

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, September 13, 2023 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



The Person God Uses
2 Timothy 2:20-22

“²⁰ 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. ²¹ 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. ²² Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” -2 Timothy 2:20-22 (NKJV)

Some Key Date in Paul’s Challenging Life:

- [c. A.D. 52-57]- Paul takes his third mission trip and spends three years in Ephesus
- [c. A.D. 58]—Paul was apparently arrested in Jerusalem
- [c. A.D. 61]—This is the approximate time that Paul arrived in Rome. He had spent these three years in prison, going from one trial to another before different Roman rulers
- [c. A.D. 61–62]—Paul underwent his first Roman imprisonment. We do not have this recorded in the Book of Acts, which breaks off at the very beginning of Paul’s first Roman imprisonment
- [c. A.D. 62–63]—Paul was released from prison, and during this period he covered a great deal of territory. It was during this time that he wrote 1 Timothy and Titus from Macedonia
- [c. A.D. 63-64]—Paul was arrested again. Before his death he wrote 2 Timothy
- [c. A.D. 64-67]—Paul was beheaded in Rome.

For some 2 Timothy may nothing more than a continuation where 1 Timothy leaves off. But as you can see, it is so much more. The book is the Apostle Paul’s “Swan Song,” his warning shot, his encouragement in the face of great opposition and obstacle. It is so practical and relevant for 21st century Christians and the church... a needed word for what we face in our day.

Fast Facts 2 Timothy

- (1) **Author:** Paul
- (2) **Recipient:** Timothy
- (3) **Date:** AD 64-67
- (4) **Place:** Written from a prison cell in Rome
- (5) **Destination:** Ephesus (*Timothy was pastor of the church at Ephesus*)
- (6) **Incident:** Paul's imprisonment and pending death
- (7) **Purpose:** To encourage Timothy in the face of persecution and apostasy

Some Key Characteristics of 2 Timothy:

- (1) **2 Timothy is Paul's last will and testimony** – In our study we are referring to it as Paul's "Swan Song." The deathbed statement of any individual has an importance which is not attached to other remarks. This is what lends significance to 2 Timothy. It is the final communication of Paul. It has a note of sadness which is not detected in his other epistles. Nevertheless, there is the overtone of triumph... *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith,"* written by Paul as his own epitaph (2 Tim. 4:7). Also, because this was his last letter, Paul was very personal. In these four short chapters, there are approximately twenty-five references to individuals.
- (2) **2 Timothy is Paul's warning of coming times of apostasy** - In this little book of 2 Timothy an ominous dark cloud is seen on the horizon. It is the coming apostasy. Today apostasy has broken like a storm, like a Texas tornado, on the world and in the church. What do we mean by apostasy? Webster defines apostasy as "total desertion of the principles of faith." So apostasy is not due to ignorance; it is a heresy. Apostasy is deliberate error. It is intentional departure from the faith. An apostate is one who knows the truths of the gospel and the doctrines of the faith, but has repudiated them.
- (3) **2 Timothy speaks of the ultimate outcome of gospel preaching** - The final fruition will not be the total conversion of mankind, nor will it usher in the Millennium. On the contrary, some will believe and for some there will come about a great turning away, not unlike what we are seeing today... even a watering down, compromise, and total perversion of the gospel. Don't think that what we see going on today has caught God off guard. God wrote about it and warned us about in 2 Timothy.

A man used to visit a tiny general store in the country. The proprietor has a clerk named Jake, who seemed to be the laziest man in the world. One day the man noticed that Jake was gone. He asked the proprietor, "Where's Jake?" "Oh, he retired," was the answer. "Retired? Then what are you going to do to fill the vacancy?" The owner replied, "Jake didn't leave no vacancy."

That leads me to ask, *"What kind of vacancy would there be in this church if you left?"* It is God's clear intention that every one of His people be used in serving the Lord Jesus Christ.

The desire of every Christian ought to be that their life might be useful to God and His kingdom, that somehow God might use him or her for His glory. He has given gifts to each one of us to be used for His purposes as good stewards. And yet for many, who call themselves Christians, faith is like...

- A “football” - an occasional Sunday spectator sport
- Or like a “Quick Stop” – a convenience store serving only when it is convenient
- Or like a “dance recital” – dancing around with excuses why they can’t serve or why someone else is more suited to serve

They are not serving Christ day by day. But if you truly know Christ, you can’t be happy sitting on the bench or in the stands. You want to be in the game. And further there are some Christians who aren’t useful to God...

Think of this, what might make one not useful to God? _____

It has become popular today to suggest that God can use anybody. It’s true that He does not show favoritism based on race, age, gender, marital history, past failures or income status. Yet His standards have never been lowered; He only uses humble, obedient, consecrated followers.

Many Christians will never be useful in the kingdom because of mindsets or behaviors that limit the flow of the Holy Spirit or, as the apostle Paul said in **Galatians 2:21 (KJV)**, **“frustrate the grace of God.”** I don’t ever want to frustrate His grace! If you want God to use you, make sure you don’t fall into any of these categories:

7 Types of Christians God Can’t (or won’t) Use: (by J. Lee Grandy)

- (1) **Driver’s seat Christians** - Jesus is not just our Savior; He is our Lord, and He wants to guide our decisions, direct our steps and overrule our selfish choices. There are many believers who enjoy the benefits of salvation yet they never yield control to God. If you want Him to use you, then you must slide over into the passenger seat and let Jesus drive. If you have a problem with willfulness, learn to pray, **“Not my will, but Yours be done” (Luke 22:42, NKJV)**.
- (2) **Armchair critics** - There are some people who roll up their sleeves and serve the Lord; there are others who make it their business to analyze and pick apart (critique) everyone who is doing God’s work. The devil is the Accuser, so if you are accusing others you are operating in the spirit of the enemy. The Holy Spirit does not work through people who are bitter, angry or judgmental... constantly tearing down and criticizing, grumbling rather than building up and edifying others.
- (3) **Glass-half-empty pessimists** - Many Christians today are worried about what sinners are doing, and some spend hours trying to predict when the Antichrist will arise or when

the world will end, or how bad the world is and getting worse, or how corrupt culture is, etc. Listen we all know that! That's not new news! Meanwhile there are other Christians who focus on winning lost people to Jesus and showing His compassion to a broken world. Who do you think will bear more spiritual fruit—the doomsday pessimist or the hopeful evangelist?

- (4) **Carnally-minded Christians** - It has become fashionable today for believers to lower the standard, to take on the characteristic of the world, to look more like the world in order, they say, to be more “seeker-friendly,” or too be more “relevant” and “relatable” to the world. Many believers have even lowered the standard of moral behavior to the point that anything goes. Unmarried Christians living together outside of marriage, some pastors are experimenting with adultery and some denominations have voted to embrace homosexual relationships, and more. Don't be fooled. Just because more and more people are jumping on this trendy bandwagon does not mean God has rewritten His eternal Word. People who live in blatant sin cannot be instruments of the Holy Spirit. As we are going to hear Paul tell Timothy in **2 Timothy 2:21**, “...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...” One who cleanses himself from these things will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, fit for the Master's use, and prepared for every good work.” Our usefulness to God is based on whether we have submitted to the process of sanctification. Holiness is not an option.
- (5) **Church dropouts** - I won't win a popularity contest by saying this, but it's true: God does not use people who have turned away from the church or are not faithful to the church. I've seen this over and over... people who want to start ministries, or be leaders in some service ministry and yet they are not faithful to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, they don't come, they miss more than they are there, and then they don't understand when many times their ministry or service fails or is not connecting with God's people. Perhaps it not those people at all, but instead is the one who is setting such a poor example. Today it is fashionable to bash the church (or church leaders); some people have even established “ministries” to lure Christians away from church and into an isolated spiritual wilderness. Most of these church-bashers are bitter because they had a bad experience with a pastor or someone else in the church. **I have only compassion for any victim of spiritual abuse.** That is a sad reality that does happen, and I personally know of some who have been deeply injured by spiritual abuse or abusive pastors. **But no one has the right to tear down the work of God just because a spiritual leader hurt him or her.** The church is God's Plan A, and He does not have an alternative. If we are going to be used by God, we must get connected to the church and learn to flow with its God-ordained leadership.
- (6) **Quaking Saints** – Some believers are not useful to God because they are too afraid to be used... “I'm not good at that!” or “I'm too shy to talk in front of other!” or “Let someone else do it, I'm not comfortable being involved!” or “I don't have the right words to say!” or “I don't know enough to share my faith!” and that statements of “quaking saints” goes on and on. I'm going to tell you that ministry and service is scary and a fearful things for

literally all of us! If a person isn't scared and a bit intimidated, and shaky about it... well, beware of that one. When Paul sent Timothy to Ephesus to pioneer the church there, he exhorted him to break free from fear. He wrote, *"Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord"* (2 Timothy 1:8). And even more directly Paul would say to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:7, *"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."* Quaking saints is a misnomer (contradiction, inaccuracy, incongruity) for a Christian, because it's not about your ability or what you can or cannot do. It is about what God can do through you if you let Him use you and empower you to do what you can't. Fear has the power to paralyze. All those who surrender to the call of God must bravely open their mouths, defend the faith, risk their reputation and suffer rejection—and possible persecution and serve Him. If you are afraid to be used by God, to serve when asked, to share the gospel, repent of your fear and ask God for holy boldness.

- (7) **Lazy spectators** - Many Christians today think following God means clocking in for a 90-minute service before driving to the lake. We read quick devotions on our smart phones and breathe short prayers during our morning commutes. But somewhere in all this 21st century stress we lost the meaning of discipleship and service. Church (and the Christian faith) is not a spectator sport. The church is the body of Christ with each person being a part of what makes that body work. For those who think coming and sitting, and watching others perform, soaking it in and getting fed yourself, is okay... well, it is if you're not a Christian, but if you are one you are an active part of the body of Christ... the church and you ought to want to be used by Him. Not content to just spectate!

If you want God to use you, you must take His call seriously and become a focused student of His Word and a passionate prayer warrior. The apostles of the first century declared in Acts 6:4, *"But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."* Halfhearted people never changed the world. You must be devoted, committed and passionate if you want to make maximum spiritual impact.

Our text reveals the kind of person God uses. Let's look at it together in 2 Timothy 2:20-22 (READ: 2 Timothy 2:20-22)

"²⁰ 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. ²¹ 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. ²² Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." -2 Timothy 2:20-22 (NKJV)

Some Common Miscalculations About Who God Uses:

- (1) **God only uses impressive gifts and abilities** - You may think that God uses people who have impressive abilities and gifts. While spiritual gifts and great ability may play a part, they are not the main feature in being used by God. We hear about it and ready about it

far too often in the national news, another gifted Christian leader or preacher falls and brings terrible disgrace to the name of Christ.

- (2) **God only uses the seminary trained** - Or you may think that God uses a person who has been to seminary and has a lot of training. While seminary has its place, I know of many men who graduated from seminary, but they're not even in the stadium, let alone in the game!
- (3) **God only uses those with great Bible knowledge** - Or you may think that God uses a person who has a great knowledge of the Bible. While, as we saw last week, being careful students of the Bible is very important, it is not necessarily the main or "only" thing. You may be a renowned Bible scholar, and yet be detrimental to the cause of Jesus Christ.
- (4) **God only uses those with great charm and charisma** – We often think that personality and a lot of it is everything. That a great leader, a great pastor or leader of the church must be a great charismatic leader with a lot of zeal and charm. Unfortunately that puts a lot of preachers in the same category as a "slick car salesman," a "snake charmer," or a "slick lawyer or politician." Of the highly charming and charismatic leader/preacher is only good at manipulating, and coaxing out high numbers and misguided decision that produces what many not be genuine.
- (5) **God only uses those who are blessed and highly favored** – Maybe you think that the "call" of God is only for the select few... those "called to the ministry," or those who have experienced the "call" as we sometimes say... meaning professional clergy, specially called missionaries or evangelists. And the truth of the matter is we've all seen those in ministry (T.V. Evangelist types, some Mega-Church Preachers, Mega-Ministry Leader) who seem to think that they themselves are God's-gift to man and almost pass themselves off as "messiah-like"... blessed and highly favored. And they do more damage than good to the church and the cause of Christ. When we think of those "blessed and highly favored" we probably think of Biblical figures like Moses, or the prophet Isaiah, Jeremiah or Elijah, a King David, or one of the disciples in the New Testament. We even hear the angel say to Mary, you are blessed and highly favored. So we think that God only uses those who are "called" to ministry. First of all Christians are "favored"... that's what grace is, the "unmerited favor of God." All Christians are blessed and highly favored. And all Christians are "called" in a sense. That isn't to take away from God's call for some into full-time Christian service, or called to ministry. But there is a sense in which we are all called of God to be used of Him in Christian service.

The simple question is "What is the key to being used of God?" "Who is it that God uses?" And, "How can my life be used of God?" The simple message of our text (2 Timothy 2:20=22) is that God uses cleansed people, who are defined by two characteristics:

2 Characteristics of Those God Uses:

- (1) **God uses cleansed people who flee sin**
- (2) **God uses cleansed people who pursue godliness**

Paul is telling Timothy how to deal with some difficult problems in the church of Ephesus, where he was ministering. In the verses just before, he has exhorted Timothy to use the Scriptures properly, not as Hymenaeus and Philetus, whose false teaching had led some astray. Look up at verse 19 (2 Timothy 2:19) Paul reminds Timothy, ¹⁹ ... *“Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”* Now he urges Timothy to be a cleansed man who flees sin and pursues godliness. Godliness is summed up under four qualities in our passage in verse 22 (2 Timothy 2:22), ²² *Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”*

4 Qualities of Godliness:

(1) Righteousness

(2) Faith

(3) Love

(4) Peace

NOTE: We are to pursue these qualities of godliness in the company of the saints (the church, other believers and with a pure heart.

Now in our passage Paul uses the illustration of a large house that has different kinds of vessels. The gold and silver vessels are kept clean so that they may be used for honorable purposes, such as dinner parties. The wood and earthenware vessels are used for dishonorable purposes, perhaps in the kitchen or to carry out garbage or human waste. They often get broken and are cheaply replaced.

It would be easy to misapply Paul’s point here. If you took his illustration to its logical conclusion, you could say that the dishonorable vessels serve a legitimate function and thus are just as necessary as the gold vessels. But that’s *not* his point. Rather, the large house represents the professing or visible church. Some who associate with the church are truly born again. Others, such as the false teachers Hymenaeus and Philetus, are probably not born again. They are the vessels for dishonor. Paul is saying that no one should be a vessel for dishonor.

To put it another way, he is saying that God isn’t going to use a garbage pail life to serve the pure gospel to a hungry world. Can you imagine being a guest at a wealthy home, where you’re seated around a magnificent table? The kitchen door swings open and the cook comes out with a garbage pail and starts dishing the food out of the pail. Even so, God isn’t going to use dirty lives to serve the good news of Christ to the world. Rather,

GOD USES CLEANSED PEOPLE (2 Timothy 2:20-21)

²⁰ *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.* ²¹ *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 Timothy 2:20-21

Note three things:

3 Things Concerning the Cleansed People God Uses:

(1) You must choose the type of vessel you will be - Clearly, Paul is presenting us with a choice: Do you want to be a gold or silver vessel, used for honor, or will you be a cheap clay pot, used for dishonor? Again, you may think, “Well, both are used of God, aren’t they?” The answer is, “Yes, but you don’t want to be used as a vessel for dishonor!”

It’s interesting that Paul uses this illustration in Romans 9:21-23, although with a different emphasis... let’s turn there and look at **(READ: Romans 9:21-23)**

“²¹ Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? ²² What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory,” – Romans 9:21-23

In this passage, Paul is emphasizing God’s sovereign right to do as He pleases with His creation. As the potter, He can do whatever He wants with the clay, and the clay has no right to challenge the potter.

But in our passage in **2 Timothy 2:20-21**, Paul’s emphasis is different... in our passage Paul emphasizes that it is our responsibility to cleanse ourselves from the defilement of sin, especially the sin of false teaching, so that we will be vessels for honor.

The Bible is clear that as the Sovereign of the universe, God uses even evil people for His righteous purposes. He uses Satan and the demons, even though they are opposed to Him. In Moses’ day, He raised up Pharaoh and used him to demonstrate God’s power (Rom. 9:17). He used Judas in His plan of putting Jesus on the cross. **Acts 4:27-28** explains, *“²⁷ For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together ²⁸ to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.”*

As **Proverbs 16:4** puts it, *“The Lord has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil.”*

If you’re thinking, “Then we’re just robots or puppets,” you’re wrong! The Bible also clearly declares that each of us is **a responsible moral agent**. Although God ordained that Judas and Herod and Pilate would play roles in crucifying the Savior, each of those men

★ are guilty sinners, responsible for their terrible sins. **You will fall into error if you let go of either God’s absolute sovereignty or man’s full responsibility for his sins.** Paul’s point in our text is, you have a choice:

- Will you be a filthy vessel that God uses for dishonor?
- Or, will you be a clean vessel that God uses for honor?

You are accountable for your choice!

(2) **Cleansing is your responsibility** - Note verse 21, ²¹ *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.* In the context, “the latter” refers back to the vessels of dishonor... particularly the sin of false teachings that were being spread as well as sin and uncleanness. It’s worth noting that false teachings are not just mental mistakes—they are *sins* that need to be cleansed out of our lives!

When Paul says that a person needs to cleanse himself, he is not teaching that by our own efforts we can atone for our sins. If you could do anything in and of yourself to deal with your sin problem before God, then the death of Christ was pointless. **But you can and must avail yourself of the means of cleansing that God has provided in Christ.** That is *your* responsibility.

If you come into the house filthy dirty after a day of working in the yard, you don’t lick yourself clean like a cat does! Rather, you make use of the soap and water to cleanse yourself. The soap and water are the means of cleansing. But you make use of them by applying them to your body.

God provided the blood of Jesus as the means of cleansing us from all our sins (1 John 1:7, 9). There is a sense in which we are completely clean the moment that we trust in Christ as Savior. But we walk in the world, where we get defiled. When we confess our sins, we apply the blood of Jesus to our dirty lives. To be a vessel for honor, you must walk in the light, confessing all known sin to God. Vessels of dishonor walk in the darkness and do not cleanse themselves from sin. So, you must choose the type of vessel you will be. Cleansing yourself to become a vessel of honor is your responsibility.

(3) **Cleansed people are sanctified, useful to the Master, and prepared for every good work (2:21)** – Let’s consider each of these...

3 Things Cleansed People Are:

1. **Cleansed people are sanctified** - The word means, “set apart” unto God. It is used three ways in the Bible.

3 Ways Sanctified Is Used in the Bible:

[1] **Positional Sanctification** - There is *positional* sanctification. Through the death of Christ, believers have been sanctified once for all (1 Cor. 1:30; 6:11; Heb. 10:10). Christians/believers are sanctified by our position/relationship with Christ through what He did/accomplished for us on the cross.

[2] **Progressive Sanctification** - There is also *progressive* sanctification. As we grow in Christ, we are progressively conformed to His image (2 Cor. 3:18; 7:1; 1 Thess. 4:3-7).

[3] **Ultimate Sanctification** - Finally, when we see Jesus, we will be like Him, which is *ultimate* sanctification (1 John 3:1-3).

In our text, Paul is talking about the process of progressive sanctification. We must be growing in the process of being separate from all doctrinal and moral evil, set apart as clean vessels for the Lord's use.

2. Cleansed people are useful to the Master - "Master" is the Greek word "despotes." We get our English word *despot* from this Greek words. In English the word "despot" has a negative meaning. I means dictator, tyrant, oppressor, authoritarian. But the Greek word "despotes" literally mean one who possesses undisputed ownership, unrestricted authority, so that the Greeks refused the title to any but the gods. The "despotes" was one who had legal control and authority over persons lives. So when Paul used this word in verse 21, ²¹ *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*" it emphasizes Christ's absolute lordship. Paul's point here is that dirty vessels are not useful to the Master's use.

If you went into a restaurant and discovered a previous customer's dirty egg crusted on your fork or plate? You would rightly demand a clean fork or plate. The dirty one is not useful. In the same way, if our minds and hearts are tainted by sin... if our minds embrace false teaching and our lives are tainted by sin, we are not useful to our Master.

3. Cleansed people are prepared for every good work - Prepared has the idea of being willing and ready. The cleansed vessel is waiting for the Master to pull it off the shelf and put it to honorable use. Dirty vessels are not ready to be used.

Have you ever been angry when suddenly you have an opportunity to bear witness for Christ? You weren't prepared, were you? Or have you ever been grumbling about something when you encountered a brother or sister who needed a word of encouragement? You probably didn't even notice the need, let alone respond appropriately. But if you are cleansed, you're ready to serve the Lord in any good

work that He sets before you. Thus Paul's point (2:20-21) is that God uses cleansed people.

He goes on to show what this looks like in practice:

CLEANSSED PEOPLE FLEE FROM SIN AND PURSUE GODLINESS (2 Timothy 2:22)

“²² Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” -2 Timothy 2:22

There are two commands, flee and pursue. We are to flee from youthful lusts and pursue what we may sum up as godliness, broken down under four qualities that we mentioned previously... righteousness, faith, love and peace with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart, that is, peace with other believers.

Characteristics of Cleansed People:

(1) **Cleansed people flee from sin** – Here are Paul's words in the first part of **verse 22**, *“Flee also youthful lusts....”* We usually associate the term with sexual temptations, but as one older seminary professor told us, “Men, they aren't just *youthful!*” You don't outgrow sexual temptations. Where do you think we got the term, “dirty *old* man”? The word translated “lusts” may refer to any desires, although it usually refers to sinful desires. So while sexual temptation may be included in “youthful lusts,” it's probably not the primary focus. Rather, **Paul was probably referring to wrong desires that younger men are more prone to than older men are.**

- **Calvin** understood it as the propensity of younger men to lose their tempers and rush forward into a heated argument with more confidence and rashness than men of a riper age do (*Calvin's Commentaries* [Baker], on 2 Tim. 2:22, p. 232).
- In the same vein, **Gordon Fee** (*New International Biblical Commentary* [Hendrickson Publishers, 1988], p. 263) says that Paul is speaking of “headstrong passions of youth, who sometimes love novelties, foolish discussions, and arguments that all too often lead to quarrels.”
- **William Barclay** related it to the faults of impatience, self-assertion, love of arguing, and love of novelty that stem from youthful idealism (*The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* [Westminster Press, revised ed., 1975], p. 180).

So Paul was telling Timothy that while it is right to defend the faith against serious errors and to stand firm on the central doctrines of Scripture, there is a right and a wrong way to go about it. He will go on (2:23-26) to explain the right way. Here, he is warning against the wrong way, which is to be arrogant about how much you know, impatiently to blast those in error, and to be quarrelsome and self-assertive.

Remember “the fruit of the Spirit” that Paul speaks of in Galatians 5:22-23, “²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.*” The fruits of the Spirit include patience, kindness, and gentleness, along with self-control (Gal. 5:22-23). The impetuous nature of youth is not on the list! Paul says to flee from these youthful temptations.

The Bible commands us to flee from some other sins.

- 1 Corinthians 6:18 says, “*Flee immorality.*” Don’t flirt with it. Don’t stand there and pray about what to do. Don’t get near it. If it comes knocking, run for your life!
- 1 Corinthians 10:14 says, “*flee from idolatry.*” You may be thinking, “Well, at least that one isn’t a problem for me! I’m never tempted to set up an idol.” Really? You’re never tempted to set up anything in the place that rightfully belongs to God alone? You never allow watching TV or playing computer games or video games, or playing on your phone, scrolling through your social media, etc. to usurp the time that you should spend alone with God or serving Him? Run from anything that pulls you away from full devotion to God!
- 1 Timothy 6:11 (which is parallel to our text) tells us (in the context) to **flee from the love of money**. Are you tempted to let money control your life... having it or not having? Letting money be your god? Letting money control or run your life? Run! It’s the love of money that can lead your heart astray from God. Do you look at the rich and think, “I want to live that way”? Run! Are you tempted to steal or cheat on your taxes or be greedy rather than generous? Run! Cleansed people flee from sin.

(2) **Cleansed people pursue godliness (righteousness, faith, love, and peace)** - Notice verse 22 again, “²² *Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*” Fleeing and pursuing are opposites. It is not enough just to flee from sin. Also, you must pursue godly character qualities. The word “pursue” is the same word that is elsewhere translated “persecute.” It means to go after it with a vengeance. Run hard after these four aspects of godliness...

4 Aspects of Godlieness to Run Hard After:

1. Cleansed people pursue righteousness – This is a general term that refers to right behavior or conformity to the standards of God’s Word. God’s Word is not vague about how you should live. It doesn’t offer helpful hints for happy living, if you feel like giving it a try. It gives us the commandments of God, which are for our good (Deut. 10:13; 1 John 5:3). Paul commands us, “**Pursue righteousness!**” Go after it with everything you’ve got! David exclaimed in Psalm 40:8, “*I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart.*” Hebrews 10:7 puts those words in Jesus’ mouth. If you’re growing to be like Jesus, you’re growing in the delight of pursuing righteousness from the heart.

2. **Cleansed people pursue faith** - The Greek word here may mean, “faithfulness.” We should be pursuing faithfulness, which is all too rare! It means that you are trustworthy or reliable. When someone gives you a job, you can be counted on to do it. But the word also means “faith.” We are to pursue faith. Faith is related to your concept of God. Is He mighty? Does He hear the prayers of His people and act on their behalf? Do you trust Him to do far more than you are able to do in your strength?

Many years ago, there was a learned Hebrew professor at Princeton Seminary named Robert Dick Wilson. He was a gifted scholar and could read more than 30 Semitic languages! One time about twelve years after Donald Grey Barnhouse had graduated, he went back to the seminary to preach to the students. Dr. Wilson sat down near the front. After the message, he went forward and shook Barnhouse’s hand. He said, “When my boys come back, I come to see if they are big-godders or little-godders, and then I know what their ministry will be.” Barnhouse asked him to explain and he replied, “Well, some men have a little god and they are always in trouble with him. He can’t do any miracles. He can’t take care of the inspiration and transmission of the Scripture to us. He doesn’t intervene on behalf of His people. They have a little god and I call them little-godders. Then there are those who have a great God. He speaks and it is done. He commands and it stands fast. He knows how to show Himself strong on behalf of them that fear Him.” He went on to tell Barnhouse that he could see that he had a great God and that God would bless his ministry (Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Let Me Illustrate* [Revell, 1967], pp. 132-133). Pursue faith!

3. **Cleansed people pursue love** - You say, “Well, I’m just a naturally loving person!” No, if truth be known we all have a naturally selfish bent! That’s why Paul commands, “Pursue love!” That requires getting your focus off of yourself and onto others, so that you can treat them as you would want to be treated. It means giving your time to listen to someone who is hurting. It means befriending someone who is lonely. Sometimes it means having the courage to talk to a brother (or sister) who is in sin with the aim of restoring him to the Lord. It means being patient, kind, considerate, and not easily provoked (see the complete list, 1 Cor. 13:4-7). Pursuing love means investing constant effort to love others.
4. **Cleansed people pursue peace with all who call on the Lord from a pure heart** - Peace usually doesn’t just happen. You have to pursue it deliberately, sometimes with much effort. It is debatable whether the comma should be inserted after “peace.” With the comma, the sentence means that you should join with other believers in the common pursuit of peace. Without the comma, the idea is that the peace that you should pursue should be with other believers, here described as those “who call on the Lord from a pure heart.” “Pure” is related to the verb “cleanses” (2:21), and thus refers to a heart that has been cleansed from sin. The implication of the command is that even though Christians all call upon the name of the Lord out of hearts that have

been cleansed from sin, they still will have conflicts and misunderstandings with each other. Thus they need to pursue peace with one another.

The world's way of dealing with misunderstandings or conflict is to nurse hurt feelings, to spread gossip, and to stand up for your own personal rights. God's way is to go directly to the one who offended and seek to be reconciled. Jesus said that this is so important that even if you are worshiping, leave your worship and first be reconciled to your brother (or sister; Matt. 5:23-24). Recognizing that it is difficult, Paul said (Rom. 12:18), *"If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men."* Pursue peace!

CONCLUSION

It's a great honor for an athlete to be put into the starting line-up of a big game. But even greater than the honor of being used by the coach is to be used by God. To be in His starting line-up, you don't have to have great talents. You have to be a cleansed person who constantly flees from sin and pursues godliness.

Years ago, Dr. Adrian Rogers, now gone to be with the Lord, preached a sermon entitled "People God Uses." In his message he gave five characteristics of those God uses. I want close with Adrian Rogers five characteristics and encourage you pursue those characteristics that would make your life useful to God.

Dr. Adrian Rogers 5 Characteristics of Those God Uses:

- (1) **God uses common people** - First, God uses common people. God uses ordinary people, not extraordinary people. He is the only one that is "extraordinary." God does not rely on our abilities, but on our availability to Him to work through us in extraordinary ways.
- (2) **God uses cleansed people** – That's a lot of what we have been talking in our study this evening. It is the instruction of Paul to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:20-22. Dr. Adrian Rogers says, *"An idol is anything you love, fear, serve or value more than God."* God will not use us if there is unconfessed sin in our lives. We must crush our idols, repent, and be cleansed from the inside out.
- (3) **God uses courageous people** - Third, God uses courageous people. In Judges 7, God gives Gideon the command to send away soldiers who are afraid. This shows us that God can better use a smaller number of brave souls than a larger group of fearful ones. And Paul's words given to Timothy under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit are to not be afraid, to not be timid, or ashamed. Paul saw a need to encourage Timothy to be courageous and not allow fear to keep him from being used by God. As children of God, we have been given a spirit of power and love. This does not mean we become naturally courageous—it means we are filled with His Spirit.
- (4) **God uses cautious people** - We are called to be on guard at all times, ready to fight against the temptation to sin. Adrian Rogers says, *"Sin is a combination of an unexpected opportunity, an unprotected life and an undetected weakness."* That is an interesting

understanding and perspective of “sin.” An “unexpected opportunity” comes your way, and you are not guarding your heart, and it’s in an area where you are vulnerable and weak... and listen the enemy knows your weaknesses, and you fall for it = SIN.

(5) God uses confident people – Not confident in yourself, but in your God. Our confidence comes from know emphatically, doggedly that God is with us. God will give us the victory, and when we are confident that God is with us, we can be used in victorious ways.

Life Application: God has mighty plans and He wants to use us to accomplish them. Make certain that your heart is clean. He may not use you the way you expect, but if you make yourself available to Him, He will use you.