

A Vessel unto Honour

Text: 2 Timothy 2:19-26

Introduction:

1. This section (2:14-4:8): Paul's focus turns to the need for doctrinal soundness in view of the heresies appearing in the church (Hiebert)
2. The N.T. is replete with exhortations to faithfulness in doctrine. We need to make much of what God makes much of and value what He values.
3. This lesson (Vs. 19-26): Further instructions on how Timothy is to handle false teachers and false doctrine in the church. As Timothy is faithful to obey these instructions, he will be a vessel unto honor – one who receives the Lord's commendation and approval.

In order to be a vessel unto honor, Timothy needed to...

I. Purge Himself (Vs. 19-21)

There are two aspects to purging oneself from error:

A. Separate from Error (Vs. 19)

1. The illustration of the foundation (19a)
 - a. 'nevertheless' = notwithstanding, in opposition to.
 - b. "foundation of God standeth sure" = God's foundation is firm and immovable despite the fact the faith of individuals being overthrown by false teachers (Vs. 18)
 - c. "this seal" = mark of ownership, security and authenticity.
 - d. "the Lord knoweth them that are his" = God's true children, known from eternity past, are the proof of this unshakable foundation. "They are marked by God so as to be recognized by Him as His." (Wuest)
 - e. "depart from iniquity" = the personal responsibility of each believer who professes the Name of Christ.
2. The responsibility of the believer (19b)

B. Segregate Error (Vs. 20-21)

1. The illustration (Vs. 20)
 - a. "a great house" = picture of the church (See 1 Tim. 3:15)
 - b. "vessels of gold and silver" = picture of the true believers who are vessels of honor
 - c. "vessels of wood and of earth" = picture of spurious believers and false teachers like Hymenaeus & Philetus (Vs. 17) who are vessels of dishonor.
2. The application (Vs. 21)
 - a. 'therefore' = application of figure in previous verse

Continue Thou – 2 Timothy Series

- b. “purge himself” = to cleanse out, clean thoroughly. “Reference not merely to an inner moral separation but also to an outward separation. Involved is the obligation to refuse to fellowship with such enemies of the fundamentals of the faith.” (Hiebert)
- c. “from these” = the dishonorable vessels of Vs. 20.
- d. “he shall be” = the outcome and result of obedience to this command. He will become an honorable vessel with the following three qualities:
 - i. A holy vessel – ‘sanctified’ = set apart for special purposes
 - ii. A Useful vessel – ‘meet’ = usable, useful, profitable
 - iii. An Equipped vessel – ‘prepared’ = made ready, equipped. “every good work” = all types of Christian service
 - iv. Note! To be successful in ministry from God’s perspective means taking a strict line of separation from falsehood.

II. Pursue Holiness (Vs. 22)

Timothy is to pursue a life of personal purity amid doctrinal error. There are two aspects to this – one negative and the other positive:

A. Flee Sinfulness (Vs. 22a)

- 1. ‘flee’ = run away from! The opposite to the attitude that prevails today of seeing how close we can get to the edge of the cliff without falling off; the soft and careless approach to sin. We need to be like Joseph – “...and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.” (Gen. 39:12)
- 2. “youthful lusts” = the sins often connected with the unrestrained passions of youth. Definitely points to sensual sins (immorality, immodesty) but also includes other youthful tendencies such as pride

B. Follow Holiness (Vs. 22b)

- 1. Note: “These are the two important aspects to Christian victory: avoiding sin and following righteousness. One without the other does not work. If I put evil things out of my life, I create a vacuum that must be filled with things that are godly.” (Cloud)
- 2. ‘follow’ = to pursue (like a hunter). Word translated ‘persecute’ 28 times in the N.T. Example: “Saul, Saul, why **persecutest** thou me?” (Acts 9:4)
- 3. ‘righteousness’ = that which is right; practical holiness
- 4. ‘faith’ = trust and confidence in God
- 5. ‘charity’ = Christian love
- 6. ‘peace’ = peace of heart and peace with other believers

Continue Thou – 2 Timothy Series

7. Fairbairn: “In short, maintain a character such as becomes the Gospel of Christ.”
8. “with them” = in company with. Timothy is to pursue the Lord in company with others who are also in pursuit of godliness. The people we associate closely with have a profound impact on our spiritual lives. Spending lots of time in God’s house with God’s people will help keep us out of mischief!
 - a. Prov. 13:20 *“He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.”*
 - b. 1 Cor. 15:33 *“Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.”* ‘communications’ = association, company. ‘manners’ comes from the Greek word ‘ethos’ that forms the basis of our English word ‘ethics’
 - c. It is interesting to note that one of the qualifications of a pastor is that he is to be “a lover of good men” (Titus 1:8)

III. Practice Humility (Vs. 23-26)

Timothy is to help those who are deceived and seek their salvation.

A. The Demeanor of God’s servant (Vs. 23-25a)

1. Avoid Fleshly Strife (Vs. 23-24a)
 - a. ‘foolish’ = stupid, senseless
 - b. ‘unlearned’ = ignorant, untrained
 - c. ‘avoid’ = to refuse, decline
 - d. ‘knowing’ = the understanding that underpins the decision not to engage in strife of this nature
 - e. “they do gender strifes” = they produce & beget quarrels, fights & disputes. “They give birth to bitter controversies.” (Hiebert)
 - f. Haldane: “Christians seldom argue one another into their views, and more frequently each is more confirmed in his own opinion.” (Pg. 594)
2. Display Christ-like Attitudes (24b-25a)
 - a. ‘gentle’ = opposite of harsh and irritable. He must be mild, benevolent & approachable. This includes those who oppose him (note “all men”) (Hiebert)
 - b. “apt to teach” = skillful in teaching (See Titus 1:9)
 - c. ‘patient’ = forbearing
 - d. ‘meekness’ = humble patience & forbearance (i.e. in the face of provocation & irritation)
 - e. ‘instructing’ = Greek word used of child discipline and training. “Such persons need to be firmly met, and brought under a corrective, wholesome administration, yet conducted with a meek and forbearing spirit.” (Fairbairn)

B. The Desire (aim) of God’s servant (Vs. 25b-26)

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The reason we treat those caught up in error in this manner is that we desire the following:

1. That God will give them repentance (Vs. 25b)
 - a. 'peradventure' = by chance, perhaps, it may be
 - b. "God will give them repentance" = Repentance presented here as a Divine gift. Only God can deliver someone ensnared by the devil in false doctrine. Repentance in Scripture is both a Divine gift and a responsibility on the part of the sinner (See Acts 17:30)
 - c. "to the acknowledgment of the truth" = full knowledge of the truth
2. That they will be recovered from Satan's snares (Vs. 26)
 - a. "recover themselves" = 'recover' means to return to soberness. "The parties in question are contemplated as having sunk into a kind of drunken or benumbed state, through the artful devices of the great adversary." (Fairbairn)
 - b. "snare of the devil" = what an ugly picture of false teaching! To be caught up in false doctrine is to be trapped in a Satanic trap (See 1 Tim. 4:1)
 - c. "taken captive by him at his will" = they are under the control and dominion of Satan

Conclusion:

1. How important is separation to us?
2. Are we actively pursuing a life of holiness and growth in Christlikeness in company with other believers of like mind?
3. How do we handle those ensnared in Satanic falsehood? Do we seek their deliverance through patient instruction or do we resort to fleshly contention?