

## Vessels of Honor

### 2 Timothy 2: 19-23

Much like the Lord, Paul was a master of using ordinary illustrations to reveal significant truth. Our text today is yet another example of Paul's unique and memorable imagery. Knowing the need for committed service, along with the struggle to remain pure and usable, Paul spoke of men as vessels within a great house. Each vessel was different from the others, and used in different ways. The make-up of the vessel dictated its use and placement within the house. The Master knows those who abide in Him. These are expected to depart from iniquity, seeking to serve the Lord. [2 Tim.2:19 – Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.](#)

As I pondered these words, I was reminded that we are all merely vessels of clay, fashioned by the Potter's hand. He has crafted us according to His divine plan. Each vessel was crafted with a specific purpose – to hold the contents desired by the Master. [2 Cor.4:6-7 – For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.](#) <sup>[7]</sup> [But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.](#)

As we examine the [instructions](#) Paul left for the young pastor, Timothy, I want to consider the thought: [Vessels of Honor](#). We notice first:

**I. The Diversity in Character** (20) – [But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.](#) Speaking of different vessels, literally different lives, Paul described the diverse character found among men. Consider:

**A. The Placement** – We discover that each of these vessels, all varied in make-up, size, and intended use, were found within a “great house.” This creates an image of a grand house, owned and maintained by a wealthy owner, very meticulous about his home. Although the vessels were different, they each belonged to the master of the house and were used according to his wishes.

- It is widely accepted that Paul was referring to the church as he spoke of a great house. Certainly, within the context of the passage, this seems to be the intention of the apostle. We know the church is not a building, but is made up of individual believers, creating the core of the body, the local congregation. It is important to keep the vessel's placement in mind as we continue to move through these verses.

**B. The Assortment** (20) – **But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth.** Paul revealed the variety of vessels found within the great house – some of gold and silver, and others of wood and earth. Each of these vessels were created for a particular use, revealed by the material from which they were made. The vessels of gold were created for a particular purpose, and the vessels of wood were unable to meet that particular need. Each contributed in various ways, but each vessel was always used for the purpose it was created.

- Within the body of Christ, the great house built by Him, there are different vessels with various uses. Each vessel was carefully created by the Master, according to His divine plan, for a specific use within the house. Those in Christ have been uniquely gifted to carry out the work for which they were created. While the silver and gold vessels were both created of precious metals, they were intended for different uses. Each has its own place within the house, used according to the Master's design. (While we are all different, gifted with different abilities, and for different purposes, all are needed and necessary to carry out the desire of the Master.)

**C. The Assessment** (20b) – **But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.** While each vessel was owned by the same master, each vessel did not bring the same honor. In fact, some vessels brought no honor at all. It is generally accepted that the vessels of gold and silver were vessels of honor, and those of wood and clay were vessels of dishonor. Each vessel was contained within the same house, but the honor they brought the master varied according to their make-up.

- The same is true when we consider the local church. There are those who are genuinely born again, placed within the body of Christ; and there are those who are mere pretenders, simply going through the motions with no change of heart. Some who attend the house of God bring honor to the Lord, and some have never repented of sin and received Christ as Savior.
- There is a principle for every believer that we must discuss as well. While all of the saved will inherit eternal life because of the finished work of Christ, our works will be judged as we stand before the Lord. That which was done for the Lord, works of gold and silver will remain; while that which was done selfishly or in sin, the wood, hay, and stubble, will be consumed in judgment fire. **1 Cor.3:13-15 – Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. <sup>[14]</sup> If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. <sup>[15]</sup> If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.** We must ensure our lives are lived as vessels of honor rather than dishonor!

**II. The Devotion to Character** (21) – *If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.* Paul also urged young Timothy to remain devoted to godly character. Consider:

**A. The Pursuit** – Being a vessel of honor, and maintaining honor would not come without personal effort. Timothy was admonished to *purge himself* from the dangers and distractions Paul had warned of in the preceding verses. This has the idea of a “*thorough cleansing*.” Timothy had to diligently watch his life and sincerely deal with the areas that needed to be addressed.

- If we are to be vessels of honor, we must purge ourselves from the sin and hindrances of life. Our sin was cleansed through the shed blood of Christ, but we must confess and repent of sin following conversion. The Lord will not use a dirty vessel. We must be clean before the Lord if we expect to honor Him and be of use in His service.

**B. The Promise** (21) – – *If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour.* Paul offered a very encouraging word to Timothy, something that was absolute. If he was willing to walk upright before the Lord, striving to keep his life clean, he was assured of being a vessel of honor before the Lord. (That is a gracious promise we too can claim. Many want to know what the Lord desires if they are to be used of Him. We can be assured we are pleasing to the Lord and will have the opportunity to serve Him, if we seek to walk in a way that pleases Him, striving to keep our lives free of unconfessed sin.)

**C. The Provision** (21b) – *If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.* Those who walk uprightly, purging sin from their lives, will be sanctified and useful unto the Lord. Those who are sanctified are “*set apart, separated unto the Lord.*” We will then be a vessel that is “*useful and usable*” for the Lord. We will be sensitive unto the leading of His Spirit, obediently surrendered to His will and used accordingly. This effort will not rest upon our ability or wisdom; God will prepare and equip us for His use – *prepared unto every good work!*

**III. The Defense of Character** (22-23) – Once the believer was clean and useful to the Master, he must ensure he remained in a state of usefulness. Christian character must be defended and maintained for sustained use of the Lord. Paul offered instructions regarding consistent usefulness. He admonished Timothy to:

**A. Flee youthful Lusts (22)** – Timothy, and other believers, were expected to grow and mature in the faith. While the lusts of the past would never disappear entirely, they were expected to have learned to deal with these temptations in a spiritual manner. These lusts of the flesh were always strong, tempting even mature believers. They were not to be underestimated. The only way to overcome the lusts of the flesh was to flee from their presence. Remaining near the temptation would always result in succumbing to the temptation. (This has not changed, and it never will. We too must recognize these temptations and flee from them!)

**B. Follow Righteousness (22)** – *but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace...* Paul urged Timothy to flee the flesh and follow righteousness. He was to remove himself from the presence of temptation and seek the ways of God. The pursuit of righteousness involved faith, love, and peace. These attributes were to be sought and maintained in his life. (The best defense against temptation and lust is to fill our lives with godly pursuits. If we are seeking the righteousness of the Lord, walking in faith, love, and peace, victory over sin and temptation will come much easier!)

**C. Fellowship with Believers (22)** – *follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.* Timothy was to watch the company he kept. It would be much easier to follow righteousness, walking in faith, love, and peace if he surrounded himself with those who shared his desires. Too often we present perfect opportunities for temptation and sin. Temptation is greatly reduced if we surround ourselves with those who share our desire for the ways of God. You will not have to deal with as much temptation if you are careful with the company you keep. That is not to say that we should shun unbelievers or refuse to engage them with the Gospel, but we can't run with the world and expect to remain unspotted from it.

**D. Forsake foolish Strife (23)** – *But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.* Paul again warned Timothy of the dangers of foolish questions and debates that lead to strife and unrest among the brethren. He must guard himself against the desire to engage in these senseless arguments that had no eternal value or spiritual significance. He was to be a man of the Word, studying to show himself an approved workman for the Lord, rightly discerning the truths of the Word.

- This has likely done as much harm and damage to the character of solid believers as any other sinful act. The enemy would love for us to forsake our commitment to the Word for vain and useless debate. There is too much at stake to get bogged down, marring our character, with debates of little value. We must stay true to the Word, knowing what it teaches, while allowing it to speak for itself. If the Word says it, that settles it!

**Conclusion:** We are all vessels in a great house. The question is – are we a vessel of honor or dishonor? Do we live in a way that brings honor and glory to the Lord? Are we striving to walk in righteousness, faith, love, and peace; or do we continue to seek a path that pleases the flesh? Are you a useable vessel for the Lord? If there are needs, especially if you have never repented of sin and received Christ as your Savior, I urge you to come today and receive that which only He can provide.