

Women's Bible Study, November 22, 2024
Lesson 5 (1 Timothy 4)
Holy Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church

Highlights & notes for 1 Timothy 4 -- Godliness in Everyday Life

1. Objectives and Introduction of this week's study (SG p.81)

- a. By the Holy Spirit through God's Word, ...
 - 1) may we come to understand more fully the *source & value* of godliness.
 - 2) may we be encouraged to *apply the teachings of God's Word to our daily lives*.
 - 3) we will learn *how vital the pastoral office is* to the life and ministry of the Church.

b. Introduction: Two major, interrelated lessons of this study:

1) Often the greatest harm done to the Church is not by its enemies outside of the Church, but by those members within a church who might live contrary to the Gospel, or those who often are misled by false teachings that they listen to or read from outside a doctrinally sound church. In our last lesson of 1 Timothy 3, we learned what the Lord expects of pastors and leaders in the Church. This week in 1 Timothy 4, we learn how necessary the pastor (the shepherd) of the church is, in the preaching and teaching of God's Word rightly, in keeping the Gospel front and center in the life and ministry of the Church. (SG p.81)

2) "The Pastoral Epistles refer to the Christian life and Gospel ministry as '*godliness*.' This is nothing else than *faith in Christ* [recall "the mystery of godliness," in 1 Timothy 3:16 from last week's study] and the *life of love freely lived under the grace given us through Him*. It stands opposite to false godliness, which stresses human works and self-righteousness." (SG p.81)

2. 1 Timothy 4:1-5, Deceptive spirits versus enjoying God's good gifts

a. **vv. 1-3a, Falling for deceitful spirits and teachings**

1) v.1 - "the Spirit clearly says...": The Holy Spirit speaks to us by means of His Word. But before all the NT had been written, He at times spoke directly to His Church, as we have seen through times of direct revelation during Paul's missionary journeys (e.g., Acts 13:2; Acts 20:22,29-30; Acts 21:11). Paul is perhaps speaking here of a specific revelation made to him and to the Church by the Spirit. (TLSB 4:1; TPB p.63; CSB 4:1)

2) v.1 - "*in later times...*": Not only the last days before Christ's return, but the entire NT era, the time beginning with the first coming of Christ. (TLSB 4:1; CSB 4:1)

* Hebrews 1:1-2, "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in *these last days* He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom He made the universe."

** Acts 2:17, "And in *the last days* it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,..." (Here Peter quotes Joel's prophecy to state that the decisive stage and climax of history had arrived with Christ and the Church. TLSB Acts 2:17.)

3) v.1 - "*some will depart from the faith...*": Those who were once believing members of the Church were turning away from Christ (and will turn away), abandoning the faith, and thereby rejecting the gift of salvation. (TLSB 4:1) *How does that happen?!? (see next point...)*

4) v.1 - "*devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons...*": Giving more attention to false teachings that were leading them astray. (TLSB 4:1)

* Satan is "a liar and the father of lies." (John 8:44) False doctrine in all its forms comes from him. (TLSB 4:1)

** When we stop taking in nourishment through the means of grace given to us, God's pure Word, of Gospel, of the Bread of Life, we are more easily led astray and fall for false teachings & voices out there. In so doing, we unawares take our eyes off of Christ Jesus our Savior, and we are led to focus on "self" and on work-righteousness. And the Grace of Christ becomes a distant memory.

5) v.2 - "*hypocritical [insincere] liars whose consciences are seared...*": They want their lies to appear as God's truth. They even quote Scripture in their attempt to make it appear as if their lies are coming from God (TPB p.64). Twisting God's word is the devil's manipulative ploy. Their consciences have become dulled, as though "branded" by Satan to show his ownership of them, or "cauterized," leaving them unfeeling and unable to distinguish between right and wrong (TLSB 4:2).

[* Note: The study guide (SG, #38, pp.27 & 83) discusses this further, outlining the character of false teachers, the source of their error, and the effect these human regulations and restrictions have upon people's consciences. We may touch on this during our in-person/Zoom study on Friday, but I'm not including the study guide discussion here, as I've highlighted much of it above.]

6) **SG, #36**, pp.27 & 82 - (Discuss human-made rules that some churches set up as means for obtaining salvation and blessing from God, SG #36, p.27). Paul gives us examples in verse 3 of false teachings that were of concern for the churches in Ephesus. "This unbiblical asceticism arose out of the mistaken belief that the material world was evil -- a central belief of the Gnostic heresy" (CSB 4:3). (Gnosticism was one of the most dangerous heresies of the first two centuries. Its central teaching was that spirit is entirely good and matter is entirely evil. [Note from CSB, Introduction to 1 John, p. 1925])

a) In v.3 we see that false teachers were demanding that marriage and certain food be rejected, but in so doing they were rejecting God, who gives the gifts of marriage and food. They presented celibacy and fasting as a higher form of piety, while they were actually rejecting God's good gifts and relying on self & work-righteousness. (TLSB 4:3; TPB p.64)

b) "[Paul] paints a true picture of the great spiritual dangers that confront us today... The practice of asceticism -- extreme self-denial and harsh treatment of the body to gain spiritual grace -- and the monastic life of monks and nuns that is taken up with the belief that it is spiritually superior to ordinary life (Colossians 2:16; 1 Corinthians 10:31).

"Today many teach that upon meeting certain conditions of devotedness, surrender, or obedience, Christians may secure from God certain blessings. Greater levels of grace and spiritual illumination are said to be available if one will follow a certain prescription of spiritual disciplines or programs for spiritual development. Often material prosperity is promised in God's name if one gives an offering and plants seed money" (SG #36 p. 82).

c) "Such teachings are demonic, for they turn the hearts and minds of people to supposed works of piety and away from the perfect redemption effected by Christ." (TPB p.64)

d) These teachings are also demonic in that they fail to give glory to God for His good creation (TPB p.64)... (see next point, b. below, 1 Timothy 4:3b-5).

b. **vv. 3b-5, Enjoying and using God's Gifts**

1) **SG, #37**, pp.27 & 82 - (See Colossians 2:16 and 1 Corinthians 10:31. Does the NT forbid the use of any kind of food or drink?) As we noted above, false teachers try to prevent Christians from enjoying the good gifts of God. God has created these gifts and appointed them for our use.

2) vv.3b-4 - God Himself calls His creation good. Paul repeats here, "*For everything God created is good.*" And "*those who believe and who know the truth*" will rather receive and enjoy God's gifts "*with thanksgiving.*" (TPB p. 64)

* "Believers will not reject any of God's creation as something evil in itself. Sinners that we are, however, the bodies God gave us and the material gifts we receive we only too readily use in evil and sinful ways... The fault is not in God's creation. Man's sinful abuse is at fault." (TPB p. 65)

3) v.5 - "*consecrated by the word of God and prayer.*" -- "Believers will recognize God's creation as good and acknowledge Him as the giver. In prayer they will ask their heavenly Father's word of blessing on the food they eat, on their marriages, on everything the Lord gives for their bodily welfare. Thus, what appears so earthly, material, and unspiritual is '*consecrated by the Word of God and prayer.*' The Christian's entire life becomes a worship of God. Whether he eats or drinks, or whatever he does, at work or during leisure hours, he does all to God's glory." (TPB p.63)

3. 1 Timothy 4:6-11, Nourishing faith; The value of "good devotion" (beneficial for all things)

a. vv.6-7, (SG #39, pp.28 & 83), The importance of staying nourished with God's Word

1) v.6 - Timothy is to "*point out these things*" to his fellow believers: The importance of the "mystery of godliness" (3:16) by preaching the wonderful Gospel of forgiveness in Christ Jesus; And he is to continue to make aware and warn against errors (false teachings) that destroy the Gospel and faith. (TPB p.66)

2) v.6 - (Compare translations): Where the NIV states Timothy was "*brought up*" in the truths of faith, and the ESV states he was "*trained*" in the faith, I think the EHV has the better translation stating Timothy was "*nourished by the words of the faith, and the good doctrine,*" which he had been "*following faithfully.*"

* "Timothy is to feed himself spiritually on the truth, the good teaching that is found in God's revelation. From infancy he had known the Holy Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:15)... [and] he should keep on studying and reviewing in order to feed his soul and nourish his faith... Pastors need to keep on recharging their own batteries ...They can only give what they have first received." (TPB p.66)

3) v.7 - Likewise, Timothy was to "pay no attention to worldly and absurd myths [false teachings]; but train yourself for godliness." (EHV) Such things would not nourish his faith but could draw him away from the truth. (Like "junk food" filling us up so we no longer crave true healthy options at dinner.) "The same can be said of much that appears in religious publications today. A pastor will be selective in what he reads and studies..." (TPB pp.66-67)

4) It is so important that we also *continue to be nourished with God's Word*. For it is the *only way* our faith is sustained (kept from weakening) and is encouraged, strengthened, and produces spiritual growth in Christ. Additionally, it is the *only way* to keep us from faltering and going astray, keeping us from listening to and following doctrines that are false.

* "A believer's faith can be nourished only by God's Word [means of grace]. He or she should therefore give his or her whole attention to *true godliness* [1 Tim. 3:16], which concern not stories, pious opinions, or even personal testimonies as such, but *the person and work of Jesus Christ -- the Gospel*. Paul puts everything else on a level with the stories told by idle gossipers (1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 2:16; Titus 1:10, 14; 3:9). [Paul repeats this often; it's that important!] This applies also to all false doctrine and false teachers..." (SG p.83)

b. **vv.7b-8**, (**SG #40 & #41**, pp.28 & 83-84), The value of "godliness"

1) Comparing *physical (bodily) training*, and *training for godliness*: There are those who pay more attention to bodily desires and earthly ambitions, more time and resources devoted to looking and feeling good than time, attention and resources dedicated to maintaining a healthy faith. While neglecting the growth of faith and edification of our souls, we show where our treasure really is. (SG #40 p.84)

2) v.8, "*some value (beneficial to an extent)*" versus "*value (beneficial) for all things*" : "To have some value means that physical exercise is profitable only to a certain extent... The Fifth Commandment requires that we take the best possible care of our bodies and health. That is part of the godly life. It is worth a great deal but not the main thing; it is little when compared with all that real godliness comprises. Paul does not disparage athletic exercise, but neither does he unduly exalt them..." (SG #41a, p. 84)

"*Godliness*" is not something we do on our own, but it consists in the faith and life *God works in us*. Godliness "*has value for all things*." The "*all*" is comprehensive. It includes both this present life and the life to come. (TPB p.67)

3) The word "*godliness*" means literally "*good devotion*." It refers to the proper or right devotion and reverence shown to God. We know that the true worship of God does not consist in our works for Him but in believing and receiving His great work of salvation accomplished for us in Jesus Christ. To trust in Christ and make His action for us the focal point of our worship is to practice *godliness*. This results in a fruitful life of love and service to neighbor and abounds with true good works. (SG #41b, p.84)

c. **vv.9-11**, The surpassing value of godliness (again, recall our study on 1 Tim. 3:16 last week)

1) v.10, The surpassing value of godliness is important to remember! For this reason our pastors and we all as Christians continue to "*labor and strive.*" For as Paul proclaimed (v.10), "*We have put our hope in the living God who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.*" (TPB p.67) The value of true godliness is in the spirit, soul, heart, and life of those in Christ; it consists in faith, love, and all Christian virtues, the product of pure Gospel teaching. The blessings of godliness do not end with this life; godliness has real value for time and eternity. Such is its value in all things, in every way. (SG p.84)

2) v.10, Jesus "*is the Savior of all*" because He "desires all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim.2:4). His sacrificial death as the Lamb of God was for the reconciliation of the world (2 Corinthians 5:19), to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29). (TLSB 4:10)

3) Not all, however, enter into salvation (such universalism contradicts Scripture). God is, however, the Savior of all in that He offers salvation to all, and all who believe will be saved (CSB 4:10).

He is the Savior "*especially of those who believe,*" not because their faith makes them worthy of it, but because unbelief rejects God's blessing (TPB p.68). And it's important to note, believers already enjoy the benefits of everlasting life (TLSB 4:10). Thus, the work of pastors and of every Christian needs to continue, striving in godliness, and laboring so that all may come to know this saving message and grace we hold so dear... Truly of highest value, beneficial for all and *in all things!*

4) v.11, ...And, thus, Paul's instruction to Timothy in verse 11. These things are of highest importance. He is to instruct the elders (pastors), deacons, and all people in these matters, not with legalistic authoritarianism but with certainty and conviction. This is a heavy responsibility, especially for a man who was still young (see next section below, 1 Timothy 4:12...) (TPB p.68)

4. **1 Timothy 4:12-16**, Living with Purpose; Spiritual Growth

a. **v.12**, (**SG #42**, pp.29 & 84-85) - Timothy's youthful age, and setting an example

1) Timothy's "youth": "In other contexts, the word refers to people in their 30s; Timothy's age is uncertain. In first-century Jewish culture, people were considered youth up to age 40." (TLSB 4:12)

* "Timothy was probably in his mid-30s or younger, and in that day, such an influential position was not usually held by a man so young. For this reason, perhaps, his leadership had been called into question." (CSB 4:12)

** He was undoubtedly younger than many whom he was to "command and teach" (TPB p.68). Because of his younger age than some of the elders and members in the Ephesus churches, and these who were probably considerably older, they might question his authority. Paul did not consider Timothy too young to serve as his representative. Timothy had been Paul's assistant for at least fourteen years. (SG #42, p.84)

2) "set an example": In order to forestall criticism (concerning his youthful age) as much as possible, Paul said that Timothy should exercise care and always set a good example (SG #42, p.84-85). By setting a personal example (and growing in his spiritual life), Timothy would be able to prevent others from looking down on him due to his youth. (TPB pp.68-69; TLSB 4:12). He was to set an example for his fellow believers in all aspects of his life:

a) "*in speech*" - sound doctrine; whether in the pulpit, classroom, or private conversation (SG, TPB)

b) "*in life*" ("*conduct*") - by practicing what he preached (TPB)

c) "*in love*" - self-sacrificing love characteristic of Christ Jesus; demonstrating grace to those who treat him rudely and disrespectfully (TPB, SG)

d) "*in faith*" - that trusts God and is the source of the Christian's life and love (TPB)

e) "*in purity*" - giving no occasion for even a suspicion of immorality; works of pure motives (TPB; SG)

b. **vv.13-14**, (**SG #43**, pp.29 & 85) - Timothy's spiritual gift; Spiritual gifts given to those in the pastoral office

1) A spiritual gift, in this context, is "a special gift of God's grace that enables the recipient to carry out a particular role or task in the congregation." In context with v.13 ("*devote yourself to the [public] reading of Scripture, to encouraging [preaching]/exhortation, and to teaching*"), Paul is referring to Timothy's gift from the Lord which "enabled him faithfully to fulfill the tasks of his ministry in Ephesus..." (TLSB 4:14)

2) This special gift was given to Timothy "*by prophecy*" (recall 1 Tim. 1:18; and also see 2 Tim.1:6 through the laying on of hands):

a) "Prophecies about Timothy seem to have pointed to the significant leadership role he was to have in the church" (CSB 1:18).

b) Paul reminds Timothy "by Whom he was chosen and ordained, as if he had said, 'God has chosen you' " (TLSB 1:18).

c) Here in 4:14 once again he is reminded of "the proclamation of the Word when Timothy was publicly placed in his position as pastor, comparable to the ordination and/or installation of pastors today... God's gift to Timothy was mediated through the Church and her official representatives... This visible act [when the council of elders laid their hands on Timothy] signaled Timothy's placement in the Office of the Holy Ministry, showing that his gift is to be used publicly on behalf of the congregation." (TLSB 4:14)

3) "While all believers have the spiritual aptitude to comprehend the Word of God for themselves (Isaiah 54:13; John 6:45; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 John 2:20-27), only those called to the pastoral office have the promise of ministerial grace to perform the work of shepherding God's people." (SG #43, p.85)

c. **vv.15-16**, (SG #44 & #45, pp.29 & 85) - Living with a purpose; perseverance in God's Word

1) v.15, "As Timothy devotes himself diligently to the study and teaching of the Word and to his ministry, he will grow spiritually. Without any special effort on Timothy's part to display this, his growth will become evident to all. People will forget that he is young and recognize and respect him for his increasing spiritual maturity." (TPB p.71)

2) vv.15-16, Pastors are Christ's chosen ministers. A pastor is a gift to the congregation where God calls him to teach the Word of God in its truth and purity. Through the ministry of the Word and prayer, the pastor shepherds and feeds the flock. He feeds them the Gospel through the means of grace, the Word and Sacrament. It is important to realize that we should not burden or discourage our pastors from this priority. Pastors need our prayers and our encouragement, and we can assist our pastors in matters that may otherwise distract or burden them. (SG #44, p.85)

3) v.16, The pastor's devotion to and perseverance in the study of God's Word strengthens his own faith, and in his preaching and teaching he also encourages, inspires, and strengthens his congregation, those who listen to their shepherd and who are blessed by his ministry in their midst. (TPB pp.70-72; SG #45, p.85)

a) A note about v.16b, "...by doing this you will save both yourself and those who listen to you."

"God alone saves, but the NT often depicts human beings as instruments in His saving work. (1 Cor. 9:22; James 5:20; Jude 23)" (TLSB 4:16).

* Paul's words to Timothy indicate that he and other pastors do not do this (save self and others) by their own works, **but** by looking to and leading people to the Lord Jesus in faith. "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). (TPB p.71)

** As Timothy and other pastors devote themselves with diligence to God's Word, live as an example for believers, and continue to grow and mature spiritually, it will become evident to others and will bless both pastors and their listeners, eternally. (TPB p.71-72)

b) And... Regarding "will save" we need to keep in mind that "salvation is both an event and a process. We are saved by God's grace at the time of conversion but are still being saved in the sense of being made more conformed to Christ's image (1 Cor. 1:18)" (CSB 4:16).

4) We also, as members of the flock, can also grow in faith as we listen to and devote ourselves to God's Word; then as we grow in faith, we reflect the light of Christ's grace in our lives. In this way we become witnesses for Christ to our "neighbor" and to one another and to the world. (personal note re SG #45b, p.29)

References:

TPB = "The People's Bible (Commentary): 1,2 Timothy, Titus" 2nd edition, by Armin W. Schuetze. Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, WI. 2000 (2nd ed.). (Originally published 1988)

TLSB = The Lutheran Study Bible, English Standard Version, General editor Rev. Edward A. Engelbrecht. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO. Published 2009.

CSB = Concordia Self-Study Bible, New International Version, General editor Robert G. Hoerber.
Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis MO. 1986.

SG = Study Guide used in our Women's Bible Study (by participants in-person and via Zoom):
"1 and 2 Timothy, Titus: Keeping the Faith" by A.C. Mueller. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO. 2006. (This is part of the Bible study series "God's Word for Today")

Bible translations used:

EHV = Evangelical Heritage Version

ESV = English Standard Version

NIV = New International Version