

A Vessel

The VISION Newsletter / April 2012

Pastor E. Keith Hassell

2 Timothy 2:15–26 (NKJV) “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 16 But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. 17 And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, 18 who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some. 19 Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” 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. 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. 22 Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. 23 But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. 24 And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, 25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, 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.”

Not only is God looking for “a voice” but He is also looking for “a vessel.” What kind of vessel does God desire to use? First, God looks for vessels who truly belong to Him. Just prior to this text, Paul mentions two individuals, Hymenaeus and Philetus, who were in the church and professed to belong to Christ but later began to teach things contrary to the faith (2 Timothy 2:17-18). By departing from the faith, it became evident that they never had saving faith (1 John 2:19). Prior to their apostasy, Hymenaeus and Philetus seemed like awesome Christians. Their defection revealed that their faith was built on something other than the foundation of Jesus Christ.

Jesus is building His church upon the foundation of Himself (Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 3:11). Paul declares that the foundation of God is sure, preserved by God’s seal—a symbol of ownership, authorization, security and authenticity.

God’s seal has two facets. The first facet is this: God knows those who are His. This is probably a reference to Moses’ statement during the rebellion of Korah (Numbers 16:6; See also Nahum 1:7; John 10:14, 27). In His sovereign foreknowledge, God knows who belongs to Him. We do not know the true condition of the human heart or the true object of a person’s faith, but God does. I may fool you and you may fool me, but no one fools God!

The second facet is this: those who name the name of Christ will depart from iniquity. Being identified with Jesus means to cease being identified with and participating in what opposes Him (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; James 4:4). Although God sovereignly knows and keeps His elect, they nonetheless confirm their call and election by the way they live (2 Peter 1:10-11). During the rebellion of Korah, God told the people to depart from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram lest they be consumed in all their sins (Numbers 16:24-27). Those who identified themselves with Moses and the Lord separated themselves from the proud and unrepentant rebels. Since God has not revealed to us those who are among His elect, Peter instructs those who claim to be Christian to “*be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; ¹¹ for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*” (2 Peter 1:10-11 NKJV) If we identify ourselves with Christ but still continue in old patterns of sin, then our

profession is empty and void. Those who truly belong to God have the evidence of a changed life and a saving faith that will never fall away (Matthew 7:21-27; 15:13 John 10:28, 29; 1 John 2:19).

Although God reserves the right to choose how and when He will use His vessels, we are told to present ourselves as a vessel that He can use. Paul uses the illustration of a “great house,” a house belonging to a great person of wealth such as a king. In the home of a king are found different kinds of vessels for various uses. Gold and silver are precious metals common only to the wealthy. Gold and silver vessels are used for honorable purposes such as serving food and drink to honorable guests. Wood and clay are earthy materials. Wood and clay vessels are used for non-honorable uses around the home such as collecting and disposing of garbage.

What is the significance of gold and silver vessels in Paul’s illustration? The vessels of gold and silver represent the “vessels for honor.” What makes these vessels honorable is they cleanse themselves from iniquity and set themselves apart for the master’s use (2 Timothy 2:21).

What is the significance of the wood and clay vessels in Paul’s illustration? The vessels of wood and clay represent the “vessels for dishonor.” What makes these vessels dishonorable is that they fail to cleanse themselves from their iniquity and to set themselves aside for the master’s use. They are content to live in sin and to disregard the Lord. The vessels for dishonor are those who name the name of Christ but do not depart from iniquity (2 Timothy 2:19).

Through this illustration Paul points out that not everyone *in* God’s house, the church, is *of* the house. One remains forever while the other is expendable. Just as in the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, God allows the wheat (the elect) and the tares (non-saved) to exist in the same field until the time of the harvest when they are revealed and separated. The difference between the wheat and the tares is that the wheat bears fruit and the tares do not. The difference between the vessels of honor and the vessel of dishonor is that one pursues holiness while the other does not.

Is it predetermined by God which kind of vessel we must be? Not according to this passage. Paul says that if we will cleanse ourselves from iniquity and set ourselves apart for the Lord’s use, we will become a vessel unto honor. However, if we continue to name ourselves by the name of the Lord and refuse to cleanse ourselves from iniquity and set ourselves apart for the master’s use, we will prove ourselves unworthy of the honor of God’s salvation. We will soon be discarded as a vessel of dishonor.

Don’t be a dishonorable vessel that carries garbage and filth in God’s house. Don’t be one who spreads gossip, lies, discontentment, strife, division, contention, and ingratitude. Don’t be fooled to think that being in God’s house makes you of God’s house. God knows those who are His. God is looking for gold and silver vessels. God is looking for vessels unto honor that are even now actively setting themselves apart for Him. Christ is building His church with honorable vessels. Will you be a vessel ready for His use?

© Edward Keith Hassell
Grace Fellowship
P.O. Box 260
Rusk, Texas
(903) 683-6550
www.gracefellowshiprusk.com