

Women's Bible Study, December 13, 2024
Lesson 7 (1 Timothy 6)
Holy Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church

Highlights & notes for 1 Timothy 6 -- Christian Stewardship

1. **Objectives and Introduction of this week's study** (SG pp.34-35, 89)

a. Through the Word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, and prayerfully as we study 1 Timothy 6 we will...

1) ...as God's stewards, be encouraged to faithfully use God's gifts of talents, possessions, and faith, living to serve others and the Lord as His witnesses in this world.

2) ...be content with the things God gives us to enjoy in this life.

3) ...learn the value of true riches.

b. Christian stewardship is one means by which we may glorify God in this world. Scripture teaches us much about how we are to use the gifts God has given us. We as Christians realize that all we have in life are gifts from Him alone, gifts "God has loaned to us for a season."

c. "In Luke 12, Jesus tells the story of a rich man who was planning on building bigger barns to take care of his growing wealth and was thinking of the time he could take life easy and enjoy his vast possessions. But what happened? God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' (Luke 12:20). Whether a Christian is poor or rich, Paul sets forth in today's session how we should regard and use the things of this world." (SG p.89)

2. **1 Timothy 6:1-2 -- The Stewardship of Service**

a. (Regarding **SG #52** p.35): Slavery in Roman times "Slavery was part of the social and economic structure within the Roman Empire. It has been estimated that within Rome itself about a third of the population were slaves, some of them cultured and well educated. That the Gospel found acceptance among slaves is seen from Paul's frequent reference to them in his letters. Paul wrote a letter to Philemon, whose runaway slave had become a Christian. He bade Philemon to receive Onesimus as a brother in Christ." (TPB p.88)

1) "Repeatedly, Paul expressed the thought that 'there is neither...slave nor free,' that we 'are all one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3:28)." (TPB p.88)

2) "Paul held no brief for slavery. Earlier in this letter he had listed 'slave traders' with 'adulterers and perverts...liars and perjurers and 'whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine' (1:10)." (TPB p.88)

3) "Paul also did not inaugurate a crusade simply to abolish slavery in the Roman Empire or in the world, desirable as that might have been. Rather, he shows how the Gospel will have its effect on Christians as they live in the slave and master relationship." (TPB p.88)

4) "Over time, Christian teaching of brotherhood tended to undermine Roman slavery." (TLSB 6:1)

b. (Regarding **SG #53** p.35): "Paul reminds Christian slaves that they must be on their guard not to turn their masters against the Gospel by unfaithfulness or ungodly conduct. Instead, they should by an exemplary life try to win them for Christ." (SG p.34) Likewise today, consider how Christians might turn others against the Gospel (either at work or with those who are in authority over them, or in society in general). Also, in the same way, how can Christians try to win others for Christ?

1) "When a slave is a Christian, his conduct toward his heathen master brings honor or shame on Christ and the Gospel. If the slave shows no respect, Christ will as a result be blasphemed among the heathen. If slaves have believing masters, that is all the more reason not for disrespect..." (TPB p.89)

2) In his letter to the Ephesians Paul has more to say... concerning masters, "namely that Christian masters are to 'treat your slaves in the same way' (Ephesians 6:9), that is, with respect and love, reflecting faith in Christ." (TPB p.89)

3) "Thus the Gospel as it converts sinners can profoundly affect and change undesirable customs and practices that may be present in a sinful world." (TPB p.89) [See again "a.4" above.]

c. (Regarding **SG #54**, p.35): *What is meant by stewardship of time and talents?*

1) "The discussion of stewardship is often led along the lines of Law rather than Gospel....However, when stewardship is thought of and practiced in view of the Gospel, it concerns itself with loving and serving [servanthood] and benefiting others. Here we do not look for earthly gains, profits, or increase for ourselves, believing if we get something out of an act or deed then it was good stewardship. Rather, we give away

our lives, our goods, and all gain in this world, because God has in Christ secured for us eternal glory and riches in His kingdom. Thus, we are free to live in love." (SG #54, p.91)

2) Recall that Christ, the Son of God, humbled Himself and became a slave (Philippians 2:6--8), to perform the work of salvation for ungrateful people, enduring the cross, shame, indignity, and death... for our sake. (SG.#52, p.90).

3. **1 Timothy 6:3-5** -- The Stewardship of God's Word (Handling it rightly in its truth and purity, vs. "false teachings." Distorting the Word of God is poor stewardship of Scripture.)

a. **v.3** - *false doctrines* (different doctrines, EHV, ESV) -- This is the third time Paul addresses this serious problem in 1 Timothy (see also 1:3-11 and 4:1-16).

1) False doctrine/teaching can be easily recognized as it "does not agree to the *sound instruction* [sound words, EHV, ESV] *of our Lord Jesus Christ* and to godly teaching." What did Jesus teach, that so often false teachings contradict?

* He alone is the way to the Father (John 14:6)

** And that way is pure grace: "It is by grace you have been saved" (Ephesians 2:8)

2) False doctrines and teachings always add something else that we must do to gain God's favor.

i) "If you keep the commandments..."

ii) "If you accept Jesus into your life..."

iii) "If you abstain from [foods, etc]..."

iv) "if you do your best..."

v) "if you believe..." (making faith a contributing work on our part to)

"Such false conditions are not *"sound,"* healthy teaching that can heal the troubled heart. [That comes only through Christ Jesus.] It is not *"godly teaching"* that leads to true godliness in living." [which comes through the Spirit's work in us.] (TPB, pp.90-91)

b. **v.4** - False teachers are "*conceited*." False teachers claim they know more than the Lord, preferring to follow their own ideas, placing self above God's word. "False teaching creates dissension and division in the church and among Christians. How different this is from the peace, love, joy, comfort, and hope that come through Jesus' sound teaching." (TPB, p.91)

c. **v.5a** - People "*who have been robbed of the truth*" ("who have lost hold of the truth" EHV; "deprived of the truth" ESV). They had once known the truth, but they had been led into error. (CSB, 6:5)

d. **v.5b** - False teachers are also prone to use their false "*godliness*" as "*a means to financial gain*."

(Interestingly some text translations, such as EHV & KJV, include "Separate yourself from such people" (EHV). "From such withdraw thyself" (KJV). It becomes more and more difficult to avoid such false teachings in this century, with so many misleading and falsely teaching using media (TV, podcasts, Internet, social media), and bookstores everywhere. As to the financial gain... see next passage, where Paul continues with a warning about the love of money. (TPB, p.92)

4. **1 Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19** -- **The Stewardship of Possessions (SG #55 & 56, p.36)**

a. **v.6** - *Contentment* is "a state of being and an attitude that enables the Christian to live with faith in Christ, impervious to the influence of external circumstances." (TLSB 6:6)

* "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation." (Philippians 4:12)

b. **v.7** - "This universal and timeless truth [in verse 7] is recognized by those possessing godliness with contentment (v.6), but ignored by those who are ambitious only for earthly gain (v.5)." (TLSB 6:7)

* "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised." (Job 1:21)

** "Cease to pursue those things which it is misery to attain.... Will it be more prudent to yield them up for love of Christ than to have them taken away by death?" (SLSB, pp. 207-208, ["Some Letters of St. Bernard, Abbot of Clairvoux.'], 1904. As quoted TLSB 6:7)

c. **v.8** - *Food and clothing* - These are necessities of life that come from God. (Review Luther's explanation of the First Article of the Apostle's Creed... This we truly believe and trust Him, for 'this is most certainly true.') (TLSB 6:8)

* "Those who seek the LORD lack no good thing." (Psalm 34:10)

** The Lord Jesus says: "So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matthew 6:31-33).
What greater gain is there than to have this promise of the Lord? (TPB pp.93-94)

d. **vv.9-10** - The dangers of desiring earthly riches: Falling into temptation and into a trap, which can lead to destruction (could include both physical and spiritual destruction); some wander from the faith (their departure does not happen instantaneously), and some "pierce themselves," self-inflicted suffering. (TLSB)

* "One who is content always has enough. ...Discontent, however, is one of the greatest vices today. It is a foolish, dangerous, and sinful attitude of the heart." (SG #55, p.91)

* "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation." (Philippians 4:12)

e. **Summary:** "Rather than being content with what we have, we by nature covet the things we do not have. Those who covet often see money as a wonderful solution to all of life's problems. But those who love money are in grave danger; they risk losing their faith in Christ. Our Savior has blessed us with the riches of His priceless salvation. Nothing can separate us from His love. As He tenderly cares for us through His Word of promise, we are able to enjoy lives of godliness with contentment. All that we can take with us when we leave this world is the life and immortality that Jesus has given us through faith -- and that is more than enough! 'Give us grace, dear Lord, rightly to regard the wealth we call our own, that it might not be a curse in our lives but a blessing. Amen.'" (TLSB 6:2-10)

f. **vv.17-19** - Riches and all other gifts from God's hand are to be received for our enjoyment with thanksgiving (also recall 1 Tim. 4:4). Those who are rich are not to be prideful, but as Christians we are to continually place all our hope on God. (v.17). Even the poorest Christians can be "rich" in service, in good works. (v.18). Those who enjoy earthly riches should especially endeavor to be "rich" in this noble way, which flows from faith in Christ. Good works that always accompany faith are treasured by the Lord Jesus (Matthew 25:34-40). (Notes consolidated from TLSB, vv.17-19)

5. **1 Timothy 6:11-16** -- The Stewardship of Faith

a. **v.11** - Contrasting Timothy with the lovers of money who wander from the faith in v.10. Timothy was a unique man of God, but the words that follow apply to every man and woman of God through faith in Christ. (TLSB 6:11)

1) "man of God" - While Paul refers to Timothy as a pastor (and to all pastors called to God's special service), the term "man of God" that Paul uses here (and in 2 Timothy 3:17) applies to "anyone who belongs to God, whom God thoroughly equips for every good work by means of His Word." Just as Peter also refers to Christians as "a people belonging to God" (1 Peter 2:9). (TPB p.95)

2) "flee from all this" - In context, referencing back to the verses before this, "the desire to be rich and the temptations to which this leads, the love of money and all the evils associated with it." (TPB p.95)

3) "pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance (steadfastness) and gentleness" - all fruit of the Spirit, coming from God through Christ's work alone in us. (Oh, the importance of His means of grace for us!) "The believer's chief concern should be to cling to the Savior. Instead of reaching after worldly riches, he or she should guard against the sin of covetousness and seek the spiritual riches that God gives us in His Word." (SG #57, p.92)

b. **v.12** (**SG #57**, pp.37,92) - "Fight the good fight of faith" - We are engaged in an ongoing contest in which sound doctrine is advanced against the forces of darkness and evil. (TLSB 6:12)

1) In 1 Timothy 1:18, Paul spoke of this fight in terms of a battle in war. Here he uses a term referring to an athletic contest, as in a race. There's really no difference, the point is the same. The struggle is with the world, the devil, and our sinful flesh. (TPB p.96)

2) "Because of our sinful flesh, this is not easy.... We must fight the enemies of our souls and defend our faith, for Satan seeks to destroy it (1 Peter 5:8-9)" (SG #57, p.92).

3) This is the good fight of FAITH... faith received from God the Holy Spirit...

* "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 15:57) (Also, see the struggle, the war against the flesh Paul describes in Romans 7:18-25, and ends on this same victorious note.)

**This call to fight the good fight of faith is, however, not a call to muster our own strength, to trust in our own powers. Relying on himself, Peter soon fell into shameful denial of his Lord. To the Ephesians, Paul wrote how they may take their "stand against the devil's schemes" They are to "put on the full armor of God," all the weapons God gives for this fight (listed in Ephesians 6:11-17). He gives us His own sword, the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God (TPB p. 97)... Thus, our Bible study here!!

c. **v.12 (SG #58, pp.37,92)** "Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called" - God's gift of eternal life is not a prize that we receive at the conclusion of the contest but a prize that we receive and retain even in this present life of faith. It is God who gives this to us through Christ, by His active power alone in which this call of faith comes to us through the means of grace of Word and Baptism. (TLSB 6:12)

1) "to which you were called" - "God brought Timothy to faith in the Lord Jesus by calling, inviting him through the Gospel to receive eternal life. Through faith this gift is received, faith that the Spirit works in the sinner's heart by the Gospel's call." (TPB p.97)

2) "when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses" - This seems to refer to the time of Timothy's baptism, that appears to have taken place before many witnesses, who heard his "good" (sound doctrinal) confession of faith, the faith the Lord had worked in Timothy's heart. (TPB p.97)

* "Eventually, these baptismal confessions grew into what we know as the Apostles' Creed." (TPB pp.97-98)

** Note: At the time of their installation those who serve as pastors and teachers in our churches also make a "good confession" in the presence of many witnesses. They confess and promise to teach only the inspired, inerrant Holy Scriptures. And their ministry, teaching, and living is to be an ongoing "good confession" made in the presence of many witnesses, the people whom they serve. (TPB, p.98)

*** A note about the confession we made on the day of our Confirmation: "Let us often think of the confession of faith we made when we were baptized and confirmed. Through the Gospel, the Holy Spirit enables us to make this confession and live up to it. [In our class together on Friday, we will briefly review our confession at Confirmation.] The Word makes us spiritually alive and constantly sustains the new life of faith." (SG #58, p.92)

d. **vv.13-16** - In these verses Paul makes his appeal through both Father and Son (there are no greater witnesses! [TPB, p.98]), and Paul magnifies their attributes. (TLSB 6:13-16). Paul instructs Timothy and all of us to remain faithful in confessing (with our words and actions) the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ (as so beautifully outlined, as we recall, in 1 Tim. 3:16!!!), remaining faithful and proclaiming the truth of salvation in Christ Jesus until He returns.

1) **v.13** - We are to confess Christ before others, just as He confessed the truth of His divine identity before Pilate (which each of the 4 Gospels tell us [Matthew 27:11, Mark 15:2, Luke 23:3, John 18:36-37]). Recall that Jesus' testimony concerning His identity was the basis for His crucifixion. His testimony included not only His words, but also what He did for us with His very life (His suffering, crucifixion, death and burial, and His resurrection and ascension.). (SG #58, p. 92; TLSB 6:13, TPB pp.98-99)

2) **v.14** - *"to keep this command without spot or fault"* - The command we are to keep is the whole doctrine of salvation: the Gospel, and we are called to keep this faith. (SG #58, p.92) We do so not in our own strength or by any merit or worthiness of our own, but through the Holy Spirit who works in us the very faithfulness that this command calls for (TPB, p.99), and in the spotless righteousness of our Savior given to us by His grace alone.

3) **vv.15-16** - For the second time in this epistle, Paul sounds forth with a glorious doxology. The first time was when he wrote about Jesus' first coming to save sinners (in which Paul said that he was chief of sinners). (1 Timothy 1:15-17). Now here in 1 Tim 6:15-16, as Paul contemplates Christ's second coming, he breaks forth in another doxology that describes the glorious God who determines the appointed time for "the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." And as we reflect on who our God is and what He has done for us, we cannot but say with Paul, "To Him be honor and power forever! Amen." (TPB, p.100-101)

6. **1 Timothy 6:20-21** -- Conclusion: Guard Your Trust (TPB, pp.105-106)

a. This is the conclusion of Paul's letter to Timothy. Paul concludes as he began, with a call to preserve God's truth, and with a warning against false teachings. Paul warns to not engage with false teachers, but to "turn away" from them (TPB, p.105). This final warning concerns the grave effects of false teaching... causing some to wander from the faith. (TLSB, 6:21). This is serious, and frightening to see the eternal danger of such false teachings.

b. "Grace be to you." - A typical blessing as Paul closes his letter.

1) But there's nothing at all typical about *Grace*. It is Paul's prayer that all receive the Lord's abundant Grace through the teaching of God's Word in its truth and purity.

2) The "*you*" in this closing is plural in the original Greek, showing that Paul expected Timothy to share this letter with the believers in Ephesus. It reaches down through the ages also to us. What a fitting conclusion! (TLSB 6:21, TPB p.106).

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")

"Luther's Catechism: The Small Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther" (Anniversary Edition). Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, WI. 2017.

SLSB = "Some Letters of St. Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux" (pp. 207-208, quoted in TLSB 1 Tim. 6:7). Vol. 1, "The Complete Works of S. Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux." Eales, Samuel J., trans. and ed. London: John Hodges, 1904.

Bible translations used:

EHV = Evangelical Heritage Version

ESV = English Standard Version

NIV = New International Version