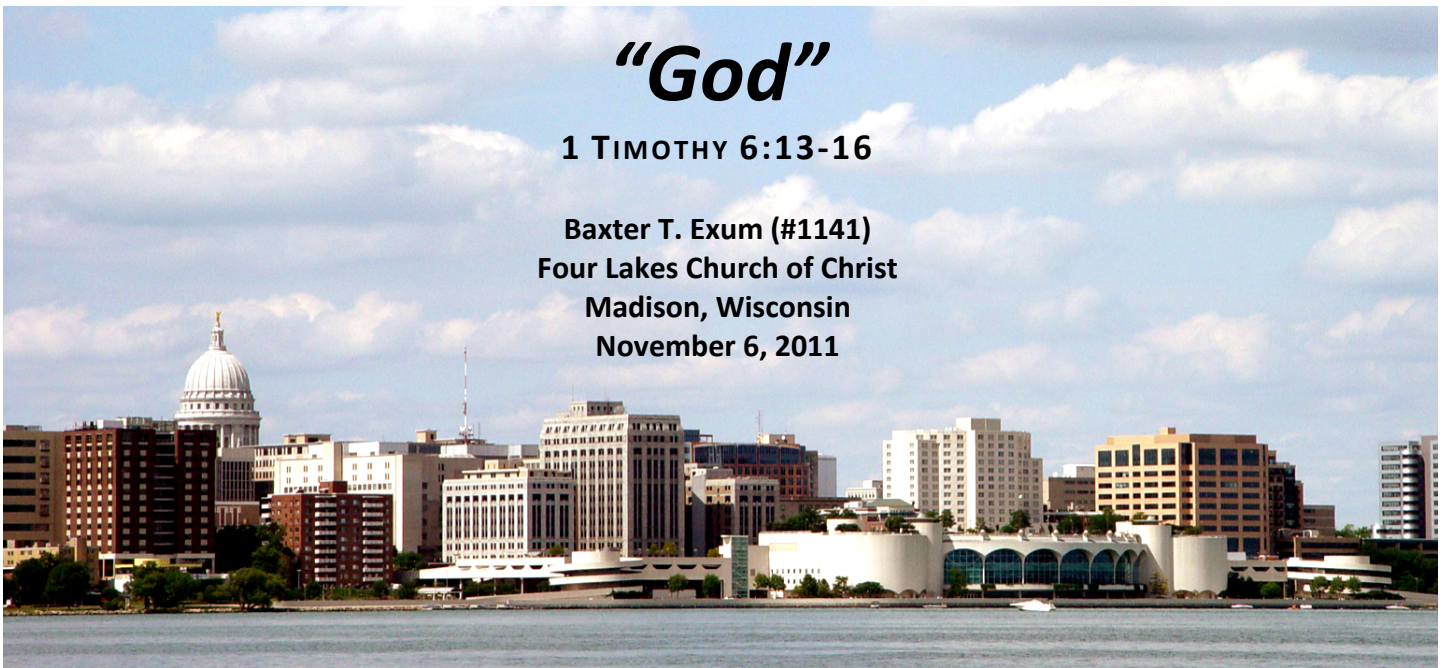


"God"

1 TIMOTHY 6:13-16

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This morning I would invite you to think with me about a passage of scripture that was written to a preacher who was facing some intense pressure to compromise. Several weeks ago, we finished a study of the book of Ephesians in the Wednesday evening adult Bible class. Well, this man was the preacher at that congregation. I am referring, of course, to a young man by the name of Timothy, and I am referring to a passage of scripture in the book of 1 Timothy. The young preacher was facing pressure from many different directions. Some of those in Ephesus wanted to turn the congregation away from the simplicity of the gospel. Others had already fallen away, and so there was the pressure of discouragement. Some would challenge Timothy because of his youth and lack of experience, and so there was the pressure of criticism. There were other problems within the congregation, and then on top of that, Timothy himself seems to have been plagued by a number of health concerns. He appears to have been somewhat of a frail individual. As far as his outward demeanor, Timothy appears to have been rather timid; that is, he was not naturally an outgoing individual. Perhaps today we might refer to him as being a little bit introverted. And so in that regard, I find myself being able to identify with Timothy. Personally, when I am around a lot of people, it makes me tired. It drains my energy. My wife, on the other hand, is an extrovert; that is, when she is around other people, she seems to feed off of that. Timothy, though, does not appear to have been a very outgoing individual. That's why, in 2 Timothy 1:7-8, Paul had to remind the young man that ***"...God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord..."***

Paul, then, wrote Timothy a letter (the book of 1 Timothy), and the letter contains a long series of commands encouraging Timothy to step up: Do this, deal with this in this way, tackle this problem, preach about this, live your life in this way, tell the church to do this, warn them about that, pursue righteousness, fight the good fight, run away from sin, and on and on and on. This morning, though I do not want us to focus on any of those commands. Yes, those things are incredibly important; however, most of us here this morning probably already know what we should and shouldn't be doing. But instead, I would like for us to focus on an encouraging description of God right near the very end of the entire book. It is almost as if Paul was saying: Timothy, I know I've given you a lot of information, but please, do not get discouraged! Remember the God who we serve! Remember who God really is!

As I have said many times before, I have no idea what kind of problems that some of you might be dealing with right now. In the same way, you might not know what I'm going through right now. All of us have our

own concerns. All of us have our own trouble: Health concerns, family issues, challenges with mental health, struggles with various sins, financial issues, job stress. And yet whatever the case may be, there is a value to pausing for just a few moments to refocus our thoughts on God. Again, we know what we've been told to do, but the struggle comes in trying not to get discouraged. This morning, then, I would like for us to think about a passage where God is described in some of the most powerful language, hoping that this will be an encouragement whether we are happy or sad or frustrated or sick or whatever we might be going through this morning.

I would invite you to turn with me to 1 Timothy 6. There is so much that we could consider in this chapter, but I would like for us to focus in very specifically on what Paul tells us about God in verses 13-16.

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.

Again, our focus this morning will be on God. I'd like for us to consider several of God's qualities, and then I would like for us to close with just a brief "So what?" question concerning what this passage really means for us today.

- I. **But first of all, let us start by considering WHAT WE LEARN ABOUT GOD in these four verses.**
 - A. And let us begin with the fact that God is the one who gives life to all things (verse 13).

We remember the very first verse in the entire Bible. In Genesis 1:1, the Bible says, ***"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."*** In other words, everything we see around us (all life) started with God. But unlike a scientist or engineer who might start with raw materials in a lab of some kind, we find in the Scriptures that God started with nothing, even to the point that absolutely everything was made by God. I know sometimes we pay attention to those little labels that tell us where something was made. Most things, it seems, are made in China (this remote control, this mp3 recorder, etc.). But what if everything God made had a label? What if every tree said, "Made by God"? What if the ocean had a label, "Made by God"? What if every newborn baby came with a label, "Made by God"? But that is really the way it is. According to Paul, God is the one who gives life to all things.

But as we continue reading the Bible, we find that God not only created life, but He sustains life. In other words, God keeps us living. In Paul's sermon on the Areopagus in Athens, Greece, in Acts 17, Paul was reasoning with the philosophers and referring to God, Paul said that, ***"He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; ...for in Him we live and move and exist."*** God, then, not only made everything we see around us, and God not only created life, but ***"in Him we live."*** As we sometimes sing, "There is a God, He is alive, in Him we live, and we survive." God is the one who gives life to all things. We praise God for creating and preserving life! As we deal with problems, there is comfort in knowing that God gives life to everything.

- B. We discover something else about God down in verse 15 as we find that God is the blessed and only sovereign.

When Paul uses the word **“sovereign,”** he uses a word that is the basis of our English word “dynasty,” and it refers to a powerful ruler, and the word goes back to the idea of having the power to get something done. Our God is a God who has the power to get things done. When we go looking for a president or a governor, we want a man or a woman who can do something. We don’t want someone who just looks nice or gives nice speeches, but we want a leader who can do stuff. That’s the idea behind the word **“sovereign.”** Our God is a God who gets things done.

C. At the end of verse 15, we now find that God is the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

I know sometimes it is hard for us here in the United States to think in terms of a king, because, not only do we not have a king here, but this nation was formed because we did not like kings! As a nation, we rebelled against the king of England. He started taxing our stuff, and we said, “No! We’re not going to take it anymore!” So, we don’t like kings. However, we can look back in history, and we understand the concept. A king is a ruler. A king is someone who is in charge. The Jewish people would have been familiar with kings. Back in the days of Samuel, they had demanded a king. God very reluctantly granted their request. They were given King Saul, King David, and King 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 was like to live under a king.

When Jesus 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.”** Very interesting! In fact, that is amazing! The Messiah that the prophets had been looking for for hundreds of years had actually been born a king. As I think about that, I realize that that’s not the way it normally happens. Normally, kings are not born, are they? But usually, a king is ruling and has a son, who is then a prince and then the prince grows up to be the king. Right? But Jesus was unique in that He was actually born as a King! And the reason is: Jesus is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. And I realize that we might be mixing God the Father with God the Son, here, but that is not really the point of this passage. The point here is that we are talking about God in general, we are talking about Deity. God is our King. He is the Lord; that is, God is the ruler, God is the master, He is the Lord of all other masters and lords. God is our boss’s Boss, we might say. He is our principal’s Principal. He is the God that we worship, and He is the God that we come to know through Jesus Christ. Hopefully this will also give us comfort as we face our various struggles.

D. There is something else we learn about God in this passage, and that is, He alone possesses immortality.

You know, sometimes we hear and discuss the word “euthanasia.” Do you remember what that word means? It refers to a “good death,” as if there is such a thing. Well, the word that Paul uses here is similar, but the prefix is different. Instead of “eu” (referring to something being good), Paul uses the prefix “a,” and when you put an “a” in front of a Greek word, it basically turns it into a negative; it means “no.” And so instead of “euthanasia” (referring to a good death), Paul uses the word “athanasia” (referring to the fact that God cannot die). Literally, our God is “without death.” He cannot die. He is the “deathless One.” He is the “Unable to Die God.” As Paul words it here in verse 16, He is the God who alone possesses deathlessness, as we might say.

As God, therefore, He will always be there for us. He will never be laid up in the hospital with some kind of fatal infection. He will never be sick. He will always be there for us. He is the God who will never die. He is immortal and eternal.

E. And then (in the middle of verse 16), we find that God dwells in unapproachable light.

Over and over again in the Bible, we read about God and light being connected. In 1 John 1:5, for example, we read that *"...God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all."* We find in John 8:12 that Jesus referred to Himself when He said, *"I am the light of the world."* Back in Psalm 119:105, we find that God's word is a *"...lamp to [our] feet and a light to [our] path."* Several times in the Bible, God's people are referred to as being *"sons of light."* Light, therefore, is good. Light overpowers darkness. Light exposes 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. I mean, that would just be a rude thing to do. However, 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. You see, the darkness had given everyone in that family the courage to violate the family rule. Light is a powerful force.

And so we come back to Paul's words here concerning the fact that God dwells in unapproachable light. The brightest light most of us have really seen is probably the sun. Even from a distance of 93 million miles, the heat of the sun can blister human skin in just a few hours. You can get burned by a source of light that takes more than 8 minutes to get here! Or consider this: We have put men on the moon. We are now planning manned missions to Mars. We are now planning manned missions to an asteroid. But think about it: Nobody has ever suggested a manned mission to the sun. And I think we know why! The sun is unapproachable.

But even the sun is just something that God created. He created the trees, and the bugs...and the sun! The sun is just something else that God created. God, therefore, is more powerful than the sun. In Hebrews 1:3, we find that Jesus is the *"radiance"* of God's glory. God, therefore, dwells in unapproachable light. I think we are talking here about God's holiness. God is not like us. God is separate. In fact, the book of Revelation explains that when we get to heaven, there will be no need for the sun, because God will illumine the city. God dwells in unapproachable light, and that should be of some comfort to us as we face challenges and disappointments, that God is more powerful than we are.

F. And we find something else about God here at the end (in verse 16), as we find that God is a being whom no man has seen or can see.

In other words, God is invisible, as Paul pointed out earlier in this book (in 1 Timothy 1:17). And I don't really know exactly what this means. I guess it could mean (in at least one sense) that we cannot fully comprehend God, that we cannot see and understand all of God at one time. Someone has tried to explain this by having us imagine standing on a picture that is infinitely wide in all directions, and for a lifetime we stand there examining the picture. We travel for hundreds and thousands of miles examining the pixels (we might say) under our feet, and right before we die we realize that we have been looking at the thumb of God in that picture. That's hard to imagine, isn't it? And so maybe in that way, God is *"invisible."* He cannot truly be seen. God is not an object we can look at and say, "This is God!" I'm thinking this is why God has always had such a problem with idolatry. There is no image or statue that can even come close to capturing a likeness of who He really is.

But then again, maybe Paul means that God really is invisible in a literal sense. We know from other passages that God is a Spirit, and so perhaps in that sense it is impossible to see God. But that doesn't mean that we cannot know God. Sometimes I imagine a child being born blind. Is it possible for that child to know his parents? Absolutely! That child can know his parents based on their touch, based on the care that they provide, based on the words that they speak. And maybe in some limited way, that is how it is with God. As Peter said in 1 Peter 1:8, *"...though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory."*

II. **So, we have learned something about God this morning, and I hope this has been encouraging in some way, but as we come to the end of this passage, I would like for us to just briefly notice two more little things at the very end of verse 16, and we might refer to this as OUR REACTION TO GOD. When we think about who God really is, THIS IS WHAT WE DO ABOUT IT.**

A. And first of all, we notice here that Paul says: To Him be honor.

That is why we are here this morning, to honor God. When we consider that God gives life to all things, when we consider that He is the blessed and only Sovereign, when we consider that He is the King of kings and Lord of lords, when we think about the fact that God is immortal, when we consider that He dwells in unapproachable light, and when we think about the fact that God is invisible, we react by saying: Yes, Lord! You are the One! You are the One that we worship! And again, that is why we are here, to honor God, to respect God for who He is.

B. But then secondly, when we consider who God is, we also admit and acknowledge that God has eternal dominion.

And yes, God would have this whether we admit it or not, but it is much better for us to be with God on this! And so again, we praise God this morning for His dominion, for His strength, and might, and power. And then Paul closes with the word **"AMEN."** The word means, "Let it be so." It means that this is a true statement. When we say the word "Amen" after a prayer, or a song, or a sermon, it means that we agree with what has been said. It means that we approve of something. Paul, then, is emphasizing that these words are true. As amazing as it seems, God is real, and He is alive. To Him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

Conclusion:

I am so thankful that we have had the chance to learn something about God this morning. The Bible certainly tells us a lot of things that we are to do and not to do. But I cannot think of a single command or even a single challenge we might face that is not made somewhat easier by knowing more about who God really is. Are you having some struggles at school or at work? Remember who God is! Are you struggling with what the Bible says about sin and repentance? Remember who God is! Are you facing some pressure to compromise with a friend? Remember who God is! Are you struggling with some kind of challenging family situation? Remember who God is! No matter what we might have to deal with, knowing who God is makes it better.

As we close, I would simply ask: Do you personally have a close relationship with God? When we sin, that relationship breaks down. But thankfully, God has a plan to make things right. He sent His only Son as a sacrifice for our sins. We respond to that sacrifice by turning away from sin, doing whatever it takes to do a U-turn as we turn our lives back toward God. At that point, we publicly admit our belief in Jesus as the Son of God. That is the **"good confession"** (in verse 13). Jesus made the good confession before Pontius Pilate. Pilate

said, ***“Are you the King of the Jews,”*** and at that point, the pressure was on! At that point, Pilate had the power of life and death; Pilate had the power of crucifixion at his disposal, ***“Are you the King of the Jews?”*** And at that point, Jesus said, ***“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. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice.”*** The voice of God tells us in the Scriptures that we must be buried with Christ in baptism, so that our sins can be forgiven.

If you have any questions about the Christian faith, I would encourage you to work those things out sooner rather than later. If we can help in some way, please let us know, but knowing how powerful and amazing God is, please, do not put it off. If you are ready to obey the gospel, you can let us know about your decision as we sing this next song. Let’s stand and sing...

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