and genealogies, fictional stories about Bible characters in Scripture’s genealogical records that were not actual Scripture, but that had a morale to the story, 1 Timothy 1:4; Titus 1:14 (William Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles, 1974, p. 58-59)
    - b. Such seemingly harmless, fictional stories led to views that did not “pay heed” (*prosecho*) to spiritually healthy words because they arose from mere human wisdom, not the spiritually nurturing, authoritative Word of God as it is described in 2 Timothy 3:15-17. (1 Timothy 6:3; Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 721)
    - c. Along with such spiritually unhealthy words in time comes carnality like one’s “paying heed” (*prosecho*) to lusts of the sin nature like a preoccupation with wine, 1 Timothy 3:8; Ibid.
    - d. The end result of such misplaced attention was “paying heed” (*prosecho*) to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, or apostasy itself, 1 Timothy 4:1; Ibid.
  2. However, Paul used both *prosecho* and *epecho* in positive ways to show how one’s attention can be used to avoid apostasy and edify believers for godliness:
    - a. Paul urged Timothy to “pay attention to; take pains with” (*epecho*) himself and his doctrine, 1 Timothy 4:16. This directive involved an introspective evaluation of both Timothy’s beliefs and his application of those beliefs to his life.
    - b. Timothy was to accomplish this personal attentiveness along with his need to “pay attention” (*prosecho*) to his pastoral ministry of the Word of God in the Christian church services, 1 Timothy 4:13:
      - i. Timothy was to give attention to “reading” (KJV), what translates the Greek noun *anagnosis*, “the public reading of Scripture” (Abbott-Smith, A Man. Grk. Lex. of the N. T., 1968, p. 28) The public reading of Scripture was part of the worship service in Hebrew synagogues in Paul’s day (cf. Luke 4:16-17), so Paul was urging Timothy to be preoccupied with his pastoral work in church worship.
      - ii. Timothy was to give attention to “exhortation” (KJV), what translates the Greek noun *paraklesis*, “exhortation” (Ibid., p. 340), what in this context means preaching the Word in a church service.
      - iii. Timothy was to give attention to “doctrine” (KJV), what translates the Greek noun *didaskalia*, “teaching, instruction” (Ibid., p. 113), pastoral teaching in the Christian Church.

***Lesson:*** *The pastoral epistles reveal that if a believer gives his attention to seemingly benign extrabiblical, fictional stories about Bible characters, stories that even teach a morale, but that do not constitute God’s Word itself, he is headed down a long, slippery slope that ends in full-blown apostasy. However, if a believer pays attention to the Biblical accuracy of his beliefs and their application to his way of life in addition to his exposure to a Biblical local church’s ministry of the Word of God, he maintains a godly walk and avoids a long slide into apostasy.*

***Application:*** *(1) May we examine that to which we are giving our attention, and if we find that we are getting preoccupied with anything but Scripture itself for our spiritual nurture, may we get back to a dependency on Scripture alone for our spiritual nurture in order to avoid a long, slippery slope that heads into apostasy. (2) If we are maintaining a healthy focus on Scripture in evaluating our beliefs and actions in life, may we maintain it for our spiritual welfare. (3) Obviously, reliance on the Holy Spirit is the means by which we accomplish each of these steps of adhering to healthy beliefs and practices, 2 Timothy 1:13-14.*