
Online service sheet during the coronavirus.

Reading OT Holiness
Reading Ps 101:1-7 (page 604)
Tit 2:11-14 (page 1199)
2 Tim 2:22 (page 1196)
1Th 4:1-12

Title: Pursue Godliness!

Listen to today's sermon by clicking on the link at www.knbc.org.

The audio file is **20_04_26.mp3** in the sermons directory

Reflective prayer what does this mean for me Lord.....

Closing Prayer:

Close -----

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.” (Tit 2:11-14)

Welcome

Good morning dear brothers and sisters, I'm sorry we can't meet together here at the Chapel this morning, it is very strange to be in an empty building, but at least we can meet around God's word together. Let's pray.

■ How is the garden? How is it coming on? Can you hear it calling you?

One winner in Britain's lockdown are our gardens they will be the best ever!

■ In the morning I pass a house with such a beautiful garden it stands out. Full of brightly coloured flowers, it is well stocked, ordered and obviously well cared for. Just see the time & effort have been put in.

■ However, there are a number of gardens, if I can call them that, where the grass hasn't been cut, the brambles are crawling up the wall, there are broken pots on their side, rubbish lying around, etc.

Both gardens tell you much about the owner.

✚ Our Christian life is like a garden. x2 It can be made beautiful, as the Lord intends - or just left, neglected.

Gardens always need attention -So our Christian lives always need attention. Gardeners are busy people and to keep things looking good they are out there regularly, faithfully seeing to it. So it should be with our Christian life.

This is always the case - but now is a time to be extra careful. We are all in new circumstances. When this happens alarm bells should ring. How am I going to continue to do what I should normally do? I don't just mean the shopping, exercise regime, house repair jobs etc., but the disciplines of our Christian life.

Having too little time can be a problem - having too much can be a problem. For me I find it harder when I have more spare time, I need to be careful not to misuse it. Just like going on holiday, the changes upset our normal pattern, and it is easy to let things slip. We have to rethink how best to make the most of the extra time we have.

■ I was talking to a parent the other day, she was struggling with her son. Like others her children are at home with home school work to do. This requires a plan: breakfast, school work time, break, school work time, break play time lunch, chores, etc. It requires two things a plan and a will, it has to be both thought through and stuck to.

■ When I saw them it was mid-morning and the boy was playing out of the front of the house, she hadn't much of a plan and when she had one - she hadn't enforced it.

So it can be with our Christian life. It is impossible to live a life pleasing to the Lord by just rolling along - with little plan - and little effort.

✚ Like the garden, to just leave it means it is soon overrun.

✚ So our life with the Lord cannot be static, it needs nurturing.

In Paul's letter to Timothy, today's passage is about giving our life before God that attention, and nurturing – it's about the pursuit of Holiness.

“Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” 2Ti 2:22

Two sides here - what we are to run from - and what we are to pursue, run to. Or to put it another way - what to put off - and what to put on.

Gospel

✚ This verse challenges the heart, it challenges how you are to be!

“Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness... What is your thought when you read this verse? Do you have a desire for holiness?

And what of those desires that Paul speaks of? What are they?

They are evil desires. This is not wanting to find a job, provide for your family, learn, develop your gifts and skills.

No, evil desires are fleshly desires such as pride, lust, greed, selfishness, malice, jealousies, anger, being divisive. Etc. etc.

They're evil desires because they are against God, antagonistic towards God

There's a tendency not to think of our desire as 'evil', "that's too strong". You might say; "they come easily and actually they sit comfortably with me, as they allow me to be me.

Whether they make me feel better or not our flesh does want these things, and let's be clear it is our flesh which is the source of these desires – but they oppose God.

Hear Romans 8:7 **“the sinful mind or flesh is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.”**

What is that the flesh is against? what does our flesh NOT desire? Holiness Naturally, without Christ's intervention you and I do not seek **righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.** That is NOT what we want!

Attempted break-in this week at the Chapel, what were they after? Any guesses? Well I'm pretty sure they weren't after the bibles!

They weren't breaking in to make a donation. Bring their offering!

✚ A break in is an obvious sign of hostility to what is right and good. We expect a burglar to be against God.

Yet sadly there are those with a Christian background, who align themselves with Christianity, who come to church, may even have been baptized, yet actually have no desire for Holiness. Why? because despite all their outward observances, they are, deep down just as hostile to God.

Why? Because they have never been truly converted. Never been born anew by the Spirit of God. All they have is the old nature, what we are all born with, a fallen nature at odds with, actually at war with God.

God wants all he has made to be Holy - so what is the first thing he does? What is necessary? He gives His Spirit of Holiness to enter me to make me Holy. That is what he has made me in his sight through Christ - Now I am to live up to that!

Now that we can be Holy through the Spirit of Holiness he says, and says it repeatedly; **“Be Holy because I am Holy”**. Someone who is born again, who has this new *God given nature* can be Holy – should be - is to be Holy.

Do you have God's Spirit? The Scriptures say we ought to test ourselves to see? Is Christ in you? Is he??

The answer is seen in how you approach this verse. Do you want holiness? If you have been going your own way and now desire Godliness then turn to Christ, seek forgiveness, come to the cross, and he will wipe away your sins and give you His Spirit. Now when God says pursue Righteousness, Faith Love - you not only can do - but you want to!

God's Holy Spirit in us is the great enabler - and also the great persuader.

Christ the motivation

Pete - There a brother at BCM who prays often using the words “you made this or that *for your glory and our good*”. x2

That's a great way to understanding why God made all that we see around. But how much more true is it for you and I who are bought through the precious blood of Christ into His kingdom. **Jesus Christ, gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.** (Tit 2:11-14)

✚ If you have been redeemed from all wickedness – it's impossible to now live in it.

Fleeing evil passions

So let us return to our passage **“Flee the evil desires of youth, Youth!**

At this point you breathe a sigh of relief. “I cannot” you say, “by any stretch of the imagination describe myself as a youth!”

Well go back to the end of the previous letter 1Ti 6:11 and we read - **“But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.”** There is no age mentioned here.

Flee means to ‘flee away, seek safety by flight, escape safely out of danger’ And from what? What is the **‘all this’**?

Look back to the previous verse and it is about money, it is about discontentment. It is about desiring after the things of this world. Some of this stems from a false view, mostly it is being weak giving in to our desires.

- Like Brexit before we now have wall to wall News coverage of the current Coronavirus. The world, - and the devil behind it - either ignores something -or can talk of nothing else. Distorting it to the nth degree.

TV presents a godless worldview; you will never hear what God is doing. It wants to constantly drip, drip into your mind so you end up thinking the same way it does.

How much of your heart is tied up with the things of the world? The world is always trying to grab your attention, to involve you in what it is doing. To make you interested, worried, bothered, caught up in its ways.

But not for us **“But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.”**

In our passage Timothy is told to **flee the evil desires of youth**. Timothy was a young man. We don’t know how young but certainly young.

So what desires are we talking about? I dug deep into my memory (and checked with Sam and Van) Young people can have, I had, a rebellious spirit, be contentious, have wrong sexual desires, wanting to look a certain way, wanting to be first, to be noticed, to be important.

Timothy as a young ministry could be tempted to pride, seeking vain glory, popular applause, seeking to have the pre-eminence,

“I’m not a youth” you reiterate, well what would he say to you? What desires, evil desires do you have at middle age? As an elderly man or woman? As someone married, or single, living alone, living with others etc.

Is there envy? Stubbornness? Laziness? Vanity? Self-centeredness? - And yes wrong sexual desires. You underestimate these at your peril.

Paul tells the Thessalonian Christians how to live in a way that pleases God - and not as those around do, notice what is first on the list: **“It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honourable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no-one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins,... for God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.**

In Lev 18-20 God is saying to those he has rescued from slavery to be his Holy people, do not be like the nations around you, be distinct, be separate from Egypt where you came, or Canaan where you are going. Not like them. Salt and light we were reminded last week.

What is the first demarcation he mentions between God’s Holy people and the nations around that He was soon to Judge? Sexual purity.

Moral holiness is the great desire of the Spirit. As soon as He comes to live in a man or woman; the conscience is strongly reinvigorated, the language changes, the desires change, and you want to be clean from anything that’s dirty.

✚ **The great effect with many becoming Christians in the Roman Empire**

When revival came in the great awakening in 1730-40 and on with Jonathon Edwards, Wesley and Whitfield through the middle of that century .. and then a century later the great marks of the revival were moral uprightness, the elevation of the family and sexual purity.

- One social historian said speaking of Christian revival that it “introduced to Britain a 'new moral economy of sobriety, self-control, sexual restraint and respectability, which challenged both the hedonism of the aristocracy and the levelling and violence of the French Revolution. Ted Williams
- In the Oxford History of England: Sir Robert Ensor reaches the conclusion: 'No one will ever understand Victorian England who does not appreciate that... it was one of the most religious that the world has known. Its particular type of Christianity laid a peculiarly direct emphasis upon conduct;

In particular, sexual conduct. Purity became the benchmark, chastity before marriage and faithfulness within it.

Purity is the hallmark of a Christian, not just purity in the action, but no innuendo, lewdness, flirtiness, playfulness etc. Indulge in these and you strangle, overrun, kills off your life with Christ.

- The number of dead trees down the country lane on the walk the other day, the cause? **Ivy**. It looks lovely but it kills anything it can get itself round. It sticks to everything and is hard to remove. (Just removed a huge amount taking over the back garden at WHR)
- ✦ It is not possible to live a holy life unless these are thrown off/dealt with.
- Before we can beautify the garden with those bright flowers you have work to remove the weeds and brambles - they all need to go.

The battle is with the old nature.

Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. 1Pe 2:11

- New houses springing up everywhere have new gardens – but under the new turf are to be found the old rubble.
- A friend of mine decided the only way to have a proper garden is to clear away all the old rubbish and rubble. He ended up filling three skips with stones and rubbish. It was days of hard work.

So for us as born again Christian - The battle continues

Pursuing righteousness

God clearly wants us to not only to flee evil but **pursue** or *chase after* **righteousness, faith, love and peace,**

It requires effort like that weeding in the garden – clearing out, forgetting what is behind, which can be a great hindrance, and sowing what is good - 1st word is **righteousness**. What does Paul mean by **righteousness**?

In one sense it is being in a state/condition acceptable to God – something Christ has achieved for each of His people through the cross.

But it also means living in a godly rightness, with integrity, virtue, purity of life, correctness of thinking, feeling, acting. That is how I should now be.

... and in practice? Look at Christ, who is now living in you - Look at Him!

Study His life, do you study the bible? – not just bible reading - but study?

In fact study all of Scripture for we read **all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,** 2Ti 3:16

Yes **training in righteousness**. So *how did* Moses follow the Lord and cope with problems when things went wrong? How about Joshua? Or David?

with his heart laid bare in the psalms, how did he work out his life before God. It is all there. Ready it and apply it. Then we will be strong in faith...

faith

- Read Christian books, read about the great men and women of the faith, learn from them. Learn like them to trust the Lord in all things.

I know it can be daunting they seem like giants; I have just finished two biographies, Hudson Taylor and just last week George Whitfield.

- ✦ They were very gifted - but don't confuse gifting with godliness
- I'm from a gifted family. I am from a family of musicians, but my two attempts to play an instrument have been... well.. disappointing.
- My brothers and sister have other languages, not me.

So you may be gifted, you may not be gifted, we all have strong and weak areas. It really doesn't matter as long as you use the talents you have.

Godliness is what counts with Him - This is really what matters

It's not natural gifting but living in obedience to the Spirit of Christ in your life. In this you should and can excel. You may have, it seems to you, zero gifting - but you can be Godly – and should be.

Love - As a Christian Christ is with you, in you, you know his love. We know it, we thank God for it and we say that we love him back. Good

But love is action, let's manifest that love and actively look for ways to express this to people... **Love is the mark of a Christian** - To do everything but not to love God and his people means we have nothing.

peace - Timothy as he sought to lead the church was constantly caught in the cross fire, he had to bring peace, be a peace maker, one can only do that when we are at peace with the Lord. Importance of a clear conscience

To have all these things requires effort, self-discipline, and attention to detail. So also is the discipline of prayer, not praying here and there as someone said they did - but times of prayer.

- I used to have a sticker on the back of my car "nothing moves without engineers"

✦ So one in the Christian life nothing progresses without "Self-control"

Keep it up! Weeding and planting is ongoing - and overlaps - because only as we clear an area, weed an area can we now plant the flowers, we

continually move on bed by bed. So you and I are to pursue godliness, Paul says elsewhere **train yourself to be godly**.

May we all up our game.

- Normally those signs on the road that say 'your speed' frown at me. Not the other day I was on a bicycle and it said '8'. I thought I can do better.

Finale

Finally why does Paul say this here?

Just before he has been speaking about being useful to the Lord not a vessel of wood or clay but of silver and gold, and the good news is that we can change from one to the other. How? No not alchemy but through holiness Those two verses are straddle with v19 **turn away from wickedness.**" And the first phrase after that **flee the evil desires**. So this is how you make yourself useful to the Lord

There's another reason why Paul told Timothy to be like this.

Look at the next Ch 3 where he describes the godlessness in the last days (now). Then he points to His own life - and the contrasts is stark. That's the point Timothy if you are godly you will stand out, people will see your good conduct, your good example, your good, godly standard and follow you.

That is why he is told **watch your life and doctrine closely**

They will follow his teaching when they see his life, because he walks the talk.

[Did you see churches speedy response to governmt Covid-19 guidelines](#)

How people see God depends on how they see you. People see God as a Holy God if they see your holy life.

along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." 2Ti 2:22

We as Christians call upon him; but our prayers to God and Christ are not acceptable nor successful except they come out of a pure heart. It is the pure in heart that see God. May Christ shine in us and through us all

END