

Message #10

II Timothy 2:20-26

We are involved in the supper eight dinners. Mary and I have been involved in these dinners for years. We have not missed any of them. It is fun to go to people's homes and get to know them and see where they live.

In all of our years of doing this, never once has anyone said we would like you to take a good look at our toilet. We have never gone to anyone's home and they say let me show you our beautiful toilet bowl. Now the truth is that the toilet is a vital part of the house. It is a very necessary part of the house. But you would not say this is our most honored vessel in our home. In fact, probably it would be considered to be the least honored vessel in the entire house.

In God's family there are all kinds of people and all kinds of ministers and quite honestly there are some who are continually living their lives in the toilet cesspool of this world. We are not talking about a struggle with the flesh, which we all have; we are talking about a continual pattern of life. There are some in the family of God who are not functioning as an honorable vessel and this is the way they always live.

They are drifting through life in some spiritual fog and they apparently think that one day they will go into heaven and then Jesus Christ will somehow hold them up as a real honorable vessel. Well this text says—that is not going to happen. When God's family is all together, God will not honor toilet bowls. If a minister or a believer decides to live his life with a focus on worldly sewage, he will lose and he will lose big.

In the preceding context, Paul brought out to Timothy that if he was to finish an award-winner; he needed to be very faithful in his preaching ministry. He needed to very carefully and accurately handle the Word of God. **It is important that a minister be faithful in his public life and preaching life. Now in this part of the letter, he brings out to Timothy that if he was to finish an award-winner, he needed to be very faithful in his personal life.**

Now as a believer we may choose to live our personal lives as an honorable award-winner, or a dishonorable award loser. In this text, Paul tells Timothy how to do that. What we see is this:

THOSE WHO ARE IN GOD'S FAMILY EITHER LIVE THEIR LIVES AS VESSELS OF ETERNAL VALUE AND HONOR, OR VESSELS OF NO VALUE AND DISHONOR.

It is that simple. It is not complicated. It is one or the other. This is a lifestyle choice we make. We are either living our lives in a way God views has worth high value or little value. We are either living our lives in ways that are precious or ways that are cheap. We are either living our lives in ways God would deem worthy or disgraceful. In these verses he spells that out.

Now at the end of **verse 19** Paul gives Timothy and us a critical admonition—"Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness."

The verb “abstain” means to depart from; to withdraw from something. The verb is aorist tense. What this means is that those who continually name the Lord are to make point of time decisions to stay away from wicked stuff.

Actually the word “wicked” refers to all kinds of iniquity and unrighteous things. **Honorable believers make pointed decisions to keep away from wicked, evil, unrighteous, sinful things.**

Verse 20 opens by giving a series of metaphors to Timothy so that he gets the point and so that we get the point because this is for “everyone who names the name of the Lord.” If you claim you are a Christian, this text is aimed straight at you and straight at me.

Now Paul starts in **verse 20** by speaking of a “large house.” **This is a metaphorical picture of the majestic, and numerous and magnificent family of God.**

The word “vessels” is a word that describes various types of utensils, goods and implements. It is a metaphorical picture of a variety of different people, works, gifts and service areas in the family of God.

The words “honor” and “dishonor” and the words “gold, silver, vessels of wood and earthenware” metaphorically picture the value of the service and reward.

Now what this verse clearly communicates is that it is possible to be in God’s family and even serving God in a variety of ways and not be valuable in God’s estimation. A person could be a believer who is very active or one could even be a minister and by estimation of God could be cheap, disgraceful and dirty. God could actually examine ministries that seem to be very successful to the world and view them as almost worthless.

Paul did not want that happening to Timothy. So in this text, Paul spells out three key personal life factors that determine whether or not we are a vessel of honor:

DETERMINING FACTOR #1 – A vessel of honor must meet God’s condition of cleanliness.
2:21

Paul starts right here. If we are to be a believer who is valuable in the sight of God, we must be clean. We cannot be living a life of filth and dirt. We must be “sanctified” which speaks here of a practical sanctification in that we are set apart from dirty, filthy things.

This verse says that if we are willing to meet this standard, we are “useful” to the Master and we are “prepared for every good work.” God uses clean vessels to do a good work for Him.

Now the challenge that Paul gives to believers is to “cleanse himself.” The obvious assumption is there are things from which we need to cleanse ourselves. As we do that, we become more honorable and God uses us at a greater level.

Now the word “cleanse” is one that means we must clean ourselves up by removing any impurities. We must be thoroughly clean. In the immediate context this would include being clean in doctrine, in handling God’s Word and in our own lives.

You and I both know that if you are going to sell a house, it is much more valuable if the inside is clean. It is worth more. It will get you a better offer. If the house is junky and dirty, it isn’t worth as much.

The same is true with God. If a believer consistently has dirty closets in his or her life, that believer is not worth as much. The value is not what it could be and should be. In fact, that believer won’t be used by God and honored by God.

Two of the most beautiful butterflies you can see are the Red Admiral and the Viceroy. They are gorgeous to look at. In fact, their color is breathtaking. But these butterflies feed on manure. Instead of soaring to tree tops, they descend to dung piles. The butterfly looks beautiful; but it is dirty and filthy and pathetic.

There are people in the family of God just like that. There are ministers like that. They look good externally. They look the part and sound the part. But the fact is they are dirty. They continually feed on filthy things: movies, internet, magazines, and books. We are not talking about just a weak moment of their flesh. This is their consistent diet. God says that is not a vessel of honor because if one is to be a vessel of honor, one must be clean.

DETERMINING FACTOR #2 – A vessel of honor must move God’s direction of holiness.
2:22

Now in order to be an award-winner, it is not enough to be judicially clean; but one must also begin to move in two specific directions if one is to be an honorable vessel for God. The two verbs “flee” and “pursue” are both present tense verbs and they both are imperatives.

So God has given Grace Age believers two lifestyle commands that are to be continually (present tense) followed if one is to be an honorable and useable vessel:

Direction #1 - A vessel of honor must continually run from things godless. **2:22a**

Now the specific thing that Paul says that a vessel of honor must do is to “flee youthful lusts.” By virtue of the fact that Paul uses a present tense verb, would seem to suggest that this command is continual, which means it doesn’t stop when one gets older. In other words, older people need the same challenge to habitually flee “youthful lusts.”

The word “lusts” refers to those things that excite one’s passions, which include desires, impulses, and longings for things that are forbidden in the Word of God. Those things have a specific drawing effect on young people, but older people need the continual challenge as well because we are not immune to this, while living in this world.

Now there are different types of youthful lusts from which an honorable vessel will flee. We present six different types of youthful lusts from which an honorable vessel will flee:

(Type #1) - An honorable vessel will flee immoral sensual pleasure.

Now there is a legitimate fulfillment of sensual pleasure that is sanctioned by God and that is in marriage. The Bible is not prudish in this area. Husbands and wives have every right to physically enjoy themselves completely.

However, an honorable vessel will not be one who is out sneaking around in impure and immoral things. A valuable minister, a valuable board member, a valuable committee member, a valuable Sunday school teacher, a valuable church member or believer is one who continually runs away from immoral things. He does not continually run to them, but away from them.

There are some in the family of God who are addicted to immoral stuff and they do not run from it, they run to it. They are not going to get before God and finish an award-winner.

In my opinion, one of the most depressing old men is Hugh Hefner. Actually, I feel sorry for Hugh Hefner. He was raised in a conservative Christian home and when he was in the military, his wife was unfaithful to him and that devastated him. He plunged himself into a pursuit of the sensual and he can't seem to shake it even though he is nearing 90-years-old. It is a sad story. As far as I know, Mr. Hefner does not say he is a Christian. What we do know is his life has been devoted to sensual pleasure.

But there are stories sadder than that one. There are some believers who have been going to church for years and they are addicted to immoral stuff. If they will flee it, they can finish a vessel of honor; if they don't, they won't.

(Type #2) - An honorable vessel will flee a craving for dominant power.

There are those who crave power. They are after dominant, limelight authority. These people maneuver and manipulate and try to get control. Their goal is to lord it over others, not to serve them. A vessel of honor will turn away from this craving.

(Type #3) - An honorable vessel will flee an idolatrous prosperity.

There are believers who have an idolatrous greed. They crave more money, more prosperity. They are never content with what God has given them. They covet, they idolize and will even cheat others if they think it can get them a little more.

(Type #4) - An honorable vessel will flee an arrogant pride.

Youthful lusts often have arrogance to them. Young people aren't afraid to say anything to anyone. Young people can be arrogant and rude. These kinds of people are pushy and they will walk over others to get their way.

Just recently at a college here in Kalamazoo, a group of arrogant, loud-mouthed, bold students stormed into a meeting with a bull horn and started yelling and screaming at their elders. I thought who in the world do you arrogant, loud-mouthed punks think you are.

But this does not just occur in the secular world. There are students who go to Biblical institutions who are proud and arrogant and defiant. They think they know more than the teachers but what they don't realize is that in God's mind they are useless.

(Type #5) - An honorable vessel will flee a passion for prominence.

Another type of lust is a craving for notoriety. Many desire to be the prominent and dominant individual.

(Type #6) - An honorable vessel will flee a passion for possessions.

There are those who have a passion for everything. They want more and more even when God has given them so much.

A vessel of honor will continually check himself and flee from these things.

Direction #2 - A vessel of honor must continually pursue things godly. **2:22b**

The verb is present tense meaning there are four continual pursuits of one who is honorable:

(Pursuit #1) - An honorable vessel will pursue righteousness. **2:22b**

An honorable vessel does his best to conform his life to the Word of God. An honorable believer takes God's Word very seriously and personally no matter what the topic or issue.

(Pursuit #2) - An honorable vessel will pursue faith. **2:22c**

Honorable vessels are those who believe God and trust in God. They operate by faith. This is a faith in Christ alone and a faith that actively believes in the Word of God. They believe it and apply it literally, regardless of the topic.

(Pursuit #3) - An honorable vessel will pursue love. **2:22d**

Honorable servants do not get caught up in the fray of the emotions, but they choose to love God and others at the highest level, which is God's level.

(Pursuit #4) - An honorable vessel will pursue peace. **2:22e**

Honorable vessels are in war, but they don't like war. They like peace. An honorable vessel first and foremost is after peace in his or her relationship with God. To have that peace there must be a pursuit of that which is Biblically right.

DETERMINING FACTOR #3 – A vessel of honor must minister with God’s distinction of gentleness. **2:23-26**

There are two ways that honorable ministers will always minister:

Minister Way #1 - An honorable minister will refuse to get into foolish and ignorant discussions. **2:23**

We come back again to the challenge to watch what we say. Our words are critical to being an honorable vessel. **These are very strong Greek words that literally mean an honorable vessel will not get lured into stupid and ignorant discussions and arguments that are not true to the Word of God.** In fact, he will avoid such discussions because he knows all this does is create quarrels and start fights. Now there are some people who ask questions because they want to learn. There are some who ask questions because they want to argue. An honorable vessel discerns which is which.

J. A. Bengel, a German Lutheran scholar and grammarian of the 1700’s, offered some wise counsel on this point. He said that when a learned man faces an unlearned man who wants to argue, the learned man should keep quiet.

The learned man will not win in such a discussion. Actually Solomon said the same thing in Proverbs 9:6-9. He said that there is no point in discussing anything with a God-mocking scoffer or wicked person because such a discussion is futile. Honorable people of God refuse to be lured into pointless discussions.

Minister Way #2 - An honorable minister will give himself to a gentle and meek instruction. **2:24-26**

Now an honorable servant must defend the Word of God. In fact, he must teach the truth to people because the people are held captive by Satan and it is the truth presented that can set people free.

But an honorable servant will not be one who just wants to quarrel and argue. It is true he must correct faulty thinking and doctrine by presenting true Biblical instruction. However, the way he tries to do this is not by being mean to people but kind to people and doing his best to present truth patiently and gently. Honorable servants are firm in their stand for truth, but when possible they will present truth in a kind way, take their stand in an attempt to defend truth mildly and meekly.

Now it is interesting in **verse 25** that the word “knowledge” speaks of full knowledge. Any believer who does not come to a full knowledge of the Word of God is trapped in the snare of the Devil.

What a faithful and honorable servant of God must do is to present the truth so that he may be delivered from that snare. That truth should be presented as gentle and as patiently as possible.

Our life right now is either on a path of an honorable vessel or dishonorable. Which is it?