

1 Timothy 1:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.

Analysis

Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies (μηδὲ προσέχειν μύθοις καὶ γενεαλογίαις ἀπεράντοις, mēde prosechein mythois kai genealogiais aperantois)—'nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies.' Prosechō means to pay attention to, occupy oneself with. Mythos means myth, fable, fictitious story. Genealogia means genealogy, lineage. Aperantos means interminable, endless, without limit.

Which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith (αἵτινες ἐκζητήσεις παρέχουσιν μᾶλλον ἢ οἰκονομίαν θεοῦ τὴν ἐν πίστει, haitines ekzētēsis parechousin mallon ē oikonomian theou tēn en pistei)—'which promote speculations rather than God's stewardship that is by faith.' Ekzētēsis means speculation, controversy. Oikonomia means stewardship, administration, God's plan of salvation.

The false teaching in Ephesus involved Jewish genealogies (perhaps rabbinic speculation on OT genealogies) and Gnostic myths. These elaborate systems produced endless debates rather than faith-building gospel truth. Paul contrasts speculation with God's saving plan revealed in Christ—received by faith, not intellectual gymnastics.

Historical Context

Both Jewish and Gnostic traditions valued elaborate genealogies and origin myths. Jewish teachers debated Messianic lineages; Gnostics created complex hierarchies of divine emanations. These speculations were intellectually stimulating but spiritually barren—they didn't build faith or promote godliness, just controversy. The gospel's simplicity (Christ crucified and risen) seemed too plain compared to these sophisticated systems.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What contemporary 'myths and genealogies' distract Christians from simple gospel faith?
2. How can we distinguish between helpful theological study and fruitless speculation?
3. Why does Paul emphasize 'faith' as the proper response to God's plan rather than intellectual mastery?

Interlinear Text

μηδὲ προσέχειν μύθοις καὶ γενεαλογίαις ἀπεράντοις

Neither give heed to fables and genealogies endless

G3366 G4337 G3454 G2532 G1076 G562

αἵτινες ζητήσεις παρέχουσιν μᾶλλον ἢ οἰκονομίαν

which questions minister rather than

G3748 G2214 G3930 G3123 G2228 G3622

θεοῦ τὴν ἐν πίστει

godly which is in faith

G2316 G3588 G1722 G4102

Additional Cross-References

1 Timothy 4:7 (References God): But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.

Titus 3:9 (Parallel theme): But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.

Titus 1:14 (Parallel theme): Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.

2 Timothy 4:4 (Parallel theme): And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

2 Peter 1:16 (Parallel theme): For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

Hebrews 13:9 (Parallel theme): Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

1 Timothy 6:20 (Faith): O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called:

2 Timothy 2:14 (Parallel theme): Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.

1 Timothy 6:11 (Faith): But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

2 Timothy 2:22 (Faith): Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

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