

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday April 26, 2023 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

Honoring 1 TIMOTHY GOD

HONORING GOD
“Integrity Under Fire”
1 Timothy 6:13-16



Key Reminders for 1 Timothy:

- (1) 1 Timothy is a personal letter
- (2) 1 Timothy is written by Paul to Timothy, his apprentice in ministry
- (3) 1 Timothy is known as a “Pastoral Epistle” (or letter)
- (4) 1 Timothy was written to address problems in the church at Ephesus and encourage their pastor
- (5) 1 Timothy was likely written about AD 63

What Was Timothy Really Like?:

The short answer is we don't know. Our ideas of what Timothy was personally like, his personality traits, his demeanor and disposition and purely supposition and conjecture. We do have particular Biblical references that may help us infer some things about Timothy that we can be somewhat more certain of, but it must be held loosely. We simply can't be narrow, rigged, dogmatic or authoritarian concerning what Timothy was really like in his personality. With that said here are some things we may infer (with some accuracy) concerning what Timothy was like...

- (1) **Timothy was a Christian** – He was saved during Paul's first missionary journey through Asia Minor. Timothy may have been as young as 15 when he was led to the Lord by Paul.
- (2) **Timothy was a young man** – He was probably no older than late teens/early twenties when he joined Paul but had already distinguished himself as faithful, and the elders noticed him. He probably heard and responded to the gospel when Paul came through the area of Derbe and Lystra on his first missionary journey, but we don't know for sure.
- (3) **Timothy had genuine faith** - Paul says Timothy had a "genuine faith," the same as that which lived in his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:1–5).
- (4) **Timothy had high respect from Paul** - Paul addresses Timothy as "my true son in the faith" (1 Timothy 1:2).
- (5) **Timothy was well trusted in ministry** - Timothy served as Paul's representative to several churches (1 Corinthians 4:17; Philippians 2:19), and he was later a pastor in Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3).
- (6) **Timothy had health problems** - It seems that Timothy had a chronic illness that required some attention (1 Timothy 5:23). Paul counseled him on a change of diet to aid the relief of his condition. From this example we learn that it is not always God's will to heal a person miraculously; sometimes, healing comes through more "natural" means, if it comes at all.
- (7) **Timothy was introverted and timid** – This, of course is pure conjecture, but may be inferred from a few Biblical references. Most notably 2 Timothy 1:7 gives an indication of Timothy's personality that comes through in this verse. Many would say apparently, Timothy was an introverted, retiring personality who of himself would not do what he would be called upon to do. By the end of the book, Paul knows that he is going to die. From all indications, Timothy would bear the weight of responsibility for preaching the gospel after Paul's death. Paul knows what Timothy is like because he had spent years with him, travelling around the Mediterranean region. The apostle, concerned about Timothy having the mind, the personality, the will, to carry out his responsibilities, reminds him that God's Spirit is one of power and of love and of sound-mindedness.

There is some particular research by Bill Mounce that may call the common interpretation of this to infer “timidity” into question. The normal picture people have of Timothy was that he was timid, a picture largely centered on 2 Tim 1:7 — *“For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline”* (NIV). When combined with the fact that he was young and evidently sick much of the time (1 Tim 5:23), many have constructed an image of Timothy that would hardly be appealing and a bit off-putting. Mounce says, *“Nothing could be further from the truth. Timothy was one of Paul’s right-hand men. When Paul had difficult situations, fraught with danger and conflict, he shows no hesitation in sending Timothy into the fray. Ephesus was an established church full of entrenched, sinful management. Paul sends Timothy. The persecutions in Thessalonica were intense. So who did Paul send? Timothy. Of no one else does Paul say, ‘For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare’ (Phil 2:20).”* This should alert us to a problem.

Perhaps “timid” has been misunderstood. How do you determine the meaning of a word? Etymology can point us in a direction, but ultimately it is how the word is used in other contexts. This gives us the range of meanings possessed by the word, and then it is up to the immediate context (2 Tim 1:3) to determine the specific nuance of meaning. If you check out Mounce’s commentary, you will see a listing of the uses of the Greek word “deilia.” Nowhere does it mean “timid.” In fact, Mounce says, “He is a bit at a loss to know where “timid” came from.” The word means “fearful,” “cowardice.” BDAG lists the gloss, lack of mental or moral strength, cowardice. This is why the ESV reads, “for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control” (emphasis added).

Is Paul saying that Timothy is fearful, a coward? That seems impossible. Nowhere in our understanding of Paul or Timothy is there a place for cowardice. And look at the entire verse. Is Paul actually saying that Timothy should not be fearful but should be characterized by power, love, and self-control? Would this mean that Timothy was not characterized by power, love, and self-control? That seems hardly possible as well.

So what is Paul saying? Things are not always as easy as we would like them to be. I believe that “fear” is merely a literary foil to emphasize that Timothy’s life is to be characterized by power, by love, and by self-control. In other words, Paul is not saying that Timothy is fearful or cowardly — this makes no sense in light of what we know about Timothy, and merely being young or physically sick does not mean that you are a coward. Rather, these are qualities that Timothy already possessed, and Paul is encouraging his young co-worker (and best friend, I believe) by reminding him of what Timothy knows is true.

¹³ I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, ¹⁴ that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, ¹⁵ which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.. -1 Timothy 6:13-16 (NKJV)

I'm going to share some statistics (not a surprise with you) from a pastoral care magazine I get. I'm not sharing these with you to be overly dramatic, or for any other reason but to give you an idea of what we may be dealing with in our churches today. These statistics just have to do with pastors...

Statistics from Pastoral Care Incorporated:

- 35% of pastors battle depression or fear of inadequacy.
- 26% of pastors report being over fatigued.
- 28% of pastors report they are spiritually undernourished.
- 70% of pastors report they have a **lower self-image now** than when they first started.
- 70% of pastors do not have someone they consider to be a close friend.
- 27% of pastors report not having anyone to turn to for help in a crisis situation.
- 81% of pastors have been tempted to have inappropriate sexual thoughts or behavior with someone in the **church** but have resisted.
- 17% of pastors report inappropriately texting with a church member at sometime in their ministry.
- 34% of pastors wrestle with the temptation of pornography or visits pornographic sites.
- 57% of pastors feel fulfilled but yet discouraged, stressed, and fatigued.
- 84% of pastors desire to have close fellowship with someone they can trust and confide with.

What is your initial reaction to those statistics? What do you feel those statistics say concerning the (pastoral) leadership in our churches today (where we are)?

Dr. Danny Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, says, "A morality crisis exists in the ministry. An integrity crisis faces the servants of God. Immorality has reached a panepidemic stage in the evangelical community both in the pulpit and in the pew. Respect for the man of God has reached an all time low. The secular media exploits every failure. The man in the street pokes fun with jokes depicting ministers as interested only in women, money, power and prestige. The Church of God reels in heartbreak, confusion and

distrust as once respected leaders are repeatedly exposed in sin and shame. The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is in critical condition.”

WHAT IS “INTEGRITY”?

I want to share some quotes with you about “integrity” and get your reaction to them. These may give us some idea of what “integrity” is and how to define it. At the end of these quotes I want to give you an opportunity to define “integrity” in your own words...

- *“Integrity is what you are in then dark.” – D.L. Moody*
- *“Integrity is doing the right things, even when no one is watching.” -C.S. Lewis*
- *“Integrity is keeping a commitment even after circumstances have changed.” – David Jeremiah*
- *“Integrity does not mean sinless, but it does describe a person who by God’s grace ‘sins less.’” – Sam Storms*
- *“We must be the same person in private and in public. Only the Christian worldview gives us the basis for this kind of integrity.” – Charles Colson*
- *“Integrity gives you real freedom because you have nothing to fear since you have nothing to hide.” – Zig Ziglar*
- *“Few things are more infectious than a godly lifestyle. The people you rub shoulders with everyday need that kind of challenge. Not prudish. Not preachy. Just cracker jack clean living. Just hones in o goodness, bone–deep, non-hypocritical integrity.” – Charles Swindoll*

➡ I read about a politician who was asked where he stood on an issue. He replied, “Some of my friends are for it; some of my friends are against it. And I’m for my friends!”

➡ Someone has observed that politicians and crabs are creatures who move in such a way that it is impossible to tell whether they are coming or going!

How would you, in your own words, define “integrity?” _____

Why is “integrity” so important in the Christian life? _____

“There is an increasing need for integrity in the ministry. We are facing an integrity crisis. Not only is the conduct of the church in question, but so is the very character of the church.” -Warren Wiersbe

Integrity is one of the top attributes of a Christian and good Christian leader. It is a concept of consistency of actions, values, methods, measures, principles, expectations and outcomes. It connotes a deep commitment to do the right thing for the right reasons, regardless of the circumstances. People who live with integrity are incorruptible and incapable of breaking trust of those who confided in them. Choosing right, regardless of the consequences, is a hallmark of integrity. One of the most damaging sins a spiritual/Christian leader can commit is to betray the trust of his people. The damage caused of a lack of integrity today is seen everywhere especially in Christendom. Hearing about different issues that are unethical or even illegal has sadly become commonplace today among ministers of God. The lack of integrity that is prevalent in our world today comes with a huge cost. The price to pay is a loss of trust. Trust is absolutely essential in pastoral ministry to function effectively. In spite of these challenges, the fact still remains that great is the impact of integrity on pastoral ministry.

It is important to understand what we mean when we talk about “integrity.” What does the word “integrity” really mean. Integrity is a “rigid adherence to a code of behavior. The root of the word is traced to Latin, “integritas” which means completeness, purity. The term integrity is not only found in the Biblical records of the Old and New Testaments, but also found in the ancient secular world. Extra-biblical records about integrity can be found in the ancient eastern world as well as in the ancient Roman world. In the ancient near east the concept of integrity had to do with fullness or wholeness, truthfulness, and sincerity of heart.

In the Greco/Roman world (that Timothy would have been raised in and that Paul would be familiar with – remember Paul was likely writing this letter from Rome, while perhaps chained to a Roman guard) the word integrity would be a military term that came from a specific Roman army tradition. In the Ancient Roman world, the Roman army inspections of the “breastplate” in a Roman soldier’s army clearly described the concept of integrity. In the first morning inspection of a Roman soldier going out for duty, the inspecting Centurion would come in front of each legionnaire and would require the soldier strike to aggressively using his right fist the armor on the breastplate that covered his heart to test the stability and authenticity of the breastplate to determine if it was sound or not, and to show whether it could protect the heart from the thrust of sword or arrow strikes. According to history as the soldier struck his breastplate he would shout the word “Integritas!” (which in Latin meant material wholeness, completeness, and entirety. In other words “integrity” referred to the putting on of armor, of building completeness, wholeness in character and on the soundness of the armor.

The Hebrews word for integrity is “tom” or “tumnaah,” which stands for whole, complete, sound, unimpaired or perfection. It also means faithfulness, trustworthiness. Also, integrity is the strength of firmness of character, utter sincerity, honesty and a state of being undivided. The Bible reveals that God is the root of human integrity and He as the basis of human existence and so the architect of all that had to do with humankind. It was after God’s

perfect standard that man was created. The word integrity in the New Testament is the Greek word “aphthoria.” It is originated from “aphthoros” which means “uncorrupted.” The actual words “integrity” does not appear in the New Testament, but the word is translated as “sincerity,” “truth,” the “pure in heart,” and “the single eye.” In this sense it is the equivalent to being honest, sincere, genuine, and is fundamental to true character.

Our present problem has been in the making for many years. The root cause is simply sin and the evil located in the human heart. Remember the words of **Jeremiah 17:9**, “*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it.*” And Jesus, Himself, warned in **Matthew 15:19**, “*For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.*” Satan, working in concert with the flesh, has utilized some effective weapons to destroy many men of God.

A secular culture, together with its values, has affected the church more than the church has affected it. Four specific areas have been especially alluring to those whom God has called to the ministry.

4 Allurements that Have Become Our Undoing:

- (1) **Materialism is fast becoming a problem in ministry** - Many men today are driven not by God but by gold. They are motivated not by the Savior but by silver and self interest. God wants His ministers to receive adequate provision and that they should not be paupers (1 Cor. 9:7-14; 1 Tim. 5:17-18). However, too many of God’s ministers view themselves in the model of the corporate CEO rather than a shepherd-servant or pastor-teacher of His flock. They lose personal perspective and usually find themselves pursuing worldly desires and spending less and less time with their spouses and families. The fallout has been tragic and devastating.
- (2) **Egotism or pride has also become rampant in our ranks** - Personal power, position, and prestige are often justified by sanctimonious words of “reaching more though bigger and better ministries for Christ.” We have forgotten that our God always opposes pride in any form (James 4:6-10). An important question every minister should ask is, “to whom are people drawn as the ministry grows - me, a particular ministry or the Master?”
- (3) **Exaggeration of accomplishments and even outright lying have also infested the pulpit** - “Ministerially speaking” means nothing more than speaking a falsehood. “Fudging” the stats to get ahead happens far too often. If we would regain respect, we must, of necessity, go the extra mile in truthful behavior and honest speech (Proverbs 6:16,19)
- (4) **Shallow theology and false ideas of spirituality have also led to failure in the ministry** - Biblical exposition is the exception rather than the rule. Emphasizing holiness and sacrifice are seldom heard. Feel good/self esteem sermons is the spiritual junk food often served to many congregations. Because of anemic biblical instruction, many

overemphasize legalism on the one hand or emotionalism on the other. The sad end of all of this is an unstable doctrinal foundation that ultimately will collapse under pressure.

One might raise a question at this point, “I see how these things are related to integrity, but what is their connection with immorality?” The answer is this: when a man is consumed with a desire for more in one area (e.g., materialism), it often leads to desire for more in another (sex). When a man deceives himself into thinking that he deserves and is entitled to the power, position, and prestige that often accompany a successful ministry, he may also deceive himself into thinking that accessibility and entitlement to a liaison with a woman other than his wife is his option, maybe even his right.

Finally, and most importantly, if a man is dishonest in one area of his life (lying and exaggerating his own accomplishments), he will likely be dishonest in other areas, including faithfulness to his wife and ultimately faithfulness to his Savior. The causes for such failures can be boiled down to three basics:

3 Basic Causes for Our Loss of Integrity:

- (1) A loss of a devotional walk with the Savior**
- (2) A loss of continual meditation in the Scriptures**
- (3) A loss of personal commitment to our calling to holiness as saints**

Integrity, the character quality of being above reproach, true to your word, and not compromising your principles even when you’re under fire, seems to be in scarce commodity among politicians and, sadly, even among many Christians and Christian leaders. But Christians should be people marked by integrity, especially when we’re under fire. If we waffle when the pressure is on, it hurts our witness and people shrug off the great message we stand for.

That’s especially true of Christian leaders. If we fudge on integrity, the enemy uses it to dilute the power of the gospel we proclaim. As with banking or the stock market, integrity is the name of the game when it comes to ministry and the preaching of the Word. For the sake of Christ who gave His life for His church, we who preach the Word must strive to be men of integrity. But that puts pastors in a bind, because like most people, pastors like people and want to be liked. But preaching uncompromising truth and preaching against sin is not always popular. You learn early in ministry that you can’t please everyone. So you’re tempted to play the politician, to try to make everyone think that you agree with them.

★ Timothy was feeling the pressure to compromise. Timid and peace-loving by nature, he had to stand strongly against the false teachers in Ephesus. It would have been easy to water down essential truth in the name of peace and unity... to not make waves, or upset those who saw things differently (false teachers). So after exhorting him to fight the good fight of the faith and reminding him of the good confession he had made at his baptism, Paul (in our

passage in 1 Timothy 6:13-16) gives a solemn charge to Timothy to maintain his integrity in his ministry above all else, even if it means persecution or death.

He states the aim: to maintain his integrity under fire; and he gives three great facts which, if Timothy will stay aware of, will motivate him to such integrity:

3 Facts That Will Motivate Us to Integrity:

- (1) **God's presence**
- (2) **Christ's coming**
- (3) **God's sovereign supremacy**

To maintain integrity under fire, live with an awareness of God's presence, Christ's coming, and God's sovereign supremacy.

THE AIM DESIRED: INTEGRITY UNDER FIRE (1 Timothy 6:13-14)

¹³I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, ¹⁴that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing" -1 Timothy 6:13-14

Paul writes to Timothy, *"I urge you ... keep the commandment without spot, blameless (with integrity)."* The question is, what does Paul mean by *"the commandment"*?

- In light of the context and the thrust of the whole book, the best view is that Paul means that Timothy maintain his personal integrity and that he discharge his ministry above reproach (so Calvin, Matthew Henry; see 4:16, "pay close attention to yourself and your teaching"; 6:20, "guard what has been entrusted to you").
- He is charging Timothy before God that he live in such a manner that neither his personal life nor his ministry would bring any blot on the name of Christ.
- Such integrity rests on a foundation beneath the surface, where no one but you and God can see.
- That foundation is laid a brick at a time, as you live each day with your thoughts and private deeds laid bare before the God who sees all.
- Hebrews 4:13 says, *"¹³And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account."*
- ➡• In other words... how did D.L. Moody say it, *"Integrity is what you are in then dark."*
- ➡• And C.S. Lewis, *"Integrity is doing the right things, even when no one is watching."*
- Well, according to Hebrews 4:13, God is always watching. He sees what we do in the dark. Someone is watching... God. We see our integrity or lack of it! WE can fool a lot of people, but we can't fool God.
- Do you spend time each day alone with God, opening your heart to Him, allowing His Word to search the thoughts and intents of your heart (Heb. 4:12)?
- Do you judge sinful thoughts, confessing them to God and forsaking them as you seek, rather, to set your mind on the things above?

- No one sees your heart, except you and God. Integrity is built on judging and forsaking such thoughts and deeds.
- Whatever the secret sin, you're building a life of integrity if you remember that God knows your heart, and you live in obedience to Him even though no other human being is watching.

Interesting...

Some years ago *Psychology Today* (10/83) reported the results of a poll of more than 650 readers. The question posed was, "If you could secretly push a button and thereby eliminate any person with no repercussions to yourself, would you press that button?"

- **60% said yes – 69% of the men, 56% of the women**
- **One man posed an intriguing question - "If such a device were invented, would anyone live to tell about it?"**

Jesus said that murder begins in the heart where anger, bitterness, and hatred go unjudged...

- Matthew 5:21-22 – ²¹ "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' ²² But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire."
- Mark 7:21-23 – ²¹ For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, ²² thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. ²³ All these evil things come from within and defile a man."

So that's where a life of integrity must be built a brick at a time. Such integrity is built in secret, but it manifests itself under fire. The pressure brings out what has been built in. Paul gives Timothy three things that he must keep before him that will motivate him to build such integrity into his life:

THE AWARENESS DEMANDED: GOD'S PRESENCE, CHRIST'S COMING, AND GOD'S SOVEREIGN SUPREMACY (1 Timothy 6:13-16)

¹³ I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, ¹⁴ that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, ¹⁵ which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.. -1 Timothy 6:13-16 (NKJV)

Awareness That Motivates us To Integrity:

(1) **The awareness of God's presence will motivate us to a life of integrity - "I urge you in the sight of God ... and before Christ Jesus"** (6:13). The close association of God and Christ Jesus, plus the assumed omnipresence of Christ, point to Jesus' deity. Paul reminds Timothy that both God the Father and Christ are listening in and watching as he gives this charge to Timothy.

Keeping in mind the fact that God and Christ are always with us will motivate us to live each moment to please Him, whether or not anyone else is there. Note how Paul describes both God and Christ here.

- God "gives life to all things."
- Christ Jesus "testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate."

Why does he use these descriptions in this context? Because Timothy was under fire in his ministry! Paul wanted him to remember that the God in whose presence he lived and served is both the giver and sustainer of life itself. If evil men threatened to kill Timothy, God could either preserve him from death or give him courage to be a faithful witness unto death, even as Christ faithfully bore witness to Pilate, rather than seeking to save His life by softening His witness.

Though the cross is foolishness to many, Timothy should remember Christ who bore witness even through the cross, and not shrink from preaching God's foolishness through which He is pleased to give eternal life to all who believe.

I read about a pastor in India who felt God's call to go to the second most sacred site for a Hindu pilgrimage and plant a church there. His wife chose to go with him, taking along their children, even though the last missionary who tried to live there had been murdered and his head placed in the temple. They went and lived in poverty, in filthy conditions, with no human means of support. In the fifteen years he has been there, this man of God has been beaten many times, he has been threatened with being skinned and thrown into the sea, his oldest son has been beaten and threatened with crucifixion for preaching, and the schools he has built for pastors have been burned to the ground, and he has built them again. But he perseveres, willing to lay down his life for Christ, because he trusts in the God who gives life to all and he knows that Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate is with him.

Most of us know nothing of such hardship. I sure don't! I hear a lot of American pastors talk about the stress of ministry, and I don't deny that there are pressures. On a few occasions I've had some angry people wishing I'd resign and just go away, I'm sure. But I've not ever had my life actually threatened... at least not yet anyway! But whatever pressures you or I face to compromise our testimony to God's saving grace in Christ, we

can stand firm if we remember the presence of God, who gives life to all, and Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate.

- (2) **The awareness of Christ's coming will motivate us to a life of integrity** - Paul goes on to urge Timothy in verse 14, “, ¹⁴ *that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing.*” to “keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which He will reveal in His own time” (literal translation). Although Christ is always present spiritually, He is not present visibly until that glorious moment when He will come again and take us to be with Him.

Jesus told the eleven, as they were anxious about His impending departure, not to be troubled, but to trust in God and in Him, because He was going to prepare a place for them. Then He promised in John 14:3, “*And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also*”

Jesus' second coming is as sure as His word! Unless He was a liar or imposter, we can count on His promise and know that one day soon He will appear and that we who have believed in Him will be caught up “in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:17). Any delay in Christ's coming is certainly not due to God's inability, as Paul's final crescendo of praise makes clear! Rather, it is due to God's sovereign timing--He will bring it about “in His own time.”

As Jesus told the disciples just prior to His ascension when they inquired about His second coming in Acts 1:7-8, “*It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses ...*” In other words, we are to get on with His work, aware that He is coming, but not sure exactly when.

Here it is... We don't know when our Lord will return; we just know He's coming. So we ought always to live without stain or reproach, ready to meet Him. Thus Paul is saying that to maintain integrity, especially under fire, we must live with the awareness of God's presence and of Christ's soon coming.

- (3) **The awareness of God's sovereign supremacy will motivate us to a life of integrity** - Paul's mention of God's sovereignly fixing the time of Christ's return leads him to an outburst of praise as he thinks on who God is in verses 15-16, “¹⁵ *Which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords,* ¹⁶ *who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.*” Verses like this overwhelm me as I think about preaching on them, because I can scarcely grasp them myself, let alone say anything to make them more meaningful to you. “Who is adequate

for these things?” Notice the things Paul is reminding Timothy of concerning God’s sovereign supremacy.

Description of God’s Sovereign Supremacy:

1. **God is blessed** – *“He who is the blessed...”* This means that He is perfect and sufficient in and of Himself, that all satisfaction and joy are inherent in God’s very nature. He did not create the universe or the human race to fulfill some lack in Himself. God wasn’t lonely or needing fellowship before He created man. Nor is God frustrated or unhappy with the way history is going, as if it were out of His control. *Although Scripture pictures God as displeased with our disobedience and rebellion, nothing we do can disturb the deep, abiding, settled blessedness of God.*

The blessed God is the only source of true blessing and joy for His creatures. As Jesus taught in the Beatitudes, we can only know true happiness when we are rightly related to God who possesses such blessedness infinitely in Himself. We may find fleeting happiness in relationships or things. We may find passing pleasure in art, beauty, nature, or sex. But true and lasting satisfaction can only be found in God Himself who is blessed.

2. **God is the only Sovereign (Potentate, Ruler, Monarch, Czar, Royal Leader), the King of kings and Lord of lords** – *“He is... only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords.”* The Greek word, *dynastes*, refers to the inherent capacity of someone to carry something out. God delegates authority to earthly kings as He wishes, but they are nothing in His sight, and He can dispose of the mightiest earthly ruler as a man flicks an ant off his arm.

The proud Nebuchadnezzar ruled over the greatest kingdom on earth, but God humbled him like a beast of the field so that he might learn that *“the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whom He wishes”* (Dan. 4:17, 25, 32). God is the only Potentate... which means He is Sovereign! When God graciously restored Nebuchadnezzar to his throne, he tells us, *“I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’”* (Dan. 4:34-35).

We as creatures can only know true blessing when we humble ourselves under the sovereign hand of the Almighty God!

The title, “King of kings and Lord of lords” that here is ascribed to God the Father is also given to the Lord Jesus Christ in His second coming, which proves His deity

(Rev. 17:14; 19:16). It would be blasphemy for a mere creature to share this exalted title with the only Sovereign of the universe. Any teaching that diminishes the supreme sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ is from the devil, whose one goal has been to overthrow the sovereignty of the Triune God

3. **God alone is immortal** - (lit., “free from death”) *“Who alone has immortality...”* He is the only uncreated, self-existent being who is not subject to death. The Father has life in Himself and gives it to whomever He wishes, and Jesus claimed the same divine attribute for Himself (John 5:26, 21).

Proud men exalt themselves as if they will live forever. God sends an invisible virus or microbe and lays the strongest of men in the dust. The mighty Alexander the Great conquered the world but died in his early thirties in a drunken stupor with a raging fever. Only God is immortal!

4. **God dwells in unapproachable light** – In **verse 16** Paul reminds Timothy that God dwells in *“... unapproachable light”* What even is that? This refers to the splendor of God’s inherent glory, and especially to His unapproachable holiness. No sinful human being could even dare to draw near to God apart from His grace in Christ any more than we would dare to put a man on the sun. He would be instantly consumed. We can’t even look at the sun for more than a split second without being blinded. Even so much brighter is God in His splendor!

5. **God is invisible** - *“Whom no man has seen or can see.”* God is spirit and cannot be captured by our finite human senses. We could never come to know such a great and mighty Being through our own reason or will power or human ability. But God condescended to reveal Himself to us in Jesus, who is the visible manifestation of the invisible God. Jesus said in **John 6:46**, *“Not that any man has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father”* He further claimed that no one knows *“who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him”* (Luke 10:22). We can’t even come to know this sovereign, immortal, unapproachably holy, invisible God unless the Lord Jesus chooses to reveal Him to us!

So with Paul, we can only be overwhelmed with worship as we proclaim, *“To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen.”* If we maintain an awareness of the sovereign supremacy of our God, we can also maintain our integrity as men and women of God, even when we’re under fire.

CONCLUSION

Let me give you some closing thought about “integrity” that I think might be important to keep in mind... three closing points

3 Closing Points About Christian Integrity:

- (1) **Remember having Christian integrity does not mean we become sinless** – As Christians, we still possess our fallen natures, live in a fallen world, and face temptations and attacks from various sources that seek to undermine our walk with God. Even the godliest of saints sin (i.e., Moses, David, Peter, John, etc.). The reality is there will be times when we fail to live by godly integrity, when we fail to keep our word, both to the Lord and others. But relapse does not have to mean collapse, for if there is humility, we can come before God’s *“throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need”* (Heb 4:16). And if we confess our sins to Him, *“He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9).
- (2) **Remember our failings, though many, do not destroy the Lord’s faithfulness to us -** For though *“we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself”* (2 Tim 2:13). God has blessed us with many promises (2 Pet 1:4), and He has perfect integrity, always keeps His Word and never fails. Just as there are times when we still sin even while trying to maintain our integrity, there is never a time when God is not faithful to us even in our failings. Remember His for us, not against us.
- (3) **Remember God wants us to develop godly integrity so our character and life measure up to His righteous standards as revealed in Scripture** - But developing godly integrity is the pursuit of a lifetime, as we make moment by moment choices to submit ourselves to God, to learn and live His Word, to be honest in who we are, to speak truth in love, and to keep our promises to others, even if the cost is great. As Christians who want to serve the Lord, may we rise to pursue such an honorable life, for God’s glory, and the benefit of others.

Discussion Questions

1. *Why is integrity so rare, seemingly even among Christian leaders?*
2. *The trend today is for Christian leaders to be “vulnerable,” sharing their faults. But Timothy was to live “without stain or reproach.” Where’s the balance?*
3. *One popular pastor and author says we need to be more “man-centered” in our theology. Why is this fundamentally flawed?*
4. *How (practically) can we gain a bigger view of God’s sovereign supremacy?*