

Gospel Marked: *Living Expectantly*
1 Timothy 6:13-16

---- *He who is the blessed and only Sovereign...to Him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen*

Introduction: He was one of the greatest competitors during his playing days, willing to go after opponent, teammate or even youth on the court if he was challenged. He was the most prepared, hardest working, and arguably one of the best players of his era. Teammates knew that they had a chance to win every time he was on the court, but they also knew that they were expected to step up to his level if they dared put on the same uniform. A former teammate told a story of playing two on two at a youth camp, and Matt Barnes, who was coming off of knee surgery was expected to play at championship level at a kids summer camp, while his friend dunked on, blocked shots of, and pretty much destroyed the high school competition. His motivation to win was unparalleled, transferring thousands of hours of practice and watching game film to 5 championships and 2 MVP awards. He wanted to be great and he succeeded. His name was Kobe Bean Bryant, and though I personally despise that professional basketball team in Los Angeles, it is clear that Kobe had unique ability matched with uncommon motivation.

What motivates you? Seems like a simple question, but in the days we live in currently, the answer you give is critical. We face a time where everyone is affected, and many are struggling not just with the poles of fear and anger, but an equally destructive bought of **prolonged discouragement**. I've talked to many families where adults and kids alike are struggling to deal with what's going on around us, how long this will last, etc. Everyone has dealt with this differently, and some better than others. Trouble sleeping, lack of joy/happiness, down mood, and depression are commonplace right now. The hope this morning is not only that we can turn to a **greater motivation** to help our discouragement, but also continue to **fulfill our mission**. In other words, nothing has changed in our priorities in the gospel, and they will not moving forward. We still will fight to worship together, love one another, reach our neighbors with the good news through service and hospitality, will continue to train ourselves in God's Word, and seek to send out workers into the harvest. Our opportunity to do all of these has only grown over the last 8 months, not diminished. So understanding **how Paul motivated Timothy at the end of this letter is important**.

You'll remember that Timothy was a young man (compared to those he was seeking to minister to), in a new place of Ephesus, where he dealt with those committed to oppose him, those who taught a false gospel and had created a following, struggled with how to communicate well, and was discouraged in the whole venture. One could easily see his next step being "*What am I doing here? No one is listening, most don't want me here, I'm out!*" But we see **TWO TREMENDOUS** ways in which Paul helps Timothy see through the discouragement:

1) **He gave Timothy a full, deep, and pervasive picture of God Himself** - *What we truly believe about God comes out in crisis, trial, and opposition. What we truly believe about God separates our ability to move forward with joy in the midst of hard vs. us shutting down with no hope.* Here's what I mean. If you believe God is only sort of holy, you will not take your own holiness seriously. If God only has weak demands and is just happy that you took ANY interest in Him at all, you will not care if your commitment to Him is mediocre. If God is only sort of sovereign, then we will fear the future and be anxious in the unknown. If God is not fully loving, we will look at everything going on around us with a negative lens, that things are going against us for no reason, and again, no hope. *A proper view of God lived out by faith allows us to thrive in obedience in whatever circumstance we find ourselves.*

2) Doxology was not a landing zone but a catapult of motivation - Typically a doxology signals the end of a service or even letter, with a closing prayer or song that summarizes or concludes with last look at who God is. Here, Paul mixes doxology with command, and actually bookended the entire epistle this way. Look back at chapter 1:

1:3 - Timothy was **charged** to have certain leader to stop teaching false doctrine

1:5 - Paul reminded Timothy that the aim of his **charge was love**

1:18 - Timothy was **charged** to wage the good warfare with the entrusted gospel

NOTE that these charges or commands to begin the letter were mixed with **testimony of Jesus, the Person of God, and doxology**

1:15 - Jesus came into the world to save sinners, giving mercy, and displaying perfect patience

1:17 - Focus on the greatness of God lead to a **closing prayer**, but the letter was far from over!

NOW, look at 1 Timothy 6:13-16 and see the parallels:

6:13 - I **charge you, Timothy**, to keep the command unstained

6:13 - Testimony of Jesus before Pilate

6:13 - God gives life and displays Christ at the proper time

6:15-16 - A **doxology** directed at God, but one directed distinctly at Timothy's charge - this was not a token way to end but a pivotal reality that Timothy needed to embrace in order to keep going.

What we think about God is what we'll believe, and what we believe will dictate our ability to obey with joy. We live in an age where attention spans are shortening, we are addicted to social media, our devices, and much like a person sitting numbingly in front of a casino slot machine, we check our phones for the next piece of information the spinning wheel will get us. **How do we find encouragement and motivation to move forward?** We have a robust, real, deepening, thoughtful view of God and Jesus Christ. Not token, but real. Not a bunch of platitudes but desperately necessary truths that we cling to like our lives depended on it.

Finding Motivation to Fulfill the Mission (13-15a)

*I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in His testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, **to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach** until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which He will display at the proper time ---*

To capture the point of this section, we first have to see the **main charge or command to Timothy**: Keep going in what you've been commanded to doing, without stopping, sinning, or sinking, until Jesus returns. Paul was not setting dates here, but giving the expectation to every follower of Jesus Christ, that we continue on until we die and see Jesus (2 Cor. 5:8) or be alive long enough to see Jesus come a second time to earth. The command Timothy had was one he received by prophecy among many witnesses (1 Tim. 1:18), to teach the **gospel entrusted to him, to live it out in front of the church and**

world, and to all of this maintaining holiness and good conscience. For Timothy, this played out in the church at Ephesus. For us, the command would be the same. We are to **maintain our mission** until the time we die or Christ returns. It requires us to maintain our **priorities even while government may restrict or while a virus remains without antidote.** This requires wisdom, discernment, courage, thought, and proactive steps of faith. We were never called to "safety" or "comfort" in this world, so our charge would be: keep going, walking in all faithfulness and holiness, to all that God has commanded us in Christ.

What's our motive in this?

We have two powerful witnesses who see and know what is going on

Paul called on two witnesses, those who would both **see what was going on, help what was going on, and hold accountable the one they were witnessing.** These two were no big deal, only the GOD of the universe and His Son Jesus Christ! Remember, Jesus said He would never leave or forsake us (Heb. 13:5) and will be with us until the end of the age (Matt. 28:20). It is both *sobering & encouraging* to know God and Jesus Christ are BOTH active in our lives, even now, working out all things for our good and their pleasure.

We have the power of God the Father who gives life

God is the originator of all of life. Nothing that exists does so without God first speaking into existence (Gen. 1:1). Through Christ all things sustain or hold together (Col. 1:17) since everything was created FOR Him and through Him. But here, the point goes one step further, since the One who "gives life to all things" is the one who has the **power to raise the dead, to resurrect those who have died.** This sense ties into the testimony of Jesus and the focus on the return of Christ. When we know that the **worst that can happen to us is death**, and know that to live is Christ and to die is GAIN (Phil. 1:21), then we can truly wrestle with our fears of the unknown, especially in an unseen, microscopic enemy.

We have the testimony and example of Christ Jesus

The second witness is Jesus Christ Himself, and the emphasis is on His **testimony and good confession** before Pontius Pilate, which in itself is fascinating. *What was so extraordinary about this confession and how did it help Timothy* (and by extension, us)? You'll remember the story, particularly in **Luke 23:1-5** and **John 18:28-40**, how Jesus was brought to trial **illegally**, by the Jewish leaders since they themselves could not put anyone to death, so they needed the Romans. They accused Jesus of ***misleading the nation*** (FALSE), ***forbidding people from giving tribute to Caesar*** (FALSE), **and saying that He Himself was a king** (TRUE). Pilate asked Jesus the fundamental question, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus responded by asking if he was asking for himself (do you really want to get saved, Pilate?), or are you parroting what others have said. Jesus could have **stayed silent, taking the 5th** (sorry, the Vth), but instead He answered Pilate's question, explaining the reality of His kingdom and His kingship, sealing His death, since He had come to "**bear witness to the truth**". Pilate's response revealed his confused state, "*what is truth*"?

What would Timothy glean from the testimony of Jesus? In the midst of certain death, Jesus communicated the truth to Pilate, not fighting back, but continuing to fulfill His mission of bearing the truth, knowing that when He would die on the cross **His Father would raise Him up again!** (Acts 3:15). Keep going, Timothy, knowing the worst that can happen is death, but life will never end.

We have the assurance of vindication

Finally, Timothy had the assurance of the **appearing of the LORD JESUS CHRIST**, which would be displayed at the time of God's choosing. Remembering this is **difficult, isn't it?** When Jesus returns, it

will not be in death but life, not in willing suffering but glorious victory. *"When Christ, who is our life appears, then we also will appear with Him in glory (Col. 3:4).* All of our suffering, all the opposition, all the wrongs done will be made right. We will be with the goal of our life as we **see Him for who He is** (1 John 3:2. Now all of that is only hopeful is we **1) believe it, 2) desire it, 3) the One who can do it is trusted and powerful enough to make it happen.** That is where Paul transitions to focus on the Person of God the Father.

Focusing our Mind on God who Empowers the Mission (15b-16)

*"He who is the **blessed** and only Sovereign, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, who alone has **immortality**, who dwells in **unapproachable light**, whom no one has ever seen **or can see**. To Him be **honor and eternal dominion**. Amen."*

God is always happy and never frustrated

Sometimes we read through sections like this a little too quickly and miss important words. Notice that in Paul's description of God, He said that He is "The Blessed". The root word *makarios* means to be "happy, content, and fulfilled." That means that God **never gets frustrated, never gets fooled, never overreacts.** I was thinking of this Friday as I was at the second store trying to find Vanilla Frozen Yogurt on a wall of ice cream and could not find ANY that fit the bill, getting more and more frustrated with the whole frozen dairy isle! We get frustrated so easily, since our *plans rarely work out, our expectations rarely live up to the hype in reality, and things remain out of our control.* But everything God sets out to do, He does. Every situation and circumstance is bringing about His perfect plan, even when we cannot understand or comprehend how that could be.

God is content with what is going on in our lives, knowing that even the hard stuff is bringing about the **refining of our faith** (1 Pet. 1:6-8), causing us to cast ourselves on Him. In a time where frustration is extreme, we can take comfort and peace in the fact that God knows and is pleased with all that is going on, since it is accomplishing His grand purpose. It's like a **dad with his kids who can answer "we are almost there, and it will be worth it"** to kids questions about a trip to a favorite destination. Dad has been there before, knows how long it takes, and knows it will be worth it, even if the kids can only see a never ending sea of cars on the freeway. But Him being happy alone would not leave us hopeful if not for the next attribute:

God is not only powerful, He IS power

We have observed over the last months/years that truism that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Most of the world vies for power in some way, and when they get it, they most often use it for their own advantage and furthering their own agenda. In our political system, the party that is NOT in control complains and criticizes the one who is, until the tables are turned, in which case they don't want any complaints or criticism coming their way from the other party. Throughout history, any despot, king, ruler, leader, or dictator has developed an over-realized sense of worth, value, and actual authority. But here, we see that there is only one real **power, authority, sovereign, the Only King among kings and Only LORD among lowly lords.** In other words, God is absolute when it comes to power, and he is incorruptible in His use of it.

In **Isaiah 40**, see that God is described an **incomparable**, knowing all the stars by name, knowing their very number. He is everlasting and Creator of all the ends of the earth. **He never faints or grows weary,** never slumbers or sleeps, but as the rest of the world does, He keeps the entirety of the universe in the palm of His hand. He seeks no other counsel, and no other can be likened to Him. All other authorities on earth have to get their power from somewhere else: military, secret police, fear tactics, or even in Satan's case, delegated authority from God. But our God **"gives power to the faint", and "increases the**

strength of the one with no strength left" (Isa. 40:29). He is the only ONE, ever, who can will something and have it done completely, fully, and without question. He has no equal.

What does this help us with? We trust all things, then, to the fact that He is orchestrating all things, and since He will not be frustrated, we know that whatever is going on is part of His plan. We trust the election, a virus, and whatever happens with a lockdown to Him. We trust the souls of our kids, the future of this church, the future of our nation and even our health to the Only Sovereign, who has the power to change, fix, and do anything, which means **whatever is going on is actually going perfectly according to plan!** That is a comfort to keep in mind as we process all that is going on.

God alone possesses immortality

Not only is He in control with power, but He alone possesses eternity, the word *athanasia* meaning "deathless". We are finite, mortal beings who have a fixed timeline on this earth (Heb. 9:27). If not for our Creator God willing it, we would simply go back to dust, out of existence. But God, being One without beginning or end, who has always existed and will always exist, gives us the opportunity to live forever. What a gift from a good and loving God, who loved us before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3-4), who desired that we would live with Him forever. Again, this is our hope in life and death, that even if we are to die physically, we know that we will live forever, in perfect joy and righteousness. This frees us to LIVE proactively now, not in fear, not in isolation, but in love.

God is only light and possesses pure holiness

God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5). God is holy by nature, glorious in all that He does, and He cannot stand the presence of sin. This is called **unapproachable light** since Moses found out that because of His holiness, no man can *see God and live* (Exodus 33:20), when Moses asked to see His glory. He is holy, and demands holiness (1 Pet. 1:16). But here is the reality: *we will see God in the person of Jesus Christ* (1 John 3:2). Our wicked, sinful eyes cannot see God without our faces melting off, but in Jesus Christ, we have the perfect righteous One, the only one who could uphold God's holiness AND offer Himself in our place. The comfort we take is that **God never compromises, never capitulates, and though He lavishes grace, He does in truth.** He cannot lie because it goes against His very nature, so we can entrust ourselves to Him, believing that Jesus did die on the cross to take our place, that we can receive **forgiveness through His blood, and can be brought near to God**, despite our sin nature. He does this by making us holy, giving us Christ's righteousness, and giving us hope for the future that expresses itself in the present reality.

God is to be honored

God is to be honored, given praise, which means that our focus needs to be on Him, not ourselves. When we busy ourselves in knowing, praising, and loving God, we have little time to give into fear, anger, or discouragement. The only reasonable response is "AMEN", so be it.

Discouragement is real. Frustration is too. We feel it everyday, and these days have been long. When we focus on all the things out of our control or what COULD happen, we absolutely will convince ourselves that life is hopeless. And the truth is: without what we know about God and Christ, it absolutely would be. If God were not Creator, content, sovereign, immortal, and holy, we'd all have to curl up in a ball and hope things would somehow blow over and get better. The answer is: they may, or they may not in temporal sense. But either way, we have deep conviction enough to know that whatever takes place does so with God absolutely in control, fulfilling His promises, and giving us commands to fulfill. That is called motivation! Not to be the best, but because we serve the One who is. So we press on without fear, entrusting our weary soul to the one who never grows weary.