

Therefore, let's anticipate that God, God Almighty, has a word for us today. So, let's start by reading the passage.

2 Timothy 2, 20 to 26. Now in a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay.

Some for the clay. Some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself for what is dishonorable, he'll be a vessel for honorable use.

[5 : 03] Set apart as holy. Useful to the master of the house. Ready for every good work. So, flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies. You know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome, but kind to everyone.

Able to teach. Patiently enduring evil. Correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance, leading to a knowledge of the truth.

And they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil. After being captured by him to do his will. May God bless the preaching of his word.

Okay. But first, the context of 2 Timothy 2, 20 to 26. For Chris's previous sermons, remember that 2 Timothy features Paul's affection, reflection, and direction.

[6 : 22] To Timothy. Paul's young protege. This letter, written from prison, presumably before Paul's coming execution, displays Paul's deep care for Timothy.

His emotional connection to Timothy and his fatherly guidance to him. To especially embrace suffering for the sake of the gospel. And in this specific section of the letter, Paul's been using imagery to capture for Timothy a picture of a faithful minister of the Lord and of the gospel.

Images like that of being a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer. Well, in this portion of the letter, Paul used a number of additional images to help instruct Timothy in his gospel ministry.

And these are instructive for us as well as we consider how we can be fruitful and ready in our ministries, whatever form they take. We're in the church, our families, our friends, in the workplace, wherever.

We can be ready for the works that God has called us to. So, what's one of the images that Paul uses to guide Timothy in this passage to strengthen him in his gospel ministry?

[7 : 38] Are you ready for every good work? Paul first compares the church to a great house. And a house with vessels. Some of use to the Lord for honorable things and some for dishonorable.

Look at verses 20 to 21. Now in a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay. Some for honorable use, some for dishonorable.

Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use. Set apart as holy, useful, the master of the house, ready for every good work.

Now before diving into the vessel piece of this image, let's first examine the image of the house in general with the great master of the house.

One way we can be ready for every good work in this house, the church, is to build our regard for this house. And especially, especially for its master.

[8 : 43] So, consider first, who is the master of the house, the church? Well, obviously it's Jesus. This same Jesus, who battled the devil, walked on water, calmed the storm, commanded demons, healed the sick, taught masterfully, suffered and died and rose again.

Consider also, who is this Jesus? He's the one who knows you intimately. Who thought of you in eternity past. Who wrote every day, every moment of your life in his book.

And who you will spend eternity with, in his presence, with great joy and pleasures forevermore. Jesus is the one who owns this house.

Who rules over this house. Who is the master of this house. Don't we want to be ready? Don't we want to be ready for every good work that Jesus, this great and close Lord, is calling us to?

And what's this house? Well, consider, it's Christ's body. It's Christ's bride. It's a pillar and budge to the truth.

[10 : 07] It was bought by Jesus' blood. Not only that, but this house, the church, it's the place where God meets us.

Week in, week out. Where your soul is nourished. Where you regularly connect with your dearest friends. Where you get to encourage and build others up in the Lord.

Don't you want to be ready? This house is so dear to us. This master is so dear to us. Don't you want to be ready to love this house, to love its members, and to build it up however the Lord may provide the opportunity.

Church family, Jesus is worthy of being held in the highest of regards. We all know that. We all know that. But it can be helpful at times to remember who this Jesus is. And freshly marvel at the fact that he has chosen us. He's chosen us to do good works, to honor him, and to build up his church. Church.

[11 : 09] Let's remember who Jesus is. And let us remember just what this church is. When we have a high regard for Jesus and his church, we will be well positioned.

We'll be fit and ready for every good work in and on behalf of his name and his church. So, how can we ready for every good work the Lord is calling us to?

Well, let's have a high regard for the Lord. Let's cultivate a high regard for the Lord and for the church, for his house. Second, how can we ready for every good work the Lord has for us?

What God has for us is when we've cleansed ourselves for honorable use. We've cleansed ourselves for honorable use. Look at verses 20 and 21 again.

Now, in a great house, not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

[12 : 33] Now, Paul's intention here is to identify and contrast teachers within the church. These vessels Paul is speaking of, this additional image, most commentators agree that the honorable vessels Paul is referring to are honorable, true teachers of the gospel.

And their use is the glory of the Lord and the salvation, sanctification, and preservation of souls. The dishonorable vessels are false teachers.

Teachers attempt us to think that it's our performance, that it's our righteousness, that it's things like circumcision that bring us to the Lord, that keep us in the Lord's favor, that help us to have our standing before God.

So then the question becomes, how can we all become honorable vessels in the great house of the Lord? And for the sake of our church today, maybe not all teachers from the pulpit, but teachers of one another.

Teachers of our spouses, our children, our friends. Teachers through our lives and words and examples. But we can do so by cleansing ourselves for honorable use.

[13 : 45] Look at verse 22. So, flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

Two major verbs here. Flee and pursue. Flee and pursue. When you hear flee, think back to Joseph with Potiphar's wife.

He fled from her presence as she tried to tempt him into an adulterous affair. Joseph fled. He didn't even hold onto his clothes to get out of that situation. He just got out of there.

It's with that intensity that we are to flee youthful passions. So, what are these youthful passions?

The language may have some sensual undertones, but most commentators agree that youthful passions in Greek *epithumeia* are more so related to anything that we are not called to have at this moment.

That we're not called to have at this moment. Just think in terms of position, power, and even riches. In this command, Paul is instructing Timothy to contentment and faithfulness.

[15 : 09] Faithfulness. Within his current state, without a striving for more worldly power and influence, he is to man his position. Preach the word. Embrace suffering where he is.

And to do so pursuing, again, rather than position or power, he is to pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace. He is to pursue his sanctification. So, he is to pursue righteousness, *dikaiois*, things even right by God, living life in light of God's eyes under his constant gaze, and seeking to bring him pleasure to the things that we are doing.

He is to pursue faith, *paitho*, like the faith of the centurion. Remember him from Matthew 8. He trusted and had confidence in the Lord that he was able to do what the Lord said he could do.

He is to pursue love, *agape*, good will for others, desire, and pursuit of the best for others, a sincere, heartfelt desire to see others flourish.

And finally, Timothy is to pursue peace, irene, wholeness, not just the absence of conflict, but the blessing of God. And like Timothy, we ourselves are to pursue these things.

[16:35] Again, we are to flee vigorously the passions of youth, and instead pursue like a hunter, like an army going after its enemy, righteousness, faith, love, and peace, to cleanse ourselves for honorable use.

So, how can we do this? Well, there's like five messages in this sermon that we could unpack, and we can go really deep here. But quickly, and we'll unpack one of these points in a podcast this week as the plan.

We'll get there. But how can we cleanse ourselves for honorable use? I love the conversation that happened around a bonfire at Larson's house recently, where the gauntlet was thrown down that if we are serious, if we're serious about our relationship with the Lord, we will be in the Word, we will be reading the Bible every day.

That's just one way, but that's a key way. We can cleanse ourselves for honorable use. So, between being in the Word in private and public fellowship, and simply obeying, what the Lord has called us to, and what we're learning from being in the Word and being in fellowship publicly, that's one way we can cleanse ourselves for honorable use.

So, ultimately, we have cleansed ourselves for honorable use. We will be well positioned. We will be fit and ready for the good works that God has called us to.

[18:03] So, how can we be ready for every good work? Cleanse yourself for honorable use. All right. Third way that we can be ready for every good work.

Run the Christian life with faithful believers. Run the Christian life with faithful believers. Look at verse 22 again. Verse 22.

So, flee youthful passions, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

I know. I'm speaking to the choir here. I'm preaching to the choir here. We love to run a community here at Providence Community Church. But pay attention to this verse. Let's just hammer this point home.

We want to run along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. Brothers and sisters, for us to be ready for every good work that the Lord has called us to.

[19:00] We must be running our Christian lives, our lives with other believers, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. And like I said, I know we love to do this, but let me just illustrate this.

My boys, Joseph and Gideon, two of my boys, are playing basketball right now. And they play. They practice by themselves. Right? We all, whatever we're doing, any kind of sports, working out, whatever, we can do it by ourselves.

But boy, do they play so much harder when they're surrounded by their teams. They run harder. They dig deeper. They set an example for those around them.

The other players set an example for them. Each of the players correct and strengthen and encourage and sharpen one another. Church, again, I know I'm speaking to a church that loves to run together.

Let's make sure that we are running together with intensity. That we keep our focus. That we all run together toward the Lord, that we press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

[20:06] May no one be left behind. May all of us run hard. And may all of us run together. Each making it to the finish line together, fulfilling every good work that God may have for us along the way.

So, how can we all be ready for every good work? Well, let's run together. Encouraging. Exhorting. Correcting.

And spurring each other on toward the love and good works that God has for us. All right, fourth. How can we be ready for every good work?

Based on 2 Timothy 2, 20 to 26. Well, we can cultivate godly character as we deal with our opponents. As we deal with our opponents.

Look at verses 23 to 26. Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies. You know they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome, but kind to everyone.

[21:09] Able to teach, patiently enduring evil. Correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance, leading to a knowledge of the truth. And they may come to their

senses and escape from the snare of the devil after being captured by him to do his will.

So, in these verses, it's clear what we as the Lord's servants are to avoid and to embrace. But we're to avoid and to embrace. We're to avoid foolish, ignorant controversies that breed quarrels.

And we should embrace kindness, right teaching, patient endurance, and gentle correction. We're to love our enemies. Yes, with a backbone that holds dearly to the eternal truths of our master.

But with kindness and gentleness in a way that introduces our opponents to the character of the Lord. So, every time we're drawn into a discussion about Christ, a discussion with unbelieving friends or unbelieving family or maybe on Facebook or what's formerly known as Twitter or X, we have an opportunity to cultivate this type of behavior, this type of character to consider.

Do we have a loving heart for our opponents? That wants to see them come to a knowledge of the truth, that longs to see their repentance.

[22 : 35] That desires to introduce them to the Lord. And that has faith that God can work through our kind, patient, right teaching and example.

And bring them back, or maybe for the first time, the right knowledge of the Lord. So I just reflect upon my conversion. I was an opponent.

I didn't believe the Lord. I was an unbeliever. And God had mercy on me and lifted the veil, just through faithful witnessing of kind, godly people. So how can we be ready for every good work? Well, especially in our conversations about the Lord, in particular with our opponents, we can cultivate godly character. All right, finally, fifth point.

How can we be ready for every good work? We must acknowledge the fact that we have an enemy working against us to be ready. We have an enemy working against us to be ready.

[23 : 43] Look at verses 24 to 26. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome, but kind to everyone, able to teach patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness.

God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil after being captured by him to do his will.

So just look at what this enemy is doing. What he's up to. He's dedicated to capturing and snaring people in falsehood. He wants to prevent people from embracing a knowledge of the truth.

The truth. Church. Test your thoughts. Are they all righteous and faithful and loving and peaceable toward your brothers and sisters in the Lord?

Toward your family, towards your opponents? If you're anything like me, it's wise to acknowledge that not every thought that goes through your head is necessarily from yourself or from the Lord.

[24 : 48] We must be watchful. We must be watchful. We must test our thoughts. We must listen to our great shepherd, our great master, that we talked about earlier.

We must listen to him only. And how can we do this? Well, this is what I want to unpack with Chris on the podcast this week, so stay tuned. But one thing, one thing, we must be soaking ourselves in scripture and prayer.

So we can recognize the lies that we're being served up and potentially tricked by each and every day. Brothers and sisters, we have an enemy.

And he's out to ensnare, to capture, to confuse, to tempt, to lead astray, to keep us from being ready. We must acknowledge this.

We must fight against this. If we're to be ready for every good work. So, how can we be ready for every good work? We must acknowledge and fight against our enemy.

[26 : 03] That leads us to the why behind all this. Why do this? Why fight so hard? Why remember our great master and what his house is? Why cleanse ourselves?

Why run with others? Why do we need others? Why do we need others? Remember, the Lord's honor is at stake. When we fulfill the good works that he's called us to and set before us, we bring him honor and the honor that he deserves.

Not only that, but our joy is at stake. Think of Eric Liddow, the runner from Chariots of Fire. When we fulfill the good works that God has for us, we feel the pleasure of God.

And finally, we want to love others. When we do good works, we are loving those inside and outside the church. We, we as a church, long to see others flourish.

Not just ourselves, not just our family, not even just our church. We want this community to flourish in the Lord. Our good works, which are set out by God, are designed to bring about exactly that.

[27 : 14] To see others flourish. And others flourish. So, in conclusion, the Lord has good works for us to do.

Like Rudy Ruediger, God is calling our number, our name, but for us each and every single day. Let's be ready for those moments, those works.

Let's regard the master and his house highly. Let's cleanse ourselves for honorable use. Let's run hard with other Christians. Let's oppose our opponents in a godly manner.

And let's acknowledge and fight against our enemy. The more we do these things, the more faithful we'll be in our everyday dealings and stewardship of the good works that God has given to us.

And then may the Lord entrust us with even more and more responsibilities so we can honor him, bring ourselves joy, and see others flourish. So, are you ready?

[28 : 23] More importantly, are you ready to get ready? Let's prepare ourselves with diligence, with passion, with endurance, and with zeal. For the good works that God has called us to perform.

Let's pray. You, you are Lord Almighty. And you are worthy of such honor.

Lord, we thank you that you have called us to yourself, Lord. We thank you that you have called us to do good works so that we can honor you and bring joy to ourselves and love others.

Lord, I thank you for your word. Thank you for preserving it over the centuries. So we could hear it and that it's fresh and that it's new and that it's alive. Lord, I pray that the seeds of today's scripture just goes deep into our souls and that you bring great fruit from it.

Lord, empower us as we seek to apply this message. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. All right. Oh. But a message like the one today, where the focus has been very much on our effort to fulfill every good work.

[29 : 45] On our call to fight, it can be tempting to think, okay, now I've got to muster up the strength and just go and do. I know that can be tempting. So for communion this morning, let's take a moment and simply remember Jesus.

And be thankful. That he was not just the master of the house, but the one, he was the one who was ready for every good work himself.

And he was ready especially to suffer and die for his household, for us, the church. Consider Philippians 2, 5 to 11.

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus. For though he was in the form of God, do not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

And being found in human form, he humbled himself. He became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that in the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth.

[31 : 05] And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God, Father. So he was in the form of God.

He didn't count equality with God a thing to be grasped. He took on human form. He was obedient to God, ultimately to suffer and die for us. Thank God, thank God, thank God that Jesus was ready to be broken, so we could be forgiven.

Thank God that Jesus was ready to bleed and die, so we could be washed clean. Thank God that Jesus was ready to rise from the dead, so that all his resurrection power, all his resurrection power, could be at work in us.

So that he could grant us all the power we need to walk in the works that he has privileged us to fulfill. His resurrection power in us, empowering us.

So let's come to the table this morning with full faith, with complete hope that he is our righteousness, because he was ready and he fulfilled every good work.

[32 : 19] With complete hope that there's no condemnation for us in Christ Jesus, because again, he was ready and willing to suffer and die and rise for us. And with complete hope that the Lord will strengthen us and help us to be ready for every good work that he has called us to walk in, because his spirit now dwells within us.

And his resurrection power is at work within us. 1 Corinthians 11, 23-26 For I receive from the Lord what I also deliver to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread.

When he had given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way also he took the cup after supper, saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Come to the table now, thanking God.

And in full faith, thank God that he was ready, Jesus was ready, for every good work that he had for us, so that we could be forgiven, and that we could proclaim his death together.
[33 : 47] Amen.