

I love this time of year for several reasons. One, it's not 172°F outside, which is good. The few times I've gotten to speak up here, I've shown a little bit of my redneck roots. So I love this season for deer hunting. I'm just going to be honest with you. That's who I am. I'm a redneck. But I also love this time of year for football. I love football season. I love watching Pee Wee football, middle school football, high school football, college football and pro football. It doesn't matter. I just enjoy the game. I think it's a great game. I was one of those guys who was too lanky to play much football, but I could cheer with the best of them. I was the guy with the body paint on and the big clown wig and that stuff going on. I got into that. I was voted most spirited in my class. But that was me. But I haven't done that in a long time. I don't just wake up in the morning and go, "Do you know what I need today? I need some body paint." I just don't do that very much. So I've kind of grown out of that a little bit. But what I've noticed is that my passions have changed a little bit. I'm not so gung-ho that I want my high school team to win so badly that I'm willing to dress like that, go to a stadium and scare people away. Things have changed for me a little bit. I have put away some of those youthful passions.

And tonight in our text in 2 Timothy 2, Paul calls for Timothy to put away youthful passions. So that's where we're going to night. 2 Timothy 2:22 says, "So flee youthful passions. . ." Before we go on, I think this is interesting that he's telling Timothy to do this. He's telling a guy who's not twenty-years-old to flee youthful passions. At this point in time, when this letter was written, Timothy was about 37-42 years old. So he's an older guy. He's a man. He's forty-something years old when this is going on. So why in the world would he tell him, "Hey, you need to flee youthful passions"? That's an interesting phrase. I think that he gives him this admonition simply because it takes us longer to put these youthful things to death, to flee or get them out of our life than we would normally think that they should go. For me growing up, I struggled with lust. Sexual sin was always one of those vices in my life, for whatever reason. Some of it just may have been my lot or some of it I just got into myself. But that was what I got into. So somehow and some way, in my mind I always thought that one day when I got married, that struggle, that temptation would just vanish like magic. You walk down an aisle, say a couple of words and all of a sudden you don't struggle anymore. I don't know where I got that from. I went to a decent church growing up, so I don't know where I got this from. But I got married, and I'm like, "Oh my gosh. This girl is beautiful. I love her. This is going to be great." And I got into marriage and still struggled with the same old things. I remember later on reading a book by a guy named Steve Farrar called *How to Ruin Your Life by Forty*, which is a terrible title for a book, but it's a great book. He talks about different things that you can get into in your life, different sins that can really ruin your life before you even turn forty, before you're halfway home. So there are certain things like financial trouble and all these things you can get into and ruin your life before forty. I remember there was one chapter on sexual sin. He goes, "If you get into sexual sin and your life could be ruined by the time you're forty." I remember going in my heart and mind, "Oh, okay. If I can just get to forty or fifty-years-old, then I won't struggle with this anymore." Now he was not saying that. That was just me being a little slow to pick up on what the story is talking about. But I get this idea in my head, "If I can just get to forty or fifty, this thing is done with. I can just move on and I'll just be a man on fire for the Lord and charge into hell with a water pistol." I was gung-ho about it. I remember the day that I read that and get this thought in my mind, there was a pastor who was a pastor who was about sixty-five years old who fell into sexual sin and got into an affair. I was horrified. I was like, "Are you kidding? Is that some kind of cruel joke? At sixty-five I still won't have conquered this? I could still possibly be dealing with this sin, this struggle, this temptation?" That just discouraged me. This guy was supposed to be a godly guy. He's preaching the Word of God, He knows truth and he falls into this? So I think that's why Paul tells Timothy at fortysomething years old, "Hey, flee youthful passions." Because the truth of the matter is you don't just outgrow youthful passions. You're not just going to simply grow out of these things

that you have been messing with for all this time. You've got to flee these passions and crucify them and kill them. You've got to crucify these passions.

So what are some of these passions? Normally in our mind, we connect passion with sex, but that's not just what this is talking about. I'm going to give you a little bit of commentary on what this means. It means several things. The first one is this. It's the passion of pleasure. Where are you finding your pleasure? I'll give you a diagnostic question to answer. What do you run to when you're having a bad day or a bad life? When things aren't going well for you, what is your outlet? When stuff is wrong, when you're under pressure, when you're being stressed, what is your outlet? For some people, it is sex, pornography or something like that, but for some people, it's things like food that bring you comfort and bring you some sort of peace. For some of us, it may even be shopping. Dallas is known for shopping. I don't want to be known for great shopping. But is that your outlet? I know some people who that's what they do. When they're being stressed, when they've had a bad day, they're like, "All I need to do is go buy me a new pair of shoes." They want to go buy something. That's going to ease their pain or make some kind of discomfort go away. What is that for you? If it's other than God, you're into self-gratification. That's why God says that you should pursue Him as pleasure. For some of us, it's a weird concept that God could be our pleasure, that God could be the thing that we run to for comfort, for peace and for joy. But that's exactly what we see in the Scriptures. The psalmist in Psalm 73 says, "Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you." I love that. Is that your heartbeat where you're going, "There is nothing on earth that I desire besides You. God, You are my pleasure, You are my joy and You are my comfort"? Is God your pleasure? Is He who you run to when things get tough?

The second thing is this. It's this idea of power. In America, we love the idea of power. It's why we cheer on winning teams. We jump on the bandwagon. We want to associate our names with something successful. We love the idea of power. Is this your greatest desire, to build your own kingdom or to have people think of you as being powerful? On the flip side of that, is that your worst nightmare that someone would see you as weak or foolish? Is that your worst nightmare? So you've built your whole life around this idea of, "I want to present myself as powerful, as strong and as wise." And you begin to control and manipulate the people around you in order for you to look like that. So maybe that's you putting others down so you can exalt you. So you've got everyone around you, kind of bowing down to you and you've crushed them under your thumb so that you can be higher, be more powerful than them. What does that look like for you? Are you so much to the point that you're going, "Hey, I would rather appear powerful to men than even be chosen by God"? Because 1 Corinthians 1 talks real specifically that God chooses the weak, the foolish, the low and the despised. "He gives grace to the humble, He resists the proud," James says. Is that really who we want to be, resisted by God, proud, arrogant people who are about power? It's a facade. That's not real power. No matter what you can do in your life, the richest man in the world, the most powerful man in the world is really not even that powerful. God could take his life in an instant. The next thing is this. It's the passion of possessions. We're chasing these things as if they can actually bring us some kind of satisfaction, as if they can fulfill us in some way, shape or form.

The problem is these things weren't made to satisfy us like that. The problem with all these things, whether it's pleasure, power or possession, they are an affront to God. Because God is all-powerful, God is our greatest pleasure and God is our greatest possession. So it's not only sinful for us to pursue these worldly passions, these youthful passions that Paul is talking about here, but it's also dangerous. It's sinful, it's dangerous and we've got to kill them. We can't buy into the lie that we're simply going to just outgrow these things. Because I promise you, those of us in here who have these things, they've almost become second nature to us. They have almost become our identity. We've just done life with them for so long that we associate ourselves with these things, with this power or with these pleasures. It has just become who we are. And we can't just outgrow them. They're not just going to fall away as we get older and more mature. We've got to kill them. It's like the fifty-year-old guy in here who is still struggling and looking at pornography of twenty-year-old girls and wondering why he can't have a normal relationship with his twenty-year-old daughter. It's not just going to outgrow.

You've got to kill that sin. Because the whole point of that sin is not to just entertain you for a season. The whole point of that sin is to lure you in. And like Jesus said about Satan in John 10:10, it's to steal, kill and destroy your life. That's the goal of Satan and that's the goal of sin in your life.

I heard a really crazy story circulating the Internet a few years back that illustrates this. This girl had a pet snake that stopped eating. So she took it to the vet. The vet asks, "Well, is there anything else abnormal that this snake is doing besides not eating?" So she thought for a little bit and was like, "Yeah, there is some thing. I've had this snake since he was a baby. When it was a baby, I would sleep with it on my pillow. As it got bigger, I moved it down and put it at the foot of my bed and it would sleep down there. And it's been sleeping down there for years. But recently in the past couple of months, I will wake up in the middle of the night and the snake will be stretched out along my side from my foot to my armpit." The vet looked at her and said, "Ma'am, you need to kill that snake immediately." She's like, "Why? Not Snuggles!" He was like, "Yeah, you need to kill this snake immediately. That snake is measuring you to see how big it needs to get to eat you." When I heard that story, I didn't sleep well for like two weeks. The whole point of that is that this snake, when she first got it, was small. It was cute (if a snake can be cute). But it was manageable. And then as she continued to feed it and do all these things, the snake began to grow and grow until it became unmanageable.

Listen, that is exactly how sin is in your lives and in my life. Satan has a scheme for every one of our lives. He has a scheme to steal, kill and destroy our lives. So he's not just going to throw something huge on your plate. He's going to put something small and discrete in your life and go, "Oh, this isn't that big of a deal." And you've got this little pet sin on the side that you're just feeding. Nobody knows about it. It's not bothering anybody. It's not hurting anybody. You're justifying it. "It's not hurting anybody else, and it's not hurting me. As a matter of fact, I'm growing really good at managing this. I'm taking care of it. It's not getting out and affecting my relationships, my marriage or my parenting. It's not affecting any of these other things. It's just this little pet sin that I keep right here by my side, and it's not really affecting anybody." All the while, that sin is growing and growing until it becomes unmanageable. And it's going to kill you.

So that's why is say that we cannot just think that we're going to simply outgrow our sin. We've got to take it to the Lord every day. So that struggle, that temptation that you have, you've got to run to the Lord with it and go, "God, I can't do this." For me, maybe because I grew up in a very legalistic background, I always thought, "Well I want to show God how strong I can be for Him." That's stupid. God is not impressed with how strong I can be. He's more impressed by how strong He is. And more than He wants me to flex my puny muscles in my life and show people what a good Christian I am and show people how I can resist temptation and sin, He's going, "No, I want to use you so I can flex My muscles." God gets to do that when we take these sins and temptations and run to the cross and go, "God, I can't do this any longer. This sin is killing me. It's eating me up inside. Take it from me." And it's just a one-time deal. It's not like you come down front and meet with a pastor at response time, confess that sin and are done with that forever." It's one of those things you take to Him every day, and you continue to give it over to the Lord every day, maybe many times a day if needed. Some of us have had those days before where that temptation is just continuing to knock on the door over and over again and you just go right back to the Lord and go, "God, I pray You kill this sin in me." Galatians 5:24 says, "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." That's what we've got to do, crucify the passion and desires.

Too many of us in here wait until it's too late. We act like God doesn't know, like He's not omniscient. We're like, "Oh, I'm struggling with this. If I don't pray out loud or think out loud, God won't hear me." So we keep it in here as if to save God the trouble. And we wait until we're full blown into the sin before we start crying out. Crucify those passions, those desires, those temptations well before the point that you're full blown into sin and it's unmanageable. That's how God gets glory through this whole thing. It's like my son, who is four. He will bring stuff to me and go, "Daddy, can you do

this? Can you set this on the counter?" I don't go, "Oh Crew, grow up." No, I don't. Or when he says, "Hey, can you help me move this chair?" I'll pick up the chair and squat press it. He's like, "Dad, you're so strong." I'm like, "I sure am." So that glorifies my strength, even though I'm really not that strong. That glorifies me. It's the same way with the Lord. When you go to the Lord and go, "God, I can't handle this," He's not like, "Ugh! You again! When are you going to quit coming to Me with these things?" He's going, "I'm your Abba. I'm your Daddy. I want to help you out with this." And it glorifies His strength and goodness. Quit playing with these youthful sins and quit thinking that you're just simply going to outgrow them. You're not going to outgrow them. You've got to kill them.

Let's keep reading in 2 Timothy 2:22. "So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart." So he's saying, "You're going this way. You're pursuing these things. Repent. Make a 180° and start pursuing the Lord this way. Pursue these things. Pursue righteousness." And righteousness is simply a right relationship with the Lord, a harmony with God's will and with God's mind. Pursue righteousness. This is a constant struggle with me. So many times I feel like God is telling me to go this way, and I have to shift my course a little bit. This is what pursuing righteousness means. It's being in a right relationship with the Lord. If you're like me, you're going to have days where you mess up, your attitude is wrong or your heart is off a little bit. So I'm constantly going, "No, I've got to be right with the Lord." And that's just constantly going back to Him and going, "God, I'm sorry I was like this. It was foolish. Make me right with You. Put me at harmony with Your mind and Your will. I want to know Your way."

The next thing he says is, "Pursue faith." This is not just a saving faith, although if you don't know Christ in here, we invite you to pursue a faith and say, "God I want to know You. I want to have a relationship with You." But this is saying, "I want to believe God for more." It's like the guy in Mark 9:36 who said, "God, I believe, but help me with my unbelief" I think that is so many of us in here. We're going, "God, I believe in You, but my faith is not complete. There is so much of my faith lacking." Where are you trying to grow in your faith? The next thing he says is love, love for brothers and sisters in Christ, love for those outside the church, love for your enemies, love for all these people.

And he ends it with ". . . peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart." All these things you've heard before. If you've been in church long enough, you've probably heard these things, but what is your action plan to pursue these things? Where are you going, "This is how I'm going to do this"? Because I think far too many of us have come into this building going, "I'm checking off this box. I've come to church, I've attended church, and this is all the Jesus I really need for this week." If this is all you're doing in your Christian walk, you're missing out. As good as our band is, as good as Chandler is every weekend, you're missing out if this is all that there is to your Christian life. What is your action plan for growing, pursuing the Lord and righteousness, love, faith, peace along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart? Because we as Americans are planner. My kid is four and I'm already going, "Okay, how am I going to get that kid to college? I need to start thinking about that." My friends are like, "Whoa, he's already four? You're way behind." So we've got all these things we're planning, but what's your plan to grow and pursue the Lord? What's your plan to grow in love? Because this is an area we all struggle in. There's not one of us in here who loves perfectly. My wife, I love her probably more than any person on the face of the earth, apart from Christ. I love my wife that much. But I still screw things up with her every day. She literally chews me out every day. And it's not because she's a mean woman. It's a good kind of chewing out, a healthy chewing out. And I'm going, "If I don't even love her right, and I love her a lot, how am I loving those who are not really in my circle? How am I loving those I struggle to love?" Am I asking God, "Change my heart. Help me to love her better. Help me to love this person better. Help me to love our church better. Help me to love people better"? Have you ever asked the Lord and said, "God, teach me how to love like You"? That's a really scary prayer, because He's going to bring the most annoying person into your life who is going to go, "Hey, will you disciple me?" That's the kind of stuff that happens. The Lord is like, "Hey, you wanted to love like Me. That's how I love. While you were yet sinners, I died for you. That's the kind of love I love with." If you want to love like God, love the people you think

are unlovable. How are you growing in this idea of love? It's a heart change, and it can only be done by just going to the Lord and saying, "God, please change my heart. I am selfish and wicked. Help me to see this person as You see him." How are you growing in love?

How are you growing in faith? What's an area of your life right now that the Lord is asking you to step out in faith in, and are you being obedient with that? In our culture, we want comfort. That's why we live in the burbs. We want comfort, we want everything to go well for us and we want everything planned. I was laughing this year about Halloween. Because when I was growing up, I remember at 7:00 my mom was like, "Get out of the house and don't come back till dark." And we just ran around the neighborhood terrorizing people. And now everything is controlled. Kids have six adults on them when they're walking down the street. . .and that's in Flower Mound. Everything is controlled. There are a lot fewer kids trick-or-treating. I asked my neighbor about that and he was like, "That's because everybody is at these parties where they can control everything and nothing bad is going to happen." It's like we've gotten our lives so controlled with all these things and all these measures to protect us, which are great, but we've missed out on opportunities to step out in faith. In what area right now are you asking God to do the impossible in your life? Where is that? Where is that in our church where we're going, "God, we don't know what to do here. You've got to move"? Where are you asking God for miracles? When is the last time you asked God for a miracle where you went, "God, I want You to do something so amazing at my work, at my school, in my neighborhood, in my home. God, I'm begging You to do a miracle, and I'm trusting You to do it"? Where are you stepping out in faith and growing in faith? Because that's how we grow in faith, when we go, "God, please provide this next step. I'm going to take a step of faith." And we take that step of faith and God provides. Our faith meter just shoots up, and we're like, "All right. That was cool. I like that. I'm going to do it again." And we keep going, keep taking steps of faith and watch God just flex His muscles and show His glory. Where are you growing in faith? This is Christian maturity, that you're dying to youthful passions and pursuing the Lord.

Let's go to the next section. Verse 23, "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." This is what the Lord's servant looks like. I love that. How many of us really view ourselves and go, "I'm a slave. I'm a slave to Christ"? We have almost lost that mental picture of what that truly means. A slave is someone who doesn't really have a choice in the matter. He's going to do what the Lord calls him to do. But it's evident that we don't view ourselves as that because so many of the commandments in the Bible are simply viewed as suggestions from the Lord. He's like, "Hey, love your enemy." And we're like, "Yeah, I'll love him from a distance." He's like, "No, I mean good Samaritan kind of love. Like go and take care of their well-being. Have compassion for them, pity with action. That's what it means for you to do." You're like, "Well, that's good, Jesus. I'm glad You love those guys, but I have my circle and we just do our own thing. That doesn't mean to really love your enemy; it means to favorably like them somewhat." But as the Lord's servant, you do what you've been commanded to do. If God calls you to share the gospel with your neighbor, then you share the gospel with your neighbor. We just go, "Yes, Lord." That's the only answer.

"The Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome. . ." That simply means that you're not out just looking for a fight. ". . .but kind to everyone, able to teach. . ." This doesn't mean that you have to be Matt Chandler able to teach. We have one of those. We really don't need any more. But it does mean that you need to be able to effectively communicate the gospel. Can you communicate the gospel? Parents, can you communicate the gospel to your children? Can you guys communicate the gospel to your coworker? Can you teach the gospel? Can you show someone the ways of God?

". . .able to teach, patiently enduring evil. . ." I think this is interesting because in the next chapter he says all those who desire to live a godly life will be persecuted. That means us too. If you're sitting here tonight and you're going, "Hey, I desire to live a godly life. I want to please God," then you're going against the current. You're pursuing the Lord against

the current, which means you're going to rub people the wrong way. There are going to be people at your work who hate you. Jesus said, "Don't be shocked when they hate you. They hated Me first." But you patiently endure evil. You don't get stirred up. You don't go starting a fight or getting in these huge arguments. You just patiently endure evil. It's tough.

He finishes with, ". . .correcting his opponents with gentleness." I love apologetics. Apologetics is simply being able to defend your faith. I love that stuff. You can prove the historicity of Jesus, that there was an actual resurrection of Christ about two-thousand years ago. I think that's amazing. I think we should all be involved in that, learn that kind of stuff and be able to defend our faith somewhat. But if our attitude in defending our faith is not gentle, we're not going to win anybody. We may win an argument and just totally crush somebody in the office who has a different view than us. Maybe we can put out more facts and persuasively speak better than they can and just totally crush them. But if it's not done with gentleness, you may win the argument, but you're not going to win them to Christ. Correcting opponents with gentleness, speaking the truth in love, this is what the Lord's servant is about.

And why or how is the Lord's servant like this? Check out the next couple of verses. "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." All of this is for the sake of the gospel. The Lord's servant is about the gospel, because the Lord's slave's heart has been penetrated by the gospel. From back up in the first part of verse 22, the reason that we flee from youthful passions is because we hate sin like Jesus hated sin. Jesus hated sin so much that He died for our sins, that we could have a right relationships with Him. Is that not amazing? The Lord's servant hates sin so much because he sees Jesus hating sin and goes, "If Jesus hates sin, then I'm going to hate this sin too, not the sinner but the sin. I'm going to hate these things, these lusts, these passions, the passions of pleasure, the passions of power, the passions of possessions. I hate these things because they keep me from the Lord and keep me from being holy like Christ has called me to be." It goes back to the gospel.

And the Lord's servant pursues the things of God because he wants to please God. He pursues the things of God because the gospel has penetrated his heart so deeply that he's going, "God, You have done such an amazing work in me. You have so transformed my heart and put a joy and peace in my heart. You have not made things easy, but You have brought a joy and a peace to me so much to the point that I want to pursue You and love You with everything I am. And I want to live a life that pleases You. So I will pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." It's back to the gospel.

And so we consider ourselves the Lord's slave. We would do all these things, we're kind to others because God has called us to be kind, we teach the gospel, we do the work of an evangelist like He's called us to do regardless of whether we feel gifted at doing evangelism or not and we go, "Hey, I've been called as the Lord's servant to go and make disciples of all nations. And so I'm going to do that because God has done such a work in me. He has penetrated my heart with the gospel." That's what the Lord's servant looks like. That's what the Lord's servant does. So I simply have to ask you tonight, has the gospel penetrated your heart? Has the gospel so transformed and changed every part of your being that you're going, "God, with joy I consider myself a slave. I'll do anything You say. I'll hate sin, and I'll kill sin when it comes near me. Because You are better than sin, You're better than life and you are it. And I'll pursue You and find joy, peace and happiness in You. Because we believe the gospel, and it has penetrated our hearts and lives"? Is your life that gospel-centered, that gospel-saturated? Has it penetrated your life to the point where you're going, "I'll flee these things, I'll die to these things, I'll crucify these things and I'll pursue the Lord"?

Let's pray. "Father, I thank You so much for Your gospel and that it has that kind of transforming power. I thank You that we truly can crucify sin and be free from sin because of Your gospel. As I look back on my life and see the worldly, youthful passions I used to run hard after, I can see Your work that You've done in my life. So I pray for people in here

today that may be discouraged and they're going, 'Man, I have struggled with this for years, and it has grown out of control.' I pray that tonight they would crucify it, that tomorrow they would crucify it and they would begin to find victory over that temptation because You've done such an amazing thing in their hearts and lives through the gospel. May we not think that we've moved on past some elementary truth that we teach in Kid's Village, Little Village, middle school and high school ministries, but for the rest of our lives, may we run back to the truth, the powerful truth of the gospel and let it penetrate our lives, to permeate our lives and to change us. God, You're calling some of us to pursue You in different ways. Whether that's to love someone that we deem unlovable or to step out in faith in an area of our lives, whatever it may be, Father, may we be found faithful to do that. God, bless this church. Bless us tonight with more of You. Help us somehow, some way by Your supernatural ability to communicate and to teach us the gospel so that we may be changed. We love You. In Jesus name I pray. Amen."

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