

Prayer List

Wallace
Sheila
Ophelia
Josh
Daniel
Olene

Services:

Sunday

Bible Class 9:00 a.m.
Assembly 9:50 a.m.
Assembly 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday

Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

Pinole Tidings

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This Week's Question:

What evil queen painted her face before meeting with the rebel king Jehu?

Answer To Last Week's Question:

Ezekiel - Ezekiel 18:23

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Useful for the Master - 2 Timothy 2:21

By Jacob Hudgins

"Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work" (2 Tim 2:21).

We all want to be useful. We want our lives to have meaning and purpose beyond ourselves. When we discover the gospel of Jesus, our possibilities for real use and purpose expand exponentially. Yet we come to Jesus in our raw state; we need to be purified and refined before we can reach our potential for His use. A tremendous promise rests before us in this passage: "Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work"(2 Tim 2:21). Jesus will use us-if we make ourselves useful! How do we do it?

1) We must purify our lives

In this context, Paul is discussing the dangerous false message of Hymenaeus and Philetus that Timothy needed to oppose. Yet despite the false teachers and fake Christians we might encounter, Paul reminds us: "Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His,' and, 'Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity'"(2 Tim 2:19). Two seals rest upon the foundation of Christ's church-a reminder that Jesus knows His own (even if men are unsure), and an admonition for all Christians to depart from iniquity. Fleeing from sin is an understood prerequisite to

usefulness to the Master. Can we hope to bring our iniquity into the Lord's house and please Him-or be used by Him?

Continuing with the image of Christ's church as a house, he tells us, "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor"(2 Tim 2:20). Some dishes and vessels in a house are honored; some do the grunt work. Figuratively, Paul is describing true Christians as vessels with a truly honorable purpose. But there is a condition we must meet to be vessels of honor:

"Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor"(2 Tim 2:21). We must cleanse ourselves to have honorable use! The kind of vessel we are-and whether we are useful-is not out of our control. It is not fate-or even God-who decides whether we ourselves are pure and useful to Him. "if anyone cleanses himself" puts our utility in our control-thanks to the blood of Jesus Christ. Further, "anyone" throws open the door of usefulness to any and all who will purify themselves. Thus Timothy is told to "Flee also youthful lusts"(2 Tim 2:22) since they will detract from His purpose and usefulness to Jesus.

Sin prevents Jesus from using us. Can we influence others for good when we are drinking, or smoking, or lusting? Can we preach the gospel after a profanity-laced tirade? Can we be a spiritual influence on our partner in fornication? To further Jesus' work on earth, to truly pray "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven," to be useful to the Master, we must "reckon (ourselves) to be dead indeed to sin"(Rom 6:11). The implication of this text is plain: Jesus won't use dirty vessels!

2) We must purify our teaching

What we teach and believe must be right if we are to be useful to the Master. "But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness"(2 Tim 2:16). Many are so impressed with themselves that they think their teaching is the most interesting and most important matter to be discussed. Our teachings, thoughts, and arguments are not useful to the Master; His word is. "And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some"(2 Tim 2:17-18). Was this false teaching useful to Jesus? Did it help His cause for them to teach the product of their thinking and overthrow the faith of His disciples?

These, it seems, are the vessels for dishonor (v. 20) from which we must cleanse ourselves. All of us come to Jesus with our own ideas and understandings of what is right. All of these must be surrendered to Jesus and submitted for inspection by His word. New information, direct from God, must replace our false notions. "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also"(2 Tim 2:2). When the teaching is pure, it can spread like wildfire to the glory of God; when it is impure, it must be stopped. "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"(2 Tim 2:15). The word must be rightly divided; we must teach the pure word of God, or we cannot be useful to Him.

Some things we are uncomfortable with may not be condemned by God. Some things we are very comfortable with may not be authorized by Him. Questions of degrees of modesty and propriety are often generational rules that do not originate with God; they must be discarded in our teaching. Extreme care must be taken to align our beliefs and practices with His word precisely in order to be true reflections of the Master. Put simply, many people can live a basically moral life, but only those who are teaching and practicing the pure doctrine of Jesus Christ can be useful to Him.

"Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work"(2 Tim 2:21). Jesus' promise is that when we cleanse ourselves, we will then be "sanctified," a special vessel set apart to do His special work. He assures us that we will be "prepared for every good work." The hard work of refining and purifying us will have begun, and we will stand ready for His use. We all long to be useful. Are you pure? Is He using you today?
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