

“The Useful Servant – Part 1”  
2 Timothy 2:22-26  
(Preached at Trinity, July 3, 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. On the other hand, we must prepare ourselves.
  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.
- I. Flee from youthful lusts that we might be useful servants  
Flee - φεύγω – run away from, escape out of danger  
Our word “fugitive” comes from this word describing a person who is running to avoid capture. The Christian must be continually on the run from sinful passions.
- A. Youthful may refer to young in age or it could mean young in maturity
    1. Surely new believers to the faith are more susceptible to previous lusts than more mature Christians. The mature Christian has had more time and more experience in fighting the battles that Satan wages against us. Don’t forget, in **Verse 4** Paul refers to the Christian as a soldier. The mature Christian is experienced in warfare.

2. There are also certain sins which those who are young in age must be on guard against. But in the context of this passage Paul is contrasting the honorable and dishonorable vessels – believers and unbelievers. We must flee from those lusts that characterize the unconverted.

B. What are these particular lusts that we must flee from?

1. Sexual lusts

**1 Corinthians 6:18 NAU** - "Flee immorality. Every *other* sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body."

"immorality" - πορνεία – It refers to sexual immorality. It's the word the KJV translates "fornication."

We get our word "pornography" from it.

- a. The so-called sexual revolution has exposed the condition of the human heart. The homosexual revolution describes a people given over to their lusts.

**Romans 1:24 NAU** - "Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them."

**Romans 1:26-27 NAU** - "For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, <sup>27</sup> and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error."

- b. Paul is saying these lusts have no place in the life of a believer. We must wage war against these fleshly lusts.

**1 Peter 2:11 NAU** - "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul."

- c. We must guard our eyes, our thoughts, our fleshly lusts that we might be kept pure for the Master's use.

2. The youthful lusts also include material lusts

**1 Timothy 6:9-11 NAU** - "But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup> For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. <sup>11</sup> But flee from these things, you man of God"

**1 Corinthians 10:14 NAU** - "Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry."

- a. Idolatry is the transferring of our affections from God to anything or anyone else. It is the most-vile assault upon God.
- b. We must always see material things with the mind, not the heart. With the mind, looking upon them in their utilitarian sense.
- c. We must be content with Christ

**Hebrews 13:5 NAU** - "Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,""

3. We must also guard against prideful lusts  
**1 Timothy 3:6 NAU** - "*and* not a new convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil."  
 a. With youth often comes sinful ambition - lust for power, position, recognition  
 b. This is accompanied by a hatred of authority – a rebellious spirit  
**2 Peter 2:10 NAU** - "those who indulge the flesh in *its* corrupt desires and despise authority. Daring, self-willed"

C. Why must we flee these things

1. Because they attack the soul  
**1 Peter 2:11 NAU** - "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul."  
 a. They rob the soul of peace and confidence before God.  
 b. They rob the soul of sweet communion with God.  
 c. They rob the soul of the beauty of holiness.
2. Because this is the only method of avoiding sin  
 a. The only safety is in keeping a safe distance  
**1 Thessalonians 5:22 NAU** - "abstain from every form of evil."  
 c. We must maintain a distance from those things which tempt us to sin – those things which excite our passions.  
 d. This is further reason to purge ourselves from those who call themselves brothers yet demonstrate that they are vessels of dishonor.  
**1 Corinthians 5:9-11 NAU** - "I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; <sup>10</sup> I *did* not at all *mean* with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. <sup>11</sup> But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler-- not even to eat with such a one."
3. The chief reason we flee these things is because they bring dishonor to our Master.  
 a. Paul is saying these things hinder our usefulness to Christ.  
**2 Timothy 2:21 NAU** - "Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these *things*, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work."  
 b. Our life should be a constant pursuit of seeking what is pleasing to Christ.  
**Ephesians 5:8-10 NAU** - "you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light <sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of the Light *consists* in all goodness and righteousness and truth), <sup>10</sup> trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord."

## II. Things which we must pursue so that we might be useful servants

A. We need to see a couple things as we look at these things the useful servant must pursue.

1. First of all, Paul is describing the Christian life.
  - a. These things describe the collective life of believers. These are the things we all pursue.
  - b. They are also the outward evidence of the Holy Spirit working within us. They follow closely the fruit of Galatians 5:22
2. Second of all, there is an overarching focus on God's Word in this Epistle.
  - a. **Verse 2** – It must be entrusted to faithful teachers
  - b. **Verse 15** – It must be handled with care.
  - c. **Chapter 2:2** – It must be faithfully preached in every circumstance
  - d. The Word of God is also the means of our sanctification. It is by God's Word that we grow in grace.

B. 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.  
**Romans 1:16-17 NAU** - "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. <sup>17</sup> For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous *man* shall live by faith."  
**Romans 3:20-22 NAU** - "because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin. <sup>21</sup> But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, <sup>22</sup> even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;"
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  
 In fact, a heart filled with righteousness will be protected from the assaults of Satan – it is an important piece of our armor.  
**Eph 6:14** - "and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,"
3. It must be that which we lust after – Christian lust.  
**Matthew 5:6 NAU** - "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."
4. The standard is the Word of God and the power comes through the Word of God.  
**2 Timothy 3:16 NAU** - "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness"

**Psalm 119:9-11 NAU** - "How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping *it* according to Your word. <sup>10</sup> With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. <sup>11</sup> Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You."

- C. Paul then adds we must pursue faith – There are two ways to consider this. We can also see this in Galatians 5:22.
1. The word almost always refers to faith—that is, belief or trust. We are to pursue those things that will increase our faith. Again, the Word of God is the chief means. But a careful pursuit of Christian virtues also increases our faith.
  2. We can also understand the word as referring to faithfulness. This is the same word is used to describe God’s faithfulness in **Romans 3:3**.  
**Romans 3:3 NAU** - "What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it?"  
It speaks of integrity, loyalty, and trustworthiness, steadfastness.
  3. Faithfulness towards God – Have you been faithful with that which God has given you? Are you the kind of person that is consistent, trustworthy, loyal?  
**Matthew 25:21 NAU** - "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'"
  4. Faithfulness towards the brethren
    - a. I once heard a pastor speak of his unfaithful, undependable members, “I’d sure hate to go to war with this group.”
    - b. We are fellow soldiers – **See verses 3-4**
    - c. We must be faithful to each other – defending one another, helping one another. It is sad to watch Christians in our generation attacking one another
    - d. It is a particular blessing for a pastor when he has a few who are loyal and faithful – trustworthy and dependable
  5. Faithfulness towards the church
    - a. God has granted you abilities to be used for the good of His church  
**1 Corinthians 12:28 NAU** - "And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, *various* kinds of tongues."
    - b. Have you been faithful to labor for the good of this church?

#### Conclusion:

1. Paul is describing the great contrast between vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor. He is saying we must pursue the holy life of the vessels of honor.  
**2 Timothy 2:22 NAU** - "with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."
2. Flee the carnal lusts that captivate the lost. Instead pursue righteousness and faithfulness.
3. Next time we’ll continue looking at the characteristics of the useful servant.  
Paul admonishes us to pursue love and peace and then he reminds us of our demeanor as we interact with the vessels of dishonor.