

2 Timothy 2:20-22 **“Vessels of honor”**

I. Introduction

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I. Introduction

Last time we were together we spoke of the “*Art of holding fast the pattern of sound words*”. Paul spoke to Timothy about the kind of effort he would need to put forth to accomplish this as he used the three metaphors:

- Dedication of a soldier
- Discipline of an athlete
- Diligence of a farmer

Next Paul spoke about the importance of right communication and how to avoid getting pulled into wrong communication. Paul continues this topic as he wants Timothy to be all that God want him to be. There are tons of self-help books aimed at getting the reader to get the most out of their life by diet, exercise, financial planning etc. but here Paul is telling us how we can be more useful to the Master. Dear ones this is not a selfish ambition from God, He has created us to be useful and He knows that we will attain the maximum fulfillment, excitement and satisfaction when we are operating as our Designer intended us too. Paul again uses a metaphor to describe what it will take to be useful to the master. As I read through verse 22 of this passage my mind went back to that old 1978 Kenny Rodgers song the Gambler and the lyric that said, “*You got to know when to hold them and when to fold them*”. Saints if we are going to be useful to the Master we will need to know what to FLEE and what to PURSUE.

II. Vs. 20-21 A great house

Vs. 20-21 As you look at this metaphor some see that Paul is speaking exclusively of the Church at large but I'm of the opinion that Paul is not writing to Timothy about the church but rather of humanity as every person has been designed as a vessel for God's use as that was His design from the beginning. That's not to say that every person is fulfilling their design willingly and that seems to be Paul's point. The amazing truth is God is so far ahead of all His creation that He can and does use even those in His creation who are at war against Him and determined to destroy the knowledge of Him at every turn. God even used Satan to accomplish His purposes as well as his cohorts throughout history. In Romans chapter 9 Paul develops this fact even more clearly saying that not only was Moses an instrument of God so too was Pharaoh who was used by God so that God would show His power was above that of the strongest ruler of the time. God is not limited in His use as He has and will continue to use people to bring about His purposes both in honor and dishonor. In Jeremiah 27:6 God calls Nebuchadnezzar His servant and in Isaiah 45:1 the Lord calls Cyrus King of Persia His anointed. The question isn't whether or not you are going to be used of God, the question is how are you going to be used of God? What is God going to be using you for if you are willing it will be for a ***noble purpose*** if you are unwilling it will be for an ***ignoble purpose***. People learn both ways, there is always a before picture to demonstrate the benefits of the after picture! The world is full of bad examples in fact you could make the argument that there are far more bad examples than there are good examples and to be quite frank we all have been at times on the "*bad example*" photo. Paul goes on to say to Timothy that God has two purposes in a "great house":

1. **Vessels of gold and silver...some for honor:** These are utensils to serve, to bless and feed, their material suggests permanence and value as the Owner of the house sees them as His treasure and plans on keeping them to use over and over to bless others by His continual use!
2. **Vessels of wood and clay...some for dishonor:** These are instruments in the Owners hand as well but their material composition suggests a more limited use, one in which He does not display them and in time will dispose of them. Wood and clay were the paper and plastic of that day.

By this we learn that God sees all humanity as useful but some are for good purposes and some are lessons to the rest of humanity and it is the individual's free choice to determine what kind of instrument they are. It's clear they have a choice based upon verse 21 as Paul says, "*If anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor.*"

That's interesting *we have no choice as to whether we are going to be used of God but we do have a choice as to how we are going to be used of God.* God's will not set aside a person's choice and if the person does not purify themselves then they will be used according to their choice. I find it interesting to talk to folks who have been used for an ignoble cause as they often make their ignoble use someone else's fault but the truth is they made a choice to be used the way they did. And the same is true that a person who is a vessel of honor has made a choice to purify themselves so to be a vessel of honor. There are those that come to Church hear the clear and concise teaching of the Word and though they have heard the scriptures exhortations they don't apply the truths they have heard and when their life is falling apart they blame God and His church saying, "*I'm, a Christian, I go to church I don't understand why I'm not enjoying the blessings and*

promises of God, why I don't have more joy." You cannot expect good results when you don't apply the word of God. You will never inherit the promises of God, never see the activity of God the way He wishes to release His power in your life until you come to Him to be purified! We must choose to say no to the disobedience before God will say yes to the obedience. You have to reject the philosophy of those who are urging you to live for yourself. You cannot go on living as a vessel of dishonor if you wish to be a vessel of honor, hence the words "*cleanse himself*". Yes God will use an unclean vessel but only for dishonor not for honor. The way to honor and usefulness is sanctification as Paul declares that "***we will then be useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.***" I love the truth that not only will be useful but for "*every good*" work, that implies a life time of adventure in God's abundant variety of ways in which He can use a person. All of this hangs upon the believer being willing to turn away from wrong attitudes and philosophies and actions.

III. Vs. 22 House cleaning

Vs. 22 Paul moves on to **three specifics of cleansing one's self to be a vessel of honor.**

These are all found in verse 22:

1. Vs. 22a "***Flee youthful lusts***": **The first step is don't allow yourself to behave wrongly!** When we read the phrase "*youthful lusts*" are minds immediately think of sexual urges that living in a sexually saturated society like we do would certainly fit the Greek meaning of the phrase but ***it doesn't exclusively mean that.*** Paul is speaking of ALL youthful passions that often propel the youth to be impulsive and impetuous in their actions and attitudes. Often those passions are not only wrong they are hurtful, destructive and evil in the sight of God. One commentator put it this way,

“This refers not only the sexual temptations and appetites of a young person but also to pride, conceit, dogmatism the false sense that they are the center of their own universe that also permeates the immature mind.” Timothy as a young pastor was facing an explosive situation in the false teaching and rejection of Biblical truth that was at the church in Ephesus. What Paul was warning against was acting impulsively when he dealt with it. **It is never enough for the servant of God to be right that is only the basement, the penthouse is that as we stand on the Bible for our being right we allow that same truth to dictate our behavior in behaving right as well!**

2. Vs. 22b “***Pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace***”: The second step, is the direct opposite of what Paul had just said in **FLEE**, as he now encourages Timothy to **PURSUE** four characteristics of maturity. Each of these four things is well presented in scripture as each of them as you will find many of them in Galatians chapter 5 and the fruit of the Spirit, which tells us that these all come from God and He wants to gift them to each of us. The word “pursue” means go for it or go after it.
 - a. **Righteousness**: The word means “*right behavior*” life boils down to choices and one of those choices is “*right behavior*” trust in God not in yourself.
 - b. **Faith**: Again this is a choice not in whether we will exercise faith or trust but what the object of our trust is in. I have determined in myself that most often my two choices are either God and His Word or myself.
 - c. **Love**: We must choose love even when our flesh is screaming at us take revenge, make him pay, get even. Choosing love can also mean that we need to confront a person who is grieving God.

- d. **Peace:** You also must seek peace and reconciliation which encourages and promotes restoration. To not do so is to give place for the enemy to take not only the other person captive but you as well.

Paul says that we need to make those 4 characteristics something that we go after and pursue.

3. Vs. 22c “*With those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart*”: The third and final step of cleansing oneself to be a vessel of honor is to surround yourself with those who practice these same things and encourage you to do so as well. Paul call’s them those that are of “pure heart” and by the use of this word he is not saying they are sinless. The word “*pure*” means “*cleansed*” and suggest that they knew they were not clean hearted but also knew what to do about it. These are the kind of people who see themselves not as better than others but those that know that they are sinners in constant need of transformation. That why they are good to be around as they are quick to make a long record of rights and a short record of wrongs so that they can help us get back on tract. We must keep company with people who are going the same direction.