

2 Timothy 2:19

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Date: 26 December 1994

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[0 : 0 0] Let us turn now to the second epistle of Paul to Timothy, chapter 2, verse 19.

2 Timothy, chapter 2, verse 19. Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal. The Lord knoweth them that are his, and let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold, nor silver, but also of wood on the earth, some to honour and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purges out from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

Now I would like to look at these verses in particular in the light of the context which they are placed right through to the end of the chapter.

And in doing so, bring to a close our attempt at studying the second epistle of Timothy, studies which have taken me about eight or nine weeks, if I remember correctly.

[1 : 3 0] Perhaps, if God's prayers us next week, you deserve a break from these studies. We've noticed that the main part of which Paul wrote this letter, Timothy, as Paul faced death and recognised that Timothy was to take over the responsibility of guiding the affairs of the church.

The purpose was to encourage Timothy in the work for which he felt, no doubt, ill-prepared and ill-fitted.

And consequently, he bids them to be a courageous Christian, to be dedicated, to be committed, and not at any time in the exercise of a zeal to feel ashamed of the gospel, not for the gospel.

In this passage here, he's telling Timothy really what kind of teacher and preacher, Christian witness and worker he ought to be.

And in bringing that before him, he contrasts what could be termed as a bad Christian worker with a good Christian worker.

[3 : 0 1] A useful person in the service of Christ with a person who is of little or no use in the service of Christ.

A person who is, who brings honour to the name of Jesus compared to the person who brings dishonour to his name.

A person who leads people in the right way compared to that person who leads people astray. And so he tells him, whatever else you be, he says, you make sure that you show yourself to be a good workman, having the approval of God, not to be ashamed, a man who need not to be ashamed as long as you divide correctly the word of God.

And then he goes on to tell him that there are people in the church who don't do that. People who take the word and who distort the word.

And who, because they don't believe the truth themselves, consequently lead people astray. That's a comparison he's throwing here. You be a man who is committed, dedicated, a man who is true to the truth.

[4 : 27] And don't be like the type of person like Hymenaeus and Philetus who distort the truth and who lead people astray.

Now, what Paul here is saying to Timothy surely is this. When you study the truth and when you proclaim the truth and preach the truth and witness to the truth, make sure that it is the truth that you are using and that you're using it correctly.

Make sure that the technical term that we probably use for this is just make sure that you exegete the word accurately.

That you say what the word says. And that when you're finished explaining it, preaching it, proclaiming it, witnessing to it, that people will know what that truth is saying.

And I use an interesting word for this. The study to show thyself, a workman that is not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

[5 : 55] Now, there are various ways which, therein, which expositors, commentators try to explain this word rightly dividing. Some people picture a butcher with a piece of meat and he's cutting the joint that is required and he's cutting it in the right way.

Others explain it from the point of the joiner who's got a piece of wood that must be cut in a particular way for its function. Cut it properly.

The majority of them take it to mean the, you know, from the men who build a road or a highway or a motorway.

That they're cutting their way as they're building this straight stretch of road. They're cutting their way through the undergrowth and making sure that the road that is built leads from point A to point B in a straight line.

It goes directly there. So they've got to cut it properly. This is the way, he says, in which you are to handle the word of God.

[7 : 12] Look at it. Be accurate with it. Tell what it says. Explain it. Make it plain. Keep to the truth. So that people will know what you believe and that people will know that you believe it because the truth says it.

God approves, he says, of such a workman and that person need not be ashamed of presenting the truth in that way.

And as I've said often enough, I think that this is really what the church, speaking of the church generally, needs today. The truth handled in such a way that people will know what it says.

And present it in such a way that the meaning is made plain. What's the point of standing in a pulpit talking to someone in the street corner or writing a tract or distributing it or whatever?

When what you say and what you read is absolutely meaningless. Because you use terms that people don't understand.

[8 : 27] And at the end of the day, they haven't a clue what the word is saying. Well, it says Paul to Timothy, don't you be like that.

And avoid the kind of approach to the truth that Hymenaeus and Philetus have. Now, it says these people have erred.

And if dividing the word accurately or correctly thinks sort of in terms of cutting a straight line from point A to point B, be direct, be plain, go to the point, go to the place that the word is leading you to.

If that is the way in which you are to approach it and proclaim it and preach it, avoid doing what other people do.

They err. They miss the mark completely. This is what the word says. And they take the word and they swerve away from the mark.

[9 : 27] Avoid shun, profane, and vain babblings for the increase unto more and more and more and godliness.

And the word leaders of that conqueror, of whom is Hymenaeus, my leaders who concern the truth have erred. They've strayed from the mark. They've looked at the truth. For example, he says, they say that the resurrection is passed already.

The Bible, the New Testament, teaches the fact of the resurrection, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The coming resurrection of all men from the dead.

True enough, it pictures also the spiritual resurrection of people who are converted, as we saw earlier on in chapter 2. When people are converted to Christ, what happens is that, as he tells the church in Ephesus, they are raised by the power of the Spirit of God from the spiritual death, from a spiritual grave in which sin has enslaved them.

And the power of God comes, resurrects them. But the New Testament also speaks of the physical resurrection of Jesus from the dead. It speaks of the physical resurrection of all men from the dead.

[10 : 39] The dead will arise when Jesus comes again. Now he says, Hymenaeus and Philetus, they've looked at this teacher of resurrection, they've said, oh yes, it's passed, it's happened.

Jesus did rise on the dead, and that's it. If there is another resurrection, it is spiritual. There is going to be no resurrection from the dead, no second coming.

Shades of the Bishop of Durham. But I don't suppose he would claim originality for the use that he expressed of late. If he did, he was quite wrong.

Hymenaeus and Philetus were there before, nearly 2,000 years ago. They were saying the same thing. And, says Paul, they are leading, they are overthrowing the faith of some.

They are leading them astray. They are destroying their faith. They take the truth and they say, this is not what it means. This is what it means, contrary to what the truth says. They are not cutting straight, and they are not going in the direction the truth is leading them.

[11 : 48] Now he says to Timothy, you avoid such. Avoid them and their teaching.

Shun them. Foolish and unlearned questions, avoid. Knowing that they do gender stuff is speaking really the same thing. Things which do not feed faith.

Things which destroy and overthrow the faith of people. Avoid that kind of teaching. That kind of teaching, he says, contaminates.

It poisons. It disables. It corrupts. It destroys. It subverts, he says, the hearers in verse 14.

It eats as to the conqueror in verse 17. It overthrows the faith of people. Verse 18. Well, he says, whatever else you do, avoid that kind of teaching.

[12 : 58] Now the great question here, of course, is, in avoiding that kind of teaching, how are you going to deal with the people themselves?

These people, I think, that is the reference that we have at the end of the chapter. These people are ensnared by the devil. They are taken captive by him at his will. Of course, a lot of people would pour scorn and such a thing.

How dare you say that any person who teaches what you don't believe the truth is, is a captive of the devil. And is ensnared by the devil.

Well, that's what the word of God says. And anyone who preaches what is contrary to the truth is the instrument of the one who's trying to destroy the truth.

Anyone who doesn't build up the faith of the Christian church but destroys it is the instrument of the enemy of the church, who is the devil. And we've got to recognize that the devil manipulates people into the church, manipulates people into the Christian ministry, so that he can destroy the very foundation of the Christian church.

[14 : 13] And the best way to do it is to discredit the truth. Show that that is not the truth that is not true. Deny what the truth says. You come to the truth in a very, very clever and in a very subtle way.

Now, how do you deal with them? That's the question. Well, I think that what Paul is here saying in this chapter towards the end of the chapter is, you're to adopt a Christian attitude to God.

You're not to strive, he says, as a servant of the Lord. You're to be gentle unto all men. You're to be apt to teach, patient and meek, instructing those that oppose themselves in the hope that God will give them repentance, so that they will come to acknowledge the truth.

Try to win them over to the Christian faith. And one of the best ways of doing it, and I must say that I admire the people who adopt this attitude, the people who put these principles into practice in their handling of men who are the enemies of the Christian faith.

Some of us would tend to fly off the handle when you confront them and discuss and dispute with them. But the best way of doing it is, the best way of doing it surely is by showing Christian gentleness, or perhaps the best word that I could use here is by showing Christian courtesy, and try to lead them to an acknowledgement of the truth as it is in Jesus.

[15 : 59] And thereby, try to win them over. Even when error dishonors God and destroys the faith and makes shipwreck of men, try to win the errorist to Christ.

That is very difficult. But I think that that is the picture that Paul is painting for us here. Now, as has been said, it is a very gloomy picture of perversity and decession that the apostle has been outlining in these words.

This was in line, after all, with Jesus' own teaching that we read here tonight in Matthew 24, when he said that there will come a time when error will be so rampant, even the Christian church, that if it were possible, the very elect themselves would be deceived.

And things would become so bad that this question is asked, when the Son of Man will come, will he find faith on the earth? The Christian church we saw in the 30th year, at the very earliest stage of his sister, perhaps 30 years after the resurrection of Jesus, the Christian church was in a sorry plant.

It was being persecuted. People were making inwards into the church with false teaching. There were people defecting left, right, and center.

[17 : 34] Many of them would not even come to Paul's assistance. It seemed as if someone put it as if the whole fabric of the Christian church was falling around Paul's ears.

Of course it was a very difficult and a very trying time. But he says, In the face of all that deception and denial and defection, God's foundation stands sure.

And without spending any time tonight and going into all the disputes about the meaning of this word, let's just make our way straight to the thing that many of us feel that Paul is speaking about here.

In other words, he's speaking about the Christian church. This is the whole theme of the passage here. He's speaking about people who are teaching in the church era.

And you, he says, I'm ministering to the church, you'll be true to the word. He's speaking about people who have defected from the church, deserted and denied the faith. But he says, Don't you stand in all that? The church still stands.

[18 : 48] That is what he's saying, sure. And the question is this, that he's dealing with. Who now are the members of the true church? Who belongs to this church?

Now you know the meaning of the word church. The body of believers, called by the grace of God, from the service of sin to the service of Christ. Wherever they are, whoever he or she may be, wherever they worship tonight, saved by the grace of God, they are members of the church of Jesus Christ.

Not of the free church, or the FP church, or the APC, or the church of Scotland, the church of England, or any other. Those who are united by faith, living faith, to the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's the church. And notwithstanding defections from it, and attacks upon it, and error in it, the church will stand.

Who are the members of it? There are, it has a Godward, and an aspect membership, if you want to put it like that. There's a Godward, and a manward seal of this church.

[19 : 59] It has this seal. It has this distinction. This distinctiveness. One, the Lord knows them that are his.

Two, every man in it, is to depart from iniquity. That's the twofold seal of this church.

Now, you know that, what he's really dealing with here is, God's sovereignty, and man's responsibility. At the end of the day, it is God who knows, the true member of his own church.

It is God who knows the heart. The Lord knows them, who are his. With the knowledge of the love, that moved him from eternity, to set them apart from himself, for himself, his electing love, he knows them from all eternity.

The knowledge, the love that moved him, to send Jesus into the world, to die for them. The love, the knowledge, the love that brought them by his grace, to himself, in their own experience, the Lord knows them.

[21 : 18] Jesus said, I know my sheep. it is only the Lord, as someone has put it, who knows the heart, and recognizes his own people, and can tell the truth, from the false.

He knows, who may elect him from all eternity. He knows, those for whom Jesus died. He knows, those in whose spirit, in whose heart, the spirit of God, is in dwelling.

He knows that. But you see, there's a man, what side of it as well. God is sovereign. But we have our own responsibility.

You know how he put it, right into the church in Corinth. In his first letter, I think it was in chapter 6, where he says, what he says?

Know ye not that your body is a temple, of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own, ye are bought of that price. Therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

[22 : 33] Now on the one hand, of course, it is God who knows the heart, who knows every true member, of his own church. Not, you don't become a true member, of the church of Christ, by sitting at the table, in the free church of Scotland, or by taking office, in the free church of Scotland, or becoming a minister, in the free church of Scotland.

That doesn't guarantee you, membership, of the church of Christ. How then do you know, a person who's a member, of the church of Christ?

in this way, he says, let every man, that nameth the name of Christ, depart, from iniquity. He knows them, yes, but they also know him.

He loved them, from all eternity, yes, but they also love him. And that union of faith, and love, moves them, to sever themselves, from that which is, unrighteousness.

He elaborates on this, I think, in the next two verses, which I see before we close the service. Though God alone knows the heart, the life, manifests itself.

[23 : 55] This becomes apparent to all. This is the evidence, of the heart's condition. This is the proof of our belonging.

This is the proof of, be owned by. And we owning him, this is the seal. Everyone that names, the name of Christ, must depart, from iniquity.

The same, great New Testament teaching. If any man, be in Christ, is a new creature. The old has gone, the new has come.

A new power, has taken over in his life, moving him towards, conformity to Christ. Moving him towards, a life of righteousness, and holiness, and commitment.

He names, the name of Christ. That is, he professes, to belong, to Jesus Christ. Hymenaeus, and Philetus, did the same thing.

[25 : 02] Hymenaeus, and Philetus, were members, of the church. They named, the name of Christ. But they didn't believe, the word of Christ. They lived, contrary, to the word of Christ.

And they taught, contrary, to the word, of Christ. But any man, who truly names, the name of Christ, must, show it, in his life.

And he goes on, to speak about that. Flee, says Timothy, he says to Timothy, flee, youthful lusts, follow righteousness, charity, peace, faith, with them, that call, on the name, of the Lord, out of a, pure heart.

Look at the words, that he uses, flee, from, one kind of life, and follow, after another. Run away, from one, separate yourself, distance yourself, from unrighteousness, from impurity, from uncleanness, from what is questionable.

Separate yourself, flee. That's the meaning of the word. Run away from it. I know that in certain evangelical circles, it's not a very, it's a, not a very, palatable kind of teaching.

[26 : 33] Oh no, you don't need to be that. You can be a Christian, you can take it in the name of Christ, you can stay where you are, bring your Christian influence, to bear upon those who are with you, no need to stop this kind of life.

You don't need to, stay where you are. Well my friend, what do you do with the New Testament, if that's the case? What do you do with Paul, here in Timothy, when he says to him, you flee, from that kind of life.

Run away from it, separate, distance. Get clean away from it. and run after, follow, cleave, chase.

The same word that he uses in Philippians chapter 3, I follow after, if I might lay hold of Jesus Christ. I want to become what I'm not.

I want to be, what I have not yet become. Follow after charity, love, peace, faith, righteousness, all the words and the concepts that you associate, with true, genuine, New Testament, biblical, Christianity.

[27 : 38] Do you see it? There's the one life, run away from it, leave it, and there's the other.

Run towards it, follow it, seek it. Notice the cleavage? What's happened to the Christian church today?

The line of demarcation has almost been obliterated because some people in time to apply Christian principles have become so very clever and so very devious and so very unbiblical that they've allowed people to be duped into believing that you can be a Christian without abandoning the way of life that you've had.

My friend, the New Testament forbids you to think like that. And too many Christians have made shipwreck of their lives because they have been duped into believing such teaching.

And there are people in the evangelical churches who are responsible for airing in that way and leading people away in the same way as Hymenaeus and Pilate has stood, leading them away from the truth that leads from one point to another.

[29 : 11] And the great concern of every Christian here tonight, young or old, it doesn't matter where you are or where you worshiped, the great concern for each one of us tonight is to seek conformity to the mind and the will and the life of Jesus Christ.

and if that means parting with what I have, so be it, the New Testament leaves me with no option. Flee and run towards.

Now he says, continuing his theme here, you remember he says that in a large house there aren't only vests of gold and silver but also of wood on earth, some to honour and some to dishonour.

If a man therefore purges himself from thee shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified on me for the master's use and prepared unto every good work. Now look at the illustration.

In the verse we've had before it's been speaking about the good workman. Here he is now when he directs attention to a mansion, a palace, a castle in which the master dwells, the lord of the manor.

[30 : 35] Now he says, in that house there are all kinds of plates and dishes and utensils, tools. You'll find some things of gold and silver.

You'll also find some things made of earthenware and wood. And the point he's making is this. The gold and silver, the silver plates or dishes, are the things that were in that house for the master.

These are the things that are used at his table. Of course, the earth and the wood may be used in other aspects of the functioning of the house.

Now, this, as someone said, is a condensed parable or an expanded metaphor designed to illustrate the wide difference in Christian character amongst nominal Christians.

Remember, he's speaking about the church, the foundation of God. This aggregate or this association of people. You know, there are some associations which are called foundations.

[31 : 53] For example, the Nuffield Foundation and that kind of thing. An association of people that is engaged and involved in a certain type of business.

Well, the church is an association, an organization of people. Of course, as the New Testament tells us, every person in the church is not a true member of the church.

Jesus himself told us that. The church grows up in the world like the wheat and the tares. The tares grow up with the wheat. There's the true and the false, the genuine and the spiritual.

Those who are real members of the church and those who are not. Those who have faith and those who are not. Those who will be in Christ in heaven and those who will not be.

Who will be in hell with the dead. Now, this illustration is used by Paul to enforce this obligation upon each member of the church to belong to the nobler class of vessels.

[33 : 01] The gold and the silver. He is not here drawing a contrast between people of varying gifts and talents.

Oh yes, of course there are some people that are like gold and silver but there are other poor members of the church like earth and stone. Earth and wood. There are some who have real gifts and real talents and others who are very, very poorly gifted.

Nevertheless, they all have grace. We know that. And we thank God for it. As he tells in the first letter to the Corinthians. Not many might yet chose. Not many know, but are God.

God hath chosen the poor and the weak of this world. Things that are not to bring to naught things that are. Of course, there are people with great talents in the Christian church and others with very, very few talents indeed.

But they're all of use in the church. They're all of service. Some people may be of service in the kitchen in the back and as it were. And we bless God that there are such.

[34 : 15] Others can be found in the vanguard of the battle and we thank God for them as well. But that's not what Paul is talking about here. He's really asking you and me this question.

What kind of person are you in your relationship to the Christian church? Can the Lord use you? That's what he's dealing with.

That's what he's dealing with. Can you be of service in the Christian church? Is your life one that is true or false?

Clean or unclean? Have you made the break? Will that which contaminates and poisons and ensnare and destroys?

Or have you not? Where do you stand? That's the question that he's dealing with here. Can the Lord use you?

[35 : 20] Can you be meat for the master's use? Look, he says, at that house. It's not everything in that house that the master, the Lord of the manor, will use.

When he's being served, people are careful that they put the proper dishes before and they give him the proper cup, the seminal, proper platter, and so on.

Gold and silver are for his use. Now, can you be of use to Christ?

Which raises the question, how can I be of use to him? And the question is answered in the passage before us. For a start, you must proud yourself from the east, verse 21, and then you will be a vessel unto honour, sanctified on me for the master's use and prepared for every good work.

Purge yourself from these, from what? Purge yourself from these things which contaminate and from these people who contaminate.

[36 : 32] You are not to associate with that kind of teaching or with that kind of living. You're to step out of it. Otherwise, the Lord can't use you in his service.

Surely, that is self-evident from your testament teaching. Any man or woman, boy or girl, the Lord used in his own service were people who followed the Lord.

that's the first thing. You've got to be clean in your heart and in your life. And at the very beginning of this chapter, he directed Timothy to the source of strength for the right kind of living.

Remember, he says, Jesus Christ and the grace available to you in him. and if you want to be the right kind of person, be dependent upon his grace.

And then he says, you must be sanctified. if you purge yourself from these, if you step away, make the break, come into his service, then you will be unvessel unto honor.

[37 : 52] Then you will be ready to serve him. Sanctified or consecrated, set apart, devoted to Christ and to his cause.

Committed, completely given up to him. Yielded to him and to his grace. Saying to him, I am thine. Thy ways are mine.

Thy will is mine. This consecration or devotedness of heart and life is the natural response of the person who owes the Lord so much that he says to him, Lord, what shall I render to thee?

For all thy gifts to me. Other words of Saul of Tarsha from Damascus, Lord, what will thou have me to be?

It's the response of the heart to the goodness and the love of God. The response of a heart which has been melted by the power and the love of his grace.

[38 : 58] The response of a heart aflame with devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. Where is you? Remember, there's a question he's dealing with. Timothy, think of that big house.

Think of these cups that that master uses. Think of the gold and the silver that is placed at his disposal. Have you been placed at his disposal?

Have you come to the feet of the master and said, Lord, here am I. Use me. with Isaiah of old, Lord, here am I.

Send me. Or is your heart in the grip of a cold indifference to the things of God, notwithstanding your knowledge of the truth?

Is this not what we all need? the Christian church made up of people, numbers, look at the numbers here.

[40 : 04] How many of us are aflame with devotion to Christ and to his cause? How many? Not just when it comes to attendance at the means of grace, Sabbath and weekday, but when it comes to actual service, things that have been done.

I must say that there are times when I dread having to ask anyone to do anything. A minister didn't do that.

He shouldn't have to do it. You and I should be placing ourselves at his disposal every day and every night.

But do we do it? That's the question. Consecrate it. Meat for the master's use.

Useful for the passion. And my friend here, listen, this passage will allow you to stand back and say, oh, I've got nothing. I've got no gifts.

[41 : 15] I've got no talents. He's not talking about gifts and talents. He's talking about the man and the woman, the boy and the girl who has stepped away from a life of sin by the grace of God has come and is saying to him, Lord, can you use me?

Meat for the master's use. Ready or prepared unto every good work. Ready for whatever the service may be.

Whatever the call may be. Such, he says, are vessels of honor. Vessels for service.

And as someone has put it, the true honor is service. Service for Christ. Long ago, I don't know if it's still the case or not, but long ago in this country, certainly in England, the king's servants were made nobles by their service.

It was the service that they rendered that led them to be made nobles. And I think this is a theme that Paul is on here.

[42 : 48] If you want a life of honor, it must be a life of service. service. Oh, yes.

We all want the honor, but who wants the service? That's the question. And who is in a position to be used as a service?

No higher honor is that someone could be imagined than to be an instrument in the hand of Jesus Christ to be at his disposal for the furtherance of his purpose to be available whenever wanted for his service?

And who better to strike that note than this man who for the service of Christ was facing death in prison and writing his farewell letter to his young prodigy and saying to him, Timothy, don't be afraid and don't be ashamed to serve the Lord.

Ah, my friend, has this word anything to say to you and to me tonight. You see, it places a heavy responsibility not just the ministers here or on the divinity students or on the office bearers but on every single member of the church of Jesus Christ as you and I see the church.

[44 : 39] And by member, I take it in its widest sense, most of you here tonight, as they used to say in old days, some of you, perhaps the majority of you, members of the church by baptism, if not by profession of aid.

Whether you agree with that or not, well, let's leave that to one side. But at least, here we are, vast number of people here tonight, an aggregate of people. Can the Lord Jesus Christ use you?

Are you in a position to be used? And can we not say, ah, can we not say as we leave this place tonight, Lord, here am I, use me.

Let us pray. Lord, have mercy upon us, bless to us the word of thy grace, and enable us to rejoice in the knowledge that come what may, thy church will survive, thy church will continue.

Number us amongst those who have, by the grace of God, been separated from a life and a service of sin to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[46 : 10] And may we be found as we live day by day on the side of Christ, and we will never be ashamed to own him and to accept him as our Lord and our Redeemer, as our Master and as our King, and forgive our sins for his sake.

Amen.