

Holy, Useful, and Ready

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[0 : 00] Alright, if you have your Bible with you, you can open it up to 2 Timothy. We're still working our way through this letter, and we are in chapter 2.

And we're going to be looking at verses 20 to 26 this morning. And as we get going here, I just want to remind us a little bit of the context. Paul is giving instructions to Timothy about how he should live and how he should lead there in the church in Ephesus.

And we already covered some of these instructions. We looked at verses 14 to 19. And we heard about how Timothy is to keep reminding the church of the gospel. And about how he is to warn the church against fighting and arguing over things.

We heard about how he is to aim to please God. And to shoot straight as he teaches the word of God. How he is to avoid godless chatter.

Which refers to the empty and unbiblical teachings and ideas of others who try to add to the gospel. And we heard Paul give the examples of Hymenaeus and Philetus.

[1 : 16] Who had departed from the truth and were advocating false things in the name of Jesus. Well now, as we continue on with this section, Paul gives an illustration.

A sort of an object lesson about what he means. He says, think about a large household. In a large house, there are articles not only of gold and silver.

But also of wood and clay. Some are for special purposes. Some are for common use. Those who cleanse themselves from the latter will be instruments for special purposes.

Made holy. Useful to the master. And prepared to do any good work. Now to Timothy in Ephesus, this illustration would have made perfect sense.

If you remember back to the first letter to Timothy, there were people in the church in Ephesus that were very wealthy. And who likely had houses like this. Some of them at least.

[2 : 20] Paul points to the various instruments or vessels that might be found in a large house. And he says that there are two different kinds. There are those made of gold and silver.

But not everything in the house is made of gold and silver. Some of the instruments or vessels, he says, are made of wood and clay. And to appreciate this, I think we almost need to translate this metaphor a little bit into our modern times.

There are your really good, your really nice, special, fancy things. Maybe you have a really nice set of towels that you keep for when company comes to stay with you.

Or maybe you have a fancier set of dishes or cutlery that you put out when guests come over for dinner. It used to be that china and silverware was the thing to pull out on special occasions when special guests would come to visit.

Maybe nowadays you still have some kind of a crystal serving bowl that you would use for a special dessert or salad. It's a way to honor your guests and to communicate that they're special.

[3 : 31] But you would never use the large crystal bowl as your garbage can in the bathroom. You would never take your silverware, if you have it, and use it to dig in the garden and pull weeds.

Have you ever seen a toilet brush overlaid with gold? Or silver? Or a plunger? Or a mop bucket? Of course not.

I mean, it would be almost wrong or a waste to use something so special and valuable as gold for something so crude and dirty as digging in the garden or collecting your trash or unclogging your toilet.

And now, it's important that we understand here what Paul is driving at. Is this a distinction between special and common? Or is it between honorable and dishonorable?

I know the translation on screen suggests that it's special versus common. But if we study this passage carefully, if we look into the words that Paul uses and look at some of the other

translations, it leads us in the other direction.

[4 : 47] It's actually a contrast of honorable versus dishonorable. And you could see that in the words and in the words he chooses, but you can also see it here in the context.

This is how Paul goes on to translate this object lesson back into Timothy's life. He says in verse 21, those who cleanse themselves from the latter, from the dishonorable, will be instruments for honorable purposes, made holy, useful to the master, and prepared to do any good work.

And then Paul goes a step further and he applies it even more concretely. This is what this means, to cleanse yourself from this, the dishonorable to the honorable. It means flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know that they produce quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome, but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.

So this is Paul applying the illustration to Timothy's life. He's saying cleanse yourself from the dishonorable things, flee those evil desires of youth, don't have anything to do with those foolish and stupid arguments, and instead pursue these honorable uses, these honorable things, righteousness, faith, love, peace, kindness, gentleness.

[6 : 32] So it's not special versus common, it's honorable versus dishonorable. Cleanse yourself from the dishonorable things, and set yourself apart specially in the household of God for honorable use.

And this really does fit with what we've been hearing from Paul so far in this letter. If you remember leading up to this in verses 14 to 19, Paul's just been telling Timothy not to fight over words or promote godless chatter like Hymenaeus and Philetus are doing.

Instead, present yourself to God as one approved, he said earlier. A worker who doesn't need to be ashamed, but correctly handles the word of truth. And so Hymenaeus and Philetus, they're examples of men who have been living dishonorably, and Paul's now calling Timothy to be different. Don't be like them. Cleanse yourself of the things they're doing and saying, and be an instrument of honor in the household of God. Going back to the illustration, and maybe translating it into our modern household, it's as if Paul is saying, don't be a toilet brush.

Don't be a garbage can. Giving yourself to the morally filthy and dirty things that many people today are giving themselves to. No. Cleanse yourself from those things.

[7 : 58] Be set apart for the good and the noble and the honorable things. Give yourselves to these things, and in so doing, be holy. Be useful to the master. Think of it from the master's perspective in the household.

Most of you oversee your home if you're an adult. Do you have any delight in your toilet brush? Or in your garbage can?

But how about that special serving dish or utensil that you put out when company comes? Be one of those for the pleasure of our Lord Jesus.

Be fit and ready for honorable use. And now how do we do that? Well, Paul's going to give this list to Timothy of instructions about how this should look in his life.

And we're going to look at each one of these. But before we do, let's just notice the personal emphasis of these imperatives. Notice that Timothy is to be active in this.

[9 : 18] Cleanse themselves. This is an intentional thing. This isn't a passive thing. This isn't just sit there and wait for God to do this in you.

In the meantime, you can kind of keep on doing the dishonorable things. No. Cleanse yourself of the dishonorable things. Make effort. Make the choices needed to clean those things out of your lives.

Let's come down to verse 22. The same sort of sentiment is there. Flee the evil desires of youth. Again, there's no passivity here.

He doesn't say, well, go ahead and scratch the itch of lust as often as you must. One day God's going to change your heart. And when you're older, you know it'll be easier to say no to that stuff. No. He says, flee the evil desires of youth. Run away from them. If you're tempted, take action. Get out of there. Get out of there. The evil desires of youth is quite literally youthful lusts.

[10 : 25] These are immoral desires of the flesh. In this case, the primary meaning here is immoral sexual desires. Cleanse yourself from them.

Run away from them. And pursue righteousness. Pursue righteousness.

Again, this imperative is the furthest thing from passive. To pursue means to move rapidly and decisively towards something. To run after it.

To get it. And I had a great story I was going to share, but for time I'm going to cut it out there. But this is an active word.

Both involve running. Fleeing is running from. Pursuing is running toward. Running to. And Paul says, what he's supposed to pursue? He says, pursue righteousness.

[11 : 20] Righteousness here means living a life that's morally upright according to God's commands. It's a very broad term. It could kind of cover all kinds of things.

It could cover speaking truthfully rather than lying. Or judging fairly rather than accepting a bribe or showing favoritism. It could cover living for the Lord with all your heart.

Versus living to chase after idols. Even idols of the heart. It could cover controlling yourself. And just not letting anger or violence flow through you toward others.

And so much more. In fact, the whole Bible, it just has loads to say about what it means to be righteous. Especially in contrast to sinfulness.

Wickedness and corruption. Of course, there's God's perfect righteousness. And then there's that righteous living that he calls his people to. And that's what Paul's talking about here.

[12 : 22] Pursue righteousness. Don't just think, yeah, someday I'll get around to it. No. Pursue it. Go after it. Chase it.

And pursue faith, he says. Now this might be a surprise. We don't usually put those two words together. Pursue faith.

We usually think of faith maybe as something you either have or you don't have. Sometimes I wonder though if we aren't confusing our feelings with faith.

A feeling, that's something that you can, you either have it or you don't have it. But faith on the other hand is something you choose sometimes. You choose to trust.

Despite how you feel. Despite how things seem. It's believing God. It's trusting in God and in his word and his promises. Even when we don't feel or see how that all is working out in the world around us.

[13 : 27] Pursue faith, Timothy. Go after it. If it's lacking, seek God for it. Get on your knees and cry out to God to strengthen your faith.

Paul said in the epistle to the Romans that faith comes by hearing the word of God. And so put the word of God in front of you. So that your faith can grow.

Don't just wait for this to happen, Timothy. Do it. Pursue it. Go after it with tenacity. Pursue love, he says.

Again, this is one of those ones where, that's an interesting combination. We think of love as something we either have or we don't have.

But love is more than just a feeling. It's also an action. It's acting benevolently toward other people. Acting to meet the needs of others.

[14 : 28] Staying true to those covenant and family obligations that we have. This is what love does. Jesus commanded his disciples at the Last Supper in the upper room to love each other.

He said, by this, the world will know that you are my disciples. If you love one another. That was right after he washed their feet.

Is it easy to get down on our hands and knees and serve one another? Is it easy to scrub the crusty feet of one another?

Or to scrape the carpet backing off the floor of the church basement? No. But love does these things for the benefit of others. And for the needs of others.

Go after this, Timothy. Don't just sit around and wait for that feeling of love to flower. Lead your heart with action. Pursue love for others. And lastly on this little list, pursue peace, he says.

[15 : 39] Pursue peace. This is a difficult one. Conflict happens. It's unavoidable in a family. And the church is a big family.

How should we deal with conflict when it arises? And there are some tendencies that we often see come up when it pertains to conflict. Sometimes when it happens, then we do or we say hurtful things or wrong things to each other.

And maybe they did it to me as well, but it only makes things worse. Do we seek peace? Do we seek to restore that relationship? Or do we just decide, yeah, I'm just going to ignore that person.

I'm just going to avoid that person. Pretend it didn't happen. All the while never forgiving. And never forgetting what they did or said to me. Is that the kind of peace that Jesus longs for in his household?

Another tendency is rather to try to even resolve it right from the get-go to just avoid. To just leave. Go to another church.

[16:50] Just ignore that person. But peace is more than that. It's not just a ceasefire between opponents. Where we stop trading barbs or having fights or arguments.

Peace is a good, harmonious relationship with one another. And this isn't something that happens by itself. It's something that we have to pursue.

We have to strive for it. We have to work toward it. And yes, it does take humility to take responsibility for the wrong I've done to another.

And admit to them what I did. And apologize to them. And yes, it does take courage to initiate those kinds of conversations. When they're needed. And they are needed.

When conflict happens and relationships are broken. But don't shy away from this. Pursue peace, Timothy. And finally, he says, Pursue all of these things.

[17:53] Righteousness, faith, love, and peace. Along with those who call on the Lord. Out of a pure heart. Before I got to this phrase, I might have been tempted to say, Wow, this sounds really serious.

Pursue. This is so intense. Going after righteousness, faith, love, and peace. This sounds like it must be just for Timothy. Because he's a spiritual leader in the church. Because he's got to be at a higher standard.

Surely not every Christian needs to do this. Needs to take their faith this seriously. But then this little phrase just silences that excuse of the flesh.

He says, Pursue these things along with those who call on the Lord. Out of a pure heart. So it's not just for Timothy. It's not just because he serves as a leader.

That he's to cleanse himself from the dishonorable things. That he's to flee from the youthful lusts. It's not just because he's a leader. That he's to tenaciously pursue righteousness and faith and love and peace.

[18:56] This is something that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord must do. We are all called to be holy. To be specially set apart for the master's use.

Prepared to do any good work. These words are for all of us. Paul said it this way. I'm getting ahead of myself.

We'll keep it there for a moment. This is the normal Christian life. Fleeing and pursuing. I got thinking about this.

Fleeing from and pursuing. Which means that the normal Christian life is a life on the run. And maybe you're thinking, Josh, I'm fill-in-the-blank years old now.

My running days are over. I don't have the energy. I don't have the strength for that anymore. I can barely get up and down the stairs. I can barely do half the stuff that I used to. Isn't there a time when the Christian life just kind of slows down and it's just more of a walk than a run?

[20:09] Listen. I'm only 35 years old and I'm already feeling tired. I get you. The idea of running all the time, that sounds tiresome. I don't want to run any more than you do.

There comes a time when our physical bodies just aren't like they used to be. We get old. The strength that we used to have diminishes.

But this is not physical running that Jesus is calling us to. This is spiritual running. It's running away from sin and toward goodness and righteousness.

It's running away from self-reliance and running to trusting our Lord more and more. It's running away from living a life just for the benefit of me.

And to living a life for the benefit of others. A life of love. This is a kind of running that we're called to do. Fleeing from and pursuing till the day that we die.

[21:08] Or till Jesus returns. Have you known any elderly men or women of faith? Who can maybe barely walk.

But are praying and are living for the glory of Christ with all their hearts. And loving people. Whoever and however they can. Paul died before he got to be old like that.

But I'm sure that if he'd lived into his 90s. He would have been the most passionate follower of Jesus. That you ever did see. He probably wouldn't have been sailing around. Preaching the gospel

anymore.

But he probably would have been rolling himself around the old folks home. Telling as many people as he could have. About Jesus. Whether it was the nurses or the doctors or visitors to the lodge. Where he sat in his wheelchair. Trying to capture the attention of anyone who passed him by. Listen to how Paul said it in his letter to the Roman church.

[22 : 10] Romans 12 verse 11. He said never be lacking in zeal. But keep your spiritual fervor. Serving the Lord. The Christian life.

The normal Christian life. Is a life on the run. It's fleeing from and it's pursuing these things. I don't know how I'm going to go. But if I get to be old.

I want to be that 90 something year old man. Who can barely walk across the hall. But inwardly and spiritually. I'm still running with all my might. From sin. And towards righteousness.

And faith. And love. And peace. In whatever ways I can. The normal Christian life. Is life on the run. Paul goes on.

He continues to unpack this illustration for Timothy. Verse 23. Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments. Because you know they produce quarrels.

[23 : 08] And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome. But must be kind to everyone. Able to teach. Not resentful. So here's another dishonorable thing that Timothy is to cleanse himself from.

Foolish and stupid arguments. Don't have anything to do with them. Reject them. Avoid them. What do they do? Same thing as he said earlier. They create fights. Arguments.

Quarrels. How does that help the Lord. And his household. Have nothing to do with that. Instead.

These are the honorable things that you can do in the Lord's house.

Be kind to everyone. Able to teach. Not resentful. Instructing your opponents gently.

That's the next verse. With restoration as the goal. Kind to everyone. Kind to everyone. Is there anyone to whom we are permitted to be nasty.

[24 : 12] Rude. Or insulting. I know names are coming to your mind. What about. Not according to Jesus. The Lord's servant must be kind to.

Everyone. Everyone. This is a convicting one for me. Very related to this is what comes a little later. Not resentful. This phrase means. To bear evil treatment. Without giving into resentment. I couldn't help but think of Jesus on the cross.

As the religious leaders insulted him. And mocked him. And said terrible things. They were relishing in his suffering.

And humiliation. And death. And what did Jesus say in those moments? Did he say. May God curse you. Filthy sinners. Filthy sinners. Dogs.

[25 : 15] Vermin. And spit on their faces. In angry contempt. Was that even rising up in his heart? No. He did not allow resentment.

To even have a landing pad. No matter how wicked they were. No matter how deserving of God's punishment. He said. Father. Forgive them. They don't know what they're doing.

So yes. Kindness. And love. To everyone. Even toward our enemies. Even to those who oppose us. Or cause trouble for us. Or do wicked things. Or advocate. Evil ideas. This is the way of Christ. And it's not an easy way.

But this is following Jesus. Yes. Hymenaeus and Philetus. Are spreading lies. About the resurrection. But it's no excuse. For Timothy.

[26 : 16] To be nasty. Or rude. Or insulting to them. Or even to harbor resentment. Against them. Those are the dishonorable things.

Of which Timothy. Is to cleanse himself. Instead. He is to be kind to them. He is to be able. And ready to teach them. He is not to harbor resentment.

Against them. He is to gently. Instruct them. In the hope of restoration. Opponents must be gently. Instructed.

In the hope. That God will grant them repentance. So let's not miss this. Kindness to all. Does not mean that. We just let false teachers. And loud divisive people.

Go totally unchecked. Say whatever they want to say. He's not saying that. He's not telling us. Just to ignore them. And let them do whatever they want. No. There is responsibility here.

[27 : 11] For Timothy. As a leader in the church. He is to be. Ready and able. To teach the truth. And he is to gently. Instruct them. The Lord's servant.

Must be able to teach. And must gently. Instruct. This is hard. This is hard. This is hard. In the midst of confrontation.

You know. As I said before. Most of us. We just want to avoid conflict. We just want to look the other way. Or if we do speak up.

If we do say something. It's because we're. Getting provoked inside. We're getting angry. And we just want to let them have it. We want to tell them off. But neither will do. We can't avoid.

We have to. Instruct false teachers. And loud divisive people. Who are fighting. And arguing. Yet we have to do so. Gently. He says. And humbly.

[28 : 08] Not out of a. Self-righteous spirit. But with kindness. And respect. And it goes even further than that. He says.

Opponents must be. Gently instructed. In the hope. That God will grant them. Repentance. Leading them to a knowledge. Of the truth. And that they will come to their senses. And escape from the trap.

Of the devil. Who has taken them captive. To do his will. So Jesus even tells us. The kind of heart attitude. That we have to have. As we approach.

These people. Whom we are confronting. False teachers. Or. Or people who are fighting. In the church. It's not enough to just call them up.

And get through the conversation. And not get angry. No. No. Jesus says. We must instruct them gently. Having in ourselves.

[29 : 02] The hope. That God will. Grant them repentance. That there will be restoration there. That they'll come to see.

The truth. So Paul isn't vindictively. Calling out. Hymenaeus and Philetus. I mean. He's not secretly hoping. That God's just going to strike them dead. For teaching false things.

And damn them to hell. Because they're making trouble. And causing division. No. He hopes. That as Timothy talks with them. That God will work in their hearts. Such that they repent.

Such that they see the error. Of their ways. And come to see the truth. A different way to read these verses. Maybe a little bit. Is to just ask the question. What's the situation of these two men?

Hymenaeus and Philetus. They need to come to their senses. Which means that they're out of their spiritual minds. They're not thinking clearly. They're not seeing clearly.

[30 : 02] They need to escape from the trap of the devil. Which implies that they're caught. In a trap of the devil. The devil is at work. Through them.

Achieving his will. Through them. And they have fallen prey. And are caught up in this. And they don't even realize it.

They will come to a knowledge of the truth. They don't even see it. And so Timothy. When you go into that meeting. To talk with them. You must go with a heart. Hoping. That God will grant them repentance.

And lead them. To a knowledge of the truth. That they'll come out of that. Spiritual. Madness. And blindness. That they'll come to their senses. And escape. The devil's trap.

This is how Timothy. Is to love his opponents. And be kind to his opponents. In the church. This is the kind of honorable dealing. That will bring glory to God.

[31 : 01] God. I just want to sum up the things that we've heard this morning. And then we'll be done. The overall message.

In these verses. Is a call. A call not just to Timothy. But to all. Who call on the name of the Lord. To you.

And to me. To cleanse ourselves. From these dishonorable things. As we heard. And to pursue. The good things.

Righteousness. Love. Faith. And peace. And why? Because this is what's going to bring. Pleasure. And delight.

To our master. This is what's going to make us useful. And ready. For any good work. In his household. This is what's going to bring us joy.

[31 : 55] This is what's going to bring him. Honor. And glory. And so this is what we need to do. As the people of the Lord. Let's pray. Father in heaven.

Thank you for these. Precious words. That you've given us. Please open our hearts. Open our minds. And help us to see. Exactly. How these words. Apply to us.

Each one of us. In our. Unique circumstances. And situations. Bring these words to mind. This week. Even as we're. Going about our things. Remind us of those things. That. For us. Are the dishonorable things. That we're tempted to. That we need to run away from. And remind us of those things. That are the. The righteous things. That we need to run towards. For your glory. We ask in Jesus name. Amen.