

Good morning! Anyone who reads the Bible knows that God is a holy God and He wants us to be holy, too. We sometimes conveniently forget about that. Oh, we all remember that God is holy but the part that seems to get away from us is the part about us becoming holy. After all, God forgives us, right? He knows our faults and He has known all about them from before we were ever born. He knows the sins we haven't committed yet, the ones we are going to commit that you and I don't even know about. If we know all of that, it's easy to believe that God doesn't care about our sin---except whenever we read our Bibles. The Bible tells us very clearly that He wants us to be holy. So how are we going to get there? This morning, let's look together at a passage that gives me hope; maybe it will help you, too:

Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.

1 Tim. 6:11b

When we were young, my brother Kirk and I took piano lessons. Kirk was much better than I and he improved more quickly. Our piano teacher, Mrs. Lehman, told Mom that I should stop trying to play piano and start playing drums. Mom, ever the optimist, signed us up for accordion lessons. Again, Kirk was much better than I and soon got a full-sized accordion while I had to keep playing the little beginner model, always playing the same song at every recital. Our accordion teacher told Mom that I should stop trying to play accordion and play drums instead. We continued with accordion lessons for about six months, not because I was committed to it but because Gifford's Ice Cream was next door. When Mom finally gave up, I took to drums immediately, practicing constantly, and I played in bands for years. The writer of Hebrews tells us (in Heb. 5:8) that Christ "learned obedience from what He suffered." So then, we Christians must learn, too. We learn to pray by praying. We must learn holiness by working to overcome our moral weaknesses. We must, by working at it, form good habits and overcome bad habits. We must be ever watchful for our enemy the devil, who always seeks to undermine any progress we make. Interestingly, he often uses things we value, like self-sufficiency and pride, to do it. In today's passage, Paul tells Timothy to "pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, and gentleness." Why? So he can get better at them! This morning, I want to challenge you to practice godly living. Don't worry about failing; keep doing it. If you fail, get up and try again. You'll get better with practice...and besides that, God likes it!