

## Daily Bible Study

### *“Metaphors of The Christian Life ~ The Vessels”*

#### *2 Timothy 2:20-22*

*June 29– July 5, 2014*

**MONDAY** – As we continue in our study of **2 Timothy** we look at yet another specific *Metaphor of the Christian Life* and this time it is the Vessel. We have previously seen the Steward, Soldier, Athlete, Farmer, and Workman for God. Now the connection between this text and **verses 14-19** is practical and easy to see. Paul had just said, *“The Lord knows those who are His,”* and, *“Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity”*. He spoke about the Church being made up of people who belong to God and strive to be righteous. The obvious response of many people is how can this be true and is how do you explain the existence of heretics and false teachers and believers in the Church such as *Hymenaeus and Philetus*? Paul answers that “question of the ages” by using another Metaphor and says that in any *great house* there are all kinds of *vessels* which are used for all kinds of purposes. Some are used for good, noble or *honorable* purposes and some for bad, ignoble, or *dishonorable* purposes. As long as the visible Church of Jesus remains before His return it will contain a mixture of genuine and false teachers and members; some will be true and clean *vessels* and some will be false and dirty *vessels*. Many people criticize the Church because there are sinful people in it. Some of those people are genuine hypocrites who are not born again by repentance and faith while some are genuine Christians who need to more diligently heed The Holy Spirit’s advice from this text. Some scholars see this text speaking to teachers in the church while others see this including all professing members of Christ’s Church. We will look a little more closely at this but it is our duty as professing Christian readers of this text to obey the commands of Scripture personally in our own lives leaving the judgment of who or who is not in the family ultimately to Him; for judgment belongs to God. Read our text: **2 Timothy 2:20-22**: <sup>20</sup> *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.* <sup>21</sup> *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.* <sup>22</sup> *Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”*

*Suggestion for Prayer: God, teach me from Sacred Scripture this week and please help me by giving me the power by Your Holy Spirit to obey what You are telling me from its pages.*

**TUESDAY** – **2 Timothy 2:20**: <sup>20</sup> *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.”* As I mentioned

earlier, there is some discussion as to who Paul is referring to when he speaks of the *vessels*. One thing however is pretty much universally agreed upon by all scholars and that is who or what he is referring to as the *great house*. There is not much debate or doubt that the *great house* is God’s house, the visible or professing church. We read that in this *house* there are different types of *vessels*. Jesus spoke often of this truth of both *wheat and the tares* (**Matthew 13:24–30, 13:36–43**) growing together and not being sorted out until judgment day. The point being that the *wheat and the tares* grow together, and, especially early in their growth they are so alike that it is virtually impossible to separate them. He stated the truth again in the parable of the dragnet (**Matthew 13:47–48**). The dragnet gathered *some of every kind*. In both parables, Jesus teaches there is a mixture and that human judgment can be limited but that God’s judgment is not limited and will in the end make the necessary separation. Remember this is only a metaphor, and as with all metaphors we must not press it too far. The point Paul is making however is perfectly clear. *...there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor*. The *vessels of gold and silver* had one use (honor) and the *vessels of wood and clay* (dishonor). Similarly, the church, God’s house on earth, is a mixed company of true believers, and false believers if you will. Interesting is the verse, **Romans 9:21** where Paul speaking of God’s electing purpose in Salvation says, *“Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?”* Not only does the Almighty have the only say in the judgment, He is the one who has saved His people in the first place by His electing grace.

*Suggestion for Prayer: God, thank You that by Your grace You have placed me in Your “great House”. Help me to be thankful, grateful, filled with praise and obedient.*

**WEDNESDAY** – **2 Timothy 2:21**: <sup>21</sup> *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.”* This verse starts out with the familiar refrain of so many Scripture passages, *Therefore...* After speaking facts to us concerning the mixed assembly that finds itself claiming membership in the Lord’s Church, we are now given some advice on how to live in light of what we’ve just heard. *Therefore* we must do something. The message is that if we desire to be a *vessel* for honorable purpose in God’s household, we must *cleanse* or keep ourselves from the polluting influences that can infect the church. These influences come through false teaching and also from members of the professing church who actually know nothing of God’s salvation in Jesus. We will look at both of these influences and see the danger they both provide. First let’s look at cleansing ourselves from false teachers and their teaching. As **William Hendriksen** says, “Close and intimate association with hypocrites may easily lead to moral and spiritual contamination (**1 Corinthians 15:33**). The temptation to fall into this trap must be avoided. The sin of accepting the doctrines and/or of copying the example of such wicked men (whether the latter be thought of as still in the church or as

already out of the church) must be avoided (cf. verse 19b); and if committed, must be confessed, and the evil must be overcome with good. Thus, a person must “effectively” or “thoroughly” cleanse himself “from these,” that is, from evil men (“utensils for dishonor”) and their defiling doctrines and practices; from such men as Hymenaeus and Philetus and their disciples, and from their false teachings and evil habits.” We are seeing that a man or woman who desires to be used by God and grow in Jesus must ekkathairo (to make clean by removing that which is unclean, to clean away) from these false teachers and false teachings. A person must distance themselves from false teaching and teachers by cleaning away this dangerous polluting influence. How do we *cleanse ourselves from the latter*? It can’t mean that we separate from all professing church members whom we suspect are phonies and withdraw from the visible church. Jesus taught that the weeds had been sown among the wheat and could not be successfully separated from them until the harvest. What we are to avoid is not so much contact with such men as *Hymenaeus and Philetus* but their error and their evil. Cleanse their falsehood from our thinking and minds and their evil wickedness from our hearts and lives. Purity and holiness of doctrine and life is the necessary condition of being a vessel which is useful to Jesus. The reality rises above the metaphor: a cheap vessel will always remain a cheap vessel except through God’s grace. God’s grace enables a sinner to become a saint, “*a vessel for honor*.” This is the state of being *sanctified* through the purifying work of the Holy Spirit. As K.S. Wuest says, “he has now become a saint in experience as well as position” having been wholly *set apart* for the Lord and his work, and this abidingly. Now a man is *useful for the Master* and he is *prepared for every good work* (**2 Timothy 3:17, Titus 1:16, 3:8, 14, 2 Corinthians 9:8**). It is our duty as Christians to keep ourselves free from polluting influences and our reward is not special honor and privilege but special service for Jesus and His cause, Church and name.

*Suggestion for Prayer: Father, help me to cleanse myself from false teachers and teaching and the influences they bring that pollute me. Give me strength and discernment to follow You being set apart to You as I put away the evil and error of the world, flesh and devil.*

**THURSDAY – 2 Timothy 2:22:** “<sup>22</sup> *Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*” The way to *cleanse* oneself is to become detached from that which is evil and attached to that which is good. That is what we see taught here in this verse. By scholarly study and accounts, Timothy was somewhere between 37–45 years of age when this was written to him. We all can take heart from the Apostles advice regardless of our calendar age we fight against *youthful lusts*. The NIV translates this and brings out the more accurate rendering as it contains the definite article as it says, “*Flee the evil desires of youth*” What does he mean? The word *desire* in the NIV lusts in the NKJV is epithumia in the original and means “desire, craving, longing, (for that which is forbidden)”. Whether being used in a good or bad sense it always carries the message of a *strong yearning*. In our text it is definitely *sinful* desire that is meant. Timothy is told to *flee* away from such sinful desires. 3 P-words summarize this. Forbidden pleasure and

inordinate craving for the satisfaction of the physical appetites (“*lust*” for food and drink, pleasure-madness, uncontrolled sexual desire (**Romans 1:24, Revelation 18:14**). Power, the uncontrolled passion to be Number 1, the lust to “shine” or be dominant which results in envy, quarrelsomeness, etc. (**Galatians 5:16, 24, 2 Peter 2:10, 18., Jude 16, 18**). Possessions, is the third word, an uncontrolled yearning for material possessions and for the “glory” that goes with them (**1 Timothy 6:9** in its context). We are reminded and thankful that Jesus knows these temptations and has conquered them. He conquered pleasure when in the first temptation he says, “*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God*” (**Matthew 4:1–4**). He conquers power when in the second temptation He refused to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple (**Matthew 4:5–7**). He conquered possessions when in the third temptation he refused to receive as a gift out of Satan’s hand “*the kingdoms of the world and their glory*” (**Matthew 4:8–10**). These desires often attack more in youth and as a man grows older as a Christian he, by the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit, gradually spiritually matures and learns to rise above them.

*Suggestion for Prayer: Jesus, thank You for facing and beating sin and temptation and the devil in my place. Help me now to in Your power and by Your grace to follow Your teaching and rise up in battle against temptation by the very Word of God which is my powerful sword.*

**FRIDAY – 2 Timothy 2:22:** “<sup>22</sup> *Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*” We not only get the negative command to *flee* from the Apostle but we are also told to positively *pursue*. It is important not to miss the sharp contrast between them. Pheugō (*flee*) means literally to “flee danger, seek safety in flight or escape”. It is used literally of flight from physical danger, as when Moses fled from Pharaoh’s wrath and Jesus family from Herod’s (**Acts 7:29, Matthew 2:13**). So too the hired shepherd *flees* from the wolf (**John 10:12-13**) and the Judean Christians when in A.D. 70 Jerusalem was surrounded by the legions of Rome, were to *flee* to the mountains (**Luke 21:21**). Men are commanded to *flee from the wrath to come* (**Matthew 3:7**) and we are told here and elsewhere as Christians to *flee* all sin such as *youthful lusts*, idolatry, immorality, the spirit of materialism and the love of money (**1 Corinthians 10:14, 6:18, 1 Timothy 6:11**). Remember Beloved resist the devil and he will flee from you (**James 4:7**). The verb diōkō (*pursue*) is the exact opposite. If pheugō means to run away from, diōkō means to run after, to pursue or chase with effort such as in war or hunting. It is used in the New Testament about 30 times of persecution. Paul uses it to describe how he violently persecuted God’s church (**Galatians 1:13**). Metaphorically it is used to portray the Christian’s pursuit of the will of God as Paul describes himself as pressing diōkō to the mark (**Philippians 3:12-14**). Like this, we pursue moral *righteousness, faith* and so forth. We will look more at this tomorrow in Lord’s Day worship.

*Suggestion for Prayer: Father, help me to flee and pursue what I should for Your names sake.*