

“Purify Yourself to Live a Purposeful Life”

2 Timothy 2:20-21

Introduction

All of us want to live a life on purpose. If all we did was wake up, get cleaned up, get worked up, then calm down, go to sleep only to get up and do it all over again, life would be meaningless. It would be meaningless.

We would join in with King Solomon and say:

Ecclesiastes 1:2 (CSB): “‘Absolute futility,’ says the Teacher. ‘Absolute futility. Everything is futile.’”

In 2002, Rick Warren’s book, “The Purpose-Driven Life” hit the bookstores. To date, it has sold more than 32 million copies and been translated into 85 languages.¹ Obviously, people are interested in living with a purpose.

Well, friend, God has called us to a life of purpose. His purpose is to join Him in what He is doing in the world around us. But our text makes it clear that there are some prerequisites. If you want to be used by the Lord, then you have some things to do.

READ 2 Timothy 2:20-21

1. Acknowledge Your Impurity

a. The illustration

- 1) V. 20 “Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also those of wood and clay; some for honorable use and some for dishonorable.”
- 2) The “gold and silver vessels” were very precious. They were used for special occasions. They were to be a showpiece, or maybe to be used for putting food on in a wealthy house.
- 3) The “wood and clay” vessels weren’t special. They were common. They were used for “dishonorable” purposes. This means they were used to store trash or the filth of the house until the garbage could be disposed.
- 4) What’s the “large house?” I believe this is the community of believers.
- 5) So, with the Christian family, there are those people who are very special to God and used for God’s very special purposes.
 - a) Now, remember, God looks on the heart. He doesn’t measure success the same way we do. He looks at our hearts.
 - b) There are those people who are joining God in what He is doing and reaping rewards for eternity no matter how big or small they think their tasks are.
- 6) Then, there are those in the Christian family who are common.
 - a) They have a purpose ... but they aren’t really doing anything of eternal value.

¹ <http://nrb.org/news-room/articles/nrbt/rick-warren-speak-proclaim-19-convention-anaheim/>

- b) They may be doing things that are celebrated by those around them ... but God sees their fruit as common. He's looking at their heart and he's not impressed.
- b. "So if anyone purifies himself" implies that we must deal with our impurity.
- c. Impurity is simply anything dirty. It's anything that we think or say or do that isn't holy and clean and good.
- d. We don't like to acknowledge our impurity.
 - 1) Imagine that someone came up to you and said: "I just wanted you to know that you've got a problem with pride. I see you teaching a Bible study class and you're a good teacher ... but you are full of yourself. You really need to ask God to help you with that." You would almost certainly be offended.
 - 2) Since the beginning of time, people have not liked being told where they are in error. That's why the Old Testament prophets were mistreated and even killed. That's why Jesus was crucified (from a human point of view). And it continues.
 - 3) In fact, you can go into many so-called churches today and if you listen hard, you'll realize they're just giving a pep talk. They only talk about the good stuff. Grace. Love. Forgiveness. They don't talk about sin, judgment, and God's wrath.
 - 4) Because they know people don't like to be confronted with their sin.
 - 5) But, one of the things I've discovered is that if you want to get thoroughly cleaned out and enjoy the happiness that comes with a clear conscience, you have to do a serious soul searching. The more impurity you find, the more you can receive forgiveness.

e. Some Steps to Acknowledge Your Impurity:

1) Admit your blindness to your sin.

a) Jeremiah 17:9 (CSB): "The heart is more deceitful than anything else, and incurable — who can understand it?"

2) Humble yourself before the Lord

a) James 4:10 (CSB): "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you."

b) It can happen as you remind yourself that you really are nothing apart for God.

c) I can also happen as God brings difficult circumstances into your life to kill your pride.

3) Ask God's Holy Spirit to probe your heart

a) Psalm 139:23-24 (CSB): "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. See if there is any offensive way in me; lead me in the everlasting way."

4) Compare yourself to Scripture

a) Romans 3:20 (CSB): "For no one will be justified in his sight by the works of the law, because the knowledge of sin comes through the law."

So, what do we do once we realize where the dirt is in our lives and feel the weight of its filthiness?

2. Purify Yourself

- a. What does it mean to be pure?
 - 1) Greek: "clean out," "to cleanse thoroughly"
 - 2) If you had a bowl in your house that you used to feed your dog or cat, you wouldn't dare put food in it and eat it until you had thoroughly scoured the thing. Some might even say: "I wouldn't DARE use a dish for myself that was used for my animal." But this simply speaks to God's grace.

- 3) For us to be used by the Lord for a noble purpose, some purpose in which we are joining Him in what He's doing that has incredible eternal rewards, then we have got to get ourselves thoroughly cleaned out.

b. Some Steps to Purify Yourself:

1) Confession

- a) 1 John 1:9 (CSB): "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

2) Repentance

- a) Luke 5:31-32 (CSB): "Jesus replied to them, 'It is not those who are healthy who need a doctor, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.'"

3) Transformation

- a) Romans 12:1-2 (CSB): "Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God."

- b) If you go on a diet, you may end up doing less sugar, or giving up soft drinks. For the first few days, its torture. Your body is craving those things. But, after a few days, your cravings for those things begin to subside. Eventually, you may try to drink a soft drink ... and it's nasty. Why? Because you lost your taste for it.

- c) You can't just get cleaned out. You have to replace the bad with good.

3. Embrace a Life of Purpose

a. You will be a special instrument (for honorable purposes)

- 1) It means you will have put yourself into a position where God can use you for an honorable purpose.
- 2) Instead of doing things that really don't matter, we will be invited to join God in what He is doing, things that have eternal ramifications.
- 3) Remember, we often count success by numbers. God counts it by the heart with which we do the things. No matter how small the task, if we are joining God in what He's doing, we will one day be made aware of how eternally significant that task was.

b. You will be set apart

- 1) The word is literally, "Holy."
- 2) It means to be set apart from the world and set apart for God.
- 3) It means that because you have gotten rid of sin in your life, you are set apart for God's use. You are not putting one foot in the world and another foot on the road to Christlikeness. You're all in!
- 4) Matthew 3:17 (CSB): "And a voice from heaven said: 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased.'"
- 5) This was true of Jesus and it is true of you.

c. You will be useful to the Master

- 1) If we have unconfessed, ongoing sin in our lives, God looks at us and says, "I really can't use you in what I'm doing right now."
- 2) But, if we purify ourselves, God's eyes are roaming the earth to find people like that.

3) God is actively at work in the world around us. He's looking for people to use. But He is looking for clean hearts and willing hands.

d. You will be prepared for every good work

- 1) This gets to the big question of competence and character.
 - a) All too often, we tend to value competence over character. If someone is really good at what they do and they are helping the church, then we will overlook some character flaws. The greater their competence, the more character flaws we will overlook.
 - b) But God doesn't see it this way. He values character over competence. God uses people of character for His purposes and He uses all sorts of things to develop their competence.
 - c) In fact, if you look at the qualifications of pastors and deacons in **1 Timothy 3**, you will see that the list of qualification has virtually no competency skills. They are all character qualities.
 - d) God values character!

Conclusion

So, my friend, do you want to be used by God for honorable purposes?

Do you want to make the most of your life so that you are laying up treasures in Heaven, doing the things that God values?

Then, purify yourself.

This morning, we have looked at how we can engage in that process. The choice is now yours.