

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 7/19/92  
II Timothy 2:19-23 "How Can I Be Used By God?"

**Scripture:** II Timothy 2:19-23

**Intro:**

Illust: Do you remember when you were in elementary school? Do you remember who cleaned the chalk board erasers? The teacher made it a big deal where I went to school. It was a real privilege to wash the erasers. We used to compete for the opportunity. Imagine that! Why did we do it? We had a desire to please the teacher, to contribute, to be useful.

Q: Do you want to please God with your life? Do you want to be used by God? I would assume by virtue of the fact that you are here today, in church, that most would answer, "Yes, I want to please God. I want my life to count. I want to be used by God."

Q: What kind of people does God use? Are there certain kinds of people that God does not use?

A: We're going to see this morning from II Timothy 2:19-23. Join me in II Timothy 2.

Notice the image Paul has in mind, the image of a household.

v 19 Foundation

v 20 Great House

v 20 Vessels

Key: God uses Vessels in His Service...Clean Vessels.

Illust:

Q: How can I be a vessel that God can use?

**Proposition: In order to be a vessel that God can use, I must be aware of 3 factors according to II Timothy 2:19-23.**

- I. Be aware of the Conditions (19).
  - A. Personal Relationship with the Lord
  - B. Personal Holiness
- II. Be aware of the Confusion (20).
- III. Be aware of the Commitment (21-23).
  - A. Be clean (21).
  - B. Flee (22a).
  - C. Follow (22b).
  - D. Avoid (23).

**I. Be aware of the Conditions (19).**

Context:

When Paul wrote this letter, he was incarcerated for Christ, locked up in a remote Roman dungeon. This was his last inspired letter, written to his close personal friend and ministry partner Timothy. In one sense II Timothy is a leadership manual.

Q: What's involved in being a leader in the ministry?

A: In ch 2, Paul illustrated with 7 images/metaphors of a leader. Paul told Timothy that as a leader he must see himself as a: Teacher (1-2), Soldier (3-4), Athlete (5), Farmer (6), Workman (15), Vessel (21), Servant (24).

Point #1--If I want to be used by God, I must be aware of the Conditions.  
V 19 "Nevertheless the foundation of God stands..." (refer to Korah's rebel, Num 16)  
Here's the foundation of Christianity:  
1. The Lord knows His people.  
2. Let every one that names Christ depart from iniquity.

Here are 2 conditions you must come to grips with if you would be used of God.

A. Condition #1--A Personal Relationship with the Lord  
V 19 "The Lord knows them that are His."

Jn 10:14 "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine."  
Jn 10:27 "My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me."  
I Cor 8:3 "But if any man love God, the same is known of Him."

If I want to be used of God, here's where it starts--God must know me. You say, "Wait a minute. He knows everything and everybody, doesn't He?"

Yes, but that's not what Paul has in mind. The Lord knows everybody, but not everybody has a personal relationship with Him. In fact, the statement that the Lord knows them that are His implies what? There are people that are NOT His.

Refer to Korah--Numbers 16:5

A man named Korah did not like Moses. He was jealous of him. Do you know what he did? He rallied 250 people around him (2). He stirred them up against Moses (3). Do you know what Korah said?

16:3 "You take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation is holy..."

Here's what Korah said, "You don't have any right to be our leader Moses. God is with the rest of us too. We're His people too."

That was a coverup for his proud heart. Listen to Moses' reply.

16:5 "Even tomorrow the Lord will show who are His..."

Listen. Not everyone that claims to be a Christian is indeed a Christian. In Timothy's case, there were men like Hymenaeus and Philetus (17). They defected. But lest Tim lose heart, Paul reminded him, "The Lord knows them that are His."

Q: Does God know that you belong to Him? Do you have a personal relationship with Him?

Objection: "How can I know?" Second condition...

B. Condition #2--Personal Holiness  
V 19 "Let everyone that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."  
Quote: "Christians are not sinless, but they do sin LESS."

God is holy. And because He is holy, He expects His people to be holy (I Pt 1). There are 2 steps involved in becoming a Christian: Repent, and Believe. Repentance demands that we turn away from sin. Personal holiness is not an option.

"Let EVERY ONE... depart from iniquity."

Is 52:11 "Depart ye, depart, go out from there, touch no unclean thing; go out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord."

Illust:

Listen. If we want to be used in God's service, here are the 2 conditions. A personal relationship with Him through Jesus Christ. And personal holiness.

Q: Have you met the conditions? Does God know you as one of His own? Are you living like it?

Illust:

Tran: How can I be used of God? Be aware of the conditions. Secondly...

## **II. Be aware of the Confusion (20).**

What kind of confusion? Remember what Paul told Timothy to do as a minister in 2:15? "Cut it straight with the Word of God." Here's the confusion. Not every minister does that. Listen to v 20.

V 20 "But in a great house..."

The "great house" refers to the visible church.

Q: What does Paul say you can find in the visible church?

A: 2 types of vessels

1. Gold/silver vessels >> Unto Honor
2. Wood/earth vessels >> Unto Dishonor

Here's the picture. Houses have all kinds of vessels in them. Peanut butter jars and crystal goblets, gas cans and brass vases, soap dispensers and porcelain jars, paper cups and antique china. What do they all have in common? They're all vessels. But what makes them different? They have different functions. They were designed for different purposes.

That's what Paul has in mind. You use noble vessels for noble purposes. You don't store gas in a crystal goblet. And you don't put a beautiful flower arrangement in a peanut butter jar!

Q: What's Paul talking about? Who are the vessels?

A: Specifically, he's talking about true and false teachers in the church.

Here's the confusion. In the visible church, not everyone brings honor to Jesus Christ. Yes, there are gold and silver vessels like Paul and Timothy and Onesiphorus. But there are also wood and earth vessels like Phygelus and Hermogenes, and Hymenaeus and Philetus. Not every teacher is a vessel God can use for His noble purposes. Some are frauds.

Listen. There are exceptions. There have been times when God has used unclean vessels. He used pagan Assyria to smite disobedient Israel (Is 10:5). He used

Nebuchadnezzar and the wicked Babylonians to accomplish His holy purpose. He used Cyrus the pagan Persian. But these were exceptions. The overwhelming emphasis in the Bible is that God chooses to use clean vessels to fulfill His purposes. God doesn't privilege everyone to be used in His glorious service.

Illust: I did a funeral for a man recently for a man who I never met. His family told me he did not attend church. His reason. The church had hypocrites, and he did not want to be a hypocrite.

That objection is all too familiar, isn't it? Jesus Himself predicted it would happen in the parable of the Wheat and Tares (Mt 13). When they first start growing, wheat and tares look alike. You can't tell them apart. So it is in the visible church. Unsaved people can go through new member's classes and join churches. Only later will it become apparent what kind of vessel they really are.

Challenge: Yes, there is confusion. There are 2 kinds of vessels. But don't throw in the towel. I want to challenge you today. Determine today that you will be the kind of vessel God can use. Be a vessel of gold and silver. Be a vessel that brings honor.

Tran: We've seen 2 factors so far--The Conditions, and the Confusion.

How do we deal with the confusion? What should we do in light of the fact that there are 2 kinds of vessels?

### **III. Be aware of the Commitment (21-23).**

If we want to be used of God, we can't just sit back and watch the world go by. We need to make a 4-fold commitment. Notice that Paul challenged Timothy to do 4 things (4 verbs).

#### A. Be clean (21).

God uses clean vessels. Why? For an obvious reason. An unclean vessel contaminates the contents. You can't pour Living Water out of a Rust Bucket!

Illust:

Q: What should be our attitude towards pastors, TV preachers, radio teachers, televangelists who don't "cut it straight with the Word"?

Listen to what Paul told Timothy...

V 21 "If a man...purge..."

"from these" = Paul is telling Tim what to do with false teachers like Hymenaeus and Philetus.

"purge" = to cleanse thoroughly; This is a key word in this paragraph.  
eg--"katharas"

Tim was to have nothing to do with false teachers. He was to stay away from them. Their message is dangerous.

Caution: Be careful who you watch on TV...what you read... I say this with great concern. There are many wolves in sheep's clothing calling for our attention.

Illust: When visiting homes, I see Christians reading books that cause my heart to jump to my throat. Be careful!

Illust: US News article about Bill Clinton--his "religion"

Here's the first commitment I must make--BE CLEAN.

Q: What happens if I choose to be clean? What is true of a clean vessel?

A: Notice 4 traits of a clean vessel in v 21...

1. Honors God
2. Consecrated--"sanctified"

Is Paul talking about a second work of grace? What does it mean to be "sanctified"? It means to be "set apart." A sanctified vessel is a vessel that is a holy vessel, a clean vessel, a vessel God can use for His holy purposes.

3. Useful--"fit for the Master's use"

Application: Can God use you? Are you in a position where God can use you? Some are not because of debt. There are some people that have borrowed to the hilt just to keep up with the Jones', and now are enslaved by that debt. They can't get involved in ministry because they have forced themselves to work at both ends of the candle to keep their creditors off their back.

4. Prepared--"prepared unto every good work"

Do those 4 traits describe you? Are you honoring God with your life? Are you consecrated to His service? Are you useful to Him? Are you prepared and ready to do His will? You are if you are a clean vessel.

Illust:

That's the first commitment--Be clean.

Q: What must I do if I am to be clean?

### B. Flee (22a).

V 22 "Flee also youthful lusts"

Timothy was a man mature beyond his years. Paul valued him perhaps as his greatest associate. But he was young (mid 30's?). And apparently he still displayed certain characteristics that so often are found in baby boomers: prone to be impatient and intolerant; attracted by the love of argument and self-assertion. Add to that the tendency to show partiality, and the everpresent danger of sexual infidelity.

So Paul told him in frank terms...

"Flee"--Shun; Get away from

"youthful lusts"--What are they? William Hendriksen suggests 3:

1. Pleasure--the inordinate craving for the satisfaction of the physical appetites; Includes sex, food, sensual living; "If it feels good, do it, and worry about the consequences later."
2. Power--the ungoverned passion to be #1; to be dominant; to be in the spotlight in every crowd
3. Possessions--uncontrolled yearning for material possessions and for the glory that goes along with them

Those are youthful lusts. Flee them!

Q: Can we do it? How?

A: Only by the power of Christ in us.

Jesus was tempted by these 3 temptations in the wilderness in Mt 4. He triumphed over each...

1. Temptation of Pleasure (refused to turn stone into bread)

Mt 4:1-4 "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds ...God."

2. Temptation of Power (refused to cast Himself from Temple, Mt 4:5)

3. Temptation of Possessions (refused to receive the kingdoms of the world from Satan--Mt 4:8-10)

Key: If I am to be used by God, I must choose to FLEE these desires.

Illust:

But fleeing is only half of the task. The void must be filled with something else.

### C. Follow (22b).

V 22 "Follow"--strong word; exact opposite of "flee" = to pursue, to persecute

What must I pursue if I am to be used of God?

1. Righteousness--giving both God and men their due

2. Faith--loyalty and reliability; comes from trusting in God

3. Love--the determination that I will seek the highest good of others

4. Peace--proper relationships with God and men

See also: I Tim 6:11 "But thou...flee...follow"

I must both flee and follow. I have a double duty. I must run away from spiritual danger. I must run after spiritual good. I must put off the old man, and put on the new. I must deny myself, and follow Christ. I must crucify the flesh, and walk in the Spirit.

Q: How can I be this kind of person?

A: Practical advice--V 22 Spend time "with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." If I want to be a pure vessel, with whom should I spend time? People who have "pure hearts."

Q: Who do you spend time with? Are your friends godly people?

Illust: Teens

Illust: Talked this week with a H.S. friend; He's been saved since H.S. "I'm so glad I'm a Christian. I used to be empty. That's why I'd drink. I'd get wasted to get rid of the empty feeling. But the next morning, the emptiness would be back, even worse."

### D. Avoid (23).

V 23 "But foolish (=dull, stupid) and unlearned questions (=debates, arguments)..."

If you want to be used of God, you must choose to stay out of certain conversations! And silence them if you can. Why?

"knowing this"--Count on it! They "breed strifes" (=produce quarrels).

**Conclusion:**

Illust: Water tank with dead animals at the bottom...

Q: How can I be the kind of vessel God can use?

I must be aware of 3 things--the Conditions, the Confusion, and the Commitment necessary.

Q: Is God using your life right now? If He is, thank Him for the privilege!

Illust:

But if He isn't, why not? Why not? Are there some things that need to change?