

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

## How To Be Useful To Our Master

2 Timothy 2:19-26

**Keywords:** Sanctification, Holiness, Good Works, Purification

**PowerPoint Presentation included:** NONE

**SermonAudio Blurb:** The heartbeat of any true follower of Jesus is to be useful to Him. They see Him as their master and they desire that He would find them faithful and ready. But what does this mean? Paul explains what it looks like and how it works to his faithful son in the faith.

### I. Introduction.

- A. One book of the Old Testament that is not well known, but is worthy of your time, is Haggai.
  - 1. A very practical book it addresses a nation that has gone far in losing its way.
  - 2. A key phrase captures somewhat the problem of the people. Four times it is uttered by the prophet, "Consider your ways." I would say it this way, "Stop and think about what you are doing and where you are heading."
  - 3. This book is set in the days of Darius, the Medo-Persian king.
    - a. Babylon had fallen to the Persians. Ezra came back to the land of Israel. The Temple was to be rebuilt but it wasn't.
    - b. This is where the prophet Haggai comes into play.
  - 4. Through a series of four messages God speaks to the people regarding their lack of diligence in rebuilding the temple. Though they had built for themselves houses the temple was desolate.
  - 5. Procrastination was their problem, there never seemed to be the right time to begin to do the central task of rebuilding the temple. Though God in His mercy had opened up their land again, they still sought after their own comforts.
  - 6. In another act of grace Haggai is sent to speak to them and to exhort them to shake off the cobwebs and begin to move forward with promises of blessing of they would.
    - a. They were still in poverty and this is one of the reasons they thought they could not begin the project.

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- b. But Haggai shows them that their poverty was simply the reality of God's faithfulness to his covenant promises. In Deuteronomy 28 you read of God saying that disobedience would cause their kneading bowls to be cursed and their purses to have holes.
  - c. "You have sown much, but harvest little; you eat, but there is not enough to be satisfied; you drink, but there is not enough to become drunk; you put on clothing, but no one is warm enough; and he who earns, earns wages to put into a purse with holes." Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Consider your ways! Go up to the mountains, bring wood and rebuild the temple, that I may be pleased with it and be glorified," says the LORD. "You look for much, but behold, it comes to little; when you bring it home, I blow it away. Why?" declares the LORD of hosts, "Because of My house which lies desolate, while each of you runs to his own house." (Hag 1:6-9)
  - d. So the call is to trust the Lord and His enablement and begin to repent and build the temple.
- B. This is a fitting illustration of the situation in 2 Timothy 2.
- 1. Paul instructs Timothy to not get caught up in the foolish argument and empty words of those who seek to bring false teaching and distractions to the people of God.
  - 2. Instead he was to focus his energies on dealing rightly with the Word of God so that in the end he will find himself approved and unashamed before God.
  - 3. Then in vs 19 we read the encouraging and yet sobering words of the sovereignty of God. There are two aspects given, God's and man's.
    - a. God's perspective is that He knows who are His.
      - (1) Many claim and take on the name of the Lord but their take it in vain.
      - b. But the Lord knows whom He has redeemed. He knows the ones given to him since the beginning.
      - c. Men like Hymenaeus and Philetus were found to be not His. We would not have known this, but God knew it always.
    - d. Man's perspective is that those who truly are God's people are a people pursuing holiness and purity.

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- C. It is here that we pick up the thought of 2 Timothy. The idea of the pursuit of holiness by the people of God is now on Paul's mind.
1. Handle the Word of God rightly.
  2. Handle your life in a manner consistent with calling Jesus "Lord."
  3. In other words, our lives should reflect a hope in the gospel. We have been redeemed from unrighteousness in which we were once slaves, therefore, as Paul said in Romans 6, if we have died to sin how then should we continue to walk in it?
- D. Read 20-21.
1. The issue before us today is how we can be useful to God. What is it that causes some Christians to essentially sit on the sidelines and others move forward, growing in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and being used?
  2. And the answer is found in vs 21, they have cleansed themselves for the purpose of being holy and ready to do any good work.
  3. But this is much like the Israelites in the days of Haggai.
    - a. They had returned to their land. They had seen the promise of God fulfilled and had witnessed his turning the heart of King Cyrus to let them return.
    - b. But they were only looking forward in a self-centered manner. They were not truly thinking in a God-centered manner. So they built themselves houses, started planting and raising herds and flocks of animals and forgot the Lord.
    - c. He tells them they need to reorder their priorities. They need to sanctify themselves to the Lord and then He will use them and bless them.
  4. In the same way Paul is telling Timothy that there are many in the church who are saved but they are not useful to God. Therefore they were to cleanse themselves rightly so as to be holy and useful to Him.
- E. We will consider this passage in two parts, first to look at the vessels themselves and then to consider what is a useful-to-the-Lord vessel.

## **II. The varied vessels in the Church (11-12a).**

- A. Two types of vessels in the church—useful and not useful.

# M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- B. At first glance it appears that the two types are gold or silver vs wood and earthenware but that would be in error.
1. The imagery used:
    - a. The house is a metaphor for the Church.
    - b. The vessels are utensils that the typical fancy/great house would have in those days.
      - (1) Some are the fine, company vessels. They are displayed as pieces of beauty and have value. They are used for special events and special guests.
      - (2) The others are the day-to-day utensils. There is nothing unique about them and nothing that makes them stand out. They are used for everything from a drinking cup to a chamber pot.
    - c. Now many will take the idea that the gold and silver vessels are the ones which are honorable. And the others are dishonorable. And if this is your position it works out.
    - d. However, it is not what the passage is saying.
      - (1) There is both kinds of vessels in the house and that is not a statement of quality. It is just the way it is.
      - (2) But with those vessels some have honor and others dishonor.
      - (3) What matters is not the external but what they contain and how they are used. The most beautiful pot is still a dishonorable one if it is filthy and unclean.
  2. The point being made:
    - a. In the Church you have all sorts of people who are recipients of God's blessing and who are used by God in various ways.
    - b. Romans 12:3ff.
    - c. Romans 12:14.
    - d. 1 Corinthians 12:18-31.
    - e. 1 Timothy 5:3, 17.

# M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- f. Some have greater perceived value, some have greater real value, some have greater giftedness, some have the greater gifts.
  - g. What matters though is that they are all part of the household of God, or they make up the Body of Jesus Christ.
- C. Excursus on the nature of clean and unclean.
- 1. In my preparation for Brazil I have spent time in Leviticus where the nature of holiness is a central subject.
    - a. Leviticus 11:14-45
    - b. There is no other God like YHWH. He is unique and distinct. This defines everything else that is holy. They are only holy when they are rightly defined by the one who alone is holy.
  - 2. There are things that are holy and things that are common.
  - 3. It is easy to mistake common = unclean, when it doesn't.
  - 4. Holy is something that has been consecrated to God. It could be a common thing that is now made holy, such as utensils used in the Tabernacle.
  - 5. But to treat a holy thing as common (even though it once was common) is to profane it, which is sin. For something that is common is to come in contact with something that is holy it must first be "clean".
  - 6. Purification is different than consecration. If it polluted it is now unclean and must first be purified/cleansed. Example, to work on the Sabbath, which is holy is to profane the Sabbath.
  - 7. Example is Leviticus 12.
- D. This is what we see going on in 2 Timothy. Paul is saying that it matters not whether you are a vessel that is fancy or common, what matters is whether you are one that is honorable or dishonorable.
- 1. Why?
  - 2. Because one is useful to God and the other is not. It is as simple as that.

### **III. Becoming useful to the Lord.**

- A. In vs 20 there are some vessels that are to honor and others to dishonor. "Therefore" in vs 21 moves us to the conclusion that he begins to draw from this.

# M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

1. “If” you cleanse yourself then you become a vessel for honor.
2. Here we see the connect back to vs 19c.
  - a. This tells us how one becomes a vessel for dishonor—sin.
  - b. It matters not what you look like, for the Christian there is no place to be tolerant of wickedness in your life.
  - c. The command is simple and blunt. A person who takes upon himself the name of the Lord is one who is to have withdraw or turn away from wickedness.
  - d. Discuss the nature of “taking the name in vain.”
  - e. This is the point Paul makes, don’t take the name of the Lord and then live in rejection to what the name represents.
- B. Paul has already described people such as Hymenaeus and Philetus and their heretical activities.
  1. The warning is simple, examine yourself to see if there be any wicked, unrighteous thing and deal with it.
  2. This was the point of my sermon last week on the nature of repentance.
  3. I would add that there is also the connection to the first part of vs 19 in this section as well. “The Lord knows who are His.”
    - a. That is the other side of the same coin about abstaining from wickedness.
    - b. As Galatians 5 says after listing the various examples of one who lives by the power of sin rather than the Spirit. “. . . those who practice . . .”
  4. Because all I really think about right now is the Pentateuch I think of the nature of sin and how it leads to destruction.
    - a. In Numbers 11 the obedience to the Lord changes to rebellion. 11:1 they were complainers (note the warning of YHWH by only consuming some on the outskirts), vs 4 they become weepers like little children. 14:2 they became grumbled (also 27,29,36) against the Lord. Then they are grumbling about God's leaders in Moses and Aaron (16:11, 41). All of this points to not finding God to be

# M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- sufficient and satisfying. This then leads to the foundational problem of rebellion first found in 14:9, this is what the others will lead to.
- b. Or as James puts it, temptation by our own desires, our desires give way to sin and sin, when fully grown brings forth death.
  - c. That is why a true believer is one who is habitually repenting.
- C. So the goal as a vessel in the household of God is to be one that is seen by God as being one for honor.
- D. However Paul does not tell us to be a vessel for honor; rather he gives us three descriptions that describe what one that is for honor looks like.
- 1. Sanctified.
    - a. This is the idea I already spoke about regarding the common and the holy.
    - b. The point is that though we are all common, we consecrate ourselves to the service of our holy God and therefore we walk in holiness. We do not participate in the profane and unclean.
    - c. How often do you think this way? “I belong to the Lord. He purchased me. I do not live for myself nor anyone else. I live for the Lord and seek to glorify Him in all that I do.”
  - 2. Useful to the Master.
    - a. Here the idea is that the Lord finds in you a vessel that is ready to be used.
    - b. All of us have picked up a pot or a utensil and found it dirty or broken. The opposite is one who is aware of his position and calling in Jesus Christ. We seek to be always ready for His use.
    - c. What also stands out in this is the use of “master” speaking of God’s sovereignty. All that matters on our end is that we are ready to be used. He will be the one who will determine how we are used and when.
    - d. Can you be content with that? Can you be at peace with the idea of waiting in a state of readiness for the hand of the Lord?
  - 3. Prepared for every good work.

# M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- a. This is naturally built off of the one before.
- b. Here is the idea of being equipped to the fulness.
- c. Not just waiting for the Lord but always working and growing and maturing so that you constantly add to your repertoire.
- d. You are alert and looking. You seek to see where good might be done and then act upon it.

## **IV. Conclusion.**

- A. How to not sanctify yourself:
  1. 1 Corinthians 5:6 Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? [not speaking of the world]
  2. 1 Corinthians 15:33 Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals.
  3. Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.
  4. Ephesians 5:5-7 For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them;
  5. 2 Timothy 2:17. Allowing yourself to be in the company of false teaching, like gangrene
- B. The motivation for a true follower of Jesus is to be useful to Him, ever ready to be used and equipped for anything He may call you to do.
- C. How?
  1. Prayer:
    - a. Ephesians 1:18ff
    - b. Ephesians 3:14ff
  2. Knowledge of the word
    - a. 1 Peter 2:2.
    - b. 2 Timothy 3:15ff



*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

---

## Small Group Questions

- How does “prepared for every good work” look like in real life? Think about this carefully and brainstorm on it. Think about how you deal with your time management or your finances. How might these indicate being prepared? What about others?
- What are ways you sanctify yourself to the use of the Lord? This is not a time to lift one’s self up but to talk about how this requires forethought and a plan. Also think about non-negotiables in your life that help you in this process of sanctifying yourself.
- Remember that no of us has “arrived” so where are you seeing the need to grow?