

Abounding Grace Christian Church

A Study of Paul's Second Letter to Timothy – Part 8

I. Exposition of Chapter Two (Continued).

A. Verse 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.”

1. “...if anyone cleanses himself from the latter...” – This corresponds with the phrase in verse 19 which reads; “...depart from iniquity...”, and refers to “...vessels...of dishonor” (verse 20). The word “cleanses” means; “to make clean by removing that which is unclean—to clean out, to clean away”¹ In the *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary*, the authors write:

“The cleansing in view here is of both life and doctrine. Paul says, ‘if anyone cleanses himself from *these things*’ (v. 21 NASB; emphasis added), and in this passage ‘these things’ seems to refer back to the corrupt teaching of Hymenaeus and Philetus and the consequent result: ‘godlessness’ (vv. 16-18). Paul also shows the connection between impure doctrine and impure living (see 1 Tim 1:19-20; 6:3-5). Another clue that a pure life (not just pure teaching) is in view is that the clean vessel metaphor is sandwiched between two verses that speak of personal holiness: ‘turn away from unrighteousness’ (v. 19) and ‘flee from youthful passions, and pursue righteousness’ (v. 22). To be an honorable vessel, one must pursue pure doctrine and pure living.”²

- a. The question arises then, “How does one cleanse himself?” Of course the first step would be to repent. In other words, turn around from ungodliness and false teaching. The next step would be to get one’s thinking straightened out by the process of the renewing of the mind (Romans 12:1-2).
2. “...he will be a vessel of honor...” – The word “vessel” means; “any kind of instrument, tool, weapon, equipment, container, or property”³ In the context of verse 20, Paul is using the analogy of a “house” so the best understanding of the word “vessel” here would be “instrument” or “container”. The word “honor” means; “value or worth”⁴ (cf. I Thessalonians 4:3-4).
 3. “...sanctified and useful for the Master...” – The word “sanctified” means; “set apart for God, to be, as it were, exclusively His”; “in a moral sense, pure, sinless, upright, holy”⁵ The word “Master” means; “one who holds complete power or authority over another—‘master, ruler, lord, Lord (as a title for God and for Christ)”⁶
 4. “...prepared for every good work...” – The word “prepared” means; “to cause to be ready—to make ready”⁷

“If you keep yourself pure, you will be a special utensil for honorable use. Your life will be clean, and you will be ready for the Master to use you for every good work.” – II Timothy 2:21 – New Living Translation

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

1. “Flee also youthful lusts...” – The word “flee” means; “to be saved by flight, to escape safe out of danger”⁸ “Lusts” means; “desire, craving, longing.”⁹ This doesn’t necessarily mean bad or evil desires, however, in this context, it would mean this. Again, appealing to the *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary*, the authors write:

“While Scripture indeed teaches we must avoid this type of sin (see 1 Cor 6:18), the command in this context is not limited to sexual sin. What are these youthful passions, then? If we glance at verses 23-25, it seems best to understand these desires as the temptation to quarrel, be unkind, or be harsh. The remaining words in verse 22 also point us in this way, as we note how Timothy was to pursue love and peace. Young leaders have the temptation to indulge the flesh in a variety of ways including impatience, arrogance, stubbornness, recklessness, harshness, and unkindness.”¹⁰

2. “...but pursue...” – “to follow with haste, and presumably with intensity of effort, in order to catch

¹ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 698.

² David Platt, Daniel L. Akin and Tony Merida, *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary: 1&2 Timothy and Titus* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013)

³ Louw and Nida, 52.

⁴ James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

⁵ Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti* (New York: Harper & Brothers., 1889), 7.

⁶ Louw and Nida, 478.

⁷ Ibid., 682.

⁸ Thayer, 651.

⁹ Ibid., 238.

¹⁰ David Platt, Daniel L. Akin and Tony Merida, *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary: 1&2 Timothy and Titus* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013)

up with, for friendly or hostile purpose—‘to run after, to chase after’¹¹

- a. “...righteousness...” – “the condition acceptable to God”¹²; “right-standing”; “rightness”
- b. “...faith...” – “that which is completely believable—‘what can be fully believed, that which is worthy of belief, believable evidence, proof’”¹³ – In the context, this could be taken as in contrast to the false teachers who taught things which lacked evidence or proof. The idea could also include ever be chasing after fortifying your faith.
- c. “...love...” – This is typically thought of as the highest kind of love which we’re commanded to have (John 13:34-35).

d. “...peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” – A. Duane Litfin writes: “...the phrase should read straight through: ‘peace’ along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart (cf. ‘pure heart’ in 1 Tim. 1:5). While Timothy must oppose the false teachers, he was to be at peace with his brethren who were honest before God”¹⁴

C. Verses 23-24 – “But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient,”

1. “...avoid foolish and ignorant disputes...” – The word “disputes” means; “a subject of questioning or debate, matter of controversy.”¹⁵ This is similar to “...not to strive about words...” in verse 14. Paul qualifies these disputes by calling them “foolish” and “ignorant” (or, “uneducated”). The word “avoid” means; “to refuse to pay attention to.”¹⁶ Dr. Bob Utley writes:

“These false teachers are without sense and without training; this is purposeful and willful! All they want to do is debate and speculate about non-essentials (cf. 1 Tim. 1:4; 4:7; 6:4; 2 Tim. 2:14; 4:4; Titus 1:14; 3:9). This type of arrogant debating is repeatedly denounced in the Pastoral Letters.”¹⁷

2. “And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient,” –

The word “quarrel” is defined as: “serious conflict, either physical or non-physical, but clearly intensive and bitter—‘to clash severely, struggle, fight.’”¹⁸

- a. “...but be gentle to all...” – “pertaining to being gentle, with the implication of kindness”¹⁹
- b. “...able to teach...” – “apt and skilful in teaching”²⁰
- c. “...patient...” - pertaining to enduring difficulties without becoming angry or upset²¹

“False teaching will always be divisive, but the Lord’s servant should not be a fighter but a promoter of unity, by being kind (‘gentle’) to everyone (cf. 1 Thes. 2:7), able or ready to teach (cf. 1 Tim. 3:2) those who are willing to learn, and forbearing in the face of differences (*anexikakon*, lit., ‘ready to bear evil treatment without resentment’; used only here in the NT).”²²

D. Verse 25 – “...in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth,” – Paul instructs Timothy to bring correction to those who are teaching error, but to do so with “humility.” This word means; “gentleness of attitude and behavior, in contrast with harshness”²³ Regarding the phrase “...if God perhaps will grant them repentance...”, the authors of the New American Commentary state: “The phrase... does not imply that God hesitates to give repentance but that human beings often refuse to accept it. Paul presented repentance as a gift given by God.”²⁴

E. Verse 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.” – Deception is referred to as a “...snare of the devil...”. The word “snare” means; “an object used for trapping or snaring, principally of birds”²⁵

¹¹ Louw and Nida, 201.

¹² Thayer, 149.

¹³ Louw and Nida, 370.

¹⁴ A. Duane Litfin, “2 Timothy,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 755.

¹⁵ Thayer, 272.

¹⁶ Louw and Nida, 333.

¹⁷ Robert James Utley, *Paul’s Fourth Missionary Journey: I Timothy, Titus, II Timothy*, vol. Volume 9, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 2000), 157.

¹⁸ Louw and Nida, 494.

¹⁹ Ibid., 748.

²⁰ Thayer, 144.

²¹ Louw and Nida, 307.

²² A. Duane Litfin, “2 Timothy,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 755.

²³ Louw and Nida, 748.

²⁴ *The New American Commentary*, 1, 2 Timothy, Titus, Vol. 34, Thomas D. Lea & Hayne P. Griffin Jr. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 1992)

²⁵ Louw and Nida, 55.