



Stewardship Primer 2

The Foundation for Christian Stewardship

1 Corinthians 4:2

"Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy."

Christian stewardship is founded upon the Word of God. "The Word of God," writes T. A. Kantonen in *A Theology for Christian Stewardship*, "in its derivative sense is the life-changing message of God's redeeming activity in Christ, the gospel...The gospel does more than tell 'the old, old story of Jesus and his love.' It is the means by which Jesus himself confronts men. It does not point beyond itself to something high and holy toward which we are to strive. It brings God in his holiness and love to us. It is God's Word not because it speaks about God but because in it God speaks. Just as in the creation of the world God spoke and the world began, so today God speaks in the word of this gospel and new life is created in human hearts" (page 13).

Titus 2:11-15 gives a wonderful summary of the foundation for Christian stewardship. "**11** For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, **12** training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, **13** waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, **14** who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. **15** Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

Seminary Professor Rev. Francis Rossow writes about this text in *Lectionary Preaching Resources*, "In the verses before and after our text, Paul recommends a number of specific virtues. Hence it should not surprise us to find as strong a sanctification emphasis in our text as there is a justification emphasis. In fact, throughout the text Paul insists that Christ came to our world for two reasons: (1) to save us and (2) to make us good people...Where God justifies, He also sanctifies. Where faith is, there are also good works" (page 26).

Christian stewardship begins with the grace of God. C. F. Walther writes in a sermon on this text, "Christ has appeared to pay man's debt of sin, and for that reason, man is indeed blessed. The Lord of all lords has become the servant of all servants. God had to humble Himself so deeply to pay our debt. He began to pay it while lying in deepest misery in the manger, and He did not stop paying it until, forsaken by God, He was about to breathe His last upon the cross. Then and only then, after having paid the very last cent of our debt, could He cry out triumphantly, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). The God who became man had then effected the pardon of sinful men and their reconciliation with God, who opened the gates of heaven to them once again" (page 77, *God Grant It*).

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Stewardship Primer: A Guide for the Christian Congregation

This grace motivates the Christian to live a godly life for the one who has redeemed us. Everything the Christian is and everything the Christian does is the result of God's grace in Christ.

Luther comments on this Christian life in a sermon on this text (Titus 2) taken from volume VI:113-141 of *The Sermons of Martin Luther* published by Baker Book House. In that sermon he explains what it means to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives.

First St. Paul mentions **self-control**. This word indicates what should be the nature of man's conduct toward himself in every area of life. This includes eating, drinking, sleeping, dress, speech, etc.

Paul also says we should be **upright** in our lives. "Here," says Luther, "Paul gives a hint of how we should conduct ourselves toward our neighbor—righteously. We owe him that righteousness which consists in doing to him as we would have him do to us; in granting to him all we would have him grant us. We are to do our neighbor no bodily harm, no injury to his wife, children, friends, possessions, honor or anything of his. Rather we are obligated, wherever we see he needs our assistance, to aid him, to stand by him, at the risk of our bodies, our property, our honor and everything that is ours.

We are also to live **godly** lives. Luther writes, "Here we are reminded of how to conduct ourselves toward God...Godly living consists in trusting God, in relying on his grace alone, regarding no work not wrought in us by him, through grace. If we are godly, we will recognize, honor, adore, praise and love God. Briefly in two words, to live godly is to fear and trust God."

The Lutheran distinction between the Law and the Gospel is necessary for the proper understanding of Christian stewardship. *Luther's Small Catechism* states, "In the Law God commands good works of thought, word, and deed and condemns and punishes sin....In the Gospel, the good news of our salvation in Jesus Christ, God gives forgiveness, faith, life, and the power to please Him with good works" (page 52).

It is the Gospel that motivates and empowers the Christian steward. It is the Law which instructs the Christian steward.

Reflection:

Why is Titus 2:11-15 a good foundational text for Christian stewardship?

How does the Gospel motivate the Christian steward?

How does the Law instruct the Christian steward?

Digging Deeper:

Read *A Theology for Christian Stewardship* by T. A. Kantonen. Find it at faithaflame.lcms.org

Read *The Genius of Luther's Theology* by Robert Kolb and Charles P. Arand.



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