

## Vessels for Honor

II Timothy 2:20-26

10/15/06

### Intro

As we study through Paul's last letter, we should be struck by the depth of his words and the sense of urgency in his tone. Paul writes straightforward, down to earth, and unafraid.

Paul begins this section with an object lesson. He tells us that in a house there are vessels to honor and vessels to dishonor. Some are made of quality materials such as gold and silver, and some are made of just wood or clay.

In every house there are many different vessels. We have cups, vases, bowls, serving dishes, decorative pieces, bins for trash, and in the old days, we even had buckets for slop spittoons. Some vessels are more for common use and others are for honorable use.

Paul's charge to Timothy and to us is to be a vessel for honor, useful to the Master and set apart for His purposes in our lives.

**These are insights and principles we need  
in order to become a vessel for honor.**

### **I. Be Ready to be Used**

- There are few things as rewarding as being used of God for godly purpose in someone's life; to lead someone to faith, to comfort someone who is in need, to change the direction of someone's life.

### A. God can use anyone

- First, we should begin with a point of clarification. God uses whoever He wishes to use to carry out His purposes and that even includes those who may not believe in God.
- In other words, God, in His sovereignty will even use the ungodly.
- The scriptures are filled with examples:
  - Moses was used of God we know, but so was Pharaoh. He resisted the exodus of Israel from Egypt so that the greatness of God would be known.
  - The evil Assyrian king, Sennacherib was used of the Lord to discipline the nation of Israel, but his arrogance cost him dearly.
  - Nebuchadnezzar was a Babylonian pagan, but he was called, "the servant of God."
- The question is not if God can use you, but how will God use you?

**App – Every house has vessels of dishonor. They are used, but they are dishonored. We hide our garbage can under the sink, or put the slop bucket in the corner.**

**But there are other vessels we cherish. I have a favorite coffee mug that has beautiful designs on it and it brings pleasure to my day as it fulfills its purpose.**

B. You have a choice

**Illus – There’s a big difference between that coffee mug and us – we have a choice. You can decide that you will be a vessel for honor and God in His faithfulness will use you in honor according to His word.**

- God will not force you to be a useful for godly and good things; you have to choose that for yourself.

**Illus – The dishes sitting on the counter don’t have choice whether they are cleaned or not. But we do. God has made the soap available and we need to willingly use it.**

**I Corinthians 3:11-13, For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.**

- David asked the people of Israel to bring supplies that were needed to build the temple. This is part of his prayer...

**I Chronicles 29:17-18, “Since I know, O my God, that You try the heart and delight in uprightness, I, in the integrity of my heart, have willingly offered all these things; so now with joy I have seen Your people, who are present here, make their offerings willingly to You.”**

**II. Pursue the Things You Love**

- Paul speaks of fleeing and pursuing. This is a good question to consider, what is it that you are pursuing? The answer is found in what you love.

A. The question is, ‘what do you love?’

- Vs 22 – pursue these things with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.
- “What we love changes, molds, and transforms us,” wrote A.W. Tozer.

**Illus – “We are all in the process of becoming.” Read quote from AW Tozer.**

**I Timothy 1:5, But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.**

**II Peter 1:5-9, For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. NIV**

B. Be empty and then be filled

- Paul tells Timothy to flee from youthful lusts.
- The first thing we often think of when we read ‘lustful passions’ is sexual desire. That is true, but there is more to it. The word means *longings or passions* and refers to all the things driven by youthful impetuosity-- flee these things.
- We need to empty the cup, but then we need to fill the cup. Pursue these things that are of God; righteousness, faith, love, and peace.
- Pursue, be filled, desire these things and you will be useful for every good work.

**Colossians 1:9-10, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;**

- But we all so need to be available to God, in other words willing.

**App – Be available for any good work. Are you available if God wants you to pray with someone, or to fix the toilet? Or do you say, “That’s not my job?”**

**Illus – The problem of using a special mug or a goblet as a vessel is that their use is limited. In reality, we have to be available for any good thing.**

**I remember one Wednesday when the sewer backed up in the whole building and because I knew how to fix it, I did that and then ran in to start the service.**

**III. Have the Character of God**

- Paul continues by telling Timothy some of the character qualities of a man of God.
- If we want to be useful to the Lord, we need to understand that our character is vitally important.

A. The Lord’s servant must not quarrel

- It doesn’t mean that you avoid conflict at all costs, controversies and conflict will happen for sure,

**Illus – If Martin Luther had not been willing to have conflict, there would have been no reformation.**

- But be sure to avoid senseless controversies.
- The word in the Greek is *moros* from which we get our word, moron.

**Illus – I remember when I first decided to plant a Calvary Chapel church, I was talking to someone from Bible College who was taking a position as pastor of a small church in Hillsboro. “I wouldn’t step foot in a Calvary Chapel,” he said... This was senseless.**

**Illus – “Never wrestle a pig,” as the saying goes, “he has way too much fun and you get way too dirty.”**

**Illus – Charles Spurgeon once referred to such people saying, “they went about with theological revolvers in their ecclesiastical trousers.”**

- The servant of God must not do that.

**Colossians 3:8, But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth.**

- The key is to not take things personally, if “it is well” with your soul, then let insults go.

#### B. Correct with gentleness

- Why correct with gentles? Because these are tender subjects for many people.
- And these can be tender subjects for us as well. If someone says something about our Lord, we’re tempted to get fired up.
- I have found it is very powerful if you win the person’s heart before you try to correct them.

**Illus – The man who had a problem with “rebellious.”**

**Amos 3:3, Can two walk together, except they be agreed?**

Conclusion

**Do desire to be used of God is a good thing. I pray that we will see God use all of us for every good thing. But we must be willing to be made ready. Godly change is good.**

**From AW Tozer:**

**We are all in process of becoming. We have already moved from what we were to what we are, and we are now moving toward what we shall be. The perturbing though is not that we are becoming, but what we are becoming; not that we are moving, but toward what we are moving. Not only are we all in process of becoming; we are becoming what we love. We are to a large degree the sum of our loves and we will of moral necessity grow into the image of what we love most. Our loves changes, molds and transforms us.**

**What we love is therefore not a small matter to be lightly shrugged off; rather it is of present, critical and everlasting importance. It is prophetic of our future. It tells us what we shall be, and so predicts accurately our eternal destiny. Loving the wrong objects twists and deforms the life and makes it impossible for that life to image the Lord Jesus Christ. This furnishes in part a rational explanation for the first and greatest commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." To become like God is and must be the supreme goal of all moral creatures.**