

MY GENERATION (part-three of a six-part study)

Next, Paul helps Timothy and each of us to understand the underlying reason for this solemn charge: a significant **change** for the worse will take place within the Christian faith as a whole. He describes it in its entirety in 2 Timothy 4:3-4 –

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.”

In these verses, Paul outlines a process of spiritual decline, a downward spiral, if you will, with the primary influential factor causing this spiritual regression, indicated by the apostle’s use of the verb “endure.” It is the Greek word “anecho,” and it speaks of an individual’s inner strength in facing a challenging circumstance (1 Corinthians 4:12; 2 Thessalonians 1:4). However, in 2 Timothy 4:3, it is used to reveal the fatal flaw of this particular generation of Evangelicals, who lack the necessary inner strength to successfully meet the challenge of learning and living sound doctrine. In other words, Paul is warning of a time yet future, where a generation of spiritual weaklings will usher in a significant change for the worse within the Christian faith. Instead of overcoming their weakness by means of God’s grace, they will make excuses for it. They will justify their spiritual failure in blaming sound doctrine itself, by calling it boring, irrelevant and impractical; even to the point of vilifying an emphasis on sound doctrine as divisive. Sound familiar?

Their blame shifting will create an opportunity for the emergence of “teachers” who will gladly tell this generation of spiritual weaklings what they want to hear, rather than what they need to hear. Thus, Paul’s use of the verb “to tickle” (knetho). It is used figuratively here to describe an obsessive curiosity which desires to hear something new. This is a continuation of the downward spiral, in that their unwillingness to “hear” sound doctrine will be replaced with a desire to “hear” something else which will satisfy their itching ears. Perhaps the apostle had in mind Psalm 37:4 upon concluding v3 with the expression “in accordance to their own desires.” In other words, when we “delight ourselves in the Lord,” making the development of our relationship with Him the number one priority of our lives, the desires of our heart will harmonize with God’s plan and purpose for our lives. How? God will impart His desires upon our hearts, making them one and the same with our own. But that will not be the case with this generation, due to their rejection of a lifestyle which requires learning and living out sound doctrine. Instead, they will pursue their own desires, seeking after and finding “teachers” who will be ready, willing and able to satisfy their yearning for anything and everything else.