

## Vessels Unto Honor

*"Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver; but also of wood and earth; and some unto honor and some unto dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, meet for the Master's use" (2 Tim. 2:20f).*

From the text in which this statement is taken, reference was made to the firm foundation of God that standeth. A foundation is that footing upon which a house is built and frequent allusion to a foundation as part of a house is found both from Jesus' teaching as well as from Paul (Mt. 7:24-27; 16:18-20; 1 Cor. 3:11). So, since reference was made to the firm foundation which "standeth;" there follows these words of the different materials in a "great house ... vessels of gold and silver; wood and earth." These words are much akin to 1 Corinthians 3:12 in that "... if a man buildeth on the foundation gold, costly stone, wood, hay, stubble" except that in the Corinthian passage the material was part of the house itself; the text from Second Timothy refers to various vessels within that house.

*"Vessels of gold and of silver; of wood and earth."* A vessel is something used by another although sometimes the word is used to describe different parts of the body, directed by the mind. Commanding abstinence from fornication, Paul commanded the Thessalonians *"that each one of you know how to possess himself of his vessel in sanctification and honor, not in the passion of lust ..."* (1 Thess. 4:4fa). Of course in our homes we have vessels for different uses; some honorable, some common or dishonorable. As a child I well remember a can kept handily in the kitchen (or on the back porch) into which the scraps and residue of our meals were cast; milk that was spoiled or other items no longer regarded fit for human consumption. This can was designated as the "slop can" and its contents were used to feed the hogs. On the other hand there was the "water bucket" filled with water from the well. Sometimes a gourd dipper lay nearby so that the thirsty one could quench his thirst. That dipper, and the bucket of water from the well, were vessels of honor and all discerning persons knew exactly which container they would "dip into" to quench their thirst!

*"If a man purge himself ..."* There is a work of purging (sanctification) that only God can do: only He can purge a man from the guilt of sin. On the other hand, it is the duty of man to purge himself from the love and practice of sin. Since the text speaks of "a man" who purges himself, the purging spoken of in the text is something which man must do. Thus we read, *"Cleanse your hands, ye sinners. Purify your hearts, ye double minded" (Jms. 4:8). "Come out from among them, and be ye separate saith*

*the Lord*" (2 Cor. 6:17). Assuredly we need God's help in temptation and trials, but while His is ever there, the final action must from self.

"... *from these.*" Previous in our text nothing has been said of specific sins such as those which the writer continued to write of later. "*But flee youthful lusts and follow after righteousness, faith, love, peace with them that call on the Lord ...*" (2 Tim. 2:22). "*From these*" is a reference to vessels of wood and earth, standing for sinful practice and doctrines -- such doctrine as that earlier mentioned: "*The resurrection is past already.*"

"*Vessels of honor ... dishonor.*" A vessel of dishonor can become a vessel of honor, by the volition of the man himself. A gourd dipper could dip into the "slop bucket" but who would want to drink of that? In that instance it would be a "*vessel unto dishonor.*" That same dipper could dip into the water bucket and refresh the one who drank it. In such a case it would be a "*vessel of honor.*"

"*Sanctified, meet for the master's use.*" Our lives are worthless unto both ourselves and our Maker if we dip in that "bucket of slop." We must wash out that dipper and use it to draw out fresh and pure water, and be used to our Master's glory, praise, and service.

Jim McDonald