

A Vessel Unto Honour

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[0 : 00] Let's stand together for God's Word, shall we?

2 Timothy 2, verses 20 and 21. I'd like to address the question, how can I be used of God? How can I be a vessel unto honour? A vessel unto honour. Paul writes to Timothy, he says there's different kinds of vessels, different kinds of containers. Now, we could think of vessels of containers and receptacles of various containers that hold things.

I know I've got a favourite breakfast bowl that I like to use every morning. In particular, two other kind of breakfast bowls. And I know Julie's got some cups that she cherishes, even though they've got cracks and chips in them.

She's got particular cups that she likes to drink from. If it was me, I'd probably chuck it in the bin when it's got a crack or a chip in it. But they're a vessel unto her honour.

[1 : 24] A vessel that she likes to use. A container that she likes to use. And likewise, how can I be a vessel unto honour? How can we be vessels unto honour?

I'll put it to you, there's three ways here that we can be a vessel unto honour. How we can be a container, a receptacle that God wants to honour.

Number one, be sanctified. Number two, be met or fitted for the Master's use. And number three, be prepared unto every good work.

So people are compared to vessels to containers. And some vessels are to honour and some to dishonour. You could think, you know, I could think of my breakfast bowl.

And I could think of the garbage can. You know, there's different purposes, different uses. Some are more honourable than others. And how can we be a vessel unto honour?

[2 : 20] Number one, be sanctified. Be sanctified. Verse 21, it says, If a man therefore purge himself from these. The word purge, it means to cleanse.

The Lord wants us to be purged, to be cleansed from the vessels of dishonour. It means to be purified, to be separated from the vessels of dishonour.

So in other words, separate yourself. Separate yourself from wrong associations from the vessels of dishonour. There's a familiar one. 2 Corinthians 6, verse 17.

It says, Come ye out, be ye separate. Think of the men and women of God in the Bible stories. How they were separated unto God.

Moses could not be used of God till he came out of Egypt. In Hebrews 11, 27. By faith he forsook Egypt. Abraham left his country.

[3 : 15] In Hebrews 11, verse 8. Abraham came out. The Israelites were called to be a separated people from the nations around them. If therefore a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified.

It is possible for you and I, for men and women today, to be sanctified. It means to be set apart, to be made holy. How? How can a vessel be made holy, be made sanctified?

As a vessel, we will be filled. We will all be filled. God can fill the most average, the most ordinary to be a vessel for his honour.

But first we have to be empty. We read back in Judges 7, in verse 16. Gideon's army, you know, was whittled down from thousands to just 300 men.

300 men. So they would see that they were relying entirely upon the Lord. And in Judges 7, 16, the 300 were divided into three companies. A trumpet was put in each man's hand with empty pictures, empty containers, and lamps within the containers.

[4 : 26] So the man with Gideon, the 300, had to have empty containers, filled with the lamps, with the burning torches.

And to be a vessel of honour, we need to be firstly made empty so we can be filled. And who should we be filled with? The Holy Spirit. It's not the container, but the content that matters.

It's not the container. We might have a very nice container filled with something yucky. But we want to be a container that's filled with something that's good. Oh, I made you all thirsty now, haven't I? It's not the container, it's the content. It's the content. And God fills the ordinary with His treasure. And friends, we need to let God fill us.

So the glory is not to the vessel, to you and me, but to the contents of the vessel. It's Christ in you. His treasure can fill the ordinary, the average, the imperfect, and the most unlikely, just like you and me.

[5 : 32] It's amazing what God can do with people like you and me. We can be vessels unto God's honour.

With His purity and truth. Sanctified, set apart. Made empty, but made filled. A vessel unto honour. Be sanctified. Secondly, be meant for the Master's use. Or be made fit for the Master's use. So not only are we to be filled, our Lord not only wants to fill us, but to fit us.

To make us meet for the Master's use. We see that word in Genesis 2, verse 18. Where it says of Eve, she was a help meet for Him.

She was a help fitted for Adam. It means precisely adapted to a particular situation, need or circumstance. Now, I thank God I've got Julie.

[6 : 33] She's just made meet for me. She's a help meet for me. You know, she's got to put through a lot of suffering and torment to suit her needs of her husband.

But she's almost there. She's just about perfect now. I've helped in that perfecting process. You know, she's a helper meet for me. And I thank God for that.

And we should be meet for the Master. Made fit for His use. Made fit to be employed by Him. To be used of Him. And we are to strive to be fit for His use.

For His purpose. To be used of the Master. How can we be fitted for the Master to use? God makes us fit by His power. And it's interesting.

Looking back through the case histories, through the examples of Scripture, when we see men and women made fit for the Master's use, sometimes He has to refit us as well.

[7 : 39] In the case of Mark, for example. Mark, at one time, he had deserted Paul and Barnabas. He had abandoned the mission. And Paul, in particular, was very disappointed with him.

And when circumstance came again for him to serve, Paul disagreed with Barnabas. This man of God, it was not a doctrinal difference, but a disagreement in regard to that decision.

And Barnabas wanted to take Mark. Paul said no. And yet later we read, Paul said of Mark, in 2 Timothy 4 verse 11, Take Mark and bring him with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry. He's profitable, he's useful. So there was a time when Paul considered Mark useless, and yet later we read, he's useful. And he was commended by Paul and Peter.

God gave him a second chance. You could think of Mark, as it were, as a New Testament kind of Jonah. He went and abandoned them, and he deserted them halfway through the mission, yet God gave him a second chance.

[8 : 46] We read that too of Philemon. In Philemon 1 verse 11, Paul says in times past he was unprofitable or useless, but now he's profitable, he's useful.

We might have times when we're totally useless for the kingdom of God. We're totally useless. But God gives us a second chance, just like Jonah was made useful, Mark was made useful, Philemon was made useful.

And you can be made useful, made mean, for the Master's use. For God to use you, what a blessing that would be, that the Creator of the universe should deign to use you, to choose you, and to use you, and to make you mean, to prepare you, to fit you, for the Master's use.

To make your life count, for an eternal purpose. God used Gideon. Where was Gideon? He was kind of hiding away, just threshing some wheat.

When God came and took a hold of Gideon, this man that was fearful, and God took him to lead an army of 300, to defeat Israel's armies, that were as numerous as locusts.

[9 : 58] God used Gideon. What did Gideon say? He said, I'm unqualified. He said, I'm from the weakest clan. I'm the least important person, in my father's house.

But God knew that Gideon, was the one, that he had chosen, as commander in chief. And he had promised to be with him. Our Lord used Simon Peter.

Simon Peter, another example, of someone who was useless, as it were. He denied Christ, three times. We can make mistakes.

Friends, we can. I can. I do. Make mistakes. I can be useless sometimes. But God doesn't write us off. He takes a hold of us, and he uses us, as we turn to him.

He knows you, and he's created you. He's put you, in his plan. Just like imperfect Jonah, God can use each one. Imperfect though he be.

[10:55] He wants to use you. Each one. You, you, you, you, you. He wants to use you, to employ you. You're not here by accident.

He has designed you, and made you, and equipped you, for his purposes. And as someone has said, there's four possible responses, when God comes to you.

Like Moses, you can say, who? Me? Like Habakkuk, you can say, why me? Like Jonah, you can say, not me. Or like Isaiah, you can say, send me.

What's your response going to be? Will you, respond, to his call? How can we be made? Think of some ways you can prepare yourself, make yourself available, equip yourself, train yourself, learn. Ask God to develop you, to help you develop, in your character, your faith, your tenderness to others, to be a man, to be a woman, of your word. Learn as you go, as you deal with pressure, as you deal with relationships, as you learn to prefer one another, as you learn Christ, as you learn integrity, as you learn humility, as you learn loyalty, as you learn faithfulness, in the little things, as you deal with your self-traits, as you cope with offense, as you cope with your tendency, to complain, and do the wrong thing, and how you respond to correction.

[12:27] God's training you, is shaping you, to be a vessel unto honour, a vessel of his choosing, a willing vessel. Don't shy away, from his reproving, accept those periods, of testing, of proving, of disappointment, and stop making excuses.

Stop making excuses. Here's what I read about, some excuses, of men and women, through the Bible. When God came to them, and he wanted them, to be used of him.

One thing you could say is, I'm too old. I'm too old. What about Abraham? What about Sarah? The Lord told them, in Genesis 18, 14, is anything too hard, for the Lord?

You might say, I'm just not gifted enough. I haven't got what it takes. What about Moses, in Exodus 4, verse 10, Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I'm not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken, unto thy servant, but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.

And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? Or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.

[13:55] Perhaps you'll say another excuse, I'm too sinful. I'm too sinful for God to use me. God couldn't possibly use someone like me. What about Rahab?

Rahab in the Bible. Joshua was leading the people of Israel into the promised land, and they came to Jericho, and they sent spies in first, and who helped them?

A prostitute named Rahab. Joshua 6, 24, it says, The city was burnt, and verse 25, And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had, and she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day, because she hid the messengers, which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho. I'm too sinful. What about Rahab? She was, you could say, quite an example of a sinful person, and yet God used Rahab. What about the excuse, I'm too young.

I'm too inexperienced. What about Mary and David? It's likely, scholars say, that Mary was only about 14 or 15 years old when she bore Christ, when she gave birth to Christ, only about 14 or 15 years old.

[15:14] David was just a teenager as he slew the giant Goliath and became the greatest king of Israel. I'm too young. What about Mary?

What about David? You might use the excuse, I'm totally incompetent. No, I usually think that of myself. You know, I've absolutely no talents, no gifts, nothing to offer God.

I just mess up every time. Have you considered Balaam's donkey? Balaam's donkey in Numbers 22. God even used the donkey of Balaam to speak to this man.

God can use a donkey. You know, miraculously, he can use a donkey to talk. He can use me. He can use you. Even you, even me, for his glory.

You might say, I'm not educated enough. I'm not trained enough. I'm not equipped. How could God possibly use me? What about the 12 apostles?

[16:17] In Acts 4.13, Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled and they took knowledge of them that they had

been with Jesus.

What made them qualified? To carry the work of the church, to found the church, to deliver the gospel message to the world. It wasn't their education.

It wasn't their schooling. It wasn't their qualifications. It wasn't their natural gifts, their schooling, their social status. What made the difference was that they had been with Jesus.

Hey, I can do that. You can do that. You can spend time with the Lord. The Lord Jesus wants to spend time with you. There's no excuse.

There's no excuse. God chooses people to use just like you and me. And so we can be. A vessel unto God's honour. A vessel that's honourable.

[17:17] A vessel that is honouring to our Lord. Number one, be sanctified. Number two, be meat for the master's use. And number three, be prepared. Be prepared unto every good work.

For a vessel to be a vessel unto honour, it takes a preparing process. We are being readied. We are being made ready. We cannot be used or useful because we are not prepared sometimes. How can we prepare ourselves? Be grounded in godly principles. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit. Study. Learn from your mistakes.

Learn to manage your thought life. Learn spiritual warfare. Learn the fear of God. Learn the things of God. If anything, it's more precious and needful is to learn the word, to learn the things of God, to get prepared, to get ready.

We're called to have a readiness. In Ephesians 6, 15, it tells us of having a fit shot with the preparation of the gospel of peace. There's a preparation process.

[18:24] Sometimes we want to just jump in, but sometimes there's a preparing time. A preparing time. Moses spent 80 years in the wilderness. 80 years preparing to serve the Lord.

There's necessary preparation to ready ourselves. When we're about to take a trip somewhere, I know what we should do.

We should get the map before and check the trip and check the route ahead and make the preparations and the clothes are all made ready. Often weeks in advance, I know my wife's very good at that.

I usually just jump in the car and then I start to read the map as I'm driving along. Or at the stoplights, you know, try to just work out which way we're going.

But no, there's necessary preparation. Take the map before and read the journey ahead. Are we ready for every good work? Are we at God's disposal? We want to be vessels that God uses and God can and does use the common, the average, the everyday Christian.

[19:33] When Gideon's men got to the top of the hill around the enemy with those empty containers that then were filled with those burning lamps, they break the pictures that were in their hands.

Judges 7, verse 19. They grabbed those clay vessels, those clay pots, and they broke them. They broke the containers that were in their hands.

Be in God's hand. Be in God's hand. Be prepared, be available and be broken. The Lord uses human vessels. Sometimes He's got to break us. In particular, He has to break us from our selfish ways.

And Psalm 51, 7, it says, The Lord makes us and shapes us as His vessel.

And it's like someone has said, sometimes He takes us through the Joseph process. The Joseph process. Look at Joseph back in the Old Testament. He had many tough experiences, forsaken by His own flesh and blood.

[20:43] His own brothers forsook Him and sold Him as a slave. He was then falsely accused along the way, jailed, unjustly. Even after interpreting the cupbearer's dream, He was left in prison forgotten for another two years.

In total, it was some 13 years of the Joseph process, of ups and downs, of trials, of setbacks, of successes, but of setbacks.

Constantly through His life, there was a preparing process happening in Joseph's life until ultimately, Genesis 41, 41, He was set by Pharaoh over all the land of Egypt.

And then in Genesis 50, verse 20, Joseph could say to his brothers, but as for you, you thought it evil against me, but God meant it unto good to bring to pass as it is this day to save much people alive.

God meant it for good to save the nation, to bless God's people. His brothers thought it evil against him, but God meant it unto good.

[21 : 52] Sometimes the Joseph process will happen in your life and mine. Maybe years of disappointments, of setbacks, of such disappointment, and yet God is working through those unpleasant and uncomfortable times.

A.W. Tozer said this, he said, it's doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly until he, God, has hurt or broken him deeply.

For God to use you, he might have to break you, to break that stubborn spirit, to break that prideful, proudful heart. He has to break us so that he can use us, just as that woman's jar of ointment was broken and shattered, so that it could release the fragrance, just as Gideon's men's clay pots had to be shattered, so that the flaming torches could then be displayed and scare the enemy and then the enemy slaughtered themselves.

The 300 men just broke those jars that were in their hands. Sometimes God has to break us to use us for his glory. There's a preparing process.

Perhaps some Egyptians would have looked at Joseph and thought, what's this? Where's this fellow come from? He's a Jew? How and why has he been elevated to the top position in the nation?

[23 : 17] They didn't realise the 13 year process that God had been taking Joseph through, that apprenticeship, that humbling, that breaking of his self-life, that time of preparation of Joseph's life.

And friends, this is a message for you. It's a message for you to be a vessel unto honour, each one here gathered. Sometimes we're guilty of the professional syndrome where we opt out because we think others can do it.

Christianity is not meant to be a spectator sport. To use the analogy of the football team, a football team has been described as an event where 22 men greatly in need of rest are cheered on by thousands greatly in need of exercise.

It's so true, isn't it? We all need to be vessels to want to find a part we can play. As it's been said, 80% of the work is done by 20% of the people, probably less.

But there are opportunities for us to play a part as the analogy of a football team. To not be spectators but to be participants.

[24 : 34] The harvest is ripe. These are the last days of harvest. We need to mobilise every believer, every believer. And though it be through a Joseph process, God is shaping and preparing each one.

And you can say like Job in 2310, But he knoweth the way that I take. When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. Through that refining, you will be shaped and purified, made fit for the master.

Prepare through that training process. Prepare in the spirit of faith, trusting in the spirit's power. how to be a vessel unto honour.

Be sanctified, be meet for the master's use, be prepared for every good work. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that we can be encouraged to see ourselves as we see the men and women of God, the excuses they sometimes used and yet how you still use them.

We see the examples of some as Jonah, as Mark who seemed to cop out, to miss out and yet you gave them a second chance. You refitted them for your purposes.

[25 : 53] Help us to see as it were the Joseph process of our lives at times as it might be years of preparing, of disappointment sometimes yet of your refining.

Help us to see, oh Lord, how we can be made vessels unto honour, that you will be honoured and glorified in every life. Fit each one, Lord, fit us.

Help us not to draw back, but to stand up and be counselled. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.