

“The Useful Servant – Part 2”
2 Timothy 2:22-26
(Preached at Trinity, July 10, 2022)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In verses 20-21 Paul described people in the church as “vessels of honor” and “vessels of dishonor.”
 - A. There are those vessels which God has carefully prepared to do every good work for His honor and glory. They are sanctified – that is, they are separated from sin, and separated for God.
 - B. Then, there are those vessels which bring dishonor to the Master and His church who will be temporarily put to a utilitarian use and then discarded.
2. In verse 21 Paul admonished Timothy to cleanse himself of everything dishonorable. Literally, “These things” – from the wood and earthenware – from that which characterizes those who profess a counterfeit faith. We are to purge ourselves from all that is unclean, unholy, unrighteous. We are to cleanse ourselves so that we might be useful servants for the Master’s use. The word can be translated “purge,” or “purify.”
3. Now, as he often does, Paul goes from the general to the specific. What, exactly, should we do that we might be more useful servants to our Master, Jesus Christ?
The honorable vessel purges himself from that which is dishonoring to the Master.
Verses 22-23 Paul gives examples of what an honorable vessel looks like.
Remember, the Christian life must be one of balance. On one hand, God has prepared us for His use. Our salvation, our justification is God’s work alone.
On the other hand, we press towards holiness. In other words we must give careful attention to preparing ourselves for the Master’s use.
4. Paul begins by describing the things we must flee from and then the things we must pursue.
 - A. These things describe the life of a Christian – “those who call on the Lord from a pure heart”
 - B. This teaching may seem strange to some or even radical – it is not the standard of the world. But we are not of the world! Our desire is to be useful servants to our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.
5. Last week looked at the youthful lusts that must be avoided. We must flee youthful lusts that war against our soul. These include sexual lusts, material lusts, and prideful lusts.
6. We also examined the first two virtues we must pursue that we might be useful servants.
 - A. Righteousness
δικαιοσύνη - integrity, virtue, purity of life, the condition acceptable to God
 1. Righteousness is both something that has been granted to us in Christ and something we must strive for – something we must pursue with all our might.
Yet, it is **NEVER** our righteousness that we establish that makes us acceptable to God.

2. Genuine faith is never void of the outward fruit of righteousness.
The Christian life is never a neutral life – the man who is not following hard after righteousness will be overtaken by sin
- B. Paul then adds we must pursue faith –
The word can refer to the faith that testifies to our belief or confidence in Christ. This faith can be great or small. We must strive to increase it.
It can also be understood it as faithfulness.
It speaks of integrity, loyalty, and trustworthiness
Faithfulness towards God, faithfulness towards the brethren, towards the church.
7. This morning I want to continue looking at those things Paul says we should pursue as useful servants of our Master. These are universal pursuits for God’s holy vessels:
2 Timothy 2:22 NAU - "with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."
8. We should notice here the unity of these three graces – faith, love, and peace. Sometimes Paul speaks of faith, hope, and love. We might call them the triune graces of Christianity.
1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 NAU - "We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of *you* in our prayers; ³ constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,"
Notice the energy we must expend in growing these graces:
“work of faith” “labor of love” “steadfastness of hope.”
9. In **Verse 22** Paul is describing them in the list of things we must pursue as useful servants of Christ – “faith, love, and peace.”
- I. The useful servant pursues love - ἀγάπη
 - A. Like the other Christian graces, love is something that is given to us and something we must strive after.
 1. Love is the chief of the Christian graces
1 Corinthians 13:13 NAU - "But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love."
a. It occupies the chief place in the “fruit of the Spirit” of **Gal. 5:22**
b. Jesus told His disciples that love would be the chief characteristic that would identify them as His disciples – it sets us apart
John 13:34-35 NAU - "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
c. John would later say that if a person claims to be a Christian and doesn’t love the brethren he is blind and deluded
1 John 3:14 NAU - "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death."
 2. ἀγάπη love is not like natural carnal love – it is not a feeling or emotion
a. Love is a conscious act of the will – it is a sacrificial giving of ourselves for the good of others. It is not motivated by a personal gratification or self-fulfillment
b. Agape love is not something you fall in and out of. It is something we do. It is something God commands.

- B. True love is of a particular sort.
1. True love is impossible for the lost man
The lost man is self-centered. He looks out for his own self-interests – *His* family, *His* possessions, *His* occupation, *His* pleasures
 2. True love is only possible for the believer. It is a selfless love, a sacrificial love. But that doesn't mean that we always practice it as we ought
 3. Paul says here we must pursue this love. It is a grace that increases as we submit to the inner working of the Holy Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is love. Love increases as we set our priorities on Christ. Jesus rebuked the Church of Ephesus because He had ceased to be their first love.
 4. If God is love, love will only increase as we know and follow Him. We pursue love by pursuing Christ.
1 John 4:12-16 NAU - "No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. ¹³ By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. ¹⁴ We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son *to be* the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶ We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him."

II. The useful servant pursues peace

- A. Only the one who has found reconciliation with God can be at peace with his fellow man.
1. The peace we have is a grace in the process of sanctification. We are growing in peace
 2. The lost man is on a never-ending treadmill trying to get ahead of everyone else
 - a. He wants the place of preeminence recognition
 - b. He is always concerned about what others think of him. There is no peace when our greatest labor is seeking to maintain our image.
 - c. He doesn't really care for others. He only uses them to satisfy his own pride.
 3. The believer has found true peace in love – he sees God as enthroned.
 - a. He is content in God's favor – if God honors Him it is enough
 - b. He has found the peace in putting others before himself
 - c. There is true liberty here – true peace
- B. While this peace marks us and testifies to our new life it does not find its perfection in this life. It demands much grace.
1. We must be Kingdom minded. Christ centered. As Christians we live in a whole new realm. The Kingdom of Christ is a Kingdom of peace. Jesus Christ is the Prince of peace.
He tells us: **John 14:27 NAU** - "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you."

2. Kingdom living demands intentional focus. As Christians we are to live in peace with all men.
Hebrews 12:14 NAU - "Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord."
Romans 12:18 NAU - "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men."

III. The useful servant pursue patience as we instruct those who do not know the truth.

Verses 23-24

- A. As useful servants of the Master we should always be in teaching mode.
 1. We must continually speak the truth
 2. Even our lives are used of God to teach the gospel
1 Peter 3:1-2 NAU - "In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any *of them* are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, ² as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior."
- B. There is an emphasis on pastoral leadership in this passage.
 1. These are the "Pastoral Epistles"
 - a. Paul is instructing Timothy to enlist faithful men to teach God's people – **Verses 1-2**.
 - b. Paul admonishes Timothy
2 Timothy 2:15 NAU - "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth."
 - c. **Verse 24** is chiefly instruction regarding pastoral ministry
2 Timothy 2:24 NAU - "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged,"
 2. On the other hand, Paul is still giving instruction regarding the vessels of honor, useful to the Master for every good work, those who call upon the Lord from a pure heart.
 3. They must be patient and gentle when wronged. This is yet another fruit of the Holy Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering.
- C. We must avoid foolish debates over religion
 One way to enhance peace is to avoid entertaining foolish questions – **Verse 23**
 "foolish" is from the word μωρόος from which we get our word "moron."
 By "speculations" we are to understand "matters of controversy"
 1. This doesn't mean we compromise doctrinal truth. But we should avoid endless arguments over non-essentials.
 2. This follows the same line of thought as **Verse 14**
Verse 14 - "not to wrangle about words, which is useless"
 And **Verse 16** – "avoid worldly *and* empty chatter"
Titus 3:9 NAU - "But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law, for they are unprofitable and worthless."
 3. All of these words have essentially the same meaning – empty, vain, useless words, foolish, ignorant disputes and controversies using human wisdom as the rule of interpretation.

- a. Paul is not talking about discussions with those who are sincerely seeking to know the truth. We must patiently abide with them and teach them – **2 Timothy 2:25 NAU** - "with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition"
1 Peter 3:15 NAU - "but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence"
 - b. Paul is talking about the foolishness of engaging in a war of words with men who have no interest in the doctrinal truths of the Christian faith.
- D. **Verse 24** – We must not be “quarrelsome” but be “kind” and “patient”
- 1. Our Lord was the best example of this
He was firm, assertive, uncompromising – yet gentle
Matthew 12:19 NAU - "He will not quarrel, nor cry out; Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets."
 - 2. Truth can sometimes be brutal – but the servant of God must never be brutal. The one able to teach should not be quarrelsome.
 - 3. This demands great patience
Patience demands that we approach all men with patience, always seeking to help the weak.
1 Thessalonians 5:14 NAU - "And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men."
 - 4. This demands a spirit of meekness
- E. **Verse 25** – We must correct those who are in opposition
- 1. The word for “correcting” is παιδεύω – to correct or chasten
Hebrews 12:6 NAU - "For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives."
KJV - chastens
 - 2. This means we bring them the truth – we must present it as fact
We have no need of quarreling or striving with them.
If they refuse the Word of Truth we are to withdraw from them.
 - 3. We must correct with “gentleness” – the word refers to meekness.
Contrary to our understanding of the word today, meekness in the Greek mind was power under control – It has no relation to weakness. This was best demonstrated by our Lord who as God possessed all power and dominion:
Matthew 11:29 NAU - "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls."
KJV – “meek and lowly”

Conclusion:

1. Our highest goal should be to be a useful servant to our Master – to hear His words, “well done thou good and faithful servant.”
2. This demands that we strive to be vessels of honor.
 - a. That we flee youthful lusts
 - b. That we pursue righteousness, faithfulness, love and peace.
 - c. That we avoid needless disputes with those who have set a course to attack the truths of the Christian faith – it will do nothing but cause endless debate and strife.
 - d. We must strive to be gentle to all patiently teaching the Word of God.
We must patiently teach those who will receive the Word.
We must correct those who oppose the truth with meekness.
3. This will be a lifelong work – May God continue to make us vessels of honor prepared unto every good work.