

Before we open to our passage this morning in 1st Timothy... I would first like to turn your attention to a different passage of Scripture (that isn't the main passage of our study.) We are going to begin with Psalm 78.

Psalm 78 is a psalm of history... also known as a "maskil." ... A "maskil" is a psalm that is designed to cause a person to stop and ponder its message. The opening words of this Maskil are:

Psalm 78:1 (ESV)

Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth!

Continuing to read this psalm... it does not take long to realize that the composer is recounting some rather dreary days in the history of Israel. ... The time that the psalmist recounts are some days of Israel's rebellion against God... and this maskil contrasts God's faithfulness with Israel's stubbornness and disbelief.

This Psalm contains 72 verses... but we won't take the time to read them all. In fact... for the purpose of introducing our main passage of study for today... I will only draw your attention to one more verse from this maskil...

Psalm 78:9

The men of Ephraim, though armed with bows, turned back on the day of battle;

The psalmist uses a single tribe of Israelites (the men of Ephraim) to characterize the faithlessness of all Israel. ... And it is quite a powerful illustration that he uses. (It makes quite a statement.)

(You see)... The men of Ephraim were some of the most valiant warriors Israel had - in their entire army. (They were Ancient Israel's Crack Navy

Seal Team 6.) ... These men were particularly adept with the bow and arrow. They possessed skill... and then in verse 9 it is made clear that they also had sufficient hardware to handle the enemy's attack. ... With tremendous skill and supplies in abundance... one might think that there was nothing more that they could need. But that wasn't the case. ... You see... they lacked courage. (So in that sense... I guess they were not at all like the Navy Seals.)

Anyway... on the first day of the battle... the first of what typically lasts for days... they immediately turned back. They ran! ... Apparently... the sound of battle made them “*as nervous as a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs...*” (if I may borrow Chuck Swindoll's famous expression.)

Although well-armed and very capable... these men lacked steadfastness. On the surface it looked like they had it all together ...and probably would have impressed anyone who looked on.

The men of Ephraim probably loved the Memorial Day parades when they got to march in front of their countrymen – (who must have felt very proud to see them.) ... Target practice must have been a real joy for them... as no one could outshoot them... (not even come close...) But as soon as the going got tough... all the enemy saw of them was the cloud of dust that they created as they ran back to their barracks.

The true slogan of this company of soldiers was “*Make a good appearance*.” But behind this thin veneer of valor... was a brittle... plastic shell... that fell apart on the first day of battle

I believe (with all that is within me) that the Psalmist who wrote Psalm 78 wanted us to see the men of Ephraim in this light... because it serves his

point of contrast between the *fickle Israelites* and *faithfulness of God* toward them. This interpretation fits the message of the psalm. And I also believe that one of the reasons this incident has been preserved for us here in Scripture... is because **Ephraimites live on!** ... They have invaded the ranks of churches and families... and they are virtually undetectable until a real battle breaks out.

Ephraimites look like heroic saints. Their godly words and prayers and Bible knowledge hit the very bull's eye of targets... just like the arrows of Ephraim. ... But let the hot rays of hardship beat upon their backs and they melt like butter on a hot day at the LaPine Rodeo. ... They just can't handle the battle... They can't take the pressure... They opt for the easy way out. They rehearse the words of Scripture... but they reject its personal demands on their life.

During our last time together... (as we studied 1st Timothy 6:11-12)... I talked about our need to "*fight the good fight.*" ... We are at war... and it will not end until God takes us home to Heaven... or Jesus returns for us at the Rapture. Ignoring this war will only devastate us. (We will not stand.)

So... (as I pointed out last week we must FLEE... FOLLOW... FIGHT... and FASTEN onto... the things that are mentioned in 1Timothy 6:11-12.) Today we will be learning HOW DO WE STAY MOTIVATED FOR THE FIGHT? ... (The church has too many Ephraimites. ... How do **we** keep ourselves from being one?)

1st Timothy 6:13-16

Therein lies the greatest motivating factor for any follower of Christ... to keep us from being an Ephraimite. ... It is our **vision** of God!

(LISTEN!) ... I believe so strongly that how a person lives is a reflection of what they really believe about God. (Please let that sink-in for a moment.) How a person lives is directly tied to what they really believe about God.

...[P A U S E]...

Some people (who call themselves believers) have a view of God that goes like this: “God *doesn't really care if I obey Him... He lets me slide on a lot of matters...One day, I'll straighten out the things I know He wants me to get right.. but Hey, He is alright with the way I am now... It is my choice how and when I'll serve Him.*”

And then there are those with a more Biblical belief about the Lord. “*I have been bought with a price by the Lord Jesus. I am not my own anymore. He has plans for my life and I am to discover those plans every day. Then when He returns, He will reward me according to how well I followed His will. Those rewards will be far greater than any pleasure this earth can give.*”

Paul calls Timothy to fulfill his duty based upon **Who God is**. ... Paul sensed that Timothy might become an Ephraimite. ... Timothy was left alone by Paul in Ephesus. ... Verse three of chapter one says that Paul had to **beg** Timothy (before he left to this assignment)... to confront the errant elders of the church... with their sin... and to correct their heretical teaching. - Timothy did not want to do it. ... We get the sense from 1 Timothy 4:12 that Timothy was looked down upon for his youthfulness... and that he even had frequent stomach pains - perhaps from worry.

In order to bolster his young and struggling protégé... Paul wrote these verses (that we come to today.) .., These verses are some of the most

magnificent presentations of God's character... found in the pages of Scripture. ... Most commentators believe that at least part of this passage was a *hymn* sung by the early church as a doxology to reinforce everyone's vision of God. (And let me say again - THIS is how we stay motivated. We need the right vision of God... and to keep re-inforcing it.) ... So that is what we are going to do today.

Paul gave Timothy - and now us – six attributes of God's character... that will serve as a powerful motivation for us to stay motivated to *fight the good fight* – and not become an Ephraimite. ... Let's take a look at them.

First is the **POWER OF GOD.**

1 Tim 6:13

God is the giver of life. Do you sometimes feel beaten and dejected(?)... buffeted by more things than you can handle(?)... at the end of your strength(?) ... (Then)... What you need is renewed vigor... renewed vitality and strength. ... God is the giver of life. ... He actually desires to infuse strength and vitality back into you again. Turn to Him as the Author of life.

God is in charge of all life... including Timothy's... and including yours and mine. ... Followers of Christ do not need to be concerned about the price of our faithfulness. The Lord can sustain us until we have finished His work. Or the Lord can bring us home to Himself when our life has accomplished His purpose in giving life to us. ... Let it settle deep into your heart that God is the giver of life. **Your life is His.**

God's ability to give life to all is also seen in His ability to raise the dead to live eternally. ... The worst thing someone can do to a man or woman of

God is kill their body... even if they did so... that would merely usher the man or woman of God into the Lord's presence.

Without a firm belief that God is the giver of life... we will always fear what other people can do to us. ... "*Ephraim*" will be written across our hearts.

Belief in the power of God to raise us from the dead was exemplified by our Lord Jesus when He stood before Pilate. ... Do you find it hard to admit your Christian faith at times in certain pressure groups? ... Then... think of Jesus... "*Who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate*". ...

Pilate examined Jesus and found no fault in Him. Then Pilate asked Him a question and Jesus' answer would determine whether He would live or die.

Pilate was anxious to set Jesus free (if he could)... because Pilate recognized Jesus to be a righteous... innocent man... whom the chief priests had delivered up for jealousy. "*Are you the King of the Jews?*" (Matt 27:11)... Pilate asked Him. ... Jesus could have said "*No.*" ... But (if He had done that)... He would have denied His Messiahship - He **WAS** the King of the Jews.

Jesus (also) knew that if He answered "*Yes*" to Pilate's question... there was no way He could escape *being put to death*... because the Jews would then charge Pilate with befriending a traitor to Caesar. ... The answer of "*Yes*" to Pilate - is what **sealed** Jesus' fate. ... Jesus was not ignorant of this. He knew it. ... And yet He answered with the strongest affirmation that the Hebrew idiom has, "*Thou sayest,*" or better understood by us... Jesus replied "*You are saying it...*" (Matt 27:11b). That cost Him His life.

Jesus stood His ground... spoke the truth... and entrusted His life *to Him Who would raise Him from the dead*. ... To keep from ever becoming an

Ephraimite... we must do no less... in similar circumstances. And we will – by understanding God to be the giver of life... ... That God has the power to raise the dead... is the key that allows ANY follower of Christ... to freely give his/her life away in sacrificial service.

Luke 9:24

“For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.”

(Christian!) ... There will be times when you will have to say “No”... when you want to say “Yes”... and everybody around you wants you to say “Yes.” There will be times where it will be embarrassing to admit that you’re a Christian... but remember Jesus. ...He set the good example. ... He was the “*faithful witness*” (Rev 1:5) to the truth.

Furthermore... Paul goes on to remind Timothy... that... although Jesus was put to death in weakness... He is coming again as the Lord of life (which is the focus of all history.) ... Paul continues in today’s passage to say, “*I charge you to keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” ... The One (Who was here in weakness) is coming again in great strength and will fill the horizon of life.

1 Tim 6:14-15a

The second attribute of God’s character that will serve as a powerful motivation to perform as a man or woman of God, is the **INVINCIBILITY OF GOD**.

Followers of Christ who don’t want to be Ephraimites... must have it clear in their minds that history will culminate at the appearing of our Lord Jesus. This event is the climactic conclusion of human history... and it will be the

vindication of Christ - and those who are His! ... At that very moment - all those who thought that they have gotten away scott-free with all their evil... will utter a collective "Uh Oh!" ... This is when all of the evil that presently seems to control the world will be reversed. ... And do you know what...? Believers (at that time) will also be vindicated. Let the world call you foolish...Let the world disrespect you because of your faith...

Col. 3:4 says, "*When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.*"

The man and woman of God must keep a proper perspective on this reality. This life is just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. ... God has provided an incredibly glorious future for believers. The man/woman of God keeps their focus on that truth as they endure the trials of living and ministering in this present world. We are assured that the Lord will bring a glorious victory in the day of Christ's return.

1 Tim 6:15b

The next attribute of God's character that will serve as a powerful motivation to perform as a man or woman of God... is the **BLESSEDNESS OF GOD.**

The word for blessed in the Greek μακαριωζ means "happy"... "content" and "fulfilled". When it is used in reference to God... it describes His lack of unhappiness ... (God's total lack of frustration and anxiety.) When we envision the blessedness of God... we see Him as content... satisfied... and at peace. ... He is fulfilled and perfectly joyful. Certainly... there are things that do not please the Lord... but absolutely NOTHING can disturb His heavenly contentment.

Those who enter into a relationship with God... enter into this marvelous sense of calm. ... We can be unperturbed... because our God is so unperturbed. ... How true it is what the Psalmist wrote over and over again in the Psalms: “*How blessed are all who take refuge in Him*” (Ps 2:12. 34:8, 40:4, 84:12, 112:1, 128:1).

No matter what trials or persecution you are going through... you can be at peace. As a man or woman of God... your peace is not based on external circumstances. IT IS BASED ON THE KNOWLEDGE THAT GOD IS IN CONTROL.

Our fourth attribute of God’s character that you and I need to actively envision... so that it will serve as our motivation to keep fighting the good fight is: the SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.

1 Tim 6:15c

There is no one to vie with our God - for control of the universe. How utterly ridiculous for us to ever imagine that there is!

Isaiah 43:13

*“Yes, and from ancient days I am he,
No one can deliver out of my hand.
When I act, who can reverse it?”*

God’s power to rule is inherent in Himself. It is not given to Him by some outside source... God omni potently rules everything everywhere. He has no rivals... certainly not Satan... whom He created... cast out of Heaven... and sentenced to eternal hell.

The sovereignty of God is the most encouraging and comforting doctrine in all of Scripture. If we fully envision this characteristic of God... it would

remove all anxiety from our life. We would have courage to perform all our spiritual duties and have a willingness to face any danger.

Because God is in control - **all of the time** - there is no need to worry... to compromise... or to manipulate to achieve any of our goals. ... GOD IS NEVER SURPRISED AND HIS WILL IS NEVER FRUSTRATED.

Isaiah 46:11

*From the east I summon a bird of prey;
From far a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose.
What I have said, that will I bring about;
What I have planned, that will I do.*

The next attribute of God's character that will serve as a powerful motivation to keep fighting the good fight... is the **ETERNALTY OF GOD**.

1 Tim 6:16a

Angels and men will exist forever... but God has a different kind of eternal quality of life. ... God's eternity is not dependent upon anyone else... and He is incapable of dying. ... We (on the other hand) were created. ... We came into existence. ... And the eternal life that we (now)... enjoy came from Him. ... The follower of Christ derives comfort and motivation from knowing that this deathless... eternal One... is available to support us.

1 Tim 6:16b

The final quality that we need to see is the **HOLINESS OF GOD**.

While it is true that God has made Himself known to us in the person of His Son (Jesus Christ)... and that we have the Spirit of God living inside of us... we must never treat God with such casual familiarity that we loose

sight of His utter holiness. ... Look at what our text says- *“He dwells in unapproachable light.”*

The imagery of God dwelling in blazing light expresses His absolute holiness.... He lives in an atmosphere of such *total purity* that sinners like us cannot fully enter. ... 1 Corinthians 13:12 says, *“Now we see in as a mirror dimly, but then face to face.”* When Paul wrote that, 1st century mirrors were just a shiny piece of metal. Their quality was not like our modern-day mirrors. Back then... they only had a dim image... and Paul compares that to the way we can see God today. ... Right now... the image is murky... but one day we will see Him face to face.

Until that time... we can be motivated by a clear understanding that God dwells in absolute holiness. ... God is unable to make a mistake. He always does what is right. ... That brings great comfort to the follower of Christ. Not only is God in complete control of all things-but God will never make a misjudgment of any kind!

1 Tim 6:16c

The proper response to our envisioning God should always be as Paul's response was here: *“Let God always be respected...and may His rule never end!”*

My friend... have you ever found your Christian walk to be without power...lacking strength...drive...and motivation...? Lack of spiritual endurance and fear is always the result from our being negligent to meditate on the character of God.

This week open up the Word of God...and before reading it... pause and ask God to demonstrate something about His character to you in the

passage that you read. Ask Him to indelibly mark your heart with right thoughts about who he is.

Do you think Timothy was strengthened by these fresh reminders from Paul about the character of God...? I'm sure he was. Timothy never became an Ephraimite.

The Amazon River is the largest river in the world. The mouth of this gigantic water source is over **90 miles wide**. ... So much water flows from the Amazon River... that its current runs **200 miles** out into the Atlantic Ocean... off the coast of Brazil.

One of the ironies of classical navigation was that just off the coast of Brazil... the wind dies down. ... This would catch many cutter ships of yesteryear in the windless (and thus motionless) situation. ... Sometimes ships would get caught for weeks in this standstill... which came to be known as the "*dull drums*."

If they stayed long enough... sailors would sometimes die of thirst... having used so much of their supply... while they were caught in the dull drums... without any wind to push them along. ... It was a desperate situation to be caught in the dull drums - especially for those who had no idea that the Amazon carried fresh water out **200 miles** into the Atlantic.

Ships from South America (I read) would frequently come upon stranded ships in the dull drums... and call out: "*What's the matter?*" ...and from the other ship... would come the cry: "*Can you spare us some water?*" ... The local sailors would then call back: "*Just lower your buckets and drink.*"

Now if you were a sailor and did not know about the mighty Amazon... you might think that the recommendation to lower the buckets and drink was

foolish. ... Every sailor knows that drinking sea water never quenches thirst... and only drinking IT... will kill you. ... But only those who trusted the advise from the local sailors - lived.

This morning I am urging you to lower your bucket and drink the fresh water of God's character. Meditate on the attributes that we have been discussing today and live. Leave them alone and it will be like you're a dying a slow death or thirst.