

## Vessels for Honor 2 Timothy 2:20-21

### I. Introduction

As a means of introduction to the concept of becoming a “vessel for honor,” Paul writes to Timothy and charges him to remind the Christians of the following:

- A. If they died with Christ, they would live with Him (2:11)
- B. If they endure, they would reign with Him (2:12)
- C. If they deny Him, He would also deny them (2:12)

He closes this thought in vs. 13 stating that Christ will always remain faithful, in that He can not deny himself. **The LORD will be faithful to all His promises to His people.**

He charges Timothy to press upon believers not to waste their time in unprofitable pursuits, but to engage in the task of obtaining “the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” (vs.14 (&10))

Paul then exhorts Timothy (2:15) to study so that he can perform his duties in such a way that he would not be ashamed, learning to rightly divide the word of truth. He would then be able to present himself “approved to God.” In so doing, Paul warns Timothy to avoid the unimportant strife that was apparently ongoing at the time, such as “profane and vain babblings.” These would be words that were unholy and empty, not promoting godliness and therefore increasing to more ungodliness!

Paul then gives an example of two individuals, Hymenaeus and Philetus, who had been involved in such worldly and empty chatter and had gone astray from the truth. In so doing, they had also overturned the faith of others.

But then Paul reminds Timothy that although there are brethren partaking in these activities, do not become discouraged for **God knows who belongs to Him:**

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**19** "Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: **"The Lord knows those who are His,"** and, **"Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."** **20** But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. **21** **Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work."** (2 Tim. 2:19-21)

### II. Vessels of Honor / Vessels of Dishonor

- A. Honor: esteem, respect; good name; personal integrity maintained without legal or other obligations. (American Heritage Dictionary)

The word "honor" means what is of "value" or "worth." Something that is deemed precious can be considered "honorable." Conversely, the word "dishonor" would mean what is of "no value" or "worthless."

- B. Vessel: usually denotes a cup or basin, such as used in a house. Any instrument which may be used to accomplish a purpose.
- The instrument or agent God uses to convey His favors upon mankind.
- C. Just as a potter makes vessels that are useful around the house, God creates vessels that are going to be useful in His kingdom.
- ❖ Isaiah 64:8; *"But now, O LORD, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand."*
  - Just as the potter will need to add water to the physical clay for it to become pliable and workable, for our spirits to become pliable and workable, God's word must be added to our lives. (Eph. 5:26)

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- For the potter to be able to work with the clay, it must be centered on the potter's wheel. For God to be able to mold us into the vessel that He desires, we must first be centered upon Christ. (Col. 3:1-4)
- God can not start the molding and transformation process in our lives unless we first add God's word into our lives and recognize that Christ is the only way. (John 14:6)
- If we try to live our lives without Jesus leading and guiding the way, our lives will never reach the potential that God wants for His followers.
  - Psalms 127:1 *"Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who built it."*

In 2 Timothy 2:20, Paul speaks of vessels in a great house made from gold and silver, and also from wood and clay. These vessels are within the same house but are viewed as being vessels of honor (gold & silver), and vessels of dishonor (wood & clay).

Even within the church, there are vessels (*instruments or agents God uses to convey His favors upon mankind*) that God recognizes as honorable and dishonorable.

- Those who are not suitable or prepared to be in the kingdom's work of bringing lost souls to Christ are identified as "vessels of dishonor."
- Those who cleanse themselves from vessels of dishonor (vs. 21), preserving themselves from corrupting influence of individuals who do not have Christ first in their lives, and strive to become the instrument that God wants in His kingdom are identified as vessels of honor.
- These vessels for honor are **sanctified, useful for the Master, and prepared for every good work.**

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### III. Vessels for Honor are Sanctified.

#### A. Sanctification is:

- The state of growing in divine grace.
- To set apart for holy purposes.
- The process of being made holy resulting in a changed lifestyle for the believer. The separation of the believer from evil things and ways.
  - It is the will of God that we should know how to possess our own vessel in sanctification and honor. **1 Thess. 4:3-7.**

#### B. God is calling all of us to sanctification.

- 1) We are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God. We are not to be conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of our mind. (Romans 12:1-2)
- 2) It is an ongoing process; "*For by one offering He (Christ) has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.*" (Hebrews 10:14)
- 3) Our complete being is targeted for this process of sanctification.
  - 1 Thess. 5:23; our whole spirit, soul, and body are to be preserved blameless.
  - 1 Peter 1:13-15; our conduct is to be holy.
  - 2 Cor. 7:1; we are to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."
- 4) We should no longer be slaves of lawlessness.
  - Romans 6:19-22

#### C. Sanctification is done by the Word and the Holy Spirit.

- 1 Peter 1:22; "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit..."

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- Eph. 5:25-26; Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it, “that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word...”
- 2 Thess. 2:13; from the beginning, God chose us “for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.”
- 1 Cor. 6:11; the Corinthian brethren had been guilty of unrighteousness, but they were washed, sanctified, and justified “in the name of the LORD Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”
- Rom. 8:13; if we put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit, we will live.

#### IV. Vessels for Honor are Useful for the Master.

##### A. Parable of the talents (Mt. 25:14-30)

- God has entrusted in each of those who have been sanctified a measure of “talents.” It is our responsibility to ensure they are utilized to the betterment of the kingdom of God.
- Blessing to those who improve upon the “talents” given by God. They will spend eternity glorifying God.
- Cursing for those who fail & neglect their duty in the kingdom. They will spend eternity without God, and without joy.

##### B. Examples of “useful vessels for honor” in God’s word:

- Timothy – genuine faith; 2 Tim. 1:5 / 1 Tim. 1:5
- Barnabas – encourager / kindness; Acts 4:36-37
- Stephen – courageous; Acts 6-7
- Lydia – prayerful / hospitable; Acts 16:11-15
- Crispus – influential; Acts 18:8
- Aquila & Priscilla – workers for the LORD; Acts 18:26

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How did they become vessels for honor? They allowed God's word to transform them and they refused to conform to the world.

#### V. Vessels for Honor are Prepared for Every Good Work.

##### A. God's word is the tool to prepare us for every good work.

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17; *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."*

##### B. For God's word to be effective in our lives, we must have the following:

- 1) A merciful and compassionate heart.
  - Matt. 5:1-12; Jesus teaches about these attitudes during the Sermon on the Mount.
- 2) A servant's heart.
  - John 13:1-17; Jesus instructs His disciples through the washing of their feet.
- 3) A heart willing to deny ourselves.
  - Luke 9:23
    - a) Decision – *"If anyone desires to come after Me"*
      - We must make a choice to be prepared and useful in God's kingdom.
    - b) Denial – *"Let him deny himself"*
      - We must be willing to sacrifice.
    - c) Dedication – *"And take up his cross daily"*
      - We must have continual commitment.
    - d) Determination – *"And follow Me"*
      - We must follow the LORD wherever He leads!

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### VI. Conclusion:

Our objective in life should be eternal life. Christ, in His prayer to the Father in John 17, states what eternal life is: *"that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent."* (John 17:3).

- What does it mean to "know God"? It is not just acknowledging that He exists.
  - It is a deep respect and desire to please Him as our Father, our Sovereign, and our Lawgiver. To know Him is to love Him, to respect & honor His word, to show reverence, obedience, and extreme gratitude for what He has done for us.
  
- What does it mean to "know Christ"? Again, it is not just acknowledging that He exists.
  - It is recognizing that He is our Savior, our Redeemer, our Priest, our King. To know Him is to respect what He has done for mankind, and realize the limitations that we have without Him in our lives. It should be our desire *"to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."* (Eph. 3:19)

When we truly come to know the Father, and the Son, we will fill our minds with things that are true, things that are noble, things that are just, things that are pure, and things that are lovely, things that are of good report (Phil. 4:8). We will separate ourselves from objects not professing godliness. We will be sanctified, become useful in the kingdom of God, and be prepared for every good work. **We will become "vessels for honor."**