

Series	Gamma 17 – Study 7
Reference	1 Timothy 3:14 – 4:5
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Welcome back to Gamma 17. We're looking through the pastoral epistles where Paul writes to Timothy and Titus in the church of Ephesus and Crete. We have just dealt in the past with the gospel leadership. Today, we are going to deal with guarding the gospel. Let's start with a word of prayer.

Lord, we ask that you fill us with your spirit, help us understand your word that we may know as a church how to guard your gospel. We ask for Jesus' sake. Amen.

1 Timothy 3:14-15 (ESV) I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, 15 if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.

Here we are three metaphors which Paul is using intentionally to describe the church. He describes the church as the household of God, the church of the living God and a temple, because it has got pillars and it has got a buttress which is a support of truth. And then the metaphor of the family is important. It is often used to describe the church because it is a deep bond and the bond is one by the blood of Christ. And you know these in family members, you don't get a chance to choose who your sister is going to be, who is your brother going to be, whether it is going to be cool or not cool or whether is going to bug you or not, and we are asked in any family to maintain the bond, which is already given to us genetically in the real family and spiritually by the church family. And the whole important thing about the family is love.

Jesus says. This is judgment. Sheep and goats and in this particular judge on last day, he says,

Matt 25:40 ...'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

This doesn't apply in talking about administering to the poor or the sick or the in prison. These people as described as Christ brothers, which is basically in Christ family, it is a special love that God has for his church. As you did it to the least of these, as you have visited the least of your church members, which is basically Christ brothers you did it to me. So it is a beautiful picture of what the church is.

We are also called the church of the living God. The word church is Ekklesia, the ones who are called out by God specifically. And if you look at this picture, it's Black Lives Matter. People called out because of injustice in America. They called out by a cause and they are actually motivated to go out there and protest. This is at people called up in Myanmar. They're protesting why injustice? Because the rightful governor was actually imprisoned and they are protesting against military rule. And here is Malaysia, they are called Bersih, why corruption a couple of years ago. People are called up by a particular purpose and we are called out by the living God. Why does Paul used the word living God? Well, he's going to contrast this to dead deities, which are basically idols. And the reason why he says we are the called-out ones of the living God. Jeremiah gives you the best description of idols.

Jeremiah 10:5 Their idols are like scarecrows in a cucumber field, and they cannot speak; they have to be carried, for they cannot walk. Do not be afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, neither is it in them to do good."

They are basically neutral. They just sit there. All right, but if you look here, who is God,

Jeremiah 10: 10 But the LORD is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King.

What is he capable of?

At his wrath the earth quakes, and the nations cannot endure his indignation.

God is not like a scarecrow. He is not like an idol who doesn't do anything and you got to carry him around. He is the living God, which means he actually moves, he acts. He has got wrath. The earth quakes and nations cannot enjoy his indignation.

11 Thus shall you say to them: "The gods who did not make the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under the heavens." 12 It is he who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens.

The most beautiful galaxies in the world created by the living God. That is what it means.

13 When he utters his voice, there is a tumult of waters in the heavens, and he makes the mist rise from the ends of the earth.

All the wonders you see are evidence of a living God. He makes lightning for the rain.

He makes lightning for the rain, and he brings forth the wind from his storehouses.

14 Every man is stupid and without knowledge; every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols, 14b.. for his images are false, and there is no breath in them.

So here is a clearer distinction in Jeremiah between a dead idol, which are false and has no breath and from a living God. So we are people called up by the living God, and so therefore this God will deal with false teachers. This God will not let them destroy his house. And not only that, he describes them as the pillar and buttress. The church is the pillar is where something that supports and you've got buttress, these supports the wall as it were. Some people call the church, the pillar and foundation of truth. There's actually a difference in translation. You either call it The pillar and Support of the truth, the church OR a pillar and Support of the truth. The wrong interpretation is The Pillar and Support.

If you think the church is the pillar and support of truth then you wind up with a source of authority like Roman Catholic church, where the Roman Catholic church will say that we are the source of authority. All right. And they have three sources.

1. They've got scripture.
2. They've got tradition.
3. They've got the magisterium, which is basically the Cardinals together with the Pope.

Protestant churches are different. We don't have three sources of authority. We only have one, which is basically scripture. Look at the word construction, which is the church of the living God. The Greek word is pillar (**stulos**) and kai is and **edraiooma** is basically a buttress. Basically, if you have The, you would have an article in front, there is no The. There is no The in the Greek construction. So therefore the church is basically a pillar and support of the truth, not The pillar and support.

What is the ultimate authority?

14 I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, 15 if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God

Which means the ultimate authority is the apostolic writing, which is basically the Bible. That is the ultimate authority. The church is only a part of God's defense. God is not dependent on the established church in Ephesus or anywhere to protect the proclamation of Christ.

16 Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

This is actually a hymn. This is actually a poem or a hymn. You can have two stanzas of three each or three stanzas of two each. There is a controversy over that, but basically we need to Marvel at the mystery of Godliness.

He was manifested in the flesh, which means the gospel is about the mystery of godliness is he is manifested which means Christ became flesh, lived and died for us.

Vindicated by the Spirit, because he was innocent, he was condemned to die, but God vindicated by Holy Spirit, bringing him up for resurrection, seen exalted into heavens, seen by the angels, proclaimed by the nations. Not only proclaim effectively believed on in the whole world. The gospel is effective and finally taken up to glory to be with God where he sits at God's right hand.

What is the mystery of Godliness?

Well Buddha search for seven years, and then finally wound up under the body three and then after seven days of meditation, ah the truth came to you. He need to search for who God is. The gospel, the mystery of godliness is what God sent his son. You see, the mystery of godliness of true spirituality is not something you search like Buddha to find the truth. You can't, you can search for a thousand years and you will not find the truth, you will not find God. The only way of the path to true godliness or spirituality is God coming in and sending his son, the gospel. It is how you believe the gospel and that is the truth.

1 Timothy 4:1-2 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, 2 through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared,

Here about false teaching again. When we think of false teachers, you think as somebody who looks really evil or demons who look like the living dead as it were, but in real life if you look in Screwtape Letters by CS Lewis who describes the conversation between a head demon and a junior demon discussing how best they are to trip up or destroy Christians, and he describes this,

“Indeed the safest road to Hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.”

Which means one slips into sin and false teaching, not overnight but very gradually and before you know it, your attitudes and your values have already changed. And there are three areas in which they change:

1. Demonic influence.
2. Your conscience is seared.

3. You start being hypocrite.

And you can see in a chapter 1 Hymenaeus and Alexander, they made a shipwreck of their faith, but they didn't become shipwrecks of their faith overnight. It was a gradual one. If you look at false teachers;

2 Thessalonians 2:10 and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 11 Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false,

All you have to do is not love the truth, not love the word of God. Boring, don't want to read the Bible. Don't want to go for Gamma. Don't go for anything. Well, I will have the truth when it's convenient, otherwise I'm not going to love the truth. All right. And therefore, as God punishes them, God's therefore sends them a strong delusion. If you do not hang on and love the truth then you will let go of the truth and then you will be taken away and swept away by strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false.

If we look at Satan in the Garden of Eden, he is very subtle and the way he does it is he denies. He denies God's truthfulness and saying, you will not die if you take the fruit of the knowledge of the tree of good and evil. He contradicts God's truthfulness. He focuses on denying God's goodness, because he's basically not focusing on what God has given, a whole garden. All his fruits actually focusing on the one fruit of the one tree, is focusing on the prohibition. That is how we do in sin, isn't it. That temptation always focuses on what God prohibited rather what God has given. That's how subtle it is.

And then the third thing he denies God's otherness, which means, the woman was told that, "Oh, after thinking about taking the fruit of the knowledge, I will be like God, which means she's not thinking about being a creature under God. I'll be like God, I'll be the same status. So therefore, Satan is subtle. He denies God's truth, God's goodness and finally God Otherness.

LGBTQ movement. Did God really say homosexuality is wrong? Didn't come out right to say, isn't it? Right. He is denying us true love, the church is hateful, isn't same sex marriage are human rights. So these are all subtle ways in which the devil influences us to deny God's truthfulness, to deny God's goodness to us and deny God's Otherness.

1 Timothy 4:2 to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, 2 through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared,

What is the role of conscience? Well here, the conscience are seared, it is a passive participle, which means something is done to you. It's like Revelations, 666. The conscience is actually branded by Satan. We all have a wrong understanding of conscience. Often we think conscience is a place where you basically have two people, the devil and the angel and they are basically having a discussion and you basically listening and trying to decide, which is right or wrong. That's not what the conscience is.

Conscience is a witness to what we already know.

Romans 2:15 (ESV) They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them

So basically, conscience is something where God's law is embedded into our hearts. And because of this values in our heart, it triggers a conscience which actually condemns us or excuses us. So the conscience makes itself known through emotions, which means if you commit a sin the conscience will so stir us to

have a negative emotion. If you do something good, it will stir us and give us satisfaction and pleasure. It's like a parking alarm. If you go too close to the guy at the back, the sound will run. What is the reason you have a parking alarm? The reason you have a parking alarms to protect your bumper, protect your car and the conscience of protect our souls. All right.

So here you actually have to the human warning system. You've got pain receptors and if you go too close to the fire, it will trigger off and it will tell your brain, this is really hot and you will react and basically you pull your hand off and the conscience is the same thing. When you come to sin, instead of the fire, it will trigger off into your soul and your soul will produce an emotion, an emotion saying this is sin. This is not something you should do and therefore you stop doing what you're supposed to do. And if you actually lose sensation, just like your soul, if you lose the ability to sense what is right and wrong, you're going to be like leprosy patients where they actually lose their fingers. Why? Because they're numb and basically you exert an inordinate force that breaks off your fingers or your toes.

Obama was actually interviewed and asked what is sin? He said, sin is being out of alignment with my values. That is actually typical. He was a good president Obama, but the problem is he wasn't much of a Christian. It's not being out of alignment with my values. It is actually out of alignment with God's will. Conscience isn't determined by my values, it is God's will put into your heart, basically.

So basically the word of God is the one that's put that triggers your emotion, and so tells you that is sin and you are supposed to withdraw from the sinful activity. Otherwise you will actually lose your soul as it were. To act willfully against conscience is basically sin. For example, if you found a wallet on the floor, and you see well there is money there, and you thought this was somebody else's wallet, so you basically grabbed the wallet and you take the money out and put in your pocket and you walk away. Now what's the difference when later on or you find out that the wallet actually was your own wallet, did you commit a sin? Yes, you did. Because when you took the wallet, you thought it was somebody else's money and you took it. It's the motive. All right. And conscience is the one that tells you. And what they actually have is seared conscience. It is a conscience that is no longer sensitive to sin. Someone wrote,

Be very happy when it hurts you. Be very worried when your conscience doesn't hurt you.

So when you actually ever sin.

Titus 1:15-16 (ESV) To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. 16 They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

So here we actually have false teachers or people moving along the road to false teaching, their minds and their consciousness are defiled, they are seared, they are branded with the 666 in such a way that they cannot respond to the pain of sin. And that's why they are devoted.

1 Timothy 4:1-2 (ESV) 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, 2 through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared,

Why would you devote yourself to deceitful spirit and teaching of demons?

Because they are so in love with it? Because their conscience is seared by Satan. And instead of having a negative response to sinful things, they actually find pleasure in it. This is what happens when your conscience is being seared by Satan and the searing of your conscious doesn't occur suddenly. It is slowly, small sins lowering your threshold until sin becomes a manner of life. And when that happens, you

become a hypocrite, insincerity of liars which is basically hypocrisy from the word hypokrisis. You claim to be from God, you are telling the people this is what God wants, in reality their conscience is actually controlled by Satan. This is how false teaching works within the church.

Now, what were the false teachers pushing? Well, they were pushing to forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God has created. That's what they were doing. So, they were talking about old Testament clean foods. You only have to think clean foods that is what they were saying and there are a lot of dietary restrictions, very common in the early church. Do it for health even today a lot of people are doing it for health and holiness as it were. And what they are doing is that they're taking God's commands, Old Testament, dietary commands, for example Leviticus 20:25-26. And they say since Old Testament is the Bible and New Testament 1 John 5:3 says,

For this is the love of God that you keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

So therefore you should keep all Old Testament dietary laws. In fact, you've got condemnation, Isaiah 65 verse 4,

who sit in tombs, and spend the night in secret places; who eat pig's flesh, and broth of tainted meat is in their vessels;

These are people who condemn the people who eat pigs flesh is it were. So basically this is the condemnation. There are those who at that time suggested that you don't eat meat, just be vegetarian. And the reason why these people from the more Greek background is because they've got the philosophy of Plato. In Plato's universe, he divides the whole universe into two realms. One the realm of ideas and the realm of substance. Two realms.

In the realm of ideas, if you think of an apple, the concept of apple is eternally perfect, because in your mind the Apple looks pristine, is red, is shining, is healthy, is big, is wonderful, it cannot be corrupted, but in real life, the realm of substance, the actual apple can have flaws. They can rot, they can have worms. So basically there's one ideal realm and one the real world realm. So therefore the body too is divided the soul and the spirit. And then the actual physical body. The soul and spirit is good and Holy like the realm of ideas, like the apple and the body is bad and sinful. And what we have to do is to suppress this, all the desires, and this is ascetism. And this is common in many many religions like Buddhism, for example, you suppress your desires because all desire is sinful.

Marriage. They are thinking that, you know, in the kingdom of God in heaven, there'll be no giving in marriage. Right? So therefore, since we are now born again, the kingdom of God is at hand in a new age, there will be no marriage, so therefore we all be like angels, so might so start now. No marriage even now. All right. So celibacy is taught to be a higher spiritual state because what is physical like sex is actually lower down, is corrupted. So therefore we should focus on meditation on prayer. So that's what they were teaching. All right. Paul is against these restrictions.

3 who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. 4 For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, 5 for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

So God created food. Everything he created is good, so roast pig eat. Why? Because the pig is created by God and it is good.

Romans 14: 14 I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.

So here is the kind of erroneous wrong thoughts given to people's minds. All right. And if you think the pig is horrible and dirty and not good for you, what you are saying is that you are smarter than God, that what he created, he actually created a messed up animal, pig. And therefore, we shouldn't be the pig. His creating has failed, God has failed. No we eat all these things and none of them is bad, why because God's creation is good. The second reason why Paul is against these restrictions is that everything created by God is good and nothing to be rejected if it is to be received with Thanksgiving and here we actually have, we're talking about saying grace.

God's creation is to be received with Thanksgiving. The Thanksgiving prayer before meal is actually acknowledgement of the food that God created is good. Imagine you're sitting down in your kitchen table, we are all going to say grace. And the grace that you actually say is thanking God for the food that God has given you is good. You can't give thanks for something which is bad. So by default, when you are actually saying grace, you you're saying that what God has given you is good and therefore to be received with thanksgiving.

Jesus feeding the 5,000, he took the seven loaves and after giving thanks he broke it and gave it to disciples. When you have actually have this tradition of giving thanks is based on Psalm 24:1

The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.

Which means the whole world God has given us, we have to give thanks for whatever that we partake in. So when we say grace we are acknowledging we know the truth that whatever God gives, created is good when we are saying grace.

And the last reason is that, not only that, because everything created by God is good, everything is received with thanksgiving and third reason that it is made holy by the word of God and prayer. Now, what do you mean by made Holy, which is basically sanctified or made sacred by the word of God and prayer. What is the word of God? The word of God in the pastoral epistles, if you look up or the many times the word of God mentioned, word of God means the gospel. The gospel of Jesus Christ. So therefore every time you say grace, we actually express our belief in the truth of the gospel, that when we are actually saying grace, we say this food is made holy or acknowledged as holy set apart because of the gospel and prayer, that the gospel truth is that Christ is enough.

Without a belief in the gospel, a person has no assurance that the dietary laws still do not apply.

So when you are sitting down and eating your roast pork and believing Oh, Christ death is enough, I don't need to believe in clean and unclean foods anymore. Why? Because in Christ everything is clean.

Colossians 2:20-23 If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— 21 “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” 22 (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings?

When you die with Christ, the ceremonial laws, the clean and unclean foods do not apply anymore. That's why Paul is saying, all this is rubbish, do not handle, do not touch. They are all human precepts. They don't apply anymore. If these are indeed an appearance, they look like wisdom. They look like wisdom and cleverness, but actually promote self-made religion and ascetism and a severity of the body,

but there are no value in stopping indulgence of flesh. We are trying to abstain from certain foods, do not eat your Char Siew because it makes you more holy, it doesn't. It doesn't stop you from sinning. It has basically no value. So actually when you are eating your Char Siew tonight. When you eat it, you eat it, why? Because God's creation is good. You eat it because you give thanks because this is what God has given for you which is good. You eat your roast pork and you give thanks because you've got a freedom to eat roast pork because in Christ all things are good. No more dietary laws apply because Christ death is sufficient for everything.

Here is a takeaway from diet. Food is indifferent. It's a matter of choice. Whether you eat roast pork, roast pig or roast beef, it really doesn't matter, it is a matter of choice. You want to abstain, sure you can, but it must be voluntary. No condemnation, just because you eat roast pork you don't condemn those who don't eat roast pork. Those who don't eat roast pork cannot condemn those who do. There's no condemnation from dietary habits. And you have to stick to your decision. You can't say, don't eat roast pork and you quietly go home and eat roast pork. You have to stick to your conscience, which is determined by the word of God.

What about marriage?

Same thing, it is a matter of choice. If you cannot tahan, you find you have got sexual desire and you have met the right person, you want to marry, you marry it is not a sin. If you don't want to marry, it is not a sin, it is a matter of choice. Abstinence must be voluntary, right? If you can decide that you don't want to marry or you can decide you want to marry, but you can't condemn those who marry if you don't marry, and if you marry you can't condemn those who don't marry. No condemnation must come from the decision.

Lastly, stick to your decision. Don't be inconsistent. If you say that you want to have celibacy because it's a better state for yourself, you know, be consistent with it rather than to give in. Thank you very much. I hope you have a good time discussing this in your groups.