

# The Deceitful Teaching of Demons

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[ 0 : 01 ]     Good, well we turn now to God's Word for this evening and we're in the letter of 1 Timothy. 1 Timothy and we're looking at the first few verses of chapter 4, but I'll read from the end of chapter 3.

I'll give you a moment to turn that up. 1 Timothy and I'll read from chapter 3 verse 14. The Apostle Paul writes, Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. Have nothing to do with irreverent silly myths.

Rather, train yourself for godliness. For while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

[ 2 : 27 ]     Amen. May God bless to us his word this evening. Amen. Well, do turn with me to 1 Timothy 4, and we'll come to that passage in due course.

But I want to focus tonight on what the Apostle Paul says here in 1 Timothy 4, and what he says is a warning from the Holy Spirit about the great dangers to the church in later times, that is, in the times after the resurrection and the ascension of the Lord Jesus until he returns.

Look at verse 1. He says, Now, it may be that this is an area that some of us neglect or even feel embarrassment about.

And if so, I want to correct that this evening. First of all, by looking throughout the New Testament and how it exposes Satan and his demonic forces. And then we need to think clearly about what it actually looks like when we encounter Satan and his demonic forces today and how we're to resist him and not to be deceived and led astray.

So first, then, exposing Satan and his demonic forces in the New Testament. What does the New Testament teach us about Satan?

[ 3 : 51 ]     Well, in the Gospels, we see Jesus teaching and demonstrating that the devil is a liar, that he deceives humanity, and that he's a murderer. He seeks to destroy humanity.

In John 8, verse 44, he says, He was a murderer from the beginning, and he does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

A deceiver, father of lies, and a murderer, a destroyer of humanity. And all through the Gospels, we see, don't we, this destruction.

Demons oppress. They dehumanize. They make people dumb and deaf and blind and paralyzed. Matthew 4, 24, They brought Jesus all the sick and those afflicted with various diseases and pains, and those oppressed by demons.

And there are numerous references all through the Gospels. Satan and his demons deceive, And they make even disciples err by making them embrace the world's thinking and not that of God.

[ 5 : 02 ] So Jesus says, remember, to Peter, his closest, Get behind me, Satan. You're a hindrance to me, for you're not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.

The thinking of man, the thinking of the world. The world is under Satan's sway, loving lies and deceit. But because I tell you the truth, says Jesus, You don't believe in me.

So the world, and world-corrupted religion, Calls Jesus and his true preachers demonic. The Pharisees, that's the religious establishment of the day.

Think bishops, think moderators. They said, Jesus casts out demons by the prince of demons. They said, John came eating or drinking.

And they say, he has a demon. In Matthew 24, Jesus warns about many false Christs, false prophets who will deceive. And he says, even lead astray the elect.

[ 6 : 09 ] Because they speak by an evil spirit and not by the Holy Spirit. And that thinking, says Jesus, will lead you to hell. To the eternal place of punishment of the devil and his angels.

Then he will say to those on his left, Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Come to the book of Acts.

And we see active opposition of Satan and his demons against true gospel witness. See it within the church. Acts 5, Ananias and Sapphira. Peter says to Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?

We see it in direct opposition outside to the church. Acts chapter 13, for example, Elymas, the sorcerer. Paul says to him, you son of the devil. You enemy of all righteousness.

Full of deceit and villainy. But you see, the apostolic gospel is about rescue from the power of Satan and demons.

[ 7 : 14 ] The risen Jesus appears to Paul and said to him, Paul says this in Acts chapter 26, verse 18. Jesus sent me to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light from the power of Satan to God.

And Hebrews 2 says, Jesus himself took flesh and blood that, quote, through death, he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver all of those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

Then if you read through all the epistles, you find that they are unequivocal about the gospel challenging directly the satanic world, the demonic world, and its hold over this world.

And the fierce battle that rages both within and without the church over that. The victory through Christ is sure and certain. That's the hope in which we're saved, says Paul.

The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. But he also says we're saved in hope. And meantime, we must wait for that great day with endurance.

[ 8 : 25 ] And Romans chapter 1 tells us plainly, doesn't it, that this world and its people are anti-creator. Worshipping instead the created order, turning truth into lies.

That's the very definition of sin and rebellion. And therefore, we are to resist this world's thinking about the world, about its purposes, its priorities.

Romans 12 verse 2, Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern the will of God, that you may know what is good and acceptable and perfect.

But of course, that's hard, because we are at odds with this world and its thinking, and all the things that matter most in life. The Apostle John says, We know that we are from God.

And the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. Paul says, likewise, the God of this world has blinded the mind of unbelievers.

[ 9 : 32 ] Following the course of this world, he says in Ephesians 2, is following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.

Very stark terms, aren't they? Paul is saying that this world's people are controlled by Satan. That's very offensive.

But let it sink in. But he says, Believers are now rescued from that world, set apart as holy, cannot have a foot in that world without bowing the knee to Satan.

I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and of the table of demons, he says to the church in Corinth.

We're not yet fully separated from this cursed world. We await the new heavens and the new earth, our true home. But meantime, the Bible is very clear.

[ 10 : 41 ] We are in the world still, but we are not of this world. So Jesus prays in John chapter 17 in the upper room. The world has hated them.

That's his true followers. Because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. But I ask you, Father, not to take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.

And he will keep us from the evil one. But the battle is very real, for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, says Paul, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

And that's why Paul can speak so often of real, satanic hindrances to his ministry. We wanted to come to you, he says, to the Thessalonians.

I, Paul, again and again, but Satan hindered it. And that can take many, many forms, because the devil is the great deceiver. Even Satan, says Paul, disguises himself as an angel of light.

[ 11 : 58 ] But the activity of Satan, he warns the churches, is with all power and false signs and wonders. And that means that Christians, who are very fixated on those kind of things, are very especially vulnerable.

So he says we must be alert. We must not be deceived by the evil one and his angels. Give no opportunity to the devil, Ephesians 4. We must not be outwitted by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his designs, 2 Corinthians 2.

Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the schemes, the schemes of the devil, Ephesians 6. The apostle Peter warns us likewise, against the devil's devouring appetite.

Be sober-minded, be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, and seeking someone to devour. Now we don't despair, because we've got the promise of the Lord.

The Lord is faithful. He will establish and guard you against the evil ones, says Paul to the Thessalonians. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

[ 13 : 13 ] But we must be realistic. And we will face great battles, even within the church, and as the church. Hence here, 1 Timothy 4, the Spirit expressly says that in later times, some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and the teachings of demons.

And he goes on in chapter 5 to say, and some have already strayed after Satan. And so he says to Timothy that the pastoral duty of leaders, says this in 2 Timothy 2, is correcting opponents, so that God may perhaps grant them repentance, leading to a knowledge of the truth.

They may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil after having been captured to do his will. The apostle James speaks very similarly of the reality of demons and the demonic infiltration of thinking and behavior, even in the church.

He says it's possible, by the way, to be quite orthodox in what you believe, and yet actually to be full of behavior that is driven by demons. You believe in God, he says, you do well.

So do the demons and shudder. But if you have bitter jealousy, selfish ambition in your hearts, don't boast and be false to the truth.

[ 14 : 37 ] This is not the wisdom that comes down from heaven above, but it's earthly, unspiritual, demonic. And the way to victory, he says, is to repent, to turn away from this world's thinking, from earthly ways, which are demonic, which come up from hell, and to turn again to the wisdom of God from above.

Submit yourselves, therefore, to God, he says. Repent. Resist the devil through repentance, and he will flee from you. Apostle John, likewise, reminds us that as believers, we are children of the Father.

We have overcome the evil one. And conversely, he says, whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, children of the devil. We know that we are from God, he says, but the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

So keep yourselves from idols. That's how he ends his first letter. And then, of course, the vision, the great vision that John has in the book of Revelation paints a vivid picture, doesn't it, of the whole world in these last days between the resurrection and the final coming of our Lord.

And we see the devil cast down to earth following the resurrection, defeated in his war against the Christ, but raging against the people of Christ. Revelation 12, the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent who's called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.

[ 16 : 14 ] And he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him, furious. He went off to make war on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

God's people are at war all throughout these last days, says Revelation. In chapter 16, with demonic spirits performing signs who go abroad to the kings of the whole world.

World rulers are animated by demonic spirits battling against the church of Jesus Christ. That is the picture of the New Testament and vividly in Revelation.

And we are called to endure. Blessed is the one who stays awake that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed.

Because Babylon, Babel, the city of man, this world under the control of the devil and his demons will in the end be destroyed.

[ 17 : 22 ] Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great. She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit. And we will see the devil thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur and tormented day and night forever and ever, says John.

So you see, the vision in Revelation just pictures in very vivid ways what the whole of the New Testament testifies to very plainly, unequivocally, that the awful reality about our whole world and about mankind is that it is worshipping demons.

Revelation 9, verse 20, the rest of mankind did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshipping demons and idols. But remember that the book of Revelation begins in chapters 1 to 3 before all these great visions begins with very plain letters to the churches of Asia Minor speaking about what all of this actually looks like in their life on earth and in the churches.

In the church in Pergamum where John says Satan's throne is or in Thyatira where a false prophet called Jezebel has seduced many into the deep things of Satan.

Satan opposes the church. But what does that look like in these days in their daily lives? Well the answer is that using the agency of flesh and blood these spiritual forces in the heavenly realms will cause persecution and destruction but also much more subtly will lead people astray through deception and propaganda blinding them to the truth and making even Christians be taken in by false ideologies of the world's thinking which might seem very attractive full of light to naive Christians but in fact says the Bible will lead them away to disaster away from the true faith.

[ 19 : 40 ] And that is precisely what Paul is warning about here in 1st Timothy 4. I want to turn now to having seen how the New Testament exposes Satan and his demonic forces to thinking about how we encounter Satan and his demonic forces in our lives and in our world today and in particular in these kind of deceptive ideologies which Paul says come from deceitful spirits and the teaching of demons.

Paul exposes hellish deception for what it is and he points us instead to a heavenly declaration that instead must be the thing that commands the church's healthy devotion.

So first of all let's get clear on this hellish deception. the myth that rejects God as creator and the misery that it leads to. Paul says that false spirituality is marked by myths promoted by elitists and that this is what leads to division in both the church and also by the way in the world.

What's very striking about this deceitful teaching this demonic teaching is it's anti-creation and anti-human agenda. Verse 3 you see forbidding marriage and therefore procreation and as the authorised version has it meat denigrating the very heart of human life human family and human food telling people that you're more spiritual that you're more moral that you're more righteous by rejecting the very thing that God has created verse 4 to be a joyful blessing to mankind to be received with thanksgiving to God as something that is holy that is good.

Now isn't it extraordinary how contemporary this is? Because we're surrounded by all these kinds of anti-creation agendas today. The resurgence of the pagan religion of the green movement is closely bound up with these kind of things.

[ 21 : 43 ] Ideological veganism, anti-normal marriage and procreation, pro-abortion and the zealotry increasingly of the trans movement.

Just last week the UK's chief scientist was telling us this very thing wasn't it? The way of righteousness is to eat far less meat, abstinence from foods. And last week an article in The Spectator was titled this, Having a child is the grandest act of climate destruction.

There are just too many of us that said the world population could be too big to feed itself by 2050. Just trotting out Malthus' 18th century doomsday prediction all over again, but with even more doom.

Listen, the climate collapse is all-encompassing in a way that other threats have not been. It dooms us all with no winner, no end. There's nowhere to flee to. If climate collapse is going to imperil everyone and there's no way for me to prevent that, how can I in good conscience bring children into the world?

You see, to marry and procreate is a sin against conscience. Well, friends, I want to challenge our thinking as Christians as to what we're listening to.

- [ 22 : 57 ] Because anti-creator and anti-creation ideologies, according to Christ's apostle, are the deceitful teaching of demons. And if Christians follow them, he says, we will depart from the faith and we'll find ourselves on the side of demons.

And ultimately, therefore, in the place of demons, forever. By the way, don't miss that the apostle here says that the mark of the demonic is the insincerity, the word is hypocrisy, the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared.

And so it is just worth noting, isn't it, that when people tell you to fly less and burn less and eat less, that when they fly in 400 private jets carrying hundreds of limousines and eat banquets of the finest beef and venison and haggis, then perhaps we might just notice that.

But it's a serious question, isn't it? Who do we listen to and whose voice do we trust? The voice of the world, which Jesus tells us lies in the power of the evil one, or the voice of God?

Do you think you can trust something because you saw it on the BBC or any other TV news station or newspaper?

- [ 24 : 23 ] Friends, the Bible says to us, get real. The BBC would be better called the British brainwashing cult, in my view. The devil is the father of lies and deception.

He loves our media. He's no fool. If you haven't read it, read C.S. Lewis's Screwtape Letters. It's a brilliant expose of the devil's ways.

But we have the plain words, don't we, of the New Testament. Jesus says, do not be deceived. Christians must not be gullible. We must always be skeptical of the world.

We must always ask what presuppositions are assumed in this, what agendas are being promoted. Is it accepting God as creator and as ruler and as judge or is it defying that?

Well, if it's the latter, friends, we should expect lies and deception, shouldn't we? Don't be naive. It's so important that we think of this clearly, especially in this whole area of climate alarmism.

- [ 25 : 31 ] And that is the only way I think we can describe this popular obsession around us just now, which we're in the midst of right here in Glasgow with COP26. Like so much of what we've seen of COVID over this last two years, whatever science there may be involved has been entirely overtaken by ideology.

In fact, with ideology that has a cultic religious fervor about it. It's not about science that is science as a method of inquiry, observing realities in nature, repeating experiments, verifying hypotheses, then trying to falsify them in order to formulate testable theories.

No, as we've become used to with COVIDism, it's about the unassailable dictates of the science, which are articles of dogma. So no discussion is even allowed.

It's shut down immediately because the consensus says this, and anything against it is cancelled. It's heresy. It's demonized. It's just like a medieval witch hunt, just as the Pharisees demonized Jesus.

And of course, consensus, by the way, is not a scientific term at all, is it? It's a political term. The consensus doesn't tell you anything at all about whether a view is right or wrong.

- [ 26 : 52 ] It just tells you it's a view that's winning. A brainwashed cult is a consensus. Science deals with facts, with what is true, with what is falsifiable.

And nearly every great scientific advance in history has been against the prevailing consensus. Think about Galileo or Albert Einstein. When he published his theory of relativity, he was countered immediately by a book titled A Hundred Authors Against Einstein.

And his rather wry response was, well, if I was wrong, then one author would have been enough. Don't forget that the consensus was that the Son of God was evil and should be crucified.

And a consensus rejects the Son of God today. But in fact, the truth is that on the subject of climate issues, the science is far from settled.

You'll be very surprised to hear me say that. You say, well, it must be, must be settled. We hear it all the time on the BBC. Well, certainly, as in many things today, the mainstream media does all it can to present that as settled and to squash any kind of dissent.

[ 28 : 08 ] But there are voices in the world seeking to speak a word for balance and for truth. I've just read a book on the state of climate research called Unsettled.

This book, what climate science tells us and what it doesn't and why it matters. And it's not written, by the way, by a right-wing Trumpist denier, whatever your preferred term of dismissive abuse might be.

The author is Stephen Koonin. He was the under-secretary of science in the US government under Barack Obama. So his trendy credentials are impeccable. That sort of thing matters to you.

But he's an honest man. And he's a serious scientist. And he's a great concern that so much of the truth of the real science has been corrupted and misused and turned into something else.

The science, with a capital S. The science, we're told, is settled. How many times have you heard it? The science says the earth is doomed. That's how he begins his book.

[ 29 : 07 ] But, he goes on, I do not think the science says what you think it says. That's a very balanced book. It's an honest book. It documents official facts from the United Nations, from the IPCC, from multiple government data.

And, crucially, it presents them in their proper context, which gives a very different picture, indeed, from what we're all led to believe constantly by the reporting, which has weaponized the data, selectively, as he says, for driving ideological agendas.

I recommend it. I've learned a very great deal from it, like the fact that the official data, for example, shows that Greenland's ice sheet is not melting more rapidly today than it was 80 years ago. And that even assuming the IPCC's most severe forecasts of the economic impact of human climate warming, he says the economic impact of that will be minimal even through the end of the 21st century.

The growth will be 4% less in 100 years. Here's a quote. Imagine headlines like, record high temperatures are becoming rarer, hurricanes show no sign of human influence, or global warming won't have much impact on the economy.

I think you're unlikely to see those headlines, even though they are a lot closer to what the science actually says. But he goes on, for a scientist, I believe it's a responsibility, almost an act of conscience, to portray without bias just how settled or unsettled the science truly is.

[ 30 : 48 ] But, says Koonin, the science is not settled. Open debate is the heart of the scientific process. It's absurd that scientists should fear being labeled anti-science for engaging in it.

And friends, nor should any Christians fear to question the prevailing zeitgeist of our day, especially when we know that the world is in the grip of the evil one. Another book I found very helpful is by Patrick Moore, one of the founders of Greenpeace, a lifelong ecologist and environmentalist of great credentials.

But he left Greenpeace some years ago when he said it transitioned from, and I'm quoting, it transitioned from sensible environmentalism, well that may be debatable by some, but sensible environmentalism to a platform for anti-human and anti-science campaigns that were more concerned with fundraising and scaring people with misinformation than with improving the environment.

His book is called Fake Invisible Catastrophes and Threats of Doom. So you can probably guess it's a bit more fruity than Steve Coonan's book, but it's certainly informative and entertaining.

If you're worried about species extinction, about coral reefs, about David Attenborough's disappearing polar bears, they're not by the way, or his suicidal walruses, they aren't, well this is the book for you.

[ 32 : 18 ] And one of the things that it exposes relentlessly I'm afraid is the sheer deception and lies of what he calls these purveyors of global environmental catastrophe, including such national treasures as David Attenborough.

But friends, you need to do your own research, you need to do your own thinking, don't take it from me, but I do say you must think seriously about issues such as these, because if as a scientist Steve Coonan says he believes he has a responsibility to portray the truth to the world about these kind of issues, then how much more is it on the responsibility of Christian believers who know that this world lies in the power of an evil one who seeks to deceive, who seeks to destroy human life.

we must question, we must seek truth, we must be willing to counter all anti-creation ideology, especially when so many solutions that are proposed for the so-called climate emergency risk doing vast damage, vast damage to the very human beings that God created this earth for, to fill with his glory and with his image and for his purposes.

I've briefly mentioned these issues of the science because it is very important to distinguish between issues of scientific facts, which we have no reason to dispute, but distinguish that from ideological scientism, which is being used to drive an agenda in our day, which is anti-creation, anti-God, anti-Christ, and therefore is demonic and deeply, deeply damaging.

And for the Christian church to naively go along with that is supremely dangerous. In fact, Paul says it is something we must not ever do.

[ 34 : 25 ] And friends, a demonic ideology is dominating a great deal of what we are seeing all around us today in our world in terms of climate activism, trans-activism, and all the rest.

Including, by the way, a lot of the reaction that we've seen to COVID. And the green movement is a false religion. It wants to reverse the creation mandate.

It wants to depopulate the earth of humans. Don't have kids. It wants to diminish the animal life. There's too much CO2 from cattle. It wants to rewild the earth in direct reversal of Genesis chapter 1.

God says, fill the earth. Subdue it under God. That's his command to mankind. The transagenda, likewise, attacks the very nature of humanity.

Blurring the creation order of human beings made in the image of God as male and female. Male and female, he created them. And for marriage and procreation, he united them male and female.

[ 35 : 31 ] It's the LBGT agenda assaults. So again, there's reversing of both Genesis 1 and Genesis 2. And similarly, pure materialists want to remove any distinction between man and beast.



As if we're all just dancing to the same music of the same DNA as Richard Dawkins says. Well, if that is the case, there's no wonder, isn't it, that there are many people in this world who care far more about the rights of bats than they do about the rights of unborn babies.

73 million of whom are aborted in this world every single year. These direct attacks on God's image in man are direct attacks on God himself.

And that's the picture in Genesis chapter 3. It is a demonic assault that turned the truth into a lie and pushed man into grasping for deity, autonomy, but instead just reaping utter disaster.

And it always leads to disaster when humans do that. What it looks like in global terms is what you see in Genesis chapter 11. Collective man building the Tower of Babel to reach the heavens, to be divine, to be autonomous, to be in control.

[ 36 : 50 ] And the story of human history is of the repetitive rebuilding efforts of the Tower of Babel. Ecclesiastes is right. There's nothing new under the sun. But we don't learn.

Turns out we're not very good, are we, at being God? And we reap what we sow. In God's mercy, he's scattered the nations from Babel.

And he's kept them scattered ever since at loggerheads. Because bad as international friction and rivalry is, a truly united human world order would be so truly terrifying, so truly destructive that that would be the end of humanity.

And God has promised that will not happen. But there will be many grim shadows along the way. Think of the Third Reich.

Think of the Soviet Empire. Or perhaps the next coming Empire. What will it be? The Chinese Empire? Or will it be a united world technocratic government?

[ 37 : 58 ] Some of the world's most powerful elites have been desperately seeking to do that for many, many decades now. Will it be? I don't know. But what I do know, because Scripture tells us, is that God wins.

And the story of the Bible ends with the great destruction of Babel, of Babylon, the city of man. And its inspiration and power, Satan himself, cast into the lake of fire, along with all who have swallowed his lies and borne his mark on their life.

to curry favor with the world. And that's why Paul warns us, don't swallow the lies. The city of man cannot prevail against the city of God, because in Jesus Christ, true humanity is redeemed from enslavement to evil.

And he is risen and enthroned. He is Lord. One day, he will return and judge. And then he alone will finally renew the whole earth and the heavens.

And the climax of the story we have in Revelation 21, he who was seated on the throne said, behold, I, I am making all things new at last. We cannot do that, no matter how many conferences we have.

[ 39 : 21 ] And every pretension in human history of man as the world's savior, trying to create heaven on earth, it has failed in the past.

It will fail today. Every such attempt in history will fail. It will not bring about more good. It will bring about misery. The myths that reject God as creator leads always not to joy, but to misery and human destruction.

destruction. All such, friends, are a hellish deception, is what Christ's apostle is telling us. And the Christian church is to flee from it.

And that's Paul's message right at the heart here of 1st Timothy. Instead of buying into these hellish deceptions, he says, we are to be devoted to true godliness, to true spirituality, which means being devoted instead to the heavenly declaration, to the message that reveals God as savior, and to the mission that that leads to for the church.

You see, true spirituality is always focused on the mystery that is now revealed to the whole world. And it always leads the church to evangelism, and to the true hope that our planet so desperately needs.

[ 40 : 38 ] The only hope for this whole world, look at verse 10 in chapter 4 there, is in the living God, the creator, who is the only savior of all people through faith in Christ Jesus.

That's why it's so tragic for a so-called Christian leader like the Pope, or indeed for the Archbishop of Canterbury, to point to the world's great hope as being conferences like this, as though it was within our grasp, and we can do it.

That's why Paul says in verse 6 here, you see, the absolute priority for the Christian church is to be trained, to be nourished, is the word, in the words of the faith, the faith, that is gospel truth.

Have nothing to do, verse 7, with godless myths. But train yourself, he says, in what is real and lasting promise, for this present life and also for the life to come.

Lead yourself, he says, in true spirituality. It's not about bodily matters, what you eat or what you don't eat, whether you cycle or whether you recycle.

[ 41 : 46 ] These things may have some value, he says, but what every true Christian, look at verse 10, must toil for, strive for, put all their energy into, is this end.

That is the true hope that we have in the living God who is the savior of all. So not only are we to lead ourselves in that true spirituality, the life of the church must be devoted to leading others into this only hope for humankind.

To this end we toil and strive, verse 10. Command and teach these things, verse 11. Verse 13, devote yourself to this public ministry of scripture, reading, teaching, exhorting, practice these things, verse 15, devote yourself to them and so on and on, do you see?

Why? Because we have the great message. We have the only message of hope. We have the message declared from the living God of heaven to all the people of this earth.

Look back to chapter 3, verse 16, where Paul's just declared about this great mystery of godliness. The only true spirituality about the living God, which he says is the truth for which the church exists.

[ 43 : 06 ] To be a pillar, a buttress of it in this world. This is the only message of true hope for our planet and for its future. He's telling us the future can be known.

He's telling us that there is hope because there is a real and living God. And look, verse 16, he's been manifest in the flesh in Jesus Christ, the one who's now taken up in glory as the ruler of heaven and earth.

And he was vindicated, says Paul, by the Spirit justified in his resurrection so that when he is believed on in the world, we also may be vindicated, justified by faith.

Paul says he was raised for our justification so that we might have peace with God, so that we might rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Resurrection life, everlasting life.

He says he was seen by angels ascending the throne of heaven to rule so that he might send his spirit upon the church so that he might be proclaimed among the nations.

[ 44 : 13 ] Friends, that is the task of the Christian church. It's for this that we toil and strive, to proclaim Jesus Christ among the nations so that he's believed on in the world.

So how is the Christian church to respond to all our contemporary world's confusion, to a planet which the apostle tells us lies in the grip of the evil one, the father of lies, the father of deception, who is holding people, so many people, in bondage through the fear of death, the fear of extinction?

How are we to respond? Paul says we are to be unashamedly a pillar and a buttress of truth in this glorious hope because it is the world's only hope in the face of extinction.

We are not to be diverted. We are not to be deceived by the many myths all around us today. They originate in hell.

They are the deceitful teaching of demons. They are opposed to the creator and his creation, to the life that he made us for. And they will lead into only misery and bondage in this life and eternally.

[ 45 : 44 ] And that is the goal of the devil. He has been, says Jesus, a murderer since the beginning. No, for this end we toil, says Paul.

Not to be churches marked by asceticism and worry or marked, for that matter, by ecstasy and worship but by energetic witness to this great mystery now revealed from heaven in Jesus Christ, the living God who is the savior of all who believe.

True spirituality, true godliness, says Paul. Verse 8 is living in this present world for the world to come.

And that's verse 16, living for the salvation both of ourselves and also of those who hear us. And that is the church that will not be outwitted by Satan.

That is the church that will, by faith, trample him underfoot and liberate many, many people for joy and lives of joyful thankfulness to God, our creator, for all his good gifts in this life and for the great gift, the greatest gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ, the Son.

[ 47 : 11 ] Do not be deceived but give ourselves to this glorious message. Command and teach these things.

well, let's pray together. O Lord, of all power and might who are the author and the giver of all good things, craft into our hearts the love of thy name, increase in us true faith and nourish us with all goodness and of thy great mercy keep us in the same through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.