

A Useful Vessel

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Lord's Day Evening

II Timothy 1: 1-9

Introduction: All of us long to be used by God. How do you know your life is a vessel in the Master's hand? Please turn to 2 Timothy 1. The title of this afternoon's message is "A Useful Vessel."

The Word of God says:

- 1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus,
- 2 To Timothy, *my* dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, *and* peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.
- 3 I thank God, whom I serve from *my* forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day;
- 4 Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy;
- 5 When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.
- 6 Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.
- 7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.
- 8 Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;
- 9 Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began

Introduction: About eight years ago, my wife and I visited Barcelona, where there is an exact replica of the Santa Maria there in the port. Well, if you would descend down into the belly of the ship, and you would find a multitude of oak barrels, rim to rim. These oak barrels served a very important purpose for those who journeyed in that ship. Before they took the journey, they filled them with good clean drinking water-water that they would use for their cooking, and for their refreshment. These barrels were called "ballasts." Without these barrels filled with water, they could not have lived on this journey.

But then every time one of the barrels was empty of drinking and cooking water, they filled it with sea water, because the barrels filled a second function: they were "ballasts" there in the bowels of that ship. Now do you children know what ballasts in a ship are? They are the heavy weight put in the lower part of the ship to give it stability. Once it gets out to sea and meets something more than little rippling waves, and begins to know something of the turbulence of the sea, without ballasts, the ship would be capsized!

It is the weight down in the middle of the ship that allows it to make its way through the turbulent sea, to keep it on course, and to arrive safely at its destination.

This evening we are going to look at three "ballasts of the soul" that will make you a useful vessel. Without these ballasts deep down in the belly of your soul, you will capsize, and your life will be a shipwreck outside of the good will of God. As we look to God's Word, be praying as I preach. Ask the Lord to help you to drink in the good water of these ballasts. "Taste and see that the Lord is good!" (Psalm 34:8).

How can you and I be a useful vessel for the Lord? Let us look at verse 5:

1. To be a useful vessel for the Lord, you must have FAITH (v. 5)
"I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee"

A person can look like he has all the success in the world, but if he does not have faith in the Lord, all that he accomplishes will be nothing. All is nothing in the end if God is not in our lives. He lasts forever. Everything else passes away. The call comes from a deep inner conviction of faith that it is GOD ALMIGHTY Creator of the Universe that has given the call.

- Romans 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Transition: When God gives us this faith that lasts forever, usually He does it in various ways. First,

- A. God brings faith through the FAITHFUL. "Paul, a servant" (vv.1-2)
II Timothy 1:2 "To Timothy, my dearly beloved son"

Paul looked at Timothy as a son in the Faith. We must that God for those who I call "the faithful," those who preached the Gospel to us. The Bible says in Acts 14:6-7 "They were ware of *it*, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about: 7 And there they preached the gospel."

Paul had prayed for Timothy, preached to him and his family, and prepared and groomed him for the ministry (Acts 14).

You remember the one who pointed you to Christ?

- Psalm 126:5 They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.
- Acts 16:1 Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: 2 Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. 3 Him would Paul have to go forth with him

- B. God brings faith through the FAMILY.
2 Timothy 1:5 "unfeigned faith . . . which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice"

The real key to Timothy's faith was not just missionary Paul. It was Missionary Grandma and Mom! The greatest mission field in all the world is not the distant lands of the world. The greatest mission field is your HOME!

JILL'S TESTIMONY: I think of the testimony of Jill's family. She is the eighth generation in her family to accept Christ as Saviour. Eight generations back, her ancestors were Anabaptists. They were actually from a royal family in Switzerland. Three brothers had to flee because of persecution of their faith in Christ. Where would Jill and I be without Jill's faithful mother and father? What about her faithful grandmother and grandfather. What about those before that, and so on? Are you faithful in your family? The greatest mission field in all the world is the FAMILY!

Transition: So, God engenders faith through the Faithful, those that preach to us the Gospel. And of course, He uses the family. Mom and Dad promoting the Gospel and godliness in the home. But ultimately, and truly, our salvation comes "from the Father!"

- John 1:13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
- Romans 9:16 So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

With that in mind, let's look at verse 9

C. God brings faith through the FATHER. "God...called us" (v.9)

11 Timothy 1:9 "Who [God] hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began"

- Philippians 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.
- 1 Corinthians 3:6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

It's not us who can bring faith to a person! We can plant, we can water, but GOD GIVETH THE INCREASE!

Transition: It is not enough to have faith. Plenty of people profess to have faith and are still dead in their sinful habits, or at best they simply are "casual" Christians. They are Christians of convenience. Perhaps you find yourself here today, and you are bored with your Christian life. You are stuck in a rut and you don't feel like you can talk to God and His Word is dry. You are enduring the Christian life. Well, look at verse 6.

2. To be a useful vessel for the Lord, you must have FIRE (v. 6)

2 Timothy 1:6 "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands."

Insight: As Timothy grew in his faith, it was obvious that there was this certain overwhelming desire. And any one who is called into the Body of Christ won't be happy until they are utilizing the gifts given to them by God. We can say with Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:16, "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"

Necessity is laid upon us to be used of the Lord! We've got to stir up the fire of God's gifts within us!!

A. The Fire is CHRIST-GIVEN. "the gift of God"

Insight: This fire in the soul is put there with God! It is not something we have done. Sometimes it seems as if God's fire has been extinguished! You remember the fire in your soul? Let's remember that this fire is THE GIFT OF GOD. All you have to do is stir it up! It is divinely bestowed. What are you doing to stir up your gift?

- 1 Corinthians 4:7 For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?

B. The Fire is CONSUMING. "stir up"

Insight: The word stir up has the idea of kindling a fire. This fire is consuming. God's call is something unavoidable.

- Hebrews 12:29 For our God is a consuming fire.
- Romans 11:29 says, " For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" so you can know that you will be miserable if you are not utilizing your Holy Spirit given gifts. God created you for the ministry.
- Ephesians 4:11-12 says that God's will for you is to come to maturity as a saint and to do "the work of the ministry." You were made to do this!
- Jeremiah 20:9 Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.

C. The Fire is CULTIVATED. "stir up"

Insight: The word "stir up" also gives us the sense of PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY. You must engage in ministry activities in order for your gifts to rise to the surface.

Illustration: When I was younger I used to love to go camping in Louisiana. We used to stay up all night around the campfire and look at the stars. But what must you have to have a fire? Sticks, wood, fire, fuel.... You must put the wood in a certain position, start the fire, provide oxygen to the fire, etc. The fire must be cultivated!

Application: You've got to stir up the fire. Use the gifts that God has given you. Get involved. Lead singing, study, preach, start a Bible study, do everything you can to stir up the gifts within you.

- Psalm 35:23 Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, even unto my cause, my God and my Lord.

D. The Fire is CONFIRMED.

2 Timothy 1:6 Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

When a person is gifted for a certain ministry, it is recognized by others. It is obvious when a person is called by God to do something, and Paul was referring to Timothy's ordination. Now Timothy was ordained first by God before he was ordained by men. It is God who first confirms our gifts, and secondly men recognize them.

Transition: Now you may see the evidence of God's call in your life: you may have FAITH, you may have FIRE, but in order for your call to be completed you must have the last essential ingredient: FOCUS!

3. To be a useful vessel for the Lord, you must have Focus (v. 7)

11 Timothy 1:7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

- Deuteronomy 6:13 Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him.

Insight: God has NOT given us a spirit of fear. What is *fear* anyway? Fear is a focus on failure. Fear is rooted in that which fails. There is much fear in self. You will fail. There is fear in trusting others, for they will fail you too. But there is no fear in God. Why? God never fails. Don't focus on fear and self-reliance, but be God-dependent and God-focused! God says we need to focus on three things:

A. God has given us DIVINE ENABLEMENT. "power"

Insight: So many are claiming to have power. I remember a meeting I heard about. Here was a man who was in an audience of thousands. He said, "Receive ye the gift of the Holy Spirit," blew on his hand, and the multitudes fell into their seats as if it were some miracle. Come on! God's power is not in some physical exertion of our power. God's power is in a person! We need to get our focus on Jesus Christ!

- Jesus said, "Without Me, ye can do nothing" (John 15:15).
- Matthew 28:18 "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth"
- Romans 13:1 "For there is no power, but of God . . ."
- I Corinthians 1:24 "Christ, the power of God . . ."

B. God has given us DESIRE. "love"

Love is that work of grace in our hearts that motivates us to desire the undesirable. The "Desire of All Nations" (Jesus-Haggai 2:7) can give you an all consuming love

- Matthew 22:37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This bring engenders WORSHIP toward God.

- Mark 12:31 And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. This love engenders EVANGELISM toward the lost.
- John 13:35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. This love engenders SERVICE and FELLOWSHIP toward your brethren in Christ.

C. God has given us DISCIPLINE. "a sound mind"

Insight: The words "sound mind" have the idea of "thought out, self-disciplined, well planned."

2 Timothy 4:7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

2 Corinthians 10:5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

Colossians 3:1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

- 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.
- 3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

Conclusion: Are you a useful vessel? Are you drinking in the faith and fire of the Holy Ghost and the presence of Jesus Christ in your life? Are you focused on the battle? Are you disciplined? Lift up your eyes and look on Christ! Lift up your eyes and see Christ! Focus not on yourself, for that will bring fear! Focus on Christ. Christ is our all in all. He is all we need! Are you a useful vessel? Is God using you? Are you a Christian that is stable when the winds and the waves come? Turn your eyes on Jesus, for when the waves are over your head, they're under His feet!