

1 Timothy 4:1-11 – Exercising Ourselves Toward Godliness

Michael Silva / June 11, 2017

Opening: I just watched *Hacksaw Ridge*; Desmond Doss: The Real Story¹

- On April 1, 1942, Desmond Doss joined the United States Army. Little did he realize that three and a half years later, he would be standing on the White House lawn, receiving the nation's highest award for his bravery and courage under fire.
- Of the 16 million men in uniform during World War II, only 431 received the Congressional Medal of Honor. One of these was placed around the neck of a young Seventh-day Adventist, who during combat had not killed a single enemy soldier. In fact, he **refused to carry a gun** [and avoided working on Saturday, his Sabbath day if possible]. His only **weapons** were his **Bible** and his **faith** in God.
- The journey that had brought young Desmond to this day had been a challenging one. When **Pearl Harbor** was attacked, he was working at the Newport News Naval shipyard and could have requested a **deferment**—but he wanted to do more for his country. He was willing to **risk his life** on the front lines in order to preserve freedom.
- When he joined the Army, Desmond assumed that his classification as a **conscientious objector** would not require him to carry a weapon. He wanted to be an Army **combat medic**. As luck would have it, he was assigned to an infantry rifle company.
- His refusal to carry a gun caused a lot of trouble among his fellow soldiers. They viewed him with **distain** and called him a **misfit**. His commanding officers also wanted to get rid of the skinny Virginian who spoke with a gentle southern drawl. They saw him as a **liability**. Nobody believed a soldier without a weapon was worthwhile.
- They tried to **intimidate** him, **scold** him, **assign** him extra tough duties, and declared him **mentally unfit** for the Army. Then they attempted to **court martial** him for refusing a direct order—to carry a gun. But they failed to find a way to toss him out, and **he refused to leave**. He believed his duty was to **obey God** and **serve his country**. But it had to be in that order. His unwavering convictions were most important.
- Things began turning around when the men discovered that this quiet unassuming medic had a way to heal the blisters on their march-weary feet. And if someone fainted from heat stroke, this medic was at his side, offering his own **canteen**. Desmond never held a grudge. With kindness and gentle courtesy, he treated those who had mistreated him. He lived the golden rule, "...do to others what you would have them do to you..." (Matthew 7:12 NIV).
- Desmond served in combat on the islands of Guam, Leyte, and Okinawa. In each military operation he exhibited **extraordinary dedication** to his fellow men. While others were taking life, he was busy saving life.
- When the cry, "medic" rang out on the battlefield, he never considered his own safety. He repeatedly ran into the heat of battle to treat a fallen comrade and carry him back to safety. All this, while enemy bullets whizzed past and mortar shells exploded around him. Several times, while treating a wounded soldier, Desmond was so close to enemy lines, he could hear the whispering of Japanese voices.
- In May 1945, Japanese troops were fiercely defending, to their last man, the only remaining barrier (Okinawa and the Maeda Escarpment) to an allied invasion of their homeland. The men in Desmond's division were repeatedly trying to capture the Maeda Escarpment, an imposing rock face the soldiers called **Hacksaw Ridge**.
- After the company had secured the top of the cliff, the Americans were stunned when suddenly enemy forces rushed them in a vicious counterattack. Officers ordered an immediate retreat. Soldiers rushed to climb back down the steep cliff. All the soldiers except one.

- Less than **one third** of the men made it back down. The rest lay wounded, scattered across enemy soil— abandoned and left for dead, if they weren't already. One lone soldier disobeyed orders and charged back into the firefight to rescue as many of his men as he could. His iron determination and unflinching courage resulted in at least **75 lives saved that day**, May 5, 1945, his Sabbath.
- Eventually, the Americans took Hacksaw Ridge. Okinawa was captured inch by bloody inch. Several days later, during an unsuccessful night raid, Desmond was severely wounded. [Shrapnel from a Japanese grenade] tore into his leg and up to his hip. He treated his own wounds as best he could. While attempting to reach safety, he was hit by a sniper's bullet that shattered his arm.
- His brave actions as a combat medic were done. But not before insisting that his litter-bearers take another man first before rescuing him. Wounded, in pain, and losing blood, he still put others ahead of his own safety. He would choose to die so another could live. After all, that's what he read in his Bible. Such was the character demonstrated by Jesus Christ.
- In addition to his Medal of Honor, Desmond Doss received 2 Bronze Stars; 3 Purple Hearts; 4 Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medals including an amphibious landing under combat conditions; the Good Conduct Medal; the American Defense Campaign; and the not so common, Presidential Unit Citation given to the 1st Battalion, 307Inf, 77th Infantry Division for securing the Maeda Escarpment.

Transition: We are on a Journey... through the book of 1 Timothy, which has a lot to say about church leadership, doctrine, and **discipleship**.

1. Attributes that Paul speaks of in our passage are exemplified in Corporal Desmond Doss.

Let's read our passage: 1 Timothy 4:1-11 (NKJV)ⁱⁱ And Pray...

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer. - Psalm 19:14

1. Last week... The Qualifications of the Deacon.
2. Leadership matters.
 - a) A good church leader teaches and tends to his church guarding them from false doctrines and demons.
 - b) We are constantly bombarded with messages to **compromise**, just as Doss was when he initially joined the Army.
 - c) But like Doss, we are to say true to what our Lord has called us to in His word.

1 Timothy 4:1 ¹ Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,

1. We are living in those **latter times**; therefore, we need to give **heed** to Paul's warning here.
 - a) Furthermore, we should not be surprised if we see people **depart from the faith** for we are being told here that it will happen.
 - i) We can be sad and grieve over this, but we shouldn't be caught off guard by it.
2. Who is Paul speaking of here when he says, **in latter times some will depart from the faith**?
 - a) It's a matter of **debate** among theologians and Bible teachers.
 - b) Does this mean that some **believers** will depart from the faith?
 - c) Does it refer to **people groups** who had once followed God, but are no longer?
 - i) Perhaps the **next generation** of people who were never saved, but departed from the faith of their parents in the preceding generation.
 - ii) I don't know, maybe both. I just know I believe that **in latter times some will depart from the faith**.
3. This should serve as a **warning** to us.
 - a) While I believe that we are secure in Christ, we are still capable of being **deceived** and **misled**.
 - b) We must keep our guard up so that we don't follow a leader who would lead us away from true faith in the Lord.
 - c) I believe that there are some "church leaders" and church movements who started out in a way that seemed genuine & true, but then **over time** have departed from true Christian orthodoxy.
 - i) [Orthodoxy - a belief or a way of thinking that is accepted as true or correct.]
 - ii) Of such I have strong concerns about the effects of their teachings and practices.
 - (1) Individuals like Joel Osteen, Rob Bell, Benny Hinn, who preach another kind of gospel and relationship with God that's not consistent with the Word.
4. How does this happen? Because some gave heed to **deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons**.
 - a) They were deceived, misled, tricked.
 - b) Shortly after we moved to Jacksonville, NC, I met a "New Friend."
 - i) We exchanged numbers, he seemed really nice...
 - ii) A really nice guy who was only interested in me joining his Amway sales pyramid scheme.
 - iii) When I told him I wasn't interested, the nice guy was gone. He became rude and nasty. I had initially

been deceived by him.

5. 1 Kings 13 is another example of being deceived. There was a 'Man of God' from Judah who performed mighty acts of God before Jeroboam, the king of Israel.
 - a) Read **1 Kings 13:7-17**
 - i) Thus, far so good. But watch what happens next.
 - b) The old man responded in 1 Kings 13:18-24.
 - c) Why this story? It's to **illustrate** the truth found in **1 Peter 5:8**, which says, **Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.**

Those who are deceiving and who have been deceived will be...

1 Timothy 4:2 ² speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,

1. Lies in hypocrisy **mislead** people about **who you really are**.
 - a) Deceivers hide their **true colors** until you are hooked.
2. In the end **their own conscience** become seared with a hot iron.
 - a) They have **no feelings** and are **unfazed** by their actions.
 - b) Example: **Mr. Deeds** – Longfellow Deeds and his frostbitten foot.
 - c) In the Bible, Paul before his conversion had a seared conscience. He persecuted the church and killed Christians **without remorse**.
 - i) But God intervened and did what **Ezekiel 36:26** says, **I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.**

How did they mislead and deceive in Paul's day? By...

1 Timothy 4:3 ³ forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

1. **Abstaining** from marriage and food does **not** make one holy.
 - a) Works do not make you holy and righteous. It is faith in Christ that does!

b) **Romans 1:16–17** ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”

c) Legalism does **not** lead to a better standing before God.

2. We are **complete in Christ** according to **Colossians 2:10**.

a) Therefore, Paul boldly declares in **Colossians 2:16–19** ¹⁶ So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, ¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. ¹⁸ Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, ¹⁹ and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.

1 Timothy 4:4-5 ⁴ For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; ⁵ for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

1. Here’s one reason why we **pray before we eat**.

a) The word **sanctified** in Vs 5 means to make holy, acceptable, consecrated.

b) Instead of abstaining, it **honors God more** if you just simply thank Him for it and enjoy.

c) **Hebrews 13:9** Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them.

2. Of course, there are **limits** to what Paul says here in Vs 4. We don’t partake of that which is **dangerous** or could **stumble** someone else.

a) We shouldn’t partake of dangerous substances or illegal drugs and think it’s okay because we said, “*Thanks God*” before doing so.

b) We must abide by what all of God’s Word says. We must never misapply God’s word to fulfill our own desires.

Paul Continues... **1 Timothy 4:6** ⁶ If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.

1. Timothy was to have an active teaching ministry, which was one of the indicators of if he was a **good minister of Jesus Christ**.

- a) A good minister of Jesus Christ **teaches good doctrine** and carefully **follows** it himself.
2. As Christians, we need to be **nourished** in the words of faith and of the good doctrine.

1 Timothy 4:7 ⁷ But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness.

1. When people say something like, "*You know that the Good Book says...*"
 - a) Ask them **where** it says that in the Bible.
 - b) We need to follow **God's Word** over man's word, or women's word.
 - c) There are even a lot of sayings out there that sound spiritual, but are not biblical...
 - i) Classic example is: "*God helps those who help themselves.*" That is so UNSCRIPTURAL!
 - d) What is **Grace**? Undeserved, unearned, unmerited favor.
 - i) God helps those who cannot help themselves.
 2. Then Paul goes on to say, **exercise yourself toward godliness**.
 - a) Olympics, athletics, and physical training were a big part of their **culture**.
 - b) The people in that day would get this reference; the effort that athletes put into training should be the same effort Christians put into moving **toward godliness**.
 - i) This means your faith and walk with Jesus should be active and intentional.
 - ii) Think of the word **godliness** as **God-likeness**.
 - iii) You should be **learning** more about Him, **walking** more closely with Him, and as a result **becoming** more like Him.

1 Timothy 4:8 ⁸ For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

1. It could be translated as exercise **profits for a while**, in in this life.
 - a) A study has shown that with exercise you can get a **1-to-7 return**ⁱⁱⁱ.
 - i) 1 minute of working out can extend your life up to 7 minutes.
 - b) But how long is that in comparison to eternity?

- i) **Question:** Two envelopes, each with the same work assignment you could complete this afternoon.
 - (1) If you take envelope 1 and complete your task your reward is that you will immediately get to drive a Ferrari for 10 minutes.
 - (2) But, if you take envelope 2 and complete the very same task your reward is that, if you will wait 7 months until 1/1/2018, you will get to drive a Ferrari for 10 years? But you must wait.
 - (3) Which is the greater reward?
- c) Workout, it's important! But don't forsake that which is eternal.
 - i) Invest your time and energy in growing in God-likeness. It's good for here on earth and in eternity.
 - ii) Invest your time in that which provides the greater reward.

1 Timothy 4:9-10

⁹ This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. ¹⁰ For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.

- 1. Desmond Doss suffered initially for his faith, yet he did not waiver.
- 2. The word labor means to work to the point of weariness and exhaustion.
 - a) J. Oswald Sanders wrote in his excellent book *Spiritual Leadership*, "If he is unwilling to pay the price of fatigue for his leadership, it will always be mediocre... True leadership always exacts a heavy toll on the whole man, and the more effective the leadership is, the higher the price to be paid."
 - b) **1 Corinthians 9:26-27** ²⁶ Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. ²⁷ But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.
- 3. We trust in the Living God who is able to save all; Christ *can* effectively be the Savior of all men, though He actually becomes the Savior of only those who believe.

1 Timothy 4:11

¹¹ These things command and teach.

- 1. The church and its leaders must take an active and intentional role in teaching the Word of God.
- 2. Paul declared in **Acts 20:27** For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.
 - a) That is our aim as a church and my aim as your pastor as well.

Conclusion: What's the big take away from this passage?

1. In these latter days, we will continue to be challenged by those who want to deceive us, those who want us to compromise our faith.
 - a) Like Desmond Doss, it's stay committed to our faith and bringing glory to God over personal comfort by exercising ourselves toward God-likeness.

Invitation: Revelation 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

ⁱ Desmond Doss: The Real Story <https://desmonddoss.com/bio/bio-real.php>

ⁱⁱ All scripture references, unless otherwise noted, are taken from The New King James Version. (1982). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://commonhealth.legacy.wbur.org/2013/03/minutes-exercise-longer-life>