

Text: II Timothy 2:20-21 (Pew Bible, pg.1179)

Title: “God Wants to Use You”

INTRODUCTION

How would you like to be the kind of person that God uses for His purposes? Wouldn't you like to know the exhilaration of being a person God uses to bring life to spiritually dead people, encouragement to discouraged people, comfort to despairing people, hope to hopeless people, help to helpless people? Wouldn't you like to be a person God includes in the great work of bringing a miracle into someone else's life? Do you think that is far beyond what you would ever be able to do? Well I have news for you, friend. God wants to use you.

Open your Bibles to II Timothy 2:20-21. Read text.

You see, the church, the family of God, is like a large house with all kinds of dishes and utensils in it. You know how it is around your house. There are some dishes and other items that are very costly and used for very special purposes. Maybe it's the valuable china or silver that you bring out for a special family occasion. Then there are things that are less valuable and used for common purposes ... maybe it's a plastic Texas Rangers cup you got at a convenience store. And in every house there's a combination of those things that are valuable and used for special purposes, and those that are less valuable and used for common purposes.

Now the point here is not that there aren't common, ordinary things that need to be done in the service of the Lord and others. Jesus talked about the simplest thing of giving a cup of cold water to someone in His Name is well-rewarded. Every day is filled with all kinds of ordinary things that God wants done through His people.

The point of this passage is that God wants to use extraordinary people to accomplish His work in this world. He desires for each of us to be instruments for noble purposes.

You see following Christ is not just a matter of *being* good and staying out of trouble. It's not just a matter of *feeling* good and trying to be happy. It is a matter of *doing* good and being part of God's great purposes in this world.

Remember the order of things:

Ephesians 2:8-9 - For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.

Ephesians 2:10 - For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

We are not saved *by* our good works, but *for* good works.

Matthew 5:16 - In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

And there you have the main motivation in all of this wanting to be used by God ... it is not to attract attention to ourselves, but to gain the maximum glory for God.

The fact is that most of what God does in this world He does through His people. Many of the miracles God performs today He does through His people. When God delivers grace to our lives He will often do it through someone in the Body of Christ. Whenever God does the great work of saving a soul, He employs at least one of His servants. You see, God wants to use you. That's right ... YOU!

When it says in v.21, "if a *man* cleanses himself from the latter he will be an instrument for noble use..." the word for "man" means "anyone," male or female, young or old.

This evening we're going to ordain six new deacons and commission our deacon body. Deacon, listen carefully today. You're a seminary student preparing for ministry; listen carefully today. You're a homemaker or a business executive, a student or a retiree, listen carefully. Whether you are teaching a Bible Study class on Sunday morning, or doing a secretary's work on Monday morning, God wants to use you. When Ronnie Hill comes next Sunday to preach the Good News of Jesus Christ there are people that God wants to save, and He wants to use you as a vital link in that miracle chain by you inviting them to be with you.

And in these days of seeking God for revival in our lives, this is something God is getting at. He wants to unleash us upon this county every day, holy men and women, who will be used by Him for His noble purposes.

Now the question is this: How can I be that kind of person that God uses for honorable, noble purposes ... the kind of person that is set apart to be used for the purposes of God ... the kind of person that is useful to the Master ... the kind of person that is ready for every good work? Well the Bible shows us how we can be the kind of person God can use. We have to be...

1. SATURATED WITH THE GOD'S WORD

A little bit later in this letter Paul will instruct Timothy about this very issue:

2 Timothy 3:16-17 - All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

So God's Word equips us for every good work. It matures and establishes us in the knowledge of Christ. To be effective in service we need to be consistently fed and strengthened by the Word of God. We need to let it teach us, rebuke us, correct us and train us so we are equipped for every good work.

But God's Word also becomes part of the way that God ministers through us. You may be reading your Bible one morning and you come across a verse that really speaks to you. The Bible says that God comforts us in all of our troubles. He often does that by the Spirit of God ministering some

promise from the Word of God to our minds and our hearts. But the Bible goes on to say that God does that so that we will be able to comfort others with the comfort we have received from God.

So if God is to use us we need to be saturated with His Word.

2. CONCENTRATED IN PRAYER

In these days of revival the Lord has taught me this: Prayer is one of the great works we have to do as His people. Prayer is way that we yield ourselves to God and prepare ourselves for what God wants to do through us.

EXAMPLE: On the night that Jesus was betrayed He was in the Garden of Gethsemane praying with some of His disciples. Jesus was facing the greatest test of His life ... the Cross ... and He knew He needed to spend this time in prayer with the Father. And He asked His disciples to pray with Him, but they kept falling asleep. And Jesus rebukes them, "Could you not keep watch with me for one hour?" (Matthew 26:40).

But then prayer also becomes a big part of God using us in the lives of others. Paul, writing from a Roman prison, told the Philippian church about the great benefit that came to him because they were praying for him:

Philippians 1:19 - I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.

There's a powerful connection between your praying and the help given to others by the Spirit of Jesus Christ. So be concentrated in prayer.

3. DOMINATED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

When God uses us, He supplies the supernatural power by His Holy Spirit, so that what ends up happening is not just the work of a person, but the work of God's power through that person.

Acts 1:8 - But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses...

Just think about that phrase, "when the Holy Spirit comes on you." Now post-Pentecost, this happens when we are saved and the Holy Spirit comes to take up residence in our lives. But we also know from Scripture that we are commanded to be continuously filled with the Holy Spirit. And the purpose of that filling, that dominating of the Holy Spirit, in our lives is so that God can use us to accomplish His work of bearing witness for Christ. So we must be dominated by the Holy Spirit.

4. SEPARATED FROM SIN

2 Timothy 2:21 - If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.

God wants to use clean instruments.

ILLUSTRATION – You’ve had this happen before. You go into a restaurant and unroll the napkin that has the silverware inside and you find that the fork has something left on it from the last time someone used it. It’s nasty! What do you do? You’re probably not going to use it. You’ll send it back and ask for another fork.

Now, again, I’m not saying that you have to be sinlessly perfect for God to use you. That’s not possible for any human being. We all sin and we all fall short of God’s glory. But if we are living habitually in known sin, and we haven’t confessed it and repented of it before God, we can’t expect that God can use us.

That’s why Paul would say to Timothy in the very next verse:

2 Timothy 2:22 - 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.

Why? This is the kind of person God chooses to use for His glory.

5. COORDINATED WITH DIVINE OPPORTUNITIES

EXAMPLE: I love the story of Philip’s ministry in Acts 8. Philip was a deacon in the early church and a man God could trust with big opportunities.

Acts 8:26 - Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.”

Acts 8:27 - So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship,

So God is orchestrating something here. He has brought His servant Philip in contact with someone who was seeking God. So look what Philip does:

Acts 8:30 - Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked.

Acts 8:31 - “How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

Now here is an example of why you need to be saturated in God’s Word to be effective in God’s service.

Acts 8:35 - Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

As a result, the Ethiopian man is saved and Philip stops the chariot by the side of the road where there was some water and he baptizes the guy. Isn't it amazing how God coordinates these opportunities with people He chooses to use?

6. DESIGNATED WITH SPECIAL ABILITIES

God called us to this life and He has also equipped us for this life by installing in each of us special spiritual abilities that are a manifestation of His grace in us and through us.

2 Timothy 2:20b - Some are for noble purposes...

2 Timothy 2:21 - If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes,

Obviously these articles, these instruments, have different shapes because they are used for different purposes.

ILLUSTRATION - Ladies, in your kitchen you have different kinds of dishes, all shaped differently because you use them for different purposes. And guys, out in your garage you have tools that are shaped differently because they have different purposes.

Now God has called each of us to serve. And there are some acts of service that all of us are to do. We to pray for one another, encourage one another, help one another, and share the Gospel with non-believers. We all do those things.

But then God has given each of us a particular shape that fits us for specialized duty as well. These are called spiritual gifts. And the Bible is very clear about this:

1 Corinthians 12:7 - Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

1 Peter 4:10 - Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

So God wants to use you, and He has shaped you to serve Him in a way that not everyone is shaped. And if you don't realize this you will be discouraged and frustrated in your life as a servant of God. The key is to find out how God has shaped you and then let God sovereignly place you in a ministry that uses that gift He has given you.

We don't need more people doing more things. We need more people doing what God has uniquely gifted them to do in the power that He supplies.

CONCLUSION

ILLUSTRATION – Let me see if I can help you visualize this in this way. Suppose we could be transported to a vantage point high above our city tomorrow. And suppose that we had the ability to

see God's "projects," the people He is working on. Right over here is a young lady who is at the end of her rope and she's in such despair that she is thinking about taking her life. And right over here is an unemployed dad who is sitting at his kitchen table trying to figure out how he's going to pay his bills and feed his family. And right over here in a hospital room is a family gathered around the bed of a family member who is nearing death. And right over here, in a high rise office building, is a guy who is just overwhelmed with the fact that his life has no meaning and purpose. Somehow he knows God is the answer, +but he has made so many mistakes that God could surely never forgive him. And from your vantage point you can see all this going on, thousands of times over.

Suppose we could also see where God has positioned His people all over the city. They're everywhere, in schools, downtown, on every street in every neighborhood, in every store ... they're everywhere. And then we realize that God is in the process of sovereignly coordinating and arranging these divine appointments, connecting up hurting people with His chosen instruments all over the city.

And we look a little closer and we see that God has a challenge ... some of His people are aware this is going on and their eyes and hearts are open to how God is positioning them throughout the day. They're eager and expectant for God to use them. And then there are others who are clueless. They're so wrapped up in their own "to-do" list that their oblivious to God's "to-do" list. They're so consumed with their own problems they don't have time for God to use them in someone else's problems. They're so absorbed in the things of the world or impressing others that they don't have a clue how God wants to use them in the lives of other people.

That's the world you and I walk out into every day. Will you let God use you?