

God Our Savior

Key Verse 1 Timothy 2:3-4

“³ This is good, and pleases God our Savior, ⁴ who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”

This evening I'd like to talk about foundation. Although I am a professor this is not a structural engineering lecture. Tonight is about our spiritual foundation. What does your spiritual foundation look like? Do you have a spiritual foundation? Did you know that the Burj Khalifa Tower in the UAE is the tallest building in the world? It cost over 1.5 billion dollars and took 6 years to build. Even more impressive are the 192 support piles, 1.5m by 43m and sunk 50 meters deep in the ground. The foundation hole took 1 month to dig and foundation construction took another 6 months! There is another famous building in Italy called the Leaning Tower of Pisa. It is only 56.7 meters tall, weighing only 16,000 tons, but it is crooked by 3.9 meters at the top. The reason is the tower has a poor foundation only 3 meters deep and built on loose soil it cannot stand under its own weight.

In the same way Apostle Paul was combating the loose foundation of idol worship, heresies, and all kinds of false teachers in Ephesus. He wrote to Timothy knowing he was going to face the same troubles as he grew to be a leader and minister for the church. How could Timothy possibly hope to survive? How can we hope to survive? What should our spiritual foundation be based on? God our Savior and Christ Jesus our hope are the foundation of God's household. It is imperative for a good minister of Christ Jesus to know God our Savior and Christ Jesus our hope.

Part I – God's Awesome Nature

In the opening part of chapter 1 Paul uniquely explains about God. To know God Paul had to first explain who God is. How is God portrayed in today's society? Is God like the painting on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel reaching out for Adam? Does he sound like Morgan Freeman from the movie "Bruce Almighty"? Or does it even matter what we think of God?

What does the Bible say? In 1 Timothy 1:17 Apostle Paul wrote, *“Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever, Amen.”* Look at the words used. Look at the depth of the words. Could CNN Headline News ever make the same statement? No! Paul calls God the "King eternal." What is a king? A king is someone who rules with authority, power majesty, and with total control over his subjects. God is not up for re-election in 2012. How long has he been King? All eternity past and will continue for all eternity future! God is not limited to time and space like we are. Before the creation, God existed!

Paul goes on to proclaim God is immortal, which means to live forever. Immortal means that there is no death in God. God lives forever and is alive today! The Greek gods and the idols of Timothy's day were all lost and destroyed by the passage of time. It is almost Halloween and around us we see scenes of death, ghosts, and graveyards. But in God there is no death. He is Immortal and the source of eternal life! God is also invisible. Not invisible like a stealth fighter jet or camouflage. God is holy and visible to us only if he reveals himself. Even then no one can see God and live. God is only found in the way he chooses to reveal himself.

Paul ends his letter to Timothy in the same way he started. Look at chapter 6:15-16, "...*God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.*" First Paul describes "God the blessed and only Ruler. " God is invisible but he is still the source of all goodness and is the Sovereign ruler. He alone is wonderful and he alone is beautiful because he is eternal and he is the source of eternal life. God is called the Only Ruler—God is the only one who has control of all history. Not just all history but God controls all of mankind, even down to our mind, body, and soul.

God lives in unapproachable light. Holiness means to be separate--to be set apart. At Mount Sinai those who heard the voice of God begged that no further word be spoken to them (Heb 12 :19). When Isaiah the prophet saw just the train of the robe of the Lord in the temple he said, "*Woe to me!*" "*I am ruined!*" (Isaiah 6:5). God lives in unapproachable light that no one can approach to him. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords—no sovereign can overrule God.

Why did Paul write about God in this way? Timothy lived in Ephesus where there were many gods and many idols. Christians were surrounded by false religions and poor spiritual foundations. This description of God to Timothy is very clear and is heart moving! God cannot just be described in simple terms. Who speaks about God like this? How does Paul know these facts? Paul had a personal encounter with the living God. It is almost as if his words flow out in a joyful crescendo. When we encounter this God we too are changed. How can we not be? Paul was changed by God. If Paul had not been changed by God, he never would have wrote this way and spoke this way—impossible. Let us make it our life priority to meet this same God and that our lives maybe changed to have the same solid foundation of the nature of God.

Part II – God our Creator and Provider

When we have a solid foundation of the nature of God, we begin to see God working—creating and providing all good things. Look at 1 Timothy 6:13a, "*In the sight of God, who gives life to everything...*" There is no competing creation force but only God. But there were false teachers in Timothy's time and false teachers today who are trying to over throw the clear teaching of God and his provision. Look at 1 Timothy 4:3-4, "³ *They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by*

those who believe and who know the truth. ⁴For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving,”

God provided every good thing so that we can praise God and put our hope in God. In contrast what did Paul say believers were putting their hope in? Look at 1 Timothy 6:17, *“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.”* In this last verse of 1 Timothy Paul commands those who have hope in the riches of this world to have hope in the true living God who provides all good things. We receive **everything** from God.

Knowing God the creator and our provider allows us to find the deep meaning of our lives. In 1721 at the age of 17, the arguably the greatest American Theologian, Jonathan Edwards, came to what he called a ‘delightful conviction’ upon meditating on 1 Timothy 1:17. He later remarked *“...I thought with myself, how excellent a Being that was, how happy I should be, if I might enjoy that God, and be rapt up to him in heaven; and be as it were swallowed up in him forever!”* Edwards desired *“Being swallowed up in him forever.”* You cannot be swallowed up into an idol. You cannot be embraced by a false doctrine. But the living God knows us and loves us and is working in our lives—he dwells among us.

Paul knew this truth so well and wrote in 1 Timothy 3:15, *“if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.”* In contrast to the idols that rule people’s hearts and minds Christians must live before God (Jer10:8–10)!

Part III - God Our Savior

In Timothy’s time the church at Ephesus was surrounded by Artemis worshippers. There was a great temple built to her, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Ephesus was also the center of Roman Emperor worship. Mystery religions abounded--religions that taught austerity and asceticism and mystery religions that taught indulgence and abundance. The City of Ephesus was also a center of political, financial, and military power. All these things were competing for the hearts of the Christians in Ephesus. Paul **needed** Timothy to know God as our only Savior so that Timothy could lead the people to the **only** God who could save their souls.

These false religions were out to destroy people and catch them in behaviors that God did not command. The Caesars rose and fell. Mystery religions came in and out of favor. Even the God Artemis’ image fell from the sky one day and she became the God of Ephesus at some point in time. In opposition to all this Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 4:10, *“(and for this we labor and strive), that we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe.”*

The living God is truly great! God's ultimate purpose here is to make known that he wants to save all men. When we recognize this fact we cannot but praise God for his greatness. Paul mentioned this in the opening verse in his letter, 1 Timothy 1:1, "*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope.*" This is not a new concept. The word "Savior" emphasizes that God wants to save people. God's saving nature is revealed throughout Scripture. According to the Old Testament, God is called "Our Savior," 35 times and in the New Testament God is called our Savior 24 times.

This is God's heart desire for all people. 1 Timothy 2:3-4 says, "*This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*" 2 Peter 3:9 says, "*He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*" Paul wrote with a sense of the problem that ultimately people needed a Savior. It is reported that as William Carrey taught young pupils geography at the village school, sometimes he would come to tears when pointing to continents where the gospel had not been preached. Isaiah 43:11 tells us why he came to tears, "*I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no savior.*"

Without a foundation that God is our Savior we will get **lost** in the religious ideas of our day. Mankind is sinful and evil—we know from just reading 1st Timothy. We are in desperate need of a Savior. **Who can save us?** God alone is our Savior. What happens without God our Savior? Many a man try to invent their own way to God based on their own achievements or ideas. But the man who does not know God our Savior cannot but perish and go to hell. That sounds harsh. But it is what the **Bible** says. God wants good ministers of Christ Jesus to know his true character and hold firmly to these deep truths of the faith. Knowing the fundamental truths about God lays a basic foundation for Christian life and ministry. Without knowing these fundamental truths, it is easy to stray into false doctrines.

Where are your foundations built? As a young man my foundation was solely placed on my own ability and desire to fulfill my own pleasures. I could not have chosen a worse foundation. This led me into sin and constant conflict with others. It got me into fights and caused me to be an angry young man. As a young Christian and even until now, my foundation was based on my own self-righteousness and good deeds. How foolish that I thought that I could make my own good foundation without knowing God.

God the eternal king has provided me with a wonderful family, a good church, and a mission to serve Dupage County with the Gospel. God the provider gave me the most spiritual and beautiful wife, Missionary Susanna, to serve his ministry with. The immortal and only Ruler revealed my sins of self-righteousness and my weak independent foundation through late night message training this week. Why did God do this? Because God wants me to know that he alone he is my savior and my solid foundation of the truth. I praise God that he alone is my foundation.