

STUDY ON THE BOOK OF SECOND TIMOTHY

FIT FOR THE MASTER'S USE!

Read 2 Timothy 2:20-3:9

Introduction.

In this study, Paul is continuing his insistence that Christians must live godly lives. The previous verse concludes: *"Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."* (2 Timothy 2:19b) Now he continues this theme with an illustration from pots and vessels in a household.

Pursue Righteousness

"But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honour and some for dishonour. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honour, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." (vv20-22)

Paul just used the picture of God's building (the solid foundation of God stands). Now he thinks of that building as a great house that has a variety of vessels in it — bowls, plates, vases, and other such things.

The church of God is indeed a great house.

- It is a great house because of who it belongs to. The house of our great God is certainly a great house.
- It is a great house because of the great cost it took to build it. This is a mansion far more valuable than any real estate on earth, built by the great work of Jesus on the cross.
- It is a great house because of its importance. This house and what happens in it is at the centre of God's plan of the ages. The business of this house is more important than any of the trivia most of the world is interested in.

Some of these vessels mentioned are made of gold and silver, and some are made of wood and clay. Some are used on occasions of great honour (the gold and silver vessels), and some are used for dishonour — such as a garbage bin or an ashtray.

Cleansing:

Paul spoke about a cleansing that isn't just something God does for us as we sit passively. This is a self-cleansing for service that goes beyond a general cleansing for sin. The latter things are the things of dishonour mentioned in 2 Timothy 2:20. If we cleanse ourselves from dishonourable things, God will regard us as vessels of honour, sanctified and useful for the Master.

We must not think of being usable primarily in the sense of serving in the church. God wants to use His people for every good work, including those at the workplace, the school, in the home, in the community. This happens as one will cleanse himself and set yourself aside to God as a vessel for honour.

There is a large sense in which it is left to us how we want to be used by God. We have the potential to be used as a vessel of honour or as a vessel of dishonour. According to this picture, we could be a gold platter in the house of God, beautifully displaying the fruit of the Spirit. Or we could be a wash-hand bowl or a garbage can in God's house. Your conduct — clean or unclean; set apart to God or not set apart to God; useful to Jesus or not useful to Jesus — really matters. It greatly affects how God can use you and will use you to touch the lives of others.

Flee the Desires of Youth, Pursue Righteousness

Flee also youthful lusts is the first aspect of cleansing that Paul mentioned to Timothy. Youthful lusts describe the sort of desires and temptations that are especially prominent when someone is an adolescent or young adult. Sexual temptation, illicit pleasure of the flesh, and a longing for fame and glory often mark one's youth. The command is simple: Flee also youthful lusts. Don't entertain them. Don't challenge them. Don't try and endure them.

Cleansing can never be a matter of just avoiding bad things. It must also be the pursuit of good things. Therefore, there are both things that we must flee from and things we must pursue (righteousness, faith, love, peace). Pursue... peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart: To be cleansed, we must do everything we can to be right in our personal relationships with others. Cleansing needs to extend to how we treat others.

Teaching Quarrelling People without Being Quarrelsome

“But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.” (vv23-26)

The great men of our world are not usually thought of as servants nor as gentle. Yet in the kingdom of God, greatness is marked by being a servant of the Lord and by being gentle to all. When Paul wrote to Timothy about a servant of the Lord, he told him about some of the basic characteristics of a godly pastor.

- Timothy must not quarrel but be gentle to all. It was not his job as a pastor to pick fights and to look for conflict. Some men only feel energized and motivated if they have an argument; Timothy (and every pastor) should be of a different sort.
- Timothy must be able to teach. With the great emphasis Paul placed on God's Word, a pastor who is not able to teach is like a surgeon who can't use a scalpel.
- Timothy must be patient. God's work often takes time. Sometimes we can see why it takes so much time, sometimes we can't — but God is not in a hurry and wants us to learn how to patiently trust Him.
- Timothy must be in humility correcting those who are in opposition: The gentleness and patience Timothy must have does not mean he is to never confront those who need to be confronted; but he must do it in humility.

Paul specifically told Timothy how to correct these opposing ones.

- If God perhaps will grant them repentance: They need to repent, and this repentance will never happen apart from a work of God in their heart. The idea is not, “Maybe God will or maybe God won't grant them repentance.” The idea is more, “It's remarkable thing to see this work of God, and I won't presume upon it happening.”
- So that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses: Anyone who fights against God is deceived and must come to their senses; repentance flows as someone comes to the truth in this way.
- And escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him: Those who are in opposition to God's work, whether they know it or not, are bound in a demonic deception, and are doing the devil's work. They need to escape the snare of the devil, and God is ready to set them free.

False Teachers

“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!” (vv3:1-9)

The word translated perilous has the idea of troubles, difficulty, and stressful situations. This sort of atmosphere will mark the last days. “The last days” is a broad term in the New Testament, broad enough to where one could say that the last days began with the birth of the Church on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:17). These are the characteristics of people in the last days – today.

- **Men will be lovers of themselves:** This is certainly characteristic of our present age, when men and women are encouraged to love themselves. People are told to love themselves unconditionally and that such self-love is the foundation for a healthy human personality.
- **Men will be... lovers of money:** The love of money is nothing new, but today people have the ability to pursue our love of money like never before.
- **Men will be... boasters, proud, blasphemers:** Boasting, pride, and blasphemy are nothing new; but today, they seem far more prominent than ever. Today boasting, pride, and blasphemy are apparent everywhere, especially among the celebrities that our cultures idolize. Many people today become wealthy by calculated boasting, pride, and blasphemy.
- **Men will be... disobedient to parents:** Since the mid-1960s there has been a frightening breakdown in the authority once assumed by a child towards their parents.
- **Men will be... unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving:** Ever since Adam, humankind has been marked by these things to one degree or another. Here, Paul said these things will be especially prevalent in the last days. Unloving (translated without natural affection in the KJV) literally means, “without family love.” Paul said that the end times would be marked by an attitude of growing disregard of normal family love and obligation.
- **Men will be... slanderers:** Men have always told hurtful lies about other men; but today, in media and in politics, slander has been elevated to both big business and big money.
- **Men will be... without self-control:** The story of no self-control can be written across almost everything today — sex, drugs, alcohol, food, work. Whatever we do, we often do it out of control.
- **Men will be... brutal:** Cruelty and brutality are nothing new in the world; but Paul wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit that the last days would be marked by a particular brutality.
- **Men will be... despisers of good:** There just seem to be too many examples of this in modern society to pick out examples. For one example, there was a time when most people thought letting people live was good and killing them was generally a bad thing. Today, we live in a culture when the simple good of life is now despised and attacked, through abortion, through the glorifying of violence and murder, and through euthanasia.
- **Men will be... traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God:** These characteristics are all about one thing: Self. Men are traitors because of self, they are headstrong because of self, they are haughty because of self, and they are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God because of self.

Paul ended this list with a damning statement: “Having a form of godliness but denying its power”. They look godly and perhaps, behave godly but no power. When we talk about the power of godliness, we often mean it in the sense of “power to give me what I want.” But this is exactly opposite of what Paul

meant here. The power of godliness that men will despise in the last days is the power it should have to guide their lives; power in the sense of rightful authority — and many, many, today deny that God has the power to tell them what to do through His Word.

The command to turn away from people described by the characteristics in this list is especially difficult in our present day. People who do the things on this list are not only common today, but they are often also our cultural heroes. The simple responsibility of Christians is to turn away not only these attitudes, but also from the people who do these things.

Worming Their Way into Homes

“For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”
(vv5-6)

Paul knew that the dangers were in the world in his day and would be increasingly present in the last days before the return of Jesus. However, he seemed especially concerned that these would creep into households. It is one thing to have such evil present in the world; it is another thing to allow it into your home. Paul singled out gullible women simply because in that day, women spent far more time at home than the men, and were far more exposed to any corruption that would infiltrate the household.

Opposed as Jannes and Jambres vs. Moses

“Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.” (vv8-9)

Though they were not named for us in the Exodus account, these two men are the Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses before Pharaoh (Exodus 7:8-13, 7:19-23, 8:5-7, and 8:16-19). These were able to work miracles — not mere parlour tricks — but by the power of darkness and not the power of God. When Moses cast down his rod and it turned into a serpent, Jannes and Jambres could do the same. When he turned water into blood, they could do the same. When Moses brought forth a plague of frogs, Jannes and Jambres could do the same. Yet eventually they could not match God miracle-for-miracle, and their occult powers were shown to be inferior to God’s power. In the last days, men will also resist the truth yielding to demonic spirits because of demonic power in operation.