

Called To Lead
Pastor Ty Blackburn
1 Timothy 6:11-12
June 15, 2014

May the Lord bless you, and make His face shine upon you young people today. I'm going to invite you to turn with me in your Bible to 1 Timothy 6. You may have noticed in your bulletins, the forms for elder/deacon nominations. Every two years we nominate potential elders and deacons, and we take this responsibility very seriously. The church is called by God to be led by the many set apart, so the process that we use to discern those men that He set apart is that the congregation nominates men that they see that seem to be set apart by the Lord, exhibit the character that elders and deacons as set forth in Scripture. Then the elders, those nominations, talk with potential candidates for those offices. Then we have a period of training, several months of training from August through December, in which they are interviewed, their wives are interviewed, and then if after the training the elders feel that they are ready to move forward, then we present them to the congregation for a vote. Then they have to receive an overwhelming majority of votes from the congregations. Then they are set into their offices. So it is an important thing that we do, as I said, every two years, because it takes basically a year to do the whole process once you nominate, we do it every other year. Otherwise we would just be nominating and starting up again right after that. It also gives the church time for the Lord to set apart new men.

Well, I want you to be aware of those, be praying about those nominations. The nominations are open the next three Sundays, through June, the 15th, the 22nd, and the 29th. Be in prayer that the Lord would set apart those men that He would add to our offices. We have six elders now, seven deacons, and we want the Lord to guide this process. Each time we do that, we feel that it is such an important thing, that I usually preach at least a couple of messages on leadership in the church. Sometimes more, two years ago, and four years ago, we preached messages on elders and deacons qualifications. I'm going to do that with a little different twist. We're going to return to 1 Timothy, as I said, 1 Timothy 6, and I've chosen this topic because what we're going to have, we're going to look at Paul's words to Timothy, his exhortation to Timothy, and when you look at it in context of all that he says in his first epistle to Timothy, what you see is Paul is calling Timothy to be a man of God, and he's calling Timothy as he leads the church to set apart men of God to lead the church. So as we look at what it means to be a man of God, we look at what an elder and a deacon ought to be, moving in direction of being men like this.

I've also chosen this topic because it is about the fundamental importance of leadership. The reality makes such a difference, the kind of leadership that you have. This is true in the mundane things of even things like sports. Championships are won by teams with leadership. Excellent athletes, yes, but what makes the difference between the teams that have such excellent athletes? It is leadership. Companies, great companies, have great leadership. How history is replete with examples of nations being blessed, history being shaped by great leadership, great national leaders. The difference that good leadership makes, it is amazing the difference in leadership when it changes from bad to good, or good to bad, the impact it has on a country, and not just that country, but on the shape of history.

One of the interesting stories that I think too many have forgotten today, which needs to be reread and looked at by many Americans is the story of the transition of leadership in England, from Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain to Winston Churchill in 1940. What a difference leadership made. Neville Chamberlain was a 'peace at any cost' appeaser as a leader. As Hitler devoured, began devouring bigger and bigger bites of Europe, first with the Rhineland, then Austria, then Czechoslovakia, the Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia. The nations of Europe were basically in an attitude, "We don't want to fight," and so Neville Chamberlain was the Prime Minister of England, and the Munich Pact, he met with Hitler in Munich, Germany, and got Hitler to promise, it was kind of like asking a crocodile, "If I give you my leg, will you promise you won't eat anymore," and the crocodile says, "Yes." He went and he said, "If we give you the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia, we don't declare wars as we're bound to by our treaties with Czechoslovakia, will you stop?" And he said, "Yes," and so he comes back with a document, and the famous saying as he got off the plane there in London, "Peace for our time. Peace with honor." He had the paper that Adolf Hitler had signed. Boy, that was worth a lot. Hitler was just buying time.

Winston Churchill had actually read Hitler's book, Mein Kampf, and knew he was buying time because he basically laid out a strategy in Mein Kampf for world domination, but everybody didn't want to look at the reality, they wanted to look at what they wanted to be true. And appeasement never works when you are dealing with wicked, sinful, power-hungry leaders. Winston Churchill, when he took over, what a difference he made. If not for Churchill, what would the map of Europe look like? Finally Chamberlain is humiliated as Hitler then goes into Poland, and he has to step down. Actually, no, he stays on after Poland, I'm sorry. I'm not getting my WWII history right. That starts in September and he continues on until May when Hitler finally breaks through into France, and is basically attacking all of Western Europe. Neville Chamberlain has to step down. Churchill is one of the

two candidates that are put forward. There was another guy, I forget his name right now off the top of my head, but a leading leader in the House of Lords who was for appeasement, and it was to these two guys that they were looking. They chose Churchill who was ready to fight. It was that close of a decision. What a difference it would have made had they not chosen Churchill. I think German might be the official language of England right now. It could even been the U.S. We would have been by ourselves. The Germans and the Japanese basically dictating to us what to do.

So leadership makes a tremendous difference. If it shapes the future, if it shapes the map, and the world, how much more does it shape the church, and shape the family? Leadership is so important. So Paul's words to Timothy in the first epistle basically are making that point again and again, the importance of leadership, and he's calling Timothy to lead. This is a pastoral epistle. That is, it is one of the three letters of Paul that were written not to churches, but to pastors in particular. You know, you have the Corinthians, Philippians, Galatians, these are letters written to people in cities or in regions, churches, but in Timothy and Titus, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, you have letters written directly to the pastor that show how you are to lead the church. This is where God gives us specific direction on how He wants His church run. We see this in the *Pastoral Epistles*, and in 1 Timothy particularly, we see Paul calling Timothy to lead. The title of the message is 'Called to Lead', and this message is really for every man because every man ought to aspire to be a godly leader. Every Christian man ought to aspire to have the qualifications, the character to be an elder or a deacon. And every man, whether he is a father or not, is called to be a leader in society, to be the kind of man that someone around you would want to follow, and that you could say, "Follow me as I follow Christ." Of course the principles that we're going to apply also apply to women. This is what every child of God ought to want to be. 'Called to Lead – Being a Man of God', that is the title, and it comes from 1 Timothy 6:11-12. There we read:

***1 Timothy 6:11-12 ~ 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.***

Let's pray together.

Father, we ask that You might grant by Your Spirit, through Your word, that in Your light we might see light. That You might impress Your truths upon our hearts, and bring about repentance, and faith, and the glory of Your Son. We pray in His name, Amen.

Being a man of God, what the world needs most today is men of God. That is what the world has always needed most at every moment in history, it needs men of God. The best hope for America, the best hope for anything, the best hope for the family is men of God. What we see in this passage is that Paul summarizes for us three things that characterize the man of God. Three things a man of God is known by, three things here in this passage. Now we're going to look at the first two today, and Lord-willing, the third one next Sunday. I borrowed my outline from John MacArthur although it flows pretty well from the text, but the second point particularly, the alliteration of it I owe to him. The first two are obviously right there in the text. The three things that characterize the man of God, a man of God is known by what he flees from, what he follows after. Turn, pursue, and to follow after, I like that. He is known by what he flees from, he's known by what he follows after, and he's known by what he fights for. So we are going to look at the first two today, if we are able to cover those two completely, and the third next Sunday. A man of God is known by what he flees from, and he is known by what he follows after. Verse 11:

1 Timothy 6:11 ~ But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.

There you have those two points. He's known by what he flees from, and he's known by what he pursues, or what he follows after.

1) A Man of God is Known by What He Flees From:

Now the word 'flee' there is an imperative, it is a command. He says to Timothy, ***But flee from these things, you man of God,...*** To be a man of God, you must flee from these things. The word is the Greek word 'pheugō'. It means 'to run, to make a getaway'. The etymology of our English word 'fugitive' comes from the Greek word 'pheugō'. A fugitive is a man who is always running. There was a movie some 20 years ago, 'The Fugitive', based on a TV show. I never saw the TV show when I was young. I think it was about the time I was born in the 60's that it came on. David Janssen was the fugitive, remember? If you've seen it, basically the story was he was on the run. He is the same doctor that the movie was made about. He was accused of murdering his wife. He wasn't guilty, but the police are hunting

him down, and so every week he is having to escape. He is always on the run. He is the fugitive.

What Paul is saying is that the man of God lives his life perpetually on the run. He is running for his life. He is a fugitive. It is a present tense imperative. That is continuous, ongoing action. He is not just saying flee one time, he is saying, "Flee and keep on fleeing. Run! Keep running!" What is he fleeing from? We're going to see from sin. He's fleeing from the world. He's fleeing from temptation, the works of the devil, but we first of all see the earnestness of it. It is not a light thing. To be a man of God in this world, you have to be committed to running. Things are so pleasant for us in so many ways in American life, things so sanitized. We get lulled into a false sense of security, that things are okay when they are not. What God is saying is, "Listen, you must be on the run. You must see the reality, the dangers that are very real, even though not visible to the naked eye. They are invisibly everywhere."

Thinking about this, think about what it would be like if you were camping out in the Serengeti. I'm not much of a camper anyway. I like the comedian that says, "If it's so great outdoors, why are all the bugs trying to get in my house?" But if I was camping, I wouldn't camp in the Serengeti. Can you imagine? Camping out and knowing that at night that's when the cats really come out. Prides of lions, leopards that stealthily stalk, sneak up on. In the daytime the cheetahs can run you down. Cobras, you're looking behind you, you're watching the ground. Black Mambas, I mean, I'm getting scared just talking about this. Crocodiles, wild dogs, hyenas, hippopotami. That sounds kind of funny, doesn't it? Hippopotami? But anyway, all these animals that you have to be aware of, and if you were living out there you would be on the alert. It wouldn't be like a normal walk through the mountains of North Georgia, a hike. You would be scanning the horizon, looking in the grass, "Is that a lion over there lurking in the low grass?" Every sound that you heard you'd be aware of, and you would see that life was all about survival. You would be in survival mode, the goal is to stay alive. Paul says, "That is how you live the Christian life, man of God. The reality is you have an enemy who is a lion, seeking whom it may devour, and you are to be sober and vigilant," Peter says, 1 Peter 5:8. Don't be drunk, don't be distracted with the things of the world, and the joys of life so that you forget in the drunkenness of the joy of life, just enjoying life. I'm talking about that kind of drunkenness. You forget that you are being pursued. You must run from these things. You must run like a man on the run from a wild animal. That is how you need to act in relationship to these things. "Flee these things," Paul says.

What are these things? What is he talking about when he says, “Flee from these things.”? Well, the context tells us. Verses 9-10 sums up one of the things that shows us he’s talking about sin. He’s talking about the world system. He’s talking about the temptations of Satan. Basically, the axis of evil that we must battle against—the flesh, the world, and the devil. Look what he says in Verse 9:

1 Timothy 6:9-11 ~ But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. 11 But flee from these things,...

The love of money is the one foremost in his mind because he’s been talking about false teachers in verses before that, and he leads up to their motivation being they think that teaching about God, and about Christ, is a means to gain, financial gain. “They are doing it for the money, but you, man of God, flee from this! The love of money is something to run from.” It is interesting, Paul in writing a second letter to Timothy, in 1 Timothy 2:24, uses exactly the same phrase. He actually uses exactly what we have, “Flee and pursue.” Remember 6:11?

1 Timothy 6:11 ~ But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness,...

Look at 2 Timothy 2:22, his second letter to Timothy he says:

2 Timothy 2:22 ~ Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace,...

So there he says ... ***flee from youthful lusts...*** and the idea is to flee from the sins of this world. Flee from the lusts of the flesh. All sorts of evil come from letting the desires of your heart go unbridled, that the nature of sin in you is so powerful that you must see it as something you’re running from. He’s talking about what John says in 1 John 2:15-16:

1 John 2:15-16 ~ Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

...*youthful lusts*... 2 Timothy 2:22, the lust for impurity, sexual sin, seems to be primarily in view when he exhorts Timothy there, “Flee from that. Flee from the lust for things, flee from the lust for pleasure.” Paul says, “Listen, the nature of being a follower of Jesus Christ, though your heart has been renewed, you have a new heart if you are truly a Christian, you’ve been born again. You have a new nature, but even with that new nature, that new disposition that loves God, that wants to please God, when it comes to dealing with sin and the pleasures of this world, the desires of this world, you need to see yourself as on the run. You don’t take it lightly.” You are running for your life. Sin is chasing you, and the picture of running, what is he talking about? When you are dealing with, for instance, sexual sin, when you’re dealing with a temptation to commit sexual sin, you don’t linger around it and think about it. You know like, “I really shouldn’t do this. I know I shouldn’t give in to this lustful thought. I shouldn’t give in to this expression of wanton, sexual desire. I know it’s not good. Really I’m just thinking of it theoretically.” He says, “Run! Get away from it. Don’t sit there and think about it, just get away.” Sometimes that means physically change the channel, turn off the TV, and leave the room. It means turn off the computer and become accountable to someone because you looked at something that you shouldn’t look at, and the power of it is that even for the child of God it is an enslaving power. There is a magnetism, a gravitational power that you must get away from. The love of money, always thinking about what you want, thinking about the pleasures of life, the pleasures of food, all the things that God has given us that are good that can be enjoyed in His presence, and with thanksgiving, can become things which can enslave us. When you feel that reality knocking at your door, “Run!” he says. Have the kind of intensity that an antelope has on the Serengeti. He is going to escape.

It is the kind of attitude that Joseph had. Remember when Joseph was in Potiphar’s house? He had been sent down into Egypt as a slave, sold to a man named Potiphar. There he is faithful to God. He doesn’t grumble and complain against God, although God has acted in a way contrary to what he expected. Remember He told Him, “You’re going to be the ruler of your people,” and the next thing you know he is in chains, but he is faithful to God. The Lord is with him and he’s being blessed. Everything he does is blessed for Potiphar, and then one day Potiphar’s wife, an Egyptian woman, known for their beauty, the seductive power of the Egyptian woman, she tries to seduce him. Potiphar is out, she takes the opportune moment, and she entices him into an inappropriate relationship. She asks him to be involved with her. What does he do? He immediately rejects and rebuffs that. He brings God into it which is the best way to flee things. “How can I do this thing and sin against God?” She grabs ahold of him, he knows there is no more time for talking. There are no more words to be said to this woman, he lets her have his

coat, and he runs. That is what the man of God does. We must see it as running for our lives. The problem is, we think, because sin is so deceptive, we find ourselves struggling with things because we think that there is life in them. We don't realize that it is death. I suggest three practical ways to run from these things, three suggested applications.

One of the ways that you run from the desires of this world is you make sure that you are together with Christians. One of Satan's most effective ways to get you more and more wrapped up into sin is to get you to isolate yourself more and more. We need to be counterintuitive. There are a lot of times where we feel like, "I can't go to church right now because of how I'm struggling." That is a stupid way to think. When you are struggling is a time when you must be with the people of God. When you feel the weight of sin, and the burden of guilt, and condemnation upon you because of your sin, you've got to seek out the presence and the face of God, with the people of God. So be together and don't let yourself ever get lulled into a complacency that says, "I can go it on my own."

Patti and I were watching a PBS special a while back, just a little bit. I flipped on the channel, and I'm always fascinated, even though I don't want to live in the Serengeti, I am fascinated by it. So she is sitting there with me, she watched it for a minute with me. I don't know if she remembers it like I did. She might have been reading by this time, but there were wildebeests and zebras trying to cross a river. You might have seen this. I mentioned the crocodiles. I mean, it's a tough place to live. To cross the river, to get to the new pasture land they've got to get to so that they can stay alive, they've got to cross a river with crocodiles who know they are coming. The crocodiles know every year about this time the wildebeests come, and the zebras come, lunch time. So this large group of wildebeests is going to cross, and man, they look like just dumb animals, don't they? I mean, the name fits them, wildebeests. They are just bewildered beasts. So they are coming down to the water, and the herd is pushing the ones in front. They are like, "I can't find a good place to move down the bank, guys. Can you all hold on a moment?" There is none of that, they are just pushing them on down. You've just got to make the best you can. They're falling in the water, and then they swim across the water and there's no place to get out, because they didn't stop to think, "Hey, where's the best place to cross?" and so they're just going everywhere trying to find a way out.

Now, the person that's narrating the documentary says the zebras think more independently. They don't think in a herd mentality. They actually think more as individuals, and they're a little better strategically, thinking, "Where do I need to go across?" But do you know what's interesting? Crocodiles eat more zebras than

they eat wildebeests. I mean, in this kind of situation they do. At least they did this day, and this is what they told me on the PBS special. Don't always believe what they tell you on the PBS special, but what happens is that the instinct to stay together of the wildebeest means all the hooves swimming in the water right together, the horns, everything, and the crocodile has trouble focusing on it. I mean, he's distracted. It's kind of like it makes him ADD. "I can't decide what to bite. There's too much stuff going on." But when a zebra is going across in single file, nice and orderly, "Hey, I can handle that."

Isn't that amazing that the instinct to stay together in the herd means they survive together better? There's a truth there. We need the instinct to stay together as a herd. God doesn't will us to be Lone Ranger Christians. We need one another, and the Scripture makes this so clear. The New Testament is replete with exhortations, all the *one anothers*. Search the Bible and just use the phrase *one another*. In the New Testament, more than three dozen times you'll find that phrase together, one another, encourage one another, love one another, pray for one another. Don't forsake the assembling together of one another. Be together. So that's one of the ways we flee. When we realize that we're feeling the power of sin begin to grab a hold of us, we feel like that the desires of my heart aren't where they need to be, what do you do? You get with Christians and you tell them, "Pray for me." So be together.

The second thing relating to that is to be transparent. There needs to be somebody that you're transparent with. "I need to have you pray for me. I'm struggling." Hebrew 3:12-13 says that we are to encourage one another while it is still called today, lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. "See to it that none of you fall away," he says. The idea is that the Christian who's made a profession of faith, that if he's truly saved, he won't fall away, but there are many who have made professions of faith who will be shown to be false converts by falling away. And what's the way that we're supposed to combat that? Be together encouraging one another, continuing to speak the Gospel to each other. Speak the word to each other. Pray for one another, so that we continue to work together to traverse life in this hostile territory of this fallen world. You share with someone that you can trust, the struggle that you're going through. We need accountability. Be together. Be transparent.

Thirdly, be teachable. When you're together, be teachable. When you come together, don't come together in pride, but be ready to say, "Brother, what do I need to do? Help me." One of the realities of being a Christian, and I see this as a pastor in ministry, is that the Lord intends for all of us to be teachable, and one of

the most telling, destructive elements in someone's life is when they become unteachable. The most Godly people are the most teachable, but pride when it comes up and we don't feel like we have anything to learn, we are in danger. So when we come together and we say, "Look, I'm struggling," then be ready to listen to what they have to say. In James 1, the apostle James gives us counsel in this way. He says in Verse 19:

James 1:19 ~ This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

The idea is you get together with other Christians and you are to be quick to listen, slow to speak, listen, and then receive the word implanted to help you put off all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness. In humility, receive the word. It's an amazing reality that the Lord has just made us as Christians as His people so that we need other people to tell us what we already know ourselves. Isn't it amazing how that's true? Somebody else can have a problem, they come to you and tell you, and you even see before they get through telling you, the problem. "I know exactly what you need to do." Now, sometimes we're too quick. We've got to be quick to listen and slow to speak even as we're going to give counsel, but that's the reality, isn't it? We can see over there so clearly, but then turn me around, I have basically the same exact problem with a slightly different window dressing, and I'm sitting there thinking, "What is wrong? What do I do?" That's why if I'm together and I'm transparent and I'm teachable, somebody else tells me, "Listen, what you need to do is what you told me last year," and I'm like, "Thank you so much." God has made us to need one another. So be together, be transparent, and be teachable. Flee from sin. Realize that we're in a mode. We must run for our lives, and we need to do it together with other believers. But a man of God is not just known by what he flees from.

2) He's Known By What He Follows After:

We saw in 1 Timothy 6:11, "Flee and pursue." He runs for his life but he's not just running for his life to escape what's behind him. He's running with focus on what's in front of him, and in fact, the best way to run from sin, and run from evil, and run from the world, is to run clearly after righteousness and holiness. You're chasing it. You're not just being chased. You're chasing holiness. That's the picture, and that's why Paul used the couplet. Both places we saw it.

1 Timothy 6:11 ~ But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness,...

And then 2 Timothy 2:22 says:

2 Timothy 2:22 ~ Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness,...

So the man of God is not just being chased, but he's chasing after something, and what we see in this Verse 11, we see six things he's chasing:

1 Timothy 6:11 ~ ...pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.

We're supposed to chase these things, to set our sights on these things, and Paul says this is what will mark out the men of God who are to lead and who are able to lead. They're men who are running away from sin and they're running after holiness. Now, this list of six things, I think it breaks down this way. I think the first two in some sense are more general goals, and the last four are in a sense they're goals as well, but they're more like objectives to get to the larger goals. The first two are the larger goals that you're to have your sights on, and the next four are the ways that you work on getting to the larger goals.

The first two, righteousness and godliness, I think these are basically two sides of one coin. Righteousness means that your life is conforming to an outside standard. The word δίκαιος (dikaios) righteous in Greek, means that which conforms to the standard, and so it pictures external conformity, that when you look at the man's life, when you look at the woman's life, what you see is a life that conforms to the standard that God has set forth for His people. The life is moving toward external conformity, but it's not just external conformity. No, true righteousness comes from the heart, and so he gives us the term *godliness*, and this really reflects the inward motivation, the inward disposition, that really results in righteousness.

The word *godly* is an English word that translates a word, and it really doesn't translate it well, because godliness really sounds to me like righteousness, doesn't it? I mean, righteous, to be godly, means to be like God, therefore to be righteous, and it's one of those problems of translating a word. Sometimes it's hard to go from one language to another and capture the essence of the word. You capture part of it, but the real essence of this Greek word translated *godliness* is the idea of reverence.

In fact, it's a word made by the prefix eu (εὖ). It's *eu* like eulogy is another word. It comes from that eu beginning. εὖ means good or well. Eulogy = εὖ (good) + λόγος (word), a good word spoken at a funeral. That's the eulogy. The word here is εὐσέβεια (eusebeia), and σέβομαι (sebomai) means to be reverent, to step back in the presence of holiness, to recognize something holy and step back. And so the idea when you put σέβομαι (sebomai) with the eu (εὖ) prefix, it means well-directed reverence. It means that this person is living his life where in his heart, he's living reverently before God the way he ought to. So his outward life conforms to the standard. Look at his life. It's righteous. I mean, he's not perfect, but he's moving toward the standard externally. But how is he doing that? It's because his heart, he's living his life, and how do you grow in righteousness? You grow in the fear of the Lord. That's what well-directed reverence means. It's the same thing the Old Testament called the fear of the Lord. It means to live all of your life as in the presence of God, and this is what we ought to have as our objective. All of us as Christians, but particularly men who want to lead their families, men who want to lead the church, we must be people who our lives externally are becoming more righteous because our hearts are internally becoming more surrendered to God. This means that every moment we're trying to cultivate a mindset, "I'm in the presence of God."

I like to use this analogy that you're walking into your house after a day at work and you say, "Honey, I'm home!" and you're throwing your keys down. You're beginning to just relax, maybe being a little bit loud, "I'm home!" and you drop your briefcase down loudly. Well, if you were doing that and you came in and you realized that your wife was praying there with three friends, that they were in the middle of prayer, how would that change the way you came in? "Hon....!" and you'd silence yourself. You'd stop making the racket you're making. Just stepping on the floor you're suddenly aware of the fact, "I need to be quiet even how I'm walking. I need to tip-toe. I need to back away." That's reverence.

That's what this word σέβομαι (sebomai) means. εὐσέβεια (eusebeia) means well-directed reverence. It means that I'm always realizing and remembering, "Wait a minute. I'm in the presence of something holy. Wait a minute. Even as I'm eating this meal, even as I'm going about my business doing this task, wait a minute. I'm remembering I'm in the presence of God. This is for Him." And so we have to cultivate a mindset that says everything is in the presence of God. This is the way to be a man of God, to live life in His presence.

Paul's going to tell us in 1 Timothy 4:7, "Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness." Train your soul to be like this. It takes work. You have to work at it. The word there in 1 Timothy 4:7 is γυμνάζω (gymnazō), which is where the word gymnasium comes from. It means train like an Olympic athlete to be godly. It's not going to happen—you don't just decide, "I'm going to go out and I think I'm going to do the long jump. I always wanted to," and you say, "I won the gold medal. I did eat my Wheaties, but I won the gold medal. That's all I did." No, of course not. You train every day for it. You train to be godly. These are the two big goals. Pursue righteousness and godliness. I want my life to reflect Him externally in everything I do, and I want my heart to be internally reverent before Him, living my life before His face. Those are the two general goals.

Now there are four specific objectives to get there. You run after righteousness and godliness by running after these intermediate objectives—faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness—and I think there's something of a progression here in these four. You run after faith. "What does that mean? Don't I have faith? I'm saved. I believe. I don't need to run after faith, do I?" No, Paul says yes you do. You must grow in faith. The way that you become godly is you work at growing in faith.

Now, what does it mean to grow in faith? Well, how do I grow in faith? What it means to grow in faith is you grow in your trust. You grow in what you believe about God, what you believe about Christ, what you know about Him, but you grow in your trust of Him. You're growing to trust Him more and more and more. You're growing to know more about Him and rely upon Him more completely. So the Christian life is about that. We are to grow in faith every day. We come to know more about who God is, and what Christ has done, and what God has done, and we place more and more of our weight and our trust upon Him. And as we do that, what happens is we grow in love.

If you focus more and more on what God has done—and really faith is trust, right? It's me trusting in something outside of myself. It's trusting in who Jesus is. It's trusting in who God is. It's not trying to become righteous through my own efforts. I know I'm supposed to have a character that's externally righteous. I know I'm supposed to have a heart that's disposed to reverence for God. How do I do that? Faith. Knowing more about who He is every moment will create in me those things. How do you want to be holy? It's faith. Faith is the root of it, and then love flows from that. What do I mean?

We have the problems sometimes—and this is the reality of what it is to be a Christian with a sin nature. We find ourselves sometimes thinking, “What I want to do is sin,” and we think, “I want to not want to sin. Right now, I don’t even not want to sin. I can’t even say I want to not want.” Well, what do I need to do? Am I just hopelessly lost? Am I turning away from God? No, what you need to do is look at Jesus Christ. What you need to do at that moment is look at Jesus Christ and look at God. What I need right now more than anything, Lord, is faith, because everything flows from faith. It is the soil and the root of everything else, and faith is not rooted in who I am, or what I’m like, or what my character is. Faith is rooted completely in what God has done and who Jesus Christ is. And so I’ve got to look outside of myself. Stop looking at the problem and start looking at the answer.

The wonder if it is God is so good. From Genesis to Revelation, He’s made this clear, that what you and I need to do is He says, “Look unto Me all the earth and be saved. Don’t look at who you are. Don’t look at how filthy your clothes are. Look at how powerful My blood is. Look at how sufficient My grace is.” I find the psalmists again and again saying things like, “My iniquity is over my head. Remember me according to Your lovingkindness. Do not remember me according to my iniquities. Don’t remember me according to the sins of my youth. Remember me according to Your compassion.” Do you see that? Lord, I’m coming to you.

Faith is that which places trust. Faith is that which rests upon. My reason for coming to You has nothing to do with me. In fact, if I look at me, I don’t want to come. But I’m not going to look at me. I’m going to look at You, and You’ve revealed Yourself to be a God who is lovingkindness, a God who is compassion.

Exodus 34:6 ~ “The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth;...

In the vision Moses had on the mountain, God said, “This is who I am. I keep lovingkindness for thousands. I forgive iniquity, transgression and sin.” You say, “I’m too sinful.” You’re not too sinful for God. Look how gracious He is. Look how holy He is. Look how wonderful He is. Look how merciful He is. He knows. He remembers our frame. He knows that we’re dust. He knows that we’re sheep, and so if you look at Him, what happens is I can trust You. I want You. Suddenly as you look at Him and you see all of this grace, all of this lovingkindness, all of this mercy, what does it do? It creates love. I want You. You are my portion forever. All I want is to be in Your presence. And so love is welling up inside of you, love for Him. Why? Because He first loved you.

To know that He's loving me even in my filthiness, in my wickedness, there is Christ reaching out to me, beckoning me, "Come, come." So love grows up, and as I'm growing in love for Him, I'm then able to trust in Him more. I go through a life of dealing with temptation, dealing with suffering, dealing with pain, and that's where perseverance comes in. I'm looking at Christ more and more and more. I'm preaching the Gospel to myself every day, moment by moment. I'm loving Him more, and because of that, it doesn't matter what comes. I'm able to persevere, because I know the one who loves me is in control, and He's even using these things to remind me how much I need Him. "Lord, this affliction that's just happened, You're just showing me that I'm totally dependent. How good You are. I know that Your lovingkindness is behind all of this. I know that Your mercy, that You love me too much to let me think that I don't need You more than I need You."

That leads to meekness, because when I really trust God—and the word perseverance means to remain under—when I'm able to remain under suffering, praising God, trusting God, what happens is I learn to be very gentle with others. Meekness, gentleness, whatever God is doing is good, and so when you step on my toes, when you cross me, if I'm growing in grace like this, I'm growing in faith, I'm growing in love, I'm growing in perseverance, I've become more and more gentle, and then when you have these four things, you say, "Now that's a man who's righteous and that's a man who is godly." But it all comes by looking at Christ. It all comes by looking at God.

I mean, just meditate—I encourage you to read the Psalms and look and count the times he talks about His lovingkindness and His compassion. Think about the fact that when Moses says, "Show me Your glory," Moses had seen so much glory. Why did God have him say that in His sovereignty? Why did He allow him to say that and then bless him with it? It's because He wanted to show us His glory. "Moses, do you really want to see who I am? You've seen a lot of Me. You want to see who I am? You saw the burning bush. You saw the Red Sea divided. You saw me give bread out of Heaven, water out of the rock, but you now want to see My glory? You saw My holiness break out in dealing with the wickedness of the golden calf, and I killed a lot of people. You saw My wrath then, but you want to see who I really am? I will show you tomorrow. Come up here by yourself. No one's to be on the mountain, and I'm going to show you who I am." Moses comes up and He hides him in the cleft of the rock. He said, "You can't see Me. You'll have to see just the back parts of My robe. I'm going to put you in this rock." And it's not what Moses sees. It's what Moses hears, because the way that you see God is to hear God, and the way you hear God is to hear His word.

So what happens is he's in the cleft of the rock and God says, "You want to see My glory? This is who I am.

Exodus 34:6 ~ ...“The Lord, the Lord God (Yahweh, Yahweh Elohim), compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; 7 who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.”

He's holy. But do you see that came after six positive statements of His kindness? Six times He said, "Look who I am." This is the reality of who God is. He is a God of mercy and grace. He is holy, and if you will not repent and believe, you will experience His wrath forever. Be clear about that. But if you experience His wrath forever, it will not be because of His fault, any lack in Him of mercy and grace. He is ready to receive you right now. The doors are wide open. Jesus Christ has made everything possible and available to you, and He beckons you to come. There is no lack in the grace of God. There is no insufficiency in his blood. Your sins may be as scarlet, and He says, "I will make them as white as snow." You must just look at Him. And when you make Him your delight and you put your trust in Him, He receives you, and He brings you to Himself, and He loves you, and nothing will ever change that.

And then as a Christian, your joy is to learn more and more each day through this sin-sick world where you have to run. You're in the Serengeti. You're running for your life from sin, and the devil, and the world, but you know even in that, God is so good, because if I didn't live in the Serengeti, I wouldn't know how much I need protection. I wouldn't know how much I need a Savior. But the Lord even in His wise providence in allowing things to happen as they have, is saying, "I want you, My precious child, to know the amazing joy of My presence with you in every moment in every danger. I love you that much." That's our God, and He says, yes, to be a man of God, to be a true follower of Jesus Christ, the kind of person that people want to follow, you've got to be committed to run, and you've got to be committed to follow after, but in following after, if you're running after Jesus Christ, if you're looking at Him, if everything in your life is about Him, you will find that you're making progress, and you will be able to say, "Follow me as I follow Him."

Let's go to the Lord in prayer...

Our Father, we stand in awe of You. How wonderful is Your revelation of Your own heart. How amazing and abundant is Your grace. Father, we pray that You would help everyone in this room to be sure that they are laying hold of Christ by faith. For those that have not, that have held back, that have not surrendered, that have not truly repented, Lord, expose the need and expose the answer. What would keep anyone from trusting You, oh Lord? You have proven Your love. You have proven Your goodness. You have proven Your tender mercies over and over. Father, be glorified in hearts that are surrendered to You. Thank You so much for Jesus Christ, the sufficiency of His blood, the glory of His resurrection. And we pray in His Name, Amen.

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