

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XX

September 26, 2010

No. 39

Making Yourself Useful

(Jerry Fite)

More than once in my formative years I heard someone say to me, “Make yourself useful!” The exhortation usually was uttered when I was standing around, and some work needed to be done. It meant pick up a hoe or a shovel, or grab a broom or mop and be a constructive worker, instead of an apathetic onlooker.

As we serve our Lord and wait for his glorious return, we cannot become listless or lazy in the work of the Lord. A voice direct from heaven is not going to bolt from the sky. And before a caring shepherd exhorts you to get busy, why not make yourself useful to the Lord?

Let us examine how we can be useful. First, Paul exhorts us with these words: “*If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, meet for the master’s use, prepared unto every good work*” (2 Timothy 2:21).

We must first have a heart that desires to be a vessel of honor. Paul gives the illustration of two types of vessels in the home. There are the vessels of wood and earth, and there are the special, honored vessels of gold and sil-

ver. While objects of wood and silver cannot make themselves anything other than what they are, we as living and willing creatures can make ourselves vessels of honor. The question is, are we satisfied being “earthenware” or do we aspire to be the “fine china” in the Lord’s kingdom. This “desire” question goes a long way in determining the next step.

We must purge ourselves from doctrinal error and foolish lusts if we are to be useful to the Lord’s cause. The doctrinal error promoted by Hymenaeus and Philetus in saying the resurrection had already occurred was hurtful in the cause, for such doctrine overthrew the faith of some (2 Timothy 2:17). Continuing to follow sinful lusts will not make us useful to our Lord who wants all, especially his people to “*depart from unrighteousness*” (2 Timothy 2:19). A Holy God needs his people to be living a sanctified life if they are to be useful to Him.

God desires to “*give repentance unto the knowledge of the truth*” to people in error. How does he do it? Not directly from Heaven, but through his ministers in the trenches of fighting for the faith (2 Timothy 2:25). In the

heat of battle, God’s servant manifests a gentle, forbearing and meek spirit, keeping himself in check as one in error exposes his or her ignorance. God’s servant has prepared himself or herself to teach on the subject, with the goal of winning the soul to the Lord (2 Timothy 2:23-25). The combination of preparation with truth, and a meek spirit in His servant, God works on the heart of those in error moving them to acknowledge the truth.

If the Lord’s servant is to be useful to the Lord in the battle between truth and error, he or she must keep himself or herself in check so that the teacher does not get in the way of the person in error seeing the truth of God. Too many times men and women in seeking to win the battle have lost the war, because they detracted from the truth they espoused. How useful are we to the Lord when such occurs?

May we never settle on being just vessels, but raise our sights to be “vessels of honor”. May we diligently purge ourselves from all unrighteousness. Then, may we keep ourselves in check allowing God to use us in turning people from error to truth. Let’s make ourselves useful!