

1TM 6:11-16

INTRODUCTION:

Last month I preached on the topic of “**Gambling**” and the dangers of loving money, and I used a passage from **1 Timothy 6:7-11**.

- Last June, I was asked to speak at a Preacher’s Retreat down at Little Egypt Bible Camp and I was asked to bring a message with the title, “**A Charge to the Rich**” and it was to be based upon **1 Timothy 6:17-19**.
- I modified that sermon and preached it here the following Sunday morning on June 17th, 2009.
- Both of these passages addressed the topic of materialism, worldliness, and a desire for wealth.
- Well, right in between these two passages, there are a few verses that don’t seem to have anything to do with money or the love of it.
- It is a passage that gives us one of the most vivid pictures of God that is found in the entire Bible.
- I am certain that the Apostle Paul, when he wrote this to Timothy, was trying to give the young preacher a better perspective about what is important in life.

This morning, I would like for us to deeply explore these verses in between (particularly **1 Timothy 6:11-16**) and we study these verses this morning, I would like us to realize the incredible importance of understanding God better.

- As we think about the daily decisions we make—both the good and the bad—I think you might agree with me that if we had a more complete understanding of God’s nature, some of our decisions might have been quite different.
- As Paul was encouraging Timothy to stay faithful to his confession, he thought it best to describe God in a way that would help Timothy prioritize the decisions that he makes.
- As we read **1 Timothy 6:11-16**, it is my prayer that each of us will allow ourselves to be influenced for good as we consider the nature of God.

11 But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.

12 Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

13 I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate,

14 that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 which He will bring about at the proper time—He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

16 who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen.

As we look back over these verses, especially **verses 15-16**, we find that God is Sovereign, Immortal, Holy, Invisible, and worthy of our worship.

I. In **verse 15**, we find that God is described as the “**BLESSED AND ONLY SOVEREIGN.**”

As far as I can tell, God is called the “*blessed*” God only here and in one other place in the Bible—in **1 Timothy 1:11**, where Paul referred to the “*glorious gospel of the blessed God.*”

- What does it mean to be blessed?
- The commentaries tell us that blessed refers to **“the quality of being happy.”**
- Certainly, then, we need to understand that God is a happy God.
- He is happy because of who He is. He is perfect and infinite in all of his attributes.
- He doesn’t need anyone to make Him happy.
- Thankfully, this great happiness allows God to bless his creatures and make them happy as well.

If God is the **“blessed Sovereign,”** then certainly we are in good hands as his mission is to make us also happy throughout all eternity.

- God’s sovereignty is magnified by Paul, I believe, with the statement in **verse 15** that He is the **“only Sovereign.”**
- The American Heritage Dictionary describes sovereignty as one with supreme authority.
- Based on **verse 15**, all other **“sovereigns”** on this earth receive their sovereignty from God.
- Not only is God the **“only Sovereign,”** but He is also described in **verse 15** as being the **“King of kings.”**
- It is a little difficult for us as Americans to think in terms of a king, since we have never lived in a monarchy or under a royal family.

However, the Jewish people in the First Century would have been very familiar with kings.

- Back in the days of the prophet Samuel, they had demanded a king.
- Reluctantly, God had granted their wish, and they were given King Saul, then David, and then Solomon.
- Then came the 20 kings of the Southern Kingdom. and the 19 kings of the Northern Kingdom.
- When the Jews were finally conquered by the Babylonians in 586 BC, they became servants to King Nebuchadnezzar.
- When they were freed from slavery in 539 BC, they were still servants of King Darius of the Medes and the Persians.
- They also lived under Alexander the Great and then the various Roman rulers and emperors.
- The Jewish people knew what it meant to live under a king.

When our Savior Jesus Christ was born, you might remember what the wise men said to King Herod in **Matthew 2:2—“Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.”** This is amazing!

- The King that the OT prophets had been looking for had actually been born a King.
- No human is ever born a king.
- A young person in a royal family is born a prince and then grows into the role, but Christ was born a King.

When Christ was being interviewed by Pilate shortly before the crucifixion, you might remember Jesus’ words in **John 18:37, “...Pilate said to Him, ‘So, you are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth.’”**

- Jesus, therefore, is a king in the ultimate sense of the word.

As far as God’s sovereignty is concerned, we also see that he is called the **“Lord of lords.”**

- Literally speaking, this refers to God being Lord (or master) over all who are lords (or masters).
- Jesus is our Lord and Master, and King.
- He is our Blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords.
- He is the God that we worship here in the Salem congregation, and He is the God that we come to know through Jesus Christ.

One of the greatest lessons we can learn from God's sovereignty is that we do not have a right to worry about very much, do we?

- We know from the Scriptures that God rules over the universe.
- In fact, this past Wednesday, I quoted a passage in **Hebrews 1**, that tells us that God (specifically, Jesus Christ) is the glue that holds the universe together.
- Maybe our only concern is: Why me? Why should the King of this universe care about what happens to me?

Paul said that He is the **"Blessed Sovereign."**

- He is the God of happiness and he wants us to be happy as well. God is **always** in control.
- And that brings us to the next idea in **1 Timothy 6**...

II. In **verse 16**, God is described as being **"IMMORTAL."**

Most of us are familiar with the word **"euthanasia."**

- It literally refers to **"the good death."**
- But in **verse 16**, we have the word **"athanasia,"** and it literally refers to **"no death."**
- It refers to **"The Deathless One,"** or, **"The Unable to Die"** God—the God who possesses deathlessness. God is always there.
- God will never be laid up in the hospital for a knee surgery. He will never be sick.
- He will never be too busy to deal with our concerns.

Maybe you are familiar with the contest between God and Baal on Mt. Carmel in **1 Kings 18**.

- Let's turn over to **1 Kings 18** and see what happened there!
- Elijah was challenging the prophets of Baal to have their God send down fire from heaven, but nothing was happening. That brings us to **1 Kings 18:27-30**.

27 It came about at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, "Call out with a loud voice, for he is a god; either he is occupied or gone aside, or is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and needs to be awakened."

28 So they cried with a loud voice and cut themselves according to their custom with swords and lances until the blood gushed out on them.

29 When midday was past, they raved until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice; but there was no voice, no one answered, and no one paid attention.

What a sad situation! Some commentaries have suggested that Elijah used a figure of speech in **verse 27**—basically implying that perhaps their god was busy relieving himself—literally, **"Maybe your God has his robe around his ankles."**

- Elijah had a wonderful sense of humor.
- The people cut themselves and carried on for hours—**"but there was no voice, no one answered, and no one paid attention."** Our God is not like that.
- He is the God who is always there and the God who will never die.
- As Paul says, He is immortal and eternal.

God doesn't need to look ahead at something, because He's already there.

- He doesn't need to look back at something, because He's already there.
- Time is something God created.
- Maybe we could imagine a line stretching in both directions as far as we could possibly see.
- Like that line, God is eternal. As humans, though, our bodies have a beginning and an end.

- At the same time, if we are faithful, our souls will continue on in eternal life.
- If we are not faithful, our souls will continue on in eternal death—being eternally separated from God. The Bible refers to that as the **“Second Death.”**
- God allows us to live eternally—it is not a part of our nature, as it is with God.

Just like the idea that God is sovereign, there is also a great deal of comfort in knowing that God is immortal and eternal.

- God will always be there for us—no matter what. No matter when we speak, God is listening.
- When we pray, He listens. God will never be asleep. He will never die. He will always be there.
- He is the immortal and eternal God, and there is comfort in knowing that.

As I was preparing for this morning’s lesson, I ran across a story about Martin Luther during the Reformation Movement.

- Apparently Mr. Luther was prone to depression, and at one point he was being extremely gloomy and pessimistic, and at that point his wife Catherine put on her mourning clothes and began to act bereaved.
- Luther asked his wife why she was so sad, and she replied, **“Dear doctor, I have cause for the saddest weeping, for God in His heaven has died.”**
- Apparently her actions had a very profound effect, because just as he was about to rebuke his wife for saying that, Luther realized that he had been living as if God had died.
- Thankfully, though, God will never die. He will always be there for us.

III. As we bring our attention back to **1 Timothy 6**, we also learn that **GOD IS HOLY (verse 16)**.

Paul says that God *“dwells in unapproachable light.”*

- **Hebrews 1:3** refers to Jesus as being the *“radiance”* of God’s glory.
- The brightest object we can see from this earth is probably the sun.
- Even from a distance of 93 million miles, the heat from the sun can blister human skin in just a few hours.
- We think about the power of the sun, and then we understand that this magnificent fireball was created only by a thought of God—just a few words—it contains a tiny fraction of God’s power—and even the sun is only a tiny part of the universe.

As I was researching this morning’s lesson, I found it very interesting that of all the times the word *“light”* is found in the Bible, very rarely does it refer to a literal light, or the light of a lamp.

- But rather, it almost always refers to righteousness, or truth, or spiritual purity.
- In **1 John 1:5-7**, the Apostle John basically uses the words *“light”* and *“truth”* interchangeably—as synonyms:

5 *This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.*

6 *If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;*

7 *but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

This idea also comes through in the Old Testament, in **Psalms 119:105**—a verse that all of us know, *“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”*

- Again, the word of God, or truth, is pictured as light.

Over and over in the Scriptures, God’s people are referred to as being *“sons of light.”*

- As Christians, we are to be (in a very small and limited way) what God is in an infinite way.
- We are to be holy just as God is also holy. We are set apart from the world.
- Someone has said that holiness is basically truth (or light) put into action. I
- have always liked the song, *“Trust and Obey”*—**“When we walk with the Lord in the light of His word, what a glory He sheds on our way! While we do His good will, He abides with us still, and with all who will trust and obey.”**
- This is the idea that Paul is communicating in **1 Timothy 6:16**—Jesus dwells in unapproachable light, and we reflect that light in a very small way when we *“keep the commandment”* in **verse 14**. We cannot call ourselves Christians while we live in darkness.

Light overpowers darkness and exposes any sin.

- I am reminded of a story from many years ago about a family that had the unspoken rule that no one was to ever take the last piece of chicken.
- On one particular evening, they were eating and they got down to the very last drumstick just as a breeze came through and blew out the candle that was lighting the room.
- There was a terrible scream, and someone relit the candle only to find the father’s hand on the drumstick with five forks stuck in the back of his hand.
- The darkness gave everyone in that family the courage to violate the family rule.

As we think about God and this *“unapproachable light,”* most of us probably remember the time when Moses wanted to see God’s glory.

- The Bible says that God put Moses in a crack between two rocks, covered Moses with His hand, and passed by outside the rocks—allowing Moses to see God’s backside.

In **Exodus 33 & 34**, the Bible says that even after only seeing the afterglow of God’s afterglow, Moses’ face actually glowed for some time.

- In fact, it terrified the people, and Moses had to wear a veil to keep from scaring the people.
- Have you ever wanted to see God as Moses saw God?
- Unfortunately, the Bible says that we can’t—at least in our present condition, because God is holy and we are not. And that brings us to a fourth quality of God...

IV. In **verse 16**, Paul says that God is **INVISIBLE**. He is the God **“WHOM NO MAN HAS SEEN OR CAN SEE.”**

What about statements from men like Jacob, and Moses, and Isaiah, and Daniel—where it appears that they *“saw”* God?

- What about Jesus’ promise that the pure in heart would *“see”* God?
- What about the statement of Jesus that if people had seen Him that they had seen God?

I believe that the idea of **“seeing”** God is not always meant to be taken in a literal way.

- It does not always refer to actually seeing something with our eyes.
- When we tell our children, **“Don’t you see what I’m telling you,”** we use that term with the idea of understanding something.
- Jacob, and Moses, and Isaiah, and Daniel—they saw God in a very limited way.
- The *“pure in heart”* can only begin to understand the nature of God.
- And only through Jesus can we even have hope of understanding God.
- We can understand something about God, but God is infinite, and we are not.

Maybe we could imagine a picture infinitely tall and wide, and for a lifetime we stand on that picture and we walk around examining that picture for hundreds and thousands of miles...and right before we die, we realize that we have seen the thumb of God.

- It is impossible to truly see God.
- But you see this is why Jesus came in the flesh.
- God chose to reveal Himself to the human race, so he became a human being.
- God allowed us to relate to something.
- Instead of staying in unapproachable light, God came to us in a form we could understand.
- **John 1:14** says, *“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

Unfortunately, sin is a barrier that keeps us from understanding God as we should.

- In **1 John 3:6-7**, John said, *“No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.”*
- When someone cheats his company out of some money, a barrier is built between that person and God.
- When someone is intimate before marriage, a barrier is built between that person and God.

God dwells in unapproachable light, and the only way we can ever hope to truly see God someday is to keep our hearts pure.

- God is holy, and he demands holiness from His people.
- All of this leads us to a final aspect of God...

V. We can look back at **verse 16**, and we find that all of these wonderful qualities should cause us to **WORSHIP** God. **GOD IS WORTHY OF OUR WORSHIP.**

As Paul said, ***“To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen.”***

- We show our honor and our respect for God by obeying his commandments.
- As Jesus said in **John 14:15**, ***“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”***

We also show our respect by saying and doing things in the way God would want them said and done.

- In **1 Peter 4:11**, Peter said, ***“Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”***

The word **“AMEN”** literally means, **“let it be so.”**

- It is our way of showing approval, and when we say that word, we are promising God that we will do what he wants us to do.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSION:

As we think back over these verses that we have looked at this morning, I hope we can come away from this morning’s lesson with the idea that God’s power is not just used to punish the wicked.

- God is **SOVEREIGN**.
- God is **IMMORTAL**.
- God is **HOLY**—dwelling in unapproachable light.
- God is **INVISIBLE**.
- And because of all of this, God is **WORTHY OF OUR WORSHIP AND RESPECT**.

God does punish the wicked, but he also is the ***“Blessed Sovereign.”***

- He wants us to be happy.
- The more we study the Scriptures, the more we understand that and the more we praise and worship God.

INVITATION:

The Bible tells us that God does not want anyone to perish.

- He is extremely patient.
- God’s patience does have a limit.
- God has told us in the Scriptures to change our lives and be immersed in water for the forgiveness of our sins.
- If you are ready to obey the gospel this morning, you can let us know as we stand and sing at this time...