VESSELS FOR HONORABLE USE

Unless otherwise stated all quotations are from the English Standard Version

2 Timothy 2:20&21 Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

A Great House

Paul uses the analogy of a “great house” to describe the work of God (“the master”), in the sphere of professing Christianity. “A great house” could refer to the entire world, but since Paul is writing to Timothy in First and Second Timothy about “how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God” (I Timothy 3:15), the reference is more likely to the professing church.

First Truth

Every vessel in the house is useful. God will use everyone who professes to know him, even those in flagrant disobedience. God will even use those who don’t know Him. Exodus 5:2, But Pharaoh said, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and moreover, I will not let Israel go.”

Exodus 9:16 “But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.”

Ezekiel 39:23&24 “And the nations shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity, because they dealt so treacherously with me that I hid my face from them and gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and they all fell by the sword. I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their transgressions, and hid my face from them.”

Ezekiel 39:28 “Then they shall know that I am the LORD their God, because I sent them into exile among the nations and then assembled them into their own land.”

Acts 5:1&2 But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, and with his wife’s knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles’ feet.

Acts 5:3-5 But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.” When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it.

Acts 5:6&7 The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him. After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter said to her, “Tell me whether you sold the land for so much.” And she said, “Yes, for so much.”

Acts 5:8&9 But Peter said to her, “How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.”

Acts 5:10-12 Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things. Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon’s Portico.

Acts 5:13&14 None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women.

Luke 13:1&2 There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered in this way?

Luke 13:3-5 “No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

Consider also the Book of Job and John 9:1-3.

Second Truth

We choose how God will use us. Some vessels are honorable. The word means valuable, precious. Some are dishonorable, not valuable or precious. But unlike household vessels, we get to choose what kind of vessel we will be and how we will be used.

We choose to be an honorable vessel by “cleansing” ourselves “from what is dishonorable.” “Cleanses” is *“ekkathairo,”* “to cleanse out, to cleanse thoroughly.” (Vine’s) In the New Testament it is used only here and in I Corinthians 5:7 “Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed.”

I Corinthians 5:1&2 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father’s wife. And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from you.

I Corinthians 5:6 Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

I Corinthians 5:12&13 For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church you are to judge? God will judge those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you.”

The story of Achan in Joshua 7:1-26 illustrates the truth that when God’s people condone sin, God often deals with His people as a unit, not with the guilty individual. God would not bless Israel until the guilty individual was punished.

Third Truth

Cleansing oneself from what is dishonorable has great results:

“He will be a vessel for honorable use.” Silver or gold vessels were not used to carry out the trash.

“Set apart as holy.” Many translations will say “sanctified.” Set apart as holy is what sanctified means. In the Old Testament the articles in the Tabernacle and then the Temple were holy, sanctified, set apart for use in worshiping God.

“Useful to the master of the house.” If you want to take out the trash, almost any container will do. If you want to have a guest in your house for a very special occasion, only the best vessels will do. Anyone who wants to be used by God in special ways must be an honorable vessel.

“Ready for every good work.” The Greek word translated “ready” or “prepared” in other translations, means that honorable vessels are prepared and ready for whatever task the Lord sets before them. There are many things that dishonorable vessels cannot be used to do. You could conceivably carry out the trash in a gold container, but you would not serve an honored guest a meal on a trash can lid.

Things to Remember

God will use anyone and everyone to achieve His purposes.

We choose how God will use us by whether wecleanse ourselves from what is dishonorable.

Cleansing ourselves from what is dishonorable has great results.