

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

Volume 32, Number 30

July 26, 2015



God's "Great House:" What Kind of Vessel am I?

But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work. (2 Timothy 2:20–21, KJV 1900)

By the literary context and the introductory and connective "But," Paul links this lesson with what he has just taught Timothy regarding the false teachers and God's sure foundation. The false teacher, if allowed to feed his profane and vain babblings, will eventually arrive at false doctrine such as the two men whom Paul names. Further, those false teachers will spread their error, and will so influence other believers as to overthrow their faith. However, the false teacher overthrowing the faith of some believers in no way reduces the number of God's elect. It does not remove the deceived believer from the foundation of God's sure love and electing knowledge. We glean these truths from verses 17-19. So what is Paul's point as he further develops his lesson to Timothy in our present verses? What is the "great house" of which he writes? Who are the "vessels" of gold, silver, or of wood and of earth? What makes one person in this great house a vessel of honor to God, and what makes another person a vessel of dishonor? These are important questions, and Paul answers them in the lesson, a lesson that will help us to avoid much of the self-promoting self-judgment that blackens the name of Jesus in our present world. Much of professing Christianity in our day feeds on the idea of judging another person's eternal standing with God based on whether they agree or disagree with the self-appointed judge. Disagree with these judges and you face their "If you do not accept my teachings, I can't give you any assurance that you are even born again." Paul directly deals with false teachers and their ideas in our context, but he reaches a wholly contradictory conclusion to this modern judgment. It is this inspired and Biblical conclusion that we need to understand to avoid the deformed fruits of the self-appointed judge of another person, even of another believer's eternal standing with God based merely on their agreement or disagreement with the teacher-self-appointed judge. While dealing with the practical side of this question, James clearly rebukes this modern idea.

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge

the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another? (James 4:10-12)

By the very act of judging another person who is not your servant, you magnify yourself to the posture of divine lawgiver, thereby attempting to replace God Himself who is the only true Judge and Lawgiver. Folks, this is not a position to be desired, but rather to be avoided. Let's follow Paul's teaching in this context instead of the false teachers who judge false judgments against the Lord's sheep.

If a man therefore purge himself from these.... What should a believer in Christ do when confronted with someone who teaches things different from the truths that Paul and other inspired men wrote in our New Testament, in Paul's words, "profane and vain babblings" that always grow until they become doctrinal gangrene, doctrinal "death in the pot" of a man's gospel, not the Lord's? The first and most vital action Paul simply states. "Purge" yourself from such teachers and their gangrene infection. Do not ignore them because they are your friend. Do not minimize their influence because you think "Oh, he is such a good brother who means well and wants to do what is right." If he is teaching error¹, you have one right and Biblical option. "Purge" yourself from him. The word translated "purge" in this lesson was translated from a Greek word that has the following meaning:

to make clean by removing that which is unclean—to clean out, to clean away.' ...'clean out the old yeast' 1 Cor 5:7. In 1 Cor 5:7 [the word stated in Greek characters] is used in a complex figurative expression and may often be better rendered as 'to get rid of' or 'to remove.'²

¹ Yes, Paul teaches that we should confront and admonish the "heretick," but only once or twice. If, after these admonitions, he continues in his error, Paul also directs that we mark and avoid him. (Titus 3:10-11; Romans 16:17-18)

² 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.

You cannot possibly maintain an intimate, much less a discipleship, relationship with such a man and obey Paul's words and purge yourself from him. Some New Testament Greek dictionaries refer this word to ritual or religious cleansing such as the Old Testament occasionally required after a man had touched a dead body or other "Unclean" things.

It is often the simple words in Scripture that people overlook or ignore that teach us the clearest truth of a lesson. Paul doesn't so much as hint that "If you are really born again, you will purge yourself, so, if you fail to purge yourself, it is because you are not born again." There is a dramatic difference in Paul's words that describe the man, the believer who faithfully does purge himself from his words that describe the believer who follows the false teacher into a shipwrecked or overthrown faith. "*If a man purge himself...*"

...he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work. This act of purging does not put the man in the "Great house." The whole dynamic of the lesson occurs within the named "Great house." Both kinds of vessels, honorable and dishonorable, reside in this "Great house." But only the man who abides faithfully with Paul's true teaching and who also shuns not only the false doctrine that overthrows faith, but also the profane and vain babblings that grow into such false teachings, shall become the sanctified vessel who by his purging and faithfulness becomes the honorable and useful vessel for the Master's use, prepared for every good work and not disqualified by his falling under the influence of profane and vain babblings that foster grave error.

The point that Paul makes is actually simple. Think about his household analogy. Walk through each room in your house. Look in your kitchen cabinets and your closets. You have different containers and different tools for the various duties you need to perform to keep your house clean and enjoyable. But you respectfully and wisely use the right tool for the right task. Do you put your dirty dishes in the washing machine to clean them? Please do not do so; you'll have a large pile of broken dishes, not clean dishes. If you are barbecuing a good piece of your favorite meat, do you go to a kitchen drawer for a barbecue brush, or do you go to the garage for a well-used paint brush to apply your favorite barbecue sauce?

In Paul's lesson, however, he does not deal with passive tools or vessels that merely sit in a shelf until picked up and put to use by God. He imposes personal choices and consequences onto what the man chooses to do. "*If a man therefore...*"

The grave consequences of this lesson should get our attention. How we choose to act and what we choose to believe determines whether we are a useful vessel in the Lord's "Great house" or a

dishonorable vessel, still in His house, but dishonorable to Him and His glory, and not prepared for His use. It determines if we are sanctified and ready for the Master's use, or if we are so focused on our personal wishes that we are not prepared or ready for His use at all. Do not doubt; the Lord can quite readily take care of His business. He shall always have the honorable, sanctified vessel that is "...meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." However, if you or I choose the profane and vain way, giving ourselves over to the false teachers of spiritual profanity and babbling, rest assured that the Lord shall bypass us for that sanctified and honorable vessel.

Paul's teaching gives us both comfort and rebuke. No false teacher can strip one child of grace from the loving embrace of the God of all grace. Each individual member of God's beloved family is securely planted in the foundational truth, "*The Lord knoweth them that are his.*" But Paul's teaching doesn't stop at that point. "*Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*" (2 Timothy 2:19b)

For the child of grace in the Lord's "Great house," departing from iniquity involves far more than avoiding the base sins of the body. It also demands that we avoid profane and vain babbling of false teachers that inevitably leads those who listen to its sound to indulge in the greater ungodliness of departure from the truth of the gospel into such error as either denying the resurrection or claiming that it has already occurred, and you were left behind, the teaching of the two men whom Paul names as examples in this context.

But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.
(Jude 1:20-21)

How well are we building ourselves up on that "most holy faith"? How faithful are we to "praying in the Holy Ghost" and not simply praying our own wills, ways, and ideas? How consistently do we keep ourselves in the love of God as we trek our way through this world; even as we encounter those profane and vain babblings that should sound the loud alarm of greater error to come? Beware. As we compromise our faith in any of these areas, we also erode our clear vision of the Lord's mercy and of our final eternal life. We do not lose eternity with the Lord, but we sadly lose its joyful comforts in the midst of life's trials. What kind of vessel are you in the Lord's "Great house"?

Little Zion Primitive Baptist Church
16434 Woodruff
Bellflower, California

Worship service each Sunday

10:30 A. M.

Joseph R. Holder

Pastor