

In God's image

Part 4

2 Timothy 2:20-26

²⁰ *In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for special purposes and some for common use. ²¹ Those who cleanse themselves from the latter will be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.*

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. ²³ Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. ²⁴ And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. ²⁵ Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, ²⁶ and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.*

As we last week spoke about how sometimes God has us on the anvil. He is hitting and banging up into shape but a blacksmith work on his metal to create a tool and an instrument for good works. And once his is finished the purpose for this tool is obvious. A shovel is for digging, a hammer is for hitting nails, a knife for cutting. As we come off the anvil, being shaped into an instrument for God. Our purpose should now be clear. The anvil clarifies what God wants for us and as Timothy tells us he is crafting us to be instruments for Christ

²¹ Those who cleanse themselves from the latter will be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.

Last week I spoke about how God is the active agent, it is his work to refine, purify, shape but Timothy shows us here that after God has done his work, the rest is up to us.

"those who cleanse themselves ...will be made"

The onus has shifted from God to us and the way we make ourselves clean is through his list holy behaviours, things God's people do when following him. When we seek to live by these principals, will make ourselves into the instruments. There is a need for us to open ourselves up, to be made anew, to seek to change our hearts and our lives. But what does this look like in reality? What does it look like to be and Instrument for knowable purposes?

V22 how is an instrument of Christ, supposed to live their lives?

Seek righteousness, peace, faith, love and have a pure heart.

I can't talk about all that's here in the interest of time, but instruments for Christ seek peace, and peace almost always comes at a cost.

Desmond Tutu from South Africa was appointed to the Truth & Reconciliation Commission. This was after apartheid was ended to start the healing process for South Africa. Anybody who was a victim of violence was welcome to give his or her testimony. Perpetrators of violence could also give evidence and request amnesty from prosecution. So on the same day you would have a woman sharing the story of how white policemen beat her son to death with baton followed by the very men who did the beating. But the aim of the commission was to bring out the horrible truth about apartheid and then forgive these crimes... imagine how hard that would have been. Tutu once said "peace in our land will not come from the barrel of a gun, but through forgiveness".

But instruments for Christ, seek peace in the face of great cost. Instrument for Christ live by faith.

The US Senator Mark Hatfeild once visited with Mother Teresa in the Calcutta hospital called "house of the dying" sick children went when every one else had given up on caring for them, in their last days. He also toured the clinic where people lined up for days, free medical treatment. Afterwards the senator asked, how can you stand all this suffering in this work? She said "Senator I am not called to be successful, but I am called to be faithful" Even though the problem was insurmountable, the need was far greater. She lived her life faithfully to the task God had called he to. Instruments for Christ, live by faith, to the task God has put them to.

A man who knew what it meant to be hated... to have real opposition. In a sermon once he said, "if your neighbour hates you, then love them". If they spit in your eye and curse your name, then you love them more. If they beat your body and make you bleed then you keep loving until they just can't hate you anymore. "love is the only force capable of turning an enemy into a friend". Instruments for Christ love... foolishly and unconditionally.

And they do so with a pure heart. With a heart that wants to serve God, a heart that loves his people, a heart that wants to be a better person, be made more in his image. Not because we want others to see us doing it, not because we think it's what others expect us to do but because in our heart of hearts we want to love God, and love our neighbour because we believe this is the best way to live, this is the best way to be.

In the morning services we have been looking at people who said Yes to God, people who were refined in the fire, banged and beaten on the anvil but chose to be instruments for God, for his noble purposes. Moses a man who fled Egypt in disgrace, in fear for his life, a man with no great gifting, not with speech, or charisma said, take me and shape me that I might do your will, be use for your purpose. Isaiah in chapter 6 meets God and is filled with a sense of worthlessness "Woe to me for I am a man of unclean lips... he let God use him for a hard ministry". To tell Israel they would not be saved, he was an instrument for God's will and we are all called to this same thing.

To become an instrument for noble purposes, to be used for God's will sometimes you need to set a Goal, greater than you can achieve.

Christian often get hauled over the coals for being hypocritical and often its deserved but I also believe to be an instrument for Christ you need to live with a bit of healthy hypocrisy in your life. Because to be an instrument for Christ is to set your goals higher than yourself to listen to the teaching of Christ, hold them as your personal beliefs while understanding that you will at some point fall short. Yet still holding Christs teachings as how we should live our lives that we might grow closer and closer to Christ's image.

So in one way we are being hypocritical, setting standards that we fail to meet. Yet to not be hypocritical is to never strive to be better, just to stick with the status quo. But to be new creations in Christ, made in his image, is to reach beyond our limits that in the process we might get closer and closer to the Goal, even if we never make it.

After God has shaped and honed us, we have followed his ways and teachings. Your purpose become clear, hammer for hitting, spade for digging.

Instruments for Christ have a clear purpose to live for his kingdom, to be an ambassador of his nature, to proclaim the good news, to live by faith, to seek peace, to love. God does not hide his will from his people, he makes it know to us.

Two weeks ago I mentioned that in this process of change and transformation. We can see how the Bible spells out how we **engage** and **grow**. If the fire is how we engage, the anvil is how we are shaped and grow. Then this is where God has formed us to **go**. Every tool, every instrument is made to do a job, that's their purpose – not to sit on a shelf but to go out and do a job. After we are shaped, honed, crafted into an instrument for the Kingdom God needs us to GO, use those skills, share that knowledge.

He shapes us in his image, he gives us our purpose – that we might be tools for his Kingdom, doing the work of his son reflecting his image in all we do.