



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

FAITHFUL OR UNFAITHFUL? - 2 TIMOTHY 2:19-20

COLORADO

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We dare not be deceived. Paul warns Timothy and instructs him not to tolerate anything which is contrary to God's truth because religious deceptions can be so infectious and deadly. And yet, today, tolerance has almost become a doctrine in itself. It's considered the loving and kind way to live. But when tolerance crosses the lines of Scripture, it's wrong and dangerous in the church. Scripture is preeminent in determining how we live and what we believe. Yet because of tolerance, we have allowed almost anything, which leads to mediocrity and ruin in the church so we don't offend anyone. Christianity light and easy believe-ism are embraced and what isn't tolerated becomes the "word of truth". All roads can lead to heaven instead of the only road which is through faith in Christ alone. And the greatest peril of all becomes a reality...lost souls. The gospel must never be corrupted or the message changed because it is this truth, not half-truths or distorted truths that save.

I. FAITHFUL OR UNFAITHFUL? - 2 TIMOTHY 2:19-20

2 Timothy 2:19-20: (19) "Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, 'The Lord knows those who are His', and 'Let everyone who names the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness.'"(20) Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor."

Paul writes words of encouragement that even though error is being taught and faith undermined, God's true church remains secure! And as believers, we have the privilege of serving our Lord. Will we be faithful or unfaithful in our service to God?

A. "NEVERTHELESS" - 2 TIMOTHY 2:19A

Contrary to those who teach or trust in a false gospel or religion, Paul says, "Nevertheless", those who are truly saved are a part of "the firm foundation of God." Paul describes the church in his first letter as, "the church of the living God, the pillar and support of truth." (1 Timothy 3:15) It is made up those who belong to God. The true church, all who name the name of Christ, having turned from wickedness and turned to a holy life, will stand. It can never be destroyed by the poison of false teaching. God's church will stand triumphantly and will never be overcome by the forces of hell as Jesus promised in Matthew 16:18. It will not fail because God's church is built on the solid foundation of His truth.¹

B. "HAVING THIS SEAL" - 2 TIMOTHY 2:19B

The true church, every true believer of Jesus Christ, has a seal.

"seal" Greek "sphragis" a symbol of ownership and authenticity. An inscription that proves genuineness or ownership; a brand mark, trademark, the architects' mark.

God has placed His divine seal of ownership and authenticity on the church. The true church and every true believer belongs to God and we are secure.

Paul gives two marks of authenticity which are true of every believer declaring God's ownership. He refers to an Old Testament passage in Numbers 16 for his basis of two inscriptions written on the foundation of God's true church. Contrasted in this passage are the false teachers who speak falsely for God. Paul references Korah, a Levite priest who, along with Dathan, Abiram, On and 250 other leaders, rose up against Moses' leadership. Here God made clear who belonged to Him; was it Korah and his followers or Moses?

Paul says that the first inscription of authenticity and ownership of God is that "The Lord knows those who are His." The "knowing" that Paul speaks of refers to more than just a sense of awareness. It speaks to the intimate, close relationship between every believer and God; and in that sense the church belongs to God. (John 10:27-28, Galatians 4:9) So in Numbers 16:5 Moses said the Lord would show who belonged to Him, "Tomorrow morning the Lord will show who is His and who is holy and will bring him near to Himself." Reading on we see how the Lord ordered Moses and the people to distance themselves from Korah. The earth split and swallowed up Korah, Dathan and Abiram along with everything that was theirs; family, livestock and possessions. Then God sent fire and incinerated the 250 leaders who had followed Korah. God made it clear who was His. He knows who are His. He knows them personally and intimately. The true church of Jesus Christ can take comfort in the fact that God knows who are His and they belong to Him. They are sealed securely with God's divine assurance!

The second way that God has placed His seal on the church Paul says, is their pursuit of holiness, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness." (2 Timothy 2:19) Just as in the Numbers passage where the Lord showed who was holy and set apart for Him, so all true believers in Jesus Christ are set apart to God and pursue holiness and sanctification. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 speaks to this along with 1 Peter 1:15. Despite many failures and unfaithfulness, Philippians 1:6 reminds us that God will ultimately complete our sanctification. It is important to remember that we are never saved by our works, but we are recognized by them. Our works prove whose we are. What's the habitual, continual pursuit of your life? Is it holiness? What does your life reveal about the genuineness of your faith? The first seal we can take great comfort in. The second seal we must take responsibility and participate in.

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS, GOVERNOR & SPOUSES: TUESDAY AT 7:15AM, CAPITOL BASEMENT, ROOM 0109

STAFF, LOBBYISTS, JOURNALISTS & SERGEANTS: TUESDAYS AT NOON, CAPITOL BASEMENT, ROOM 0109

Colorado

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Believers are called to righteousness, the church is called to be pure... and if we are, our reward is NOT special honor and special privilege; NO... rather special service! ²

C. "VESSELS FOR HONOR OR DISHONOR"- 2 TIMOTHY 2:20

Paul uses the metaphor of a "great house" to describe the professing church. The owners of this great house would be very affluent with many occupants, many rooms and many furnishings. Then Paul uses the figure of "vessels" to describe believers and their special service. He used this analogy in Romans 9:21 and 2 Corinthians 4:7 as well.

"vessels" Greek "skeuos" refers to a wide variety of tools, utensils and furniture found in a home.

It's important to understand as Paul uses this metaphor that he is not referring to the usefulness of these vessels but rather the value of them. Paul speaks basically of two kinds of vessels used in this great house for serving; those of gold and silver as well as wood and earthenware.

First, the gold and silver vessels are of course the most valuable utensils in this great house. They would be prominently displayed or used for important guests as a gesture of honor. These vessels were used for noble and honorable purposes.

The wood and earthenware vessels were inferior articles, common, plain, replaceable and purely for function. They were unattractive and often dirty and vile because of the use for garbage or human waste from the house. They were used for duties that you wouldn't see and were kept out of sight as much as possible. In fact, to display them before guests would be an act of unspeakable dishonor.³

So what does Paul mean when he refers to these vessels that are "some to honor and some to dishonor"? Since Paul is referring to the true church, he isn't speaking of true and false believers. We also know he isn't speaking of the value of one gift over another that believers have in serving the church. 1 Corinthians 12:14-31 and Romans 12:3-6 make clear that all gifts are essential in the body of Christ for the building up of the body and edification of the church.

By using the contrast of the value of the vessels, it is clear that Paul is referring to the faithful and unfaithful believers. He is referring to the way that all true believers are found useful to the Lord in the work He has called them to.⁴ Some believers are faithful and noble in their service to Christ and others are nominal and even shameful.

The gold and silver vessels represent faithful believers who are useful, valuable to the Lord. They serve as good soldiers, disciplined athletes and hard-working farmers. They desire to be faithful, and

dedicated in their pursuit of righteousness, they love God and His Word, they seek to please Christ and desire to be useful in service for His honor and glory. They are good workman approved by God. Every believer should be a vessel of honor; a faithful, noble servant of Jesus Christ.

But they aren't. Vessels of wood and earthenware represent those unfaithful Christians who are cowardly soldiers, lazy athletes and slothful farmers. They are fit only for the most menial tasks and purposes. Because they are unfaithful, sadly their service is of little value. Their time is spent on self-pursuit rather than self-denial for Christ. Their passion isn't to please Christ in all they do but more themselves. They often aren't trustworthy because they are lazy in their service for the Lord.

The question is this: if you belong to God and have turned from sin to pursue holiness, if you name the name of the Lord as your God and Savior then you are a vessel in His house. What kind of a vessel are you? Is your life lived in faithfulness to the Lord or characterized more by unfaithfulness? Is your service to Christ noble, disciplined and hard-working? Do you seek to please and honor God or are you living more for your own pursuits and purposes? Are you a vessel for honor in the church or one for dishonor?

All believers will give an account to the Lord for their life. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15, "Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire."

Take time to think about your life. Be honest before God. God's saving work in our life must demand a response of holy, faithful commitment and dedication to Christ. Anything less would be cheap grace and a lack of true gratitude. Your salvation came at a high price. As believers, our life is no longer ours, but Christ's. Is that your passion and pursuit? Will you be faithful and useful to the Lord? May we be able to say with Paul, "For me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21)

¹Williams, Peter, *Opening Up 2 Timothy*. One Day Publications: Ryelands Road, Leominster, New Zealand, 2007. Pg. 59.

²Barclay, William, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*. Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, Kentucky, 1956, revised 1975 and 2003. Pg. 201.

³MacArthur, John Jr., *MacArthur Commentary on 2 Timothy*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.87.

⁴MacArthur, John Jr., *MacArthur Commentary on 2 Timothy*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.88.