**Are You a Vessel of Honor**

**By Pastor Fee Soliven**

**2 Timothy 2:20-26**

**Wednesday Evening**

**May 23, 2018**

**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.**

Saints, Paul changed his metaphor from a building to household utensils, but continued the same theme. In a large house there are expensive utensils made of gold and silver that are used only on special occasions; other utensils, made of wood and clay, are cheap and for everyday use.

Again Paul makes the distinction between commonly useful and uncommonly useful workers of God, pointing out to Timothy that both will be found in the church.

**1 Corinthians 3:10-17**

10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.

11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.

14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. 16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17 If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

**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.**

Saints, Paul may have been emphasizing the individual believer’s moral purity in order to fulfill the role God has chosen him or her to play in the household.

This most likely refers to personal inward cleansing from involvement in false teachings. People who desire to be used by God must be cleansed from sin and then keep themselves pure by refraining from contacts and activities that could soil them.

This does not require a person’s isolation from the world (for sin is all around); it refers more specifically to involvement with those whose goal is to lead people away from the faith.

Cleansed people who stay away from corrupting influences can be used for God’s purpose and are then ready for the Master to use for every good work. How much more powerful the church of God would be in the world if all believers were “clean utensils” ready for the Master’s use!

**Ephesians 2:8-10**

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

**Titus 2:7-15**

7 in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, 8 sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.

9 Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, 10 not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. 11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,

12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. 15 Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.

**22 Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.**

Saints, Paul knew Timothy very well from their years of travel together, and most likely he knew Timothy’s weak spots. Timothy was a young man, at least young for the responsibilities he carried, so Paul offered no-nonsense advice.

The youthful lusts mentioned here are not only sexual, but also the other passions characteristic of the young—impatience, contentiousness, favoritism, egotism, intolerance, etc.

**1 Timothy 6:11-12**

11 But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

As was frequently the case with Paul, when he issued a warning he followed it with an alternative positive strategy. Timothy was to run from temptation but follow anything that would make him want to do right, referring to actions that are morally upright and virtuous.

In a word, it expresses a way of life that seeks to model itself after God’s directions. Rather than claiming perfection or settling for mediocrity, righteousness requires the pursuit of obedience. Paul also advised Timothy to pursue faith and love and peace. Faith and love are fundamental to Christianity and basic to Paul’s teaching.

**1 Corinthians 13:13**

“And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

Saints, in spite of the individual challenge that Paul presented, he was not permitting Timothy to function alone. He was to find strength and encouragement in the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts. There were others for whom he was responsible, but also some who would be peers and share a deep and common desire to be faithful.

**23 But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife.**

Saints, while peace should be the norm among believers, we should not entertain false teachings to keep people happy. Paul’s language here does not forbid contact with such people, as is demonstrated by verse 25, where the guidelines for treating opponents imply some level of interaction.

There can be no doubt about the problem caused by the false teachers—Paul repeated it several times in his letters to Timothy and Titus. They got people caught up in foolish, ignorant arguments that only start fights and that divided the church

**1 Timothy 1:4-7**

4 nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith. 5 Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, 6 from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, 7 desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.

**1 Timothy 6:3-5**

3 If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, 4 he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, 5 useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.

**1 Timothy 6:20-21**

20 O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babble and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge-- 21 by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace be with you. Amen.

Timothy’s best approach was to simply not get involved with them. To argue would only make Timothy angry and draw him into the very trap being set by the false teachers.

**24 And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient,**

Saints, the Lord’s servants are specifically Timothy and those chosen as leaders in the church. The expression alludes almost without doubt to the pictures of the suffering servant of God found in Isaiah (Isaiah 52:13-15; 53:1-12).

**Isaiah 52:13-15**

13 Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently; He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high. 14 Just as many were astonished at you, So His visage was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men;

15 So shall He sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths at Him; For what had not been told them they shall see, And what they had not heard they shall consider.

**Isaiah 53:1-5**

1 Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? 2 For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him.

3 He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. 4 Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted.

5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.

Saints, the Christian who imitates Christ in this way will bear the experience of “wounds” as he or she attempts to relate compassionately to those who may strike out in hurt or anger. Some people like to quarrel because they have never been listened to before; when we demonstrate kindness, we may find openness where before there was only a wall of arguments.

As a minister of the gospel, Timothy did not have to quarrel with the false teachers; to quarrel could be seen as a need to come to a compromise. There could be no compromise between the gospel truth and the false teachers. Instead, Timothy should promote unity by being kind to everyone.

The hard, sharp edge of the truth required the skilled hand of someone who could relate compassionately with others.

**25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth,**

Saints, Timothy’s goal was to gently teach his opponents the correct understanding of the truth. Therefore, he needed to maintain contact that would lead to interaction with these people, while at the same time resisting their error.

Instead of antagonizing opponents, he should calmly and gently correct their wrong ideas in the hopes that God would change those people’s hearts, and they will believe the truth. Timothy’s first desire ought to be to bring them back into the church, not to punish them.

**1 Thessalonians 3:6**

“But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also to see you”

**26 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.**

Saints, to come to their senses could also be translated “return to soberness.” In other words, the false teachers have gotten “drunk,” with the result of losing their senses and getting caught in the Devil’s trap.

Satan is at the root of all false teaching and division in the church. He knows the strength of a unified church and fears it.

**John 8:37-44**

37 "I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. 38 I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father."

39 They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. 40 But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this.

41 You do the deeds of your father." Then they said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father--God." 42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. 43 Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word.

44 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

So he creates a “trap”—money, fame, pride of feeling intellectual—to draw people away from the faith and to false teaching. They are then held captive by him to do whatever he wants. But there is hope—escape is possible.

Paul began this chapter with remarks about degenerating conditions in society. Both Paul and Timothy had witnessed how bad “the last days” would become. Paul listed a whole catalog of attitudes and behaviors typical of “last days” people. This list also described the false teachers in Ephesus. Paul characterized them as belonging to the perennial crop of “opposition” leaders who create a following for themselves. Timothy was to resist their methods and their underlying purposes.

**Let’s Pray**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace.” In Jesus Name!**