

Through the Bible - 2 Timothy

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon on 2 Timothy emphasizes the importance of true servanthood, faith transmission, and maintaining high standards in ministry.

Duration: 56:35

Topics: "Faithful Service", "Scriptural Integrity"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the characteristics of a true servant of God, as outlined in the book of 2 Timothy. He emphasizes the importance of being a faithful teacher of God's word and entrusting it to future generations. The speaker encourages believers not to lower the standard of the scriptures in order to attract more people to their churches, but rather to prioritize a higher standard even if it means having fewer followers. The sermon concludes with the reminder that Paul, the writer of 2 Timothy, points to his own life as an example of a true servant of God, emphasizing the importance of living out one's faith.

Transcript

Let's turn now to Paul's second letter to Timothy, 2nd Timothy and chapter 1. This is the last letter that Paul wrote and he knows that he is going to die soon and leave this world. When he wrote 1 Thessalonians, he said, we who are alive will be caught up. He thought he would be alive when Jesus comes again.

That's the way every Christian should live, with this attitude of we who are alive. Not they who are alive, but we. Which means he expected to be alive for the coming of the Lord.

But, fifteen years later, when he writes this letter, he says, the time of my departure is at hand. He knows that he's not going to be alive when Jesus comes and he's going to depart the world before that. And the theme of 2 Timothy, again, is a true servant of God and his ministry.

The theme of these three last letters was, as I said, Paul's burden to communicate to another generation, Timothy and Titus, how to be a good shepherd, how to be a true servant of God. And he points to his own life, always Paul points to his own life. When he spoke to the elders in Ephesus, he does not say, remember the sermons I preached to you? No.

He says, remember the way I lived with you. And the same thing here, he tells Timothy, he says, I thank God whom I serve, verse 3, with a clear conscience, the way my forefathers did. He points to the way he

himself lived, I've lived all my life, I'm not perfect, but to the best of my knowledge, as my conscience has convicted me, I have tried to live an upright life before God.

And then he speaks words of endearing words to Timothy, because he was the one person who brought great delight to Paul's heart. Paul was very disappointed with many people in many of the churches he established, because they were not radical disciples. He was disappointed with many of his co-workers, because they did not live utterly, totally for God.

And any servant of God will face the same disappointment today. If Paul faced disappointment in churches he planted, you think we are going to be able to do any better? I planted churches, I'm disappointed with a lot of things I see in those churches. I've got co-workers, and I'm disappointed with things I see in their co-workers.

But here and there you find one like Timothy. And such a person brings such delight to the heart of a servant of God. A man, Timothy, who did not seek his own in anything.

And Paul was so excited that at least there were a few like that, who could carry on that ministry with the same devotion and into another generation. And that is what brought the greatest delight to Paul's heart. And that is always what brings the greatest delight to the heart of any servant of God, when he comes to the end of his life.

That there are some others who can carry on this ministry in the same spirit. And Timothy was one of those rare ones. And that's why he speaks in such an endearing way.

He says, I always remember you in my prayers, longing to see you. I recall your tears. That must have been the last time he saw Timothy when they parted.

And I wish I could see you again. But now Paul knows that he probably will never see him again. And then we see here how Timothy came to this faith.

In verse 5, we see that Timothy's grandmother, Lois, was the first person who came to faith in that family. And from the grandmother, the faith came down to his mother, Eunice, as it is in Greek, or Eunice here in English. Faith was transmitted from the grandmother to the mother and down to Timothy.

So, what did that grandmother give to Timothy's mother? Faith, not just knowledge. And what did Timothy's mother give Timothy? Faith. That means as Timothy grew up, he saw different situations where he saw his mother trusting God.

Do your children see you trusting God in difficult situations? That's how you communicate faith to them. And that's why God allows those difficult situations in your home. So that your children, when from a small age, can see, my mummy trusted God when she was in a difficulty.

When I was sick, my mummy laid hands on my head and prayed for me, believing that God would heal me. Or my daddy did that. And that little child grows up and goes away from home one day, and when he faces a difficulty or she faces a difficulty, they do exactly what their mummy and daddy did, trusting God.

That's how we communicate faith. Now if you just tell stories to them, they've got knowledge. But it says here, they communicated the sincere faith.

And little did Eunice know that this little boy in her arms would one day be a mighty apostle. I don't know how long he was at home, probably less than 20 years. And how thankful she would have been later on to see that this son of hers grew up to be an apostle.

And it started with the mother. As far as we know, in Acts chapter 16, we read that Timothy's father was a Greek. She had married an unbeliever.

It's a picture of a young girl who marries perhaps a rich unbeliever. But she's born again, and maybe she repented. The father had no time for God, he was a businessman.

We never read of him. He had no interest in bringing up his children, Timothy, in a godly way. But the mother did such a tremendous job that even though the father was an unbeliever, this mother brought up her son to be one of the finest apostles of the first century.

What a challenge to mothers who have unconverted husbands, as to what they can do for their children. Who knows? But that little boy playing around with you, four years old, may grow up to be an apostle of Jesus Christ in India. That depends on you, sister.

On how you take time to spend with him and communicate faith to him. Don't let him hear you criticizing other servants of God and other believers. It's one of the things I was very careful about in my own home, that my children should not hear me speaking evil of other people in the church or other believers, lest they grow up with that infection.

I didn't want my children to get any type of infection. Not tuberculosis, not leprosy, and not gossip about other people. None of these things.

They're all equally bad. And gossip is the worst. But if your children can get faith from you, and they see that in the difficult situations of life, you've given them the greatest training at home for the Lord's service.

And the other thing that Timothy had, first was this faith. He got from his mother, which she got from her mother. See, generally, we see that first-generation Christians are usually stronger in faith and devotion to the Lord than second-generation Christians.

That's what we see all around us. Those who come to the Lord themselves, that means their parents were not believers. Many of you sitting here, your parents were not believers.

You came to a conviction yourself. And your faith is strong. Usually, people whose parents are believers and second-generation, usually they are not so devoted and don't have that much faith and devotion like first-generation converts.

But Timothy was an exception. So there can be second-generation believers also who are as devoted and more devoted than their parents. And Timothy is a wonderful example to second-generation believers whose parents are believers and who grow up also equally or more devoted than their parents to live for God.

But he had faith, and he not only had faith, he also needed something else to serve the Lord, and that was gifts, spiritual gifts. Always you see this balance in Scripture. You need faith, and you need the gifts of the Spirit.

And so he reminds him, I want to remind you of the gift of God which you received when I laid hands on you. And that spirit that you received when you were baptized in the Holy Spirit is not a spirit of timidity. So he says, I want you, verse 6, to stir up that gift, kindle afresh.

That means don't let that fire which came upon you that day, Timothy, die down. See, that teaches us that God gives us a gift, but we have to keep it stirred and aflame. In other words, God lights the fire, and then we've got to make sure that we keep fuel there, blow the flame, and keep on stirring it up so that it's always burning.

Don't think that just because God anointed you once, you can just relax and say, well, 25 years ago God anointed me, and I'm okay. I've seen a lot of people who were anointed even five years ago, there's nothing in their life today. So, a lot of people who had a fire once upon a time, and they don't have a fire today.

It's sad. Young people who had a fire for God, fire for souls, fire for living for God and building the church, and it's gone. Other things have come in and taken them away.

They're after money now or after some directorship or some comfortable life, and they've lost that passion. So, Paul tells Timothy, that fire that came into you, kindle it afresh. Keep it burning.

That's your responsibility. And if you don't keep it burning, it'll die out. Keep it burning by keeping a good conscience.

Keep it burning by studying the word of God. Keep it burning by prayer and fasting and seeking God. Keep it burning by staying away from the love of money.

Keep it burning by staying away from argument, staying away from anything that will quench this fire. And he says, God has not given us a spirit of fear. Timothy was a very timid type of person.

Paul was a naturally fiery type of person. Barnabas was a timid type of person. Timothy was also a timid type of person.

And God puts the fiery man with the timid man because both are required in the church to balance out each other. I've often thought that if Barnabas alone were in a church, or let's take Paul and Timothy, Paul the fiery firebrand and Timothy the timid, gentle, gracious type of person. It's an ideal combination for leadership in a church.

If everybody was like Timothy, the church would be just a bunch of wishy-washy compromisers. And if everybody was like Paul, there'd be nobody left in the church. They'll all get discouraged and go away.

But when there are both, what a balance. Grace and truth. So if God gives you a co-worker who's exactly the opposite of you, that must be God's choice.

If God gives you a wife who's exactly the opposite of you in temperament, that must be God's choice. Same in devotion to Christ and same in desire to live for God, but perhaps opposite in temperament. Paul and Timothy had the same devotion to Jesus, but their temperaments were completely opposite.

I thank God that God gives me co-workers who are completely different from me. Now you've seen me for three weeks, you know what type of temperament mine is. And you know what type of co-worker I need to balance me out.

And God has given me people like that. And I appreciate them. You learn to appreciate people whom God gives you, who are completely different in temperament from you, but equally devoted to Christ.

So Paul tells Timothy here, God has not given us a spirit of timidity and fear. Don't let this natural timidity take over your life. Just like don't let your natural hardness take over your life.

Both persons need to be careful. So he says here, God has given us a spirit of power, and of love, and of discipline. The spirit that God gives us is a spirit of power, a spirit that makes us love people, and a spirit that makes us discipline ourselves in our life.

I want to tell you this, many times in the New Testament you see, whatever experience of the Holy Spirit you may have, and whatever God does for you, if you don't allow the Holy Spirit to discipline you in your life, discipline you to teach you how to spend your time, and how to spend your money, and how to discipline your speech, and discipline your life, you will never be what God wants you to be. The greatest servants of God in the history of the church have been men and women who allowed the Holy Spirit to discipline them in their life. They were disciplined in their sleeping habits, disciplined in their eating habits, disciplined in their study of the scriptures, disciplined in prayer, disciplined in wanting to serve the Lord, disciplined in putting God first above their earthly requirements.

God has given us the spirit of discipline. Many, many people waste their life, satisfied that they've got a baptism in the Holy Spirit, they've got the right doctrine, and they think everything will flow smoothly thereafter. If you're not disciplined, I'll tell you now itself, you won't make much out of your life.

God has given us the spirit of discipline, and he tells them, don't be ashamed of me, I'm a prisoner. It's very easy to be proud of Paul when he's going around doing miracles, and to join up with him. But he says, now I'm a prisoner, and a lot of people don't want to associate with me because I'm in prison.

And you find Christians like that, they want to associate with one man when he's very popular, and the moment he becomes unpopular or rejected, they want to pull out. And almost everybody pulled out from Paul when he became unpopular. But those who stuck with him were the ones whom God tested and found were faithful.

So sometimes God tests us to see whether we'll stick with a man who's anointed, but who's not popular. But you recognize, and there God tests you to see whether you're seeking your own, or whether you're true to what you know God has said in his word, and which Paul stands for. He goes on further to say in verse 12, this wonderful verse, he says, I suffer many things, but I'm not ashamed, because I know whom I've believed, and I've committed my life to him, and I'm not ashamed, and I believe that what I've entrusted to him, he's able to guard until that final day.

And he tells Timothy further, don't ever lower the standard. Verse 13, what a great need for an exhortation like that in our day. Do not lower the standard.

If there is one exhortation I would give to you, my brothers and sisters, it is this. Don't lower the standard that you see in the scriptures, in order to bring more people into your church. If you have less people with a higher standard, you have a better church, than if you have more people with a lower standard.

It's true. It's better to have three disciples than 300 compromising worldly Christians. Any day I would choose three disciples.

I believe I can influence a village more with three wholehearted disciples than with 300 compromisers. Any day I believe that. So retain the standard, which you heard from me.

This is the great burden of every true servant of God, that the second generation should retain the standard. Very often the second generation lowers the standard, because they don't have the vision of that first generation man of God. It's happened throughout history.

You see the great denominational churches today, and compare it with how it was in the time of their founder. I don't want to mention any names. But I have often thought, if those founders came to earth today, they would not join the church which they founded.

Because those churches have lost the standards which those people preached 200-300 years ago. The standard is gone. The external form is still there.

The name is there. The doctrines are there. But the life is gone.

The knowledge of God is gone. This is always what happens in a second generation. And Paul was concerned.

He says, retain the standard. And you'll never be able to do this, he says, verse 14, without the Holy Spirit. Guard this standard through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

It's a treasure. This is a sacred treasure. Like I said the other day, here is 500,000 rupees given to you in cash.

You got to take it in train, in the train to Delhi. Make sure when you reach the other end, there's 500,000 rupees there. Not 300,000.

You need the Holy Spirit's help to guard the standard and retain it. And he says, you know, many people in Asia, verse 15, everybody in Asia, that's Asia minor, has turned away from me. Paul in his last days experienced something that Jesus experienced.

He's not talking about unbelievers. Unbelievers were never with him. Believers did not want to associate with Paul now because he was not so popular.

He was in prison. And they didn't want to get into prison themselves. He was in prison and released perhaps and again going to be in prison.

He said we better keep a little distance from him because he's in trouble now. And everybody left him. Including, he says, people like Phygelus and Hermogenes.

Maybe these were people who were probably good co-workers of Paul and they just left him. But he says there's one man, I appreciate verse 16, called Onesiphorus. He was never ashamed of my chains.

He came to me in prison. He publicly associated with me. He was not ashamed to be known as a friend of Paul.

Praise God for such people. When he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me, found me. And I believe the Lord will grant him mercy in the final day.

You know, if you help in any way a true servant of God, God will never forget it. Even a cup of cold water. In the final day, you'll find mercy like it says in verse 18.

We move on to chapter 2. In chapter 2, he speaks about various characteristics of a true servant of God. He says be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And then he tells him about a number of things that he needs to do.

A number of illustrations he uses to describe a true servant of God. First of all, verse 2, a servant of God must be a faithful teacher of God's word. Whatever you heard from me, entrust to other men, faithful men, who will be able to teach others.

You must faithfully teach the third generation. And they must be faithful to teach the fourth generation. See Paul's burden.

He's not just concerned about Timothy, the second generation. He says, Timothy, you must entrust it to a third generation who should be able to teach the fourth generation. And make sure you choose faithful men, not clever men, not intelligent men, but faithful men.

What is God looking for today? Clever men? No. Faithful men. Not rich men, not clever men.

Faithful men. Timothy himself was a faithful teacher. As a servant of God, number one, you must be a faithful teacher of the word.

Number two, you must be a soldier who does not entangle himself with the world. A detached soldier. That's a good soldier.

It says, a good soldier, verse 3 and 4, does not get entangled in all the affairs of daily life. Think of some soldier in the Indian army fighting in the borders of Kashmir. I mean, if he's got his mind always on his property here and whether somebody is stealing his property and what's all things happening, he won't fight a good battle over there.

When he's in the battlefield with the enemy in front of him, he's got to forget about everything in this world. He's probably going to lose his life there and not even see his property. So he's concentrating on the enemy.

And he says, that's all I'm interested in. I've got to win this battle for my country. Do you want to serve the Lord? You have to take your mind of all these earthly things and say, I'm in a battle with the devil.

And I've got to win this battle for the Lord. All my life, I'm in a battle. And God will take care of all the earthly things for me.

I'm not going to run after these earthly things. I don't have time for it. God will take care of it.

I do the minimum necessary. But my mind is set on the battle. I want to ask you whether you're a good soldier.

Many people are good soldiers when they are single. Once they get married and they have children, their mind gets so taken up with so many earthly things, that their effectiveness for God decreases considerably. If you are married in the will of God, I believe that your effectiveness for God should increase.

And your devotion to God should increase. I brought up four children. I was a full-time Christian worker before I got married.

And I brought up four children. They've all grown up and left home. And I don't think at any time that my family became more important than the Lord for me.

I don't think, as far as I know, that my preoccupation with my family and taking care of their needs hindered me from doing God's work. I traveled just as much as when I was single almost. If God called me, I'd go.

And I've never lost out. My children did not lose out. My wife did not lose out.

If you move in the will of God, you will not suffer. They will not lose out spiritually. They will not lose out materially.

God is a faithful God. If you serve Him, you think He'll let your family down? Impossible. So, be a good soldier.

Seek the kingdom of God first, and you will see that all the other things your family needs, God will provide them. Don't worry. If you live for Him, He will not let you down.

And I'm only adding my weak testimony to the testimony of many, many more faithful servants of God through 2,000 years who can say that better than I can. It's true. If you honor Him, He'll honor you.

So, don't get entangled with the affairs of everyday life. The third picture he uses here is of an athlete. A true servant of God must be an athlete who runs according to the rules.

A truthful athlete. That means he does not cheat. He does not do something wrong when nobody's watching.

To use an illustration, there is an event in the Olympic Games called the 50-kilometer walk. That means you've got to walk. You're not supposed to run.

Now, 50 kilometers is such a huge distance that I can imagine that somewhere along the way, when people are not watching, this fellow is tempted to run a little bit so that he can catch up. But there are hidden video cameras and all nowadays. And the fellow comes first and he's disqualified.

I've come across cases like that. He said, no, you know, on the 25th mile, we saw you running a little bit. So, even though you came first, you're out.

So, there must be no cheating in the life of a servant of God. No area in his life, if it's a 50-kilometer walk or a 50-year walk, at no point in that time must he violate the rules. He should not say, well, this is for the Lord's work.

I have to tell this lie. Brother, you never have to tell a lie for the Lord's work. For the devil's work, you have to, but not for the Lord's work.

If you cheat somewhere along the line, oh, we have to fiddle around with these accounts. Otherwise, we'll get into trouble with this heathen government. You have to fiddle around with no accounts in the Lord's work.

We can be absolutely honest. We don't have to tell any lies. If we suffer, we suffer.

I would rather suffer from men who persecute me for speaking the truth and keeping my accounts faithfully, than suffer from God one day for telling a lie. Any day. So, we must be athletes who keep the rules.

Then, what's the next one? Fourth, we must be like, verse 6, hard-working farmers. You know how a farmer is? He sows a seed, and he doesn't come next morning to see if the crop has come. He waits.

He plants a coconut tree. He doesn't come even after six months to see if the coconuts have come. It takes a long time, but it'll come.

Meanwhile, he waters it, puts fertilizer. Hard-working farmer. Farmers have to be hard-working people.

Otherwise, they won't get a crop. And he says, naturally, the more hard-working the farmer is, he deserves his share of the crops first. If ten farmers were working in a field, the man who worked hardest must get the first share of the crops.

And a servant of God must be like a hard-working farmer in his study of the Word, in his serving people, diligently watering, watering, watering. And years later, he has the joy of seeing these people grow up not only to be believers, but to be servants of God themselves. That's the tremendous joy I have had in the last few years, to see people who have grown up as ordinary believers now grow up to be servants of God themselves.

And then, he says further. In between, he says, remember Jesus Christ, verse 8, at the seat of David. And in between, he says in verse 7, Please think about all that I'm saying.

May the Lord give you understanding of all that I'm saying. Think about these things. These are illustrations, but you need to think about them and see how they apply to your life.

And then, he says that a servant of the Lord must be, verse 15, a diligent workman. He must be a very hard-working laborer when it comes to the Word. A diligent workman who rightly, accurately handles the Word of Truth.

One who can present himself to God as a hard-working workman. Lord, you've got to use me because I've spent many hours studying your book. Can you say that? Or do you say, Lord, use me? Why should he use you? Have you spent many hours accurately trying to understand God's Word? Or you just sit there and say, Lord, I wish I could speak like that man.

You'll never be able to speak like that man. Because you're not hard-working when it comes to God's Word. You read a lot of other things most of the time.

You don't have time to study the Word. See, God is not a rewarder of lazy people. Sometimes, children come to me at examination time and say, Uncle, please pray for me.

I say, did you study for your examinations? If you didn't study, my prayer is not going to help you. Because a farmer who does not sow seed in sowing time and harvest time says, Brother, please pray, I'll get a good harvest. I say, you won't get a harvest.

So, in the same way, you want God to use you, but you're not diligent to study the Word of God. You can't be used by God. It's not possible.

In between, I want to just look at these things which he mentions here in verse 11 to 13. He says, if you want to live with Christ, you've got to die with Him. If you want to reign with Christ, you must endure with Him here on this earth.

If you deny Him here, He will deny you. If you're faithless, He is faithful. He cannot deny Himself.

Remind people, verse 14, of these things. Charge them in the presence of God, verse 14. Not to argue about words.

I don't think there are any two books in the whole Bible that speaks so much about avoiding argument, avoiding disputes about words as 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy. The number of times Paul says to Timothy, avoid arguments, avoid wrangling about words. And do you know how many Christian preachers there are today who are arguing with other people about words? The very thing Paul said, don't do it.

I've had people come to me to argue about a doctrine. And the first thing I need to sense when I listen to that man is, is he trying to understand the truth because he's not sure, because he wants to live a godly life? Or is he just trying to argue with me to prove that I'm wrong? And if I sense that he's really desiring a godly life, I'm willing to spend six hours with him or more explaining to him the scriptures. But if I find that he's only come to convince me that I'm wrong, I stop in about two minutes.

I say, brother, I don't want to argue. Let's talk about cricket. Let's see what the score is or something like that, change the subject.

Because I see he's getting agitated. And I, you see, if we talk about cricket and the Indian cricket team, we are united. We both want India to win.

So we can talk about something like that instead of this doctrine over which he's got so much heat. So be careful that you don't get into argument with somebody who's heated. Don't make him sin.

I don't want to make people sin. That's why I changed the subject to cricket or something. Because he can't sin when he's talking about cricket.

But he talks about this doctrine from the Bible, he'll sin. The way he talks about it. So don't get into arguments with words.

It's a very important exhortation I would give you. Okay, again in verse 16, he repeats again. Avoid worldly chatter, empty chatter, because this will all lead to ungodliness.

Please remember, my brothers and sisters, all worldly chatter, gossip and all types of worldly conversations, they will lead to ungodliness. Your speech, it says it's like gangrene, verse 17. Do you know what gangrene is? When sometimes people have diabetes and they get a wound in their foot and it doesn't heal, gangrene sets in.

And the doctors try and try and try with medicines, antibiotics and it doesn't heal. Finally the doctor says, I'm sorry but I have to cut off your foot. Gangrene is such a terrible thing.

It just spreads. And there's no cure for it except cutting off the foot. Sometimes you have to cut off half the leg.

Because the gangrene is spreading. And he says, do you know what's the gangrene in the Christian life? It's this type of argument and worldly conversation. Sit and talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, all types of useless things.

It's like gangrene. It will just spread and destroy your life and destroy everybody else's life. Cut it off.

It's very, very important. And he says, people like Hymenaeus, verse 17 and Philetus, they went into this type of worldly chatter and now they've gone astray from the truth altogether. They say the resurrection has already taken place.

And they are upsetting the faith of some people. But he says, those who are firmly founded on God's foundation, see God's foundation has got two things written on its seal. On the downward side, now let's look at the upward side, God's side.

You know there's a great argument in Christendom about what's commonly known as Calvinism and Arminianism. Whether once saved, always saved, or you can be lost after you're saved. Eternal security or not eternal security.

There's this argument. What's the answer? The answer is in both. There's truth in both.

And if you ask me, I hold both views. Because both are in scripture. You can't put away one.

God is sovereign and He chooses. At the same time, we need to pursue after Him and follow Him. Both are true.

He holds me and I hold Him. It says here, the foundation of God, from God's side, if you look at it, He knows everybody who is a child of God. The Lord knows those who are His.

Eternal security. That's right. But if you look at it from the underside, which is the side we can see, how do you know that a man is a disciple of Jesus? I'm sorry, I can't see it from God's side.

If I could look into the book of life, I'd tell you whether you're eternally secure. But I can't. I look at it from the underside and what do I see? If you name the name of the Lord, you must stay away from sin.

If you stay away from sin, I say, brother, you are eternally secure. So you see, both truths are there in the seal of God on His foundation. There is Calvinism and Arminianism.

Both are there. The Lord knows those who are His. He has sovereignly selected them.

And the one who names the name of the Lord must himself choose to stay away from wickedness. So, God holds me and I hold Him. Okay.

Now we are looking at the characteristics of a true servant of God. A faithful teacher. And he must be like a good soldier.

A truthful athlete. A hardworking farmer. A diligent workman.

And now, verse 20 and 21, he must be a sanctified vessel. A holy vessel. That's another picture used of a servant of God in this chapter.

A vessel who cleanses himself. Now there are two types of cleansing spoken of in the New Testament. One is the cleansing of 1 John 1, 7 and 1, 9. The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to cleanse us. That is God cleansing me from the guilt of my past life. I can't do that.

Only the blood of Jesus can do that. But there is another cleansing which I have to do myself. That's here in verse 21.

A man cleanses himself. It's two sides of a coin. God cleanses my past life and I cleanse myself from the things I see in my life now.

For example, if I find that I've got the habit of cracking jokes in a way that hurt other people. Do you have that habit? Then ask. Don't ask God to remove it.

Say, Lord, I'm going to get rid of it for my life. I have to cleanse myself. Lord, I have the habit of being a busybody in other people's matters.

I want to get rid of it. A lot of believers are busybodies in other people's matters. They want to find out who's getting married to who, who's pregnant and who's having a baby.

I say, I'm not interested. I'm not interested in all that. I've got enough to do fighting the devil instead of finding out who's getting married to who and who's having a baby.

It's none of my business. And Lord, cleanse me. No, I must cleanse myself.

I must stop being interested in these things. And if a man cleanses himself, he will be a vessel sanctified, useful to the master. Brother, sister, do you want to be a vessel useful to the master for every good work? I want to be like that for many, many years.

It's been the passion of my life. Lord, I want to be a vessel useful to you for every good work that you can do with my one earthly life. Please have me.

I have such a short life on earth. Maybe I live 70, 80, 90 years. I don't know.

But every year of that life must count for you. I must be useful for you. Then the Lord says, cleanse yourself.

Look at your life and see the things that are useless. Let your life be one continuous cleansing. I'm cleansing myself even today.

Anything that I find, well, that's no use for God's work. I want to cleanse it away. That's not good for a servant of God.

I want to cleanse it away. If you're serious like that, you will be a vessel useful to the master. There are a lot of vessels that are not very useful to the master.

And he compares it to the different type of vessels in a house. There are vessels made of wood. You know, boxes, wooden boxes, crates in which we pack things.

Vessels made of earth where we store water. And then there are some other vessels of gold and silver which you find in the cupboards usually. We don't use them so much.

But if there's a fire in your house, which vessel will you go and run away with? Which will you take out of the house? I'm sure you won't take all those cardboard boxes and the earthen vessels. You'll run to the cupboard to take the gold and silver vessels. Those are the ones Jesus is coming for.

When the world is going to be on fire, he's going to take his golden and silver vessels. You are an earthen vessel. Can you become a golden vessel? Sure.

Cleanse yourself from everything. An earthen vessel can become a golden vessel. Don't think of usefulness alone.

Many people say God is using me. Yeah, in your house you may use the cardboard box more than you use the golden vessel, right? If you got a golden cup, how often do you use it at the dining table? But cardboard boxes and earthen vessels you use a lot. But usefulness is not the thing.

Which has got value? Are you worried about usefulness? Or are you worried about your value? Your spiritual value to God. That's more important than saying God is using me. God uses even the devil.

You know that? The devil sent a thorn into Paul's flesh and God used it. Doesn't he use that? The devil sends sickness to people and God uses it. He uses the devil.

He uses many people like that. He used Balaam. He used Solomon to write scripture and then he went to hell.

So, don't say God used me. There are people who say, Lord, I prophesy in your name. I did this in thy name and finally they are rejected.

Being used by God is not the main thing. What is your value? Are you a golden vessel? And lastly, a servant of God, verse 24 to 26, must be a gentle counselor. Gentle in the way he speaks to people.

Again, he says, not arguing, not quarrelsome. You cannot be a servant of God, verse 24, if you are quarrelsome. Refuse, verse 23, foolish speculations.

So, there are a number of things. One more thing I just want to mention in verse 22. If you want to cleanse yourself, one of the first things you got to run away from is youthful lusts.

Even a man like Timothy, who was probably 40 years old or 45, I don't know. Do 45-year-old people need to run away from youthful lusts? A wholehearted brother like Timothy. Paul tells Timothy, you got to run, brother.

Don't think because I am 45 years old, I won't be tempted. You got to run. You got to turn away and run.

Don't allow these things to drag you down and destroy your ministry. And pursue after righteousness with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart, verse 22. In other words, seek fellowship with those who desire purity.

That's what will help you to run away from sin. Our best friends on earth must be those who desire purity with all their hearts. There are many believers, but among all those many believers whom I fellowship with, my best friends must be those who desire to live a godly life.

The others, their standard is lower. They are not so interested in godliness. They want to go and watch movies and various things like that.

Maybe born again, I don't know. But those are not the type of people I want to spend most of my time with. I want to spend most of my time with those who desire godliness.

Those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. You say, how do you know what's in the heart? Well, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks, the Bible says. So you know what's in a man's heart by the things he talks about.

If he's always talking about the stock market and various things that he can buy for his house, you know that's what's in his heart. And you see another man who's talking about the Lord, you know that's what is in his heart. So I want to look for people, not who can tell me how to make money on the stock market or how I can buy better clothes in some place.

I want to fellowship with those people who can tell me more about Jesus, what they have discovered about Jesus from the scriptures. I'm so much in love with Jesus, even after 41 years, that I love to talk to people who talk to me about Jesus, my beloved bridegroom. That's the secret of serving the Lord.

Those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Be one like that. Be gentle in correcting people, it says in verse 25, so that they can be delivered from the trap of Satan.

And then chapter 3, he speaks about being faithful in the last days. There's a sense in which the last days began on the day of Pentecost. In Acts chapter 2, Peter says, this is what Joel prophesied, it shall come to pass in the last days, I'll pour out my spirit on all flesh.

That started on the day of Pentecost. Now, in 2000 or nearly 2001 now, we are not in the last days, we are in the last minutes. Last minutes, probably in the last seconds.

How much more these things will be true. Men will be lovers of themselves. Now the interesting thing is, he's not talking about worldly people.

Worldly people have always been lovers of themselves in the last days and the first days. Lovers of money, boastful, arrogant. This is all true of worldly people in all centuries.

But here he's talking in verse 5, about those who pretend to be believers. Who claim to be believers. That means they've got a form of godliness.

They've got the right doctrine. These are evangelical Christians. Whenever it speaks about the form, the form of godliness is the doctrine.

The doctrine, that means they hold on to the form. You know like a body has got a form. 10 fingers, 10 toes, 2 eyes, 2 ears.

We can say this is the form. If you have only 8 fingers, those are people who don't have all the doctrines. 10 fingers means all doctrines correct.

But there's no life in this body. What's the use? That's the condition of a lot of evangelical Christians. Their doctrines are all correct.

10 fingers, 10 toes, 2 eyes, 2 ears, but there's no life. They have a form of godliness, that means their doctrine is all correct, but they don't have power. They can't get up and live for God.

Such people, who have all their evangelical doctrines right, who can sign any doctrinal statement and join any evangelical fellowship, they are lovers of themselves. Are you one of those? Glorifying in the fact that you're not a liberal. Your doctrine is correct.

You've got 10 fingers, not 5 fingers like the liberals. You've got 10 toes, not 5 toes like them. You've got 2 eyes, not 1 eye like them.

You're glorying in the fact that all your doctrines are correct. But, are you a lover of yourself? Do you live for yourself or do you live for God? Are you a lover of money? Second question. Are you boastful? Are you arrogant in the way you behave with junior brothers and sisters? Are you a gossip? Speaking evil of others? Are you disobedient to parents if you're a child at home? Or dishonoring to parents? When you leave your home, you don't have to obey your parents, but you still have to honor them.

Are you ungrateful to people who do good to you? This is all ungodliness. Are you unholy? Are you unloving? Are you a person who cannot be reconciled? People try to bring you together with that person with whom you have a fight, but you're stubborn and you will not yield your point of view. Are you a malicious gossip? Are you one without self-control? Brutal, hater of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited? Are you a lover of pleasure and comfort more than a lover of God? If you love comfort more than you love God, I'll tell you right now, you can forget about serving God.

You cannot love comfort more than God and serve Him. That's completely out of the question. And yet people who do all these things have the correct doctrine.

They say we are born again. Do you know there are multitudes of people like that in the world today? Who got the right language, the right form, but they haven't been delivered from self-centeredness and living for themselves and living for the world and living for money. And the Lord, Paul tells Timothy, avoid such people.

Why should you avoid such people? Because you'll get infected. And such people are the ones who go into households and captivate weak women. You know there are some preachers who only like to preach to women.

Crazy. Because they know they can convince them. And some of these women just sit and they like to listen to these preachers.

They go visiting homes when only the women are there. It says here. And capture them, get their money.

And these women are people who keep on listening to umpteen preachers. They go to this doctrine, that doctrine, this church, this special meeting. They never can understand the truth.

It's sorry. Not all sisters are like that. There are some excellent godly sisters in the church too.

But it says there are some women like that and some preachers like to go for them. Be careful. Don't be an effeminate preacher like that.

Be a man of God. And he says about people who oppose the true servants of God. He says there are people like Janice and Jambres who are Pharaoh's magicians who oppose Moses.

And there are people like that who will oppose you, who have all this form of godliness. One day God will judge them. Their folly will be manifest to all.

But he says in contrast to all these people, verse 10 and 11, you have seen my life, Timothy. You have seen how I lived. You have seen my conduct, verse 10, my purpose, my faith, my patience, my love, my perseverance, my persecution, my suffering.

Was Paul boasting? No. Sometimes we have to give our testimony to people in order to challenge them. And Paul had to give a testimony to contrast himself with other servants of God who were crooks, who claimed to be servants of God.

And then he says, but I'm persecuted. I'm imprisoned. Because all those, verse 12, who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

But these evil men and deceivers, they'll go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you don't follow them. You follow what you learned from childhood.

And then we come to that wonderful passage about Scripture which we thought of when we began these studies. That all Scripture, he's telling Timothy, give yourself to the study of Scripture. Because in Scripture you have the breath of God.

The same Holy Spirit who fills you is the one who wrote this book. Study it. Let it teach you.

Let it reprove you. Let it correct you. Let it train you in righteousness.

And let it equip you to become a man of God ready to do every good work. And then his concluding words in chapter 4. He says, I'm charging you in Jesus name. Preach the word.

Verse 2. Be ready always to preach the word. When you feel like it and when you don't feel like it. When it's convenient and when it's not convenient.

You must always be ready. And when you preach the word, reprove people, rebuke people. It's not always gentle.

Reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience and instruction. It's not just consolation always. Because the time will come when people will not be willing to listen to hygienic doctrines.

Sound doctrine means hygienic, holy, health giving doctrine. The time will come when they want to have their ears tickled by preachers who just make them happy and collect their money. And they will not be interested in listening to solid teaching on holiness.

You go to a Christian book shop today and you'll find such a lot of books which are just trash. Just somebody's testimonies and not solid teaching that leads to holiness. All about experiences and various type of things which don't lead you to a godly life.

That time has already come. Those are the only books that sell very often. And people go for those things.

Those are the books that sell in millions. People don't want teaching that leads to a godly, holy life. He says that time will come.

So you better make sure that whenever you get the opportunity, preach the word. Wherever you get the opportunity, go and preach God's word. And endure hardship and do the work of an evangelist.

You're called to be an evangelist, go and win souls. Don't waste your time with other things. And he says my time has already come.

I'm going. I'm thankful as I look back over my life. Paul says in verse 7, I fought against the devil with all my heart.

I fought against my lust in my flesh with all my heart. I have finished the course that God kept for me. He had a particular ministry for me and I finished it.

All the places he wanted me to go to, I went. Whether it was walking or shipwreck or anything, I determined to go where God wanted me to go. And I've kept the faith.

I've not compromised on the doctrine. And because of that in future, God has laid up for me a crown of righteousness which he'll give to me and all those who love his appearing. But, Demas was with me up until recently.

Verse 10, now he's deserted me. Going after this present evil world. There are many people who fall away.

14, Alexander the coppersmith has done me much harm. The Lord will repay him in the final day. Be on guard against him because he may oppose you also.

Everybody deserted me in the courtroom. Verse 16, when I was taken to court, everybody got scared and ran away. But the Lord stood with me.

Verse 17, and saved me. And I believe that until his time comes, he will deliver me from every evil deed. And even from death.

But when his time comes, he'll take me safely to his heavenly kingdom. So that's how he finishes. His closing words.

We thank God for the example of such a godly servant who kept the faith till the end. Fought the good fight. Finished his course.

An example for all of us to follow. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the example of your servant whose challenge comes down to us through 20 centuries.

Help us to follow his example in our own life, we pray. In Jesus' name.

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