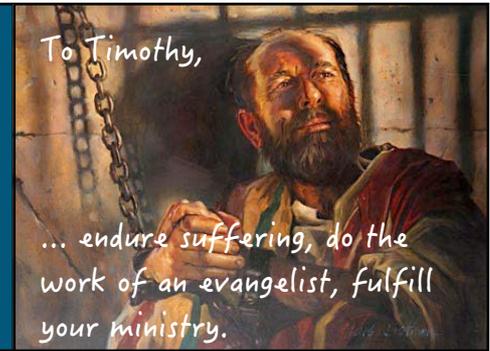


2 Timothy

Fulfill Your Ministry

Lesson 7



In lesson 6 we saw Paul address Timothy about false teachers and how to handle them. Since Paul tells Timothy to keep reminding the church of these things we know this was going to be an ongoing problem. Some within the church were caught up in useless controversies and arguments while others were spreading false teachings such as the Lord's coming has already happened. Amongst the controversies and false teaching Paul reminds Timothy of two important truths: the Lord knows those who belong to him and those who name Christ as Lord must depart from iniquity.

Choose to be Useful 2:20-26

On first reading verses 20,21 may not seem clear, but they are an illustration about how Timothy was to prepare his life for service. He was to choose to be a honourable and useful vessel.

The illustration is of a large house which contains many vessels or articles of many kinds. Some of the articles or vessels are made of gold and silver. These are articles for honourable purposes. They would include silverware and items for feasts; the plates, the pitchers, the serving trays. They might also include beautiful decorations that hang on the walls of a well appointed house.



There are also articles or vessels of wood and clay in a house. These items are for what are called dishonourable purposes. These would include rubbish bins and bed pans. The contents of these vessels are good for nothing, but to be discarded; in fact the container itself may be thrown out in some cases.

In this illustration the great house is the church, the articles are Christians, the master is God. Some in the church are honourable and some are dishonourable because of their actions. Paul is speaking of the church as a whole and is not saying that every congregation has these kind of people, but that there are dishonourable people in churches.

1. Define the word “honourable” and list a few honourable characteristics.

When Paul thinks about those who are dishonourable he has in mind the false teachers that he wrote about in verse 17; men like Hymenaeus, and Philetus, and others who have swerved from the truth.

Verse 21 makes it clear that an individual decides whether he or she will be honourable or not. This is done as a person chooses how to live day by day. The word translated as “cleanses” in verse 21 means to completely purge or eliminate.¹ The servant of God must cleanse himself from all things that could be described as dishonourable.

2. How does one purge or cleanse himself from those things which are dishonourable?

Those who are honourable are:

1. Set apart as holy. The Christian is to be set apart for a holy purpose and indicates the position of one in Christ.
2. Useful to the master of the house. The vessel that is useful is one that fulfills the function for which it was created. It is the master (God) who finds use in the service of the vessel (the Christian.)
3. Ready for every good work. The word translated as “ready” is a verb form contemplating completed action resulting in an abiding condition.² The one who has cleansed himself (through obedience to God and through his forgiveness) is prepared to undertake whatever task the Master may call him to accomplish.

Next Paul instructs Timothy “*flee youthful passions.*” Timothy probably joined Paul about the year AD 49 or 50 and if he was around twenty at that time he must be somewhere in this late thirties at the time of this writing (around the year AD 67 or 68). The Greek word for youth can refer to a man up to the age of forty.

The tense of the word translated “*flee*” is one that indicates continuous action. Flee and keep fleeing these temptations. Paul doesn’t name any particular temptation, but we are well aware of some of the temptations young men face.

3. What temptations especially beset young men?

Timothy couldn’t lead people if he did not set an honourable example. Timothy must not only “*flee*” youthful passions, he was to “*pursue*” righteousness, faith, love, and peace. Previously Paul had mentioned the first three in this list in 1 Timothy 6:11.



¹ <https://billmounce.com/greek-dictionary/ekkathairo>

² Smith, James E. Exhortation Epistles, p. 228-229.

4. Define the following words.

A. Righteousness --

B. Faith --

C. Love --

D. Peace --

5. Does the fact that a man must “flee” youthful passions while “pursing” righteousness, faith, love, and peace indicate that this may not happen naturally? What steps would be needed in one’s life to flee and pursue those things that please God?

Timothy was not in the Christian race alone. Verse 22 encourages him to pursue these godly characteristics along with “those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.” The word translated “call” is in a tense that indicates continual action. The believer is to continually look to God for their hope and strength. An entire church united and continually calling upon the Lord while avoiding dishonourable actions and living lives of righteousness, faith, love, and peace will be a powerful force in the world.



A powerful disrupter of unity within a church is quarreling. Timothy is strongly instructed to constantly avoid “foolish, ignorant controversies.” These are the same controversies addressed above. They are not based on Scripture, but based upon opinions and speculations.

Paul had addressed this previously in 1 Timothy 1:3-7 when he spoke about those who devoted themselves to “myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations.” He also calls these “vain discussions” and concludes that these individuals desire to be teachers, but don’t understand “either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.”³

6. What types of problems arise in churches that are unsettled and constantly quarreling about insignificant matters?”

Christian leaders are to correct doctrinal problems and moral issues in the church, but involvement in controversies that do not have their basis in Scripture are useless and counterproductive. Instead the Lord’s servant is to: 1) avoid quarreling, 2) be kind to everyone, 3) be able to teach, 4) patiently endure evil, and 5) correct his opponents with gentleness.

³ See 1 Timothy 1:3-7

The minister of Christ must be able to get along with people. He cannot do this if he is involved in the quarreling. Instead he acts with kindness or gentleness towards everyone. He must know Scripture and be able to provide sound teaching. He will face adversity so he must be patient and gentle as he corrects those who oppose him through ignorance or immaturity.

The goal of the Lord's servant is to gently correct his opponents so that they might repent and come to a knowledge of the truth. Gentle answers and instruction have the potential to build understanding instead of provoking greater discord and antagonizing the very ones we hope to see come to maturity in Christ. Solomon wrote in Proverbs 15:1, *"A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."*

7. Why is gentle instruction usually more effective than stern condemnation?

The need for repentance and coming to a knowledge of the truth tells us that those involved in the quarreling were in error. Rather than harshly disciplining them, gentle instruction would yield better results.

The hope of the Lord's servant is further explained in verse 26. Instead of alienation from the Lord and his church, the minister hopes to see those in error *"come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil."*

8. What is the meaning of "come to their senses" and what could bring about this change?

The current position of these individuals is that they have been *"snared"* and *"captured."* They were not just in danger, they had already been captured by the enemy. They were doing the work of the devil breeding controversy and discord in the church. Yet there was hope that they could be liberated from their captivity if they would repent and come to a knowledge of the truth as they were gently instructed by a loving servant of God.



We don't know how successful the efforts of Timothy were in the church in Ephesus. Sometimes Christians in error refuse to repent and remain captive to Satan. With the eternal destiny of men and women created in the image of God, it was vital that Timothy make every effort to lead those in error back into the arms and service of the living God. Likewise our desire to build unity and strength in the church and to see those in error *"come to their senses"* and escape the snare of the devil.