



LESSON SIX

A Man of God

Scripture Reading:

1 TIMOTHY 6

- 6:1 As many as are slaves under the yoke should regard their own masters as worthy of all honour, lest the name of God and our teaching be blasphemed.
- 6:2 And those who have believing masters should not despise *them*, because they are brothers; but rather they should serve *them*, because those who recompense *them* for the kindly service *received* are believers and beloved. These things teach and exhort.
- 6:3 If anyone teaches different things and does not consent to healthy words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the teaching which is according to godliness,
- 6:4 He is blinded with pride, understanding nothing, but is diseased with questionings and contentions of words, out of which come envy, strife, slanders, evil suspicions,
- 6:5 Perpetual wranglings of men corrupted in mind and deprived of the truth, supposing godliness to be a *means of* gain.
- 6:6 But godliness with contentment is great gain;
- 6:7 For we have brought nothing into the world, because neither can we carry anything out.
- 6:8 But having food and covering, with these we will be content.
- 6:9 But those who intend to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge men into destruction and ruin.
- 6:10 For the love of money is a root of all evils, *because of* which some, aspiring after *money*, have been led away from the faith and pierced themselves through with many pains.
- 6:11 But you, O man of God, flee these things, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, meekness.
- 6:12 Fight the good fight of the faith; lay hold on the eternal life, to which you were called and have confessed the good confession before many witnesses.
- 6:13 I charge you before God, who preserves all things in life, and Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate,
- 6:14 To keep the commandment spotless, without reproach, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,
- 6:15 Which in its own times the blessed and only Sovereign will show, the King of those who reign as kings and Lord of those who rule as lords,
- 6:16 Who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen nor can see, to whom be honour and eternal might. Amen.
- 6:17 Charge those who are rich in the present age not to be high-minded, nor to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches but on God, who affords us all things richly for *our* enjoyment;
- 6:18 To do good, to be rich in good works, to be ready to distribute, to be ones willing to share;
- 6:19 Laying away for themselves a good foundation as a treasure for the future, that they may lay hold on that which is really life.
- 6:20 O Timothy, guard the deposit, turning away from profane, vain babblings and oppositions from what is falsely called knowledge,

6:21 *Because of* which some, professing *this*, have misaimed regarding the faith. Grace be with you.

QUESTIONS:

SECTION 1:

1. What does it mean to teach differently? What does 'healthy teaching' do to people?
2. What causes people to teach differently?
3. What does the desire to be rich and love of money do to man?

SECTION 2:

1. Who is a man of God?
2. What are the things which we should pursue, what are some of the things which many Christians may pursue today which the Apostle Paul did *not* encourage Timothy to pursue?
3. What does it mean to fight for the faith?

SECTION 3:

1. How can we fight the good fight in the Christian life and ministry?
2. How should we live our human life?
3. Why does Paul in verse 13 describe God as the one who gives life to all things (or preserves all things in life)?

SECTION 4:

1. According to verse 11 what kind of life did Paul charge Timothy to live?
2. What is it to be rich according to God's pleasure?
3. What was the deposit that was committed to Timothy?

-----[SECTION 1] -----

I. WITH SLAVES UNDER THE YOKE

Let us now consider the logical connection between 6:2 and 3 and between 6:6 and 7. In 6:1 and 2 Paul charges those who are slaves under the yoke to count their masters worthy of all honor so that “the name of God and the teaching be not blasphemed.” The word blasphemed means ill spoken of, reproached. Furthermore, Paul charges the slaves who have believing masters to serve them in a proper way. Paul concludes verse 2 with the words, “These things teach and exhort.”

II. WITH MONEY LOVERS

A. Teaching Differently

Then in verses 3 and 4 Paul goes on to say, “If anyone teaches differently and does not consent to healthy words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the teaching which is according to godliness, he is blinded with pride.” To teach differently is to teach things that differ from the apostles’ teaching centered on Christ and the church. The “healthy words” here refer to the health of life. The sound teaching of the apostles ministers healthy teaching as the supply of life to people. The words of our Lord Jesus Christ are words of life (John 6:63); hence, they are healthy words. The healthy words of the Lord are the source of the teaching according to godliness. When the Lord’s words of life are taught, particularly in certain aspects, they become the teaching according to godliness. The living words of the Lord always bring forth godliness—a life that lives Christ and expresses God in Christ.

All our teaching must be according to the healthy words of God’s economy. Even those who care for the children in the children’s meeting should teach the children in principle according to the healthy words of the Lord Jesus. This means that the children should receive teaching which is according to godliness.

B. Blinded with Pride

In 6:4 and 5 Paul says that the one who teaches differently and who does not consent to healthy words is “blinded with pride, understanding nothing, but is sick with questionings and contentions of words, out of which come envy,

strife, revilings, evil suspicions, perpetual wranglings of men corrupted in mind and deprived of the truth, supposing godliness to be a means of gain.” Teachings differing from the healthy words of the Lord always issue from people’s pride with self-conceit which blinds them. Paul and his co-workers taught in a certain way. But some who were blinded with pride deliberately taught differently. To them, it was humiliating to teach the same as others.

In verse 4 Paul uses the expression “sick with questionings.” To question and contend about words is a sickness. “Sick” here is in contrast to “healthy” in verse 3.

The word revilings in 6:4 literally means blasphemies. As in Colossians 3:8, it refers here to revilings, railings toward man, not blasphemies toward God.

We have seen that in verse 5 Paul speaks of “perpetual wranglings of men corrupted in mind and deprived of the truth, supposing godliness to be a means of gain.” The Greek for “perpetual wranglings” can also be rendered “incessant quarrels.” These wranglings are carried on by men corrupted and depraved in mind and deprived, bereft, destitute, of the truth. The Greek word for “deprived” implies that these are ones who once possessed the truth, but now it has been put away from them. Hence, they are destitute of the truth.

In verse 5 Paul refers to those who suppose “godliness to be a means of gain.” They make godliness a way of gain—material profit, a gain-making trade. The desire for material gain is another reason certain ones teach differently. Thus, because of pride and the desire for profit, for riches, some today are teaching differently. Pride is related to wanting a name and a good reputation, and gain is related to money and material profit.

C. Godliness with Contentment

In verse 6 Paul says, “But godliness with contentment is great gain.” Concerning the expression “contentment,” Vincent says, “An inward self-sufficiency, as opposed to the lack or the desire of outward things. It was a favourite Stoic word.” The expression “great gain” means great means of gain. It mainly denotes the blessings

in this age—godliness plus self-sufficiency and the ability to be free from greediness and the cares of this age.

Paul's mention of gain in verses 5 and 6 brings him to the matter of dealing with money lovers in verses 7 through 10. For this reason, he uses the conjunction "for" to join verses 6 and 7.

In 6:7 Paul goes on to say, "For we have brought nothing into the world; it is evident that neither can we carry anything out." This has been wisely ordained by God that we may trust in Him for our needs and live by Him in order to express Him without preoccupation or distraction.

Verse 8 continues, "But having food and covering, with these we shall be satisfied." Although the word covering refers to clothing, it may include dwelling. To be satisfied is to have sufficient provision for our needs.

D. The Desire to Be Rich

In verse 9 Paul says, "But those who resolve to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge men into ruin and destruction." The resolve mentioned here is related to the strong desire to be rich. This is the love of riches, not the possession of them, that leads the avaricious into temptation. Some are actually rich; others have only a strong desire for riches. This evil desire ruins and destroys them. Ruin here implies destruction, and destruction implies perdition, both temporal and eternal. Those who resolve to be rich fall into a snare, as into a net, and also into many foolish and harmful lustful desires, which cause men to drown or sink into ruin and destruction.

In verse 10 Paul concludes, "For the love of money is a root of all evils, which some having aspired after have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows." Paul says that the love of money is a root of all evils. He does not say that it is the only root. The Greek word rendered aspired after means craved for, longed for. Those with this craving have wandered away from the faith; they have been led astray from the contents of our belief, from the truth of God's New Testament economy.

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A MAN OF GOD

In 1:4 we read of God's dispensation, and in 6:11 Paul uses the expression "man of God." Hence, this

book begins with God's dispensation and concludes with the charge to a man of God. God's desire is to produce men of God by dispensing Himself into those who believe in Christ. A man of God is one who partakes of God's life and nature (John 1:13; 2 Pet. 1:4) and thus becomes one with Him in His life and nature (1 Cor. 6:17) and thereby expresses Him. This corresponds to the mystery of godliness, which is God manifest in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16).

FLEEING AND PURSUING

First Timothy 6:11 says, "But you, O man of God, flee these things, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, meekness." On the one hand, Paul charges Timothy to flee certain things and, on the other hand, to pursue certain other things. Timothy must flee the negative things previously mentioned in this Epistle. He should pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and meekness. It is significant that Paul does not tell Timothy to pursue power, gifts, miracles, and theological training. Furthermore, as we shall see, in verse 12 Paul does not charge him to fight for his theology or to lay hold on the doctrinal knowledge he has accumulated. However, many Christians today pursue power, fight for doctrines, and lay hold on theological knowledge, and they charge the younger generation to do the same. They also promote natural gifts, talents, and abilities. But in 1 Timothy very little is said of man's ability. Concerning the eldership, Paul tells Timothy that an elder should be apt to teach. This refers to the ability to instruct others like a parent helping a child with homework. Paul's emphasis in 1 Timothy definitely is not on power, gifts, or natural ability.

Paul charges Timothy to pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and meekness. Righteousness is a matter of being right with people before God according to God's righteous and strict requirements. If we would be those who carry out God's dispensation for the building up of local churches as the expression of Christ, we must pursue righteousness. We must seek to be right with God and man.

In the second place, we should pursue godliness, the expression of God. In 4:7 Paul told Timothy to exercise himself unto godliness. A man of God

should not pursue power or miraculous gifts. Instead, he should pursue righteousness and godliness; he should seek to be right with God and man in order to be a living expression of God in every way. This is to live a daily life which manifests God.

In verse 11 Paul lists faith after godliness. Faith is to believe in God and His word and to trust in Him and His word. As we have pointed out, faith involves an organic union by contacting God through the Word and in the Spirit. Faith, therefore, denotes a living union. Instead of pursuing a great work, we should pursue the organic union with the Triune God.

In 6:11 Paul goes on to mention love. We should be those who love others by the love of God (1 John 4:7-8, 19-21).

Paul also speaks of endurance and meekness. We should pursue endurance, the ability to bear sufferings and persecutions, and also meekness, which is a proper attitude in facing opposition. It is certain that if we live a godly life, we shall suffer. The world opposes God. If we live God and also live out God, expressing Him, we shall be opposed and attacked by the godless world. Thus, we should pursue endurance, and we should also pursue meekness.

FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT OF THE FAITH

In verse 12 Paul continues his charge: "Fight the good fight of the faith." To fight for the faith means to fight for God's New Testament economy. In particular, it is to fight for Christ as the embodiment of God and for the church as the Body of Christ.

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LAYING HOLD ON ETERNAL LIFE

In verse 12 Paul also says, "Lay hold on the eternal life to which you were called and have confessed the good confession before many witnesses." The eternal life here is the divine life, the uncreated life of God, which is eternal. Eternal denotes the nature more than the time element of the divine life. To fight the good fight of the faith in the Christian life, especially in the Christian ministry, we need to lay hold on this divine life and not trust in our human life. Hence, in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, the eternal life is stressed again and again (1 Tim. 1:16;

6:19; 2 Tim. 1:1, 10; Titus 1:2; 3:7). To bring forth God's dispensation concerning the church in 1 Timothy, to confront the process of the church's decline in 2 Timothy, and to maintain good order in the church life in Titus, this life is a prerequisite.

We have been called to the eternal life of God. We were born of the human natural life, but we were reborn of the divine eternal life when we were called by God in Christ.

The words "confessed the good confession before many witnesses" may refer to Timothy's confession of the faith at his baptism. At that time Timothy probably confessed a good confession of the eternal life before many witnesses, as we all should do, believing and being assured that he had received the life of God.

Verses 11 and 12 are a marvelous summary of nearly the whole New Testament. A man of God should pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and meekness; he should fight for God's New Testament economy and lay hold on eternal life. All these matters are essential aspects of the New Testament. In contrast, the beasts in Revelation 13 and the lake of fire in Revelation 20 cannot compare with these essential aspects. We today must fight the good fight of the faith. This means that we must fight for Christ as the embodiment of God and for the church as the Body of Christ. Furthermore, we must not merely fight objectively, but fight subjectively by laying hold on eternal life. We should not do anything apart from this life. We should speak to our husband or wife and to our children not by the natural life, but by the eternal life. Even in the matter of buying a pair of shoes, we should live according to the eternal life to which we have been called. As today's Timothy, we need to lay hold on eternal life.

In verse 12 Paul specifically says that we have been called to eternal life. No other book in the New Testament speaks of "the eternal life to which you were called." This is a particular characteristic of 1 Timothy. Do you realize that you have been called to eternal life? This eternal life does not mainly refer to blessings in the future. To be called to eternal life does not mean that we have been called to enjoy blessings in heaven. Eternal life should be our life today, a life for our present daily living. By our first birth, the physical birth, we received the Adamic life. But because we have been called to eternal life, we should no longer live the Adamic life, the natural life. Yes, we must be truly human, even Jesusly human, but not in our natural life. On

the contrary, we need to live a human life by the eternal life. We have been called to this life, and now we need to live it.

I am deeply burdened concerning this matter of being called to the eternal life. I am especially concerned for those dear saints who have been distracted from the eternal life to which we have been called and who have become preoccupied with other things. We have been called uniquely to eternal life. This life, the divine life, is actually the Triune God Himself. Having been called to eternal life, we now should lay hold on this life, live this life, and have our whole being according to this life.

THE CHARGE TO A MAN OF GOD

In verse 13 Paul goes on to say, “I charge you before God, Who gives life to all things, and Christ Jesus, Who witnessed before Pontius Pilate the good confession.” Here Paul describes God as the One who gives life to all things. This indicates that we must focus our attention on life. Every aspect of our Christian walk must be something to which God can give life.

Paul’s concept in verse 13 is that God gives life and that when Christ was on earth, He lived the eternal life. He lived by the very God who gives life to all things. Then at the end of His journey on earth, He stood before Pontius Pilate and made a good confession. The Lord’s confession before Pilate was related to His living by the divine life. Now we can understand why Paul charges Timothy before God and before Christ Jesus. He charges Timothy before God because God gives life to all things, and he charges him before Christ Jesus because He lived the eternal life and confessed it before Pontius Pilate. Therefore, Paul indicates that Timothy must be such a person; that is, he must be a man of God. Christ was truly a man of God, living righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and meekness. Now Paul charges Timothy to be the same kind of person, a man of God living by the divine life.

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In verse 14 Paul continues, “That you keep the commandment spotless, without reproach, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The commandment must refer to the charge in verses 11 and 12. The word appearing refers to the Lord’s second coming. Paul charges Timothy to live the life of a man of God until the coming of the Lord Jesus. Then the Lord could speak well of Timothy

as one who lived on earth as the continuation of Himself. I hope that at the time of the Lord’s appearing, He will be able to say to us, “Faithful child, you have been part of My continuation. I lived on earth as a man of God. You were My continuation because you also lived the life of a man of God. You did not live by the natural life, but you lived by the eternal life.”

In verses 15 and 16 Paul goes on to say, “Which in its own times He will show, the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of those who reign as kings and Lord of those who rule as lords, Who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, Whom no man has seen nor can see, to Whom be honour and eternal might. Amen.” The relative pronoun “which” refers to “appearing” in verse 14. The personal pronoun “He” in verse 15 refers to God the Father, according to Acts 1:7. Although the Father dwells in unapproachable light, we not only can approach Him in Christ, but we also can have fellowship with Him. We can approach the Father because we are no longer in darkness. He is in the light, and we are in the light also (1 John 1:5, 7).

A CHARGE TO THE RICH

In a very real sense, 1 Timothy concludes with 6:16. However, in verses 17 through 19 Paul gives an additional charge to the rich. Verse 17 says, “Charge those who are rich in the present age not to be high-minded, nor to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God Who affords us all things richly for our enjoyment.” This word may be regarded as a supplement to 6:7-10.

The rich are often a source of trouble to the church. However, many Christian leaders today like to have rich people in their congregations. But we should not have any preference for the rich. The poor may burden the church somewhat, but they do not damage the church or ruin it. Rich people damage God’s economy much more than do the poor. The New Testament even says that those who are poor, either spiritually or materially, are blessed (Matt. 5:3; Luke 6:20). Because Paul deals with God’s dispensation concerning the church, he cannot avoid speaking about the problems of rich people. He charges them not to be high-minded, nor to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches.

In their fund-raising activities, many Christian leaders give glory to those rich people who donate large sums of money. But they often neglect those who give only a small amount. The leading ones in the churches and the co-workers should not have

this appreciation of rich people. Brother Nee even had the practice of not spending time with the wealthy. He preferred to be invited to the home of a poor brother. In this matter Brother Nee's attitude no doubt was right.

Verses 18 and 19 continue, "To do good, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying away for themselves as a treasure a good foundation for the future, that they may lay hold on that which is really life." Doing good here refers to the ready distribution of material things to the needy and the willing communication with such needs. To be rich in good works is to be rich according to God's pleasure (Eph. 2:10), not only in material things. The expression "a good foundation for the future" refers to the next age (compared with the present age in verse 17), the kingdom age, when the overcoming saints will enjoy the Lord's reward. For this we all need to lay a good foundation in the present age as a treasure for us to enjoy in the future. Those who are rich in this age should use their riches in such a way that they lay away as a treasure a good foundation for the future.

In verse 19 Paul charges Timothy to encourage the rich to "lay hold on that which is really life." This life is the eternal life referred to in verse 12. Material riches are for the human natural life in this age, which is temporal and hence not real. If we do good with material things, we accomplish something for the real life, laying away a treasure for our enjoyment in the eternal life in the next age. This requires us to lay hold on God's eternal life, which is the real life. Otherwise, we shall lay hold on our human natural life in laying away a treasure of material riches for a life in this age, a life that is not real. We should care for the eternal life rather than for the natural life.

Both verse 12 and verse 19 stress the eternal life of God. This indicates that the divine life is the vital and crucial factor in our Christian life.

GUARDING THE DEPOSIT

Verses 20 and 21 say, "O Timothy, guard the deposit, turning away from profane, vain babblings and oppositions of what is falsely called knowledge, which some professing have misaimed concerning the faith." The deposit was that which was committed to Timothy and entrusted to him: the healthy words which he received from Paul not only for himself, but also for others. By "what is falsely called knowledge" Paul means the

teachings of the false teachers, teachings which were called knowledge (probably referring to Gnostic knowledge). This false knowledge replaced the genuine knowledge of the healthy word of God which was entrusted to Timothy. Those who profess what is falsely called knowledge have misaimed concerning the faith. Concerning the objective contents of our belief, they have missed the mark, as in shooting. They have misaimed concerning God's New Testament economy. After giving this further word, Paul concludes by saying, "Grace be with you."