

“FIT FOR THE MASTER’S USE”

II TIMOTHY 2:19-21

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INTRODUCTION

Are you “**fit for the Master’s use**”? In this passage we can find the answer. The answer is two-fold:

- 1) You must belong to Him—through foreknowledge, election, and conversion.
- 2) You must be sanctified—set apart **to Him** and **from wickedness**, both personal and ecclesiastical.

Now the key to understanding this passage is to answer the question, “What attitude and responsibility should true believers have toward the counterfeit teachers and members who dishonor the Master and the Church? (21)

Today you will discover whether you are a Fundamentalist or an Evangelical/New Evangelical.

You say what is that? How do I know the difference? This text gives us one clear evidence.

You may also say, “*But, isn’t it bad to be a Fundamentalist? Aren’t they radicals, and don’t they terrorize and kill people?*”

Not if you understand the genuine Biblical and Historical truths concerning the Fundamentalist movement within Christianity.

IF YOU NAME HIS NAME YOU MUST BE AN “APOSTATE” FROM WICKEDNESS!

I. GOD’S SOLID FOUNDATION STANDS WITH A TWO-FOLD SEAL. (19)

- Authentication—genuineness
- Ownership
- Authority and Protection

This seal has two sides to it.

A. “The Lord Knows those who are His”

- He has “known” them, made them the special objects of His love and fellowship, from eternity, and later manifested such in time. This seal contains **security** for the believer.
- See Num. 16 the Lord identifies whom He has chosen for His priesthood in contrast with the counterfeit group of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram who falsely claimed the right to the priesthood.
- Moses states, “Tomorrow the Lord will show who is holy”; the LXX reading says “the Lord knows who are His.”
- False claimants to priesthood were rejected there; here, false claimants to salvation and to the authority of “teacher of the gospel” are unknown to God and therefore do not have the divine seal of genuineness.
- As a secondary issue, those whose “faith” is overthrown in some cases never had genuine saving faith, and therefore do not have the divine seal after all. God knows those who truly belong to Him and none of them will lose their salvation; none of them will have their genuine faith truly overthrown.

B. “Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from wickedness.”

- The deathblow to *fatalism*, for this activity happens **in time** (H. 268). This reality is a matter of obedience and his duty. This seal procures **purity** in the believer.
- In II Thes. 2:13 Paul states that God’s election of believers “from the beginning” was “to salvation **through sanctification by the Spirit and belief of the truth.**” Likewise I Pet. 1:1-2: “Elect...according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience....”
- This statement may also be an allusion to Num. 16:27 where God’s people were warned to step away from the tents of the rebel group that were about to be engulfed whole while all their inhabitants were taken alive into Sheol.

- Taking His name and “naming” it must not be done glibly and carelessly. His name is holy and He will defend Himself.
- Paul puts the verb in the form of a third person imperative—“let him depart, abstain from.” To be blunt, **“Let the person who names the name of the Lord apostatize from wickedness never to return to it.”**
- In Is. 52:11 the Lord commands his people to depart and go out of Babylon and not to touch anything unclean on the way, but rather to purify themselves, a command reinforced by Paul in II Cor. 6:17—“Come out from among them and be separate....”
- One who cites God’s name in his worship and claims His name over his life is thereby claiming **all that the divine “name” stands for—His attributes as revealed in nature and special revelation.** Therefore, he must be consistent in displaying such in his life by “abstaining from wickedness.”
- As noted above in the exegesis, both inscriptions of the seal reflect the same OT incident—the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram against divinely constituted authority just as these teachers rebelled against Paul and the Church; they also involved others in their rebellion just as Korah and company had done.

II. GOD’S VISIBLE CHURCH HAS TWO KINDS OF VESSELS (20)

The Universal Church consisting of genuinely saved members cannot be harmed by false teachers and false professors; it has been portrayed as a foundation in v. 19. However, in the experiential church or “visible church” does have issues with such persons and goes through trials because of them. It is now portrayed as the superstructure of a building—specifically a “house.”

A. The Kind Of House Spoken of—“Large house” or even a palace.

B. The Kinds of Vessels in the house

1. Gold and silver—for honor.

- Note that some believers are more faithful & valuable—of gold, and some less faithful and valuable—of silver.
- Honor is the “attitude towards a person or thing commensurate with its value

2. Wood and clay—for dishonor.

- Members of an important family in a “great house” sitting at table being served by servants with platters of gold or silver; in addition, the house would likely be decorated with gold, silver, and bronze objects.
- In the kitchen servants prepare the food in clay pots. In the laundry room clothes are washed in a large wooden tub. Meanwhile, one servant collects garbage in a wooden receptacle.
- The valuable articles were **to be kept and displayed**, but the less valuable and dishonorable articles **are to be taken to the dump or junk-yard when they have served their purpose.**
- Note that Paul in Rom. 9:21 makes the same reference to vessels for both honorable uses and for dishonorable uses, and also that those for common use are “prepared for destruction.”

III. GOD’S SERVANT MUST “CLEANSE HIMSELF FROM THESE” PERSONS (21)

A. The Result of the Cleansing—“He will be a vessel for honor”

- Certainly this point applies to Timothy, and to other faithful servants in Ephesus & elsewhere
- The general wording shows that even vessels of wood & clay can become a good vessel

1. Having been sanctified

- To make holy, sanctify, consecrate, dedicate, purify.
- A condition of holiness entered into in the past, not only when the man was first converted, but especially in this context the strengthened and consistently applied growth in sanctification during the process of **becoming separate from corruption and false teaching and teachers.**

- Not only being **set apart for God**, but also being **separated from the defilement** of the unclean vessels.
2. Useful for the Master
 - Easy to make use of.
 - For the benefit of the Master.
 - The heavenly Master or “Despot”; the word speaks of a ruler who has great authority, uncontrolled power, and absolute ownership.
 3. Having been prepared for every good work
 - Not only a few good works, but every good work that God, the absolute Master of the believer, expects.
 - Only good works, those that meet divine qualifications as outlined in Scripture and in harmony with the divine nature.
 - Strong emphasis in the Pastoral Epistles on **good works**—despite the stress upon salvation being by grace through faith (e.g. II Tim. 1:9; Tit. 3:5).
 - See Eph. 2:10 immediately after the emphasis upon grace through faith in 2:8-9. The believer is God’s “workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works, which God PREPARED beforehand, that we should walk in them.**”
- B. The Identification of the Cleansing—“From these”
- In I Cor. 15:33 in a similar context of false teaching—also concerning the resurrection!—Paul reminds the believers that “bad company corrupts good morals.” In II Thes. 3:14 Paul commanded disassociation with those who are disobedient to apostolic instructions. Whether the bad vessels are *already out of the church as Hymenaeus evidently was, or were still in the church, Timothy and others must not accept such teachers or their doctrines nor copy their examples.* If necessary, Timothy must **even put the “bad vessels” out of the assembly.** Kelly shows conclusively that the **only valid antecedent for “these” is the vessels for dishonor.** The suggestion that “these” could refer back to “profane vain chatter” in v. 16 is not viable—the antecedent is too remote (p. 188). Wuest states well concerning this text: “It has direct application to the obligation of a pastor to refuse to fellowship in the work of the ministry with another pastor who is a modernist” (139-40).
- It is important to understand the literal figure behind this statement of Paul. When the cheaper and ignoble vessels had served their purpose and had become useless and dirty and dishonorable, they needed to be discarded.
 - Likewise, the false teachers who had become a liability to the people of God and the “great house” needed to be “discarded” from the church. Such is the primary application of the passage; the *secondary application* is to internal cleansing and purification from defiling *attitudes, practices, and doctrinal beliefs.*
 - Paul uses the verb compounded with the preposition which intensifies its meaning to “clean out, cleanse completely.”
 - The only other NT use of this verb is by Paul in I Cor. 5:7 of the “cleansing out of the old leaven”; in the context it is clear that Paul speaks of the immoral member who is to be “delivered to Satan” for the destruction of his flesh—otherwise, excommunicated from the assembly of believers.
 - Expel the offenders, or forsake the offenders and leave the church? **In application over the years, both actions have had to be taken—depended upon the circumstances of the persons doing the “cleansing.”**

This passage is very significant in helping to illuminate the distinction between Biblical Fundamentalism and what is commonly known as New Evangelicalism—a term originally coined by Harold John Ockenga in 1948 in the effort to

establish the new movement in the 1950's, and in order to distinguish the new emphasis of Evangelicalism from that of the Fundamentalists.

- The Fundamentalists placed stress upon separation from theological error and compromise—whether by 1) putting the error out of the church or denomination, or if that failed or was impossible, by 2) leaving the church or denomination.
- The New Evangelicalism placed emphasis upon influence and infiltration of the false teachers—allowing them to remain while stating disagreement generally in a cordial and non-confrontational way. The New Evangelicals were concerned about intellectual respect from the liberals toward themselves.
- George Elden Ladd, another powerful early influence within Evangelicalism, a professor of biblical theology at Fuller Seminary, argued that “the unity of the church overrides the purity of the church.” He even uses the example of Hymenaeus and Philetus to prove his point. He argued that the presence of such men in the church as wooden and clay vessels alongside vessels of gold and silver “*can mean nothing less than that in the church we are to expect different kinds of ministers; and the point of reference is doctrinal purity. Nothing can be clearer than the statement of this verse that perfect doctrinal purity is an ideal which can never be obtained*” [*The Evangelical's Dilemma*]. He argues that when Timothy is told to cleanse himself, it means that “the church is to be *warned* against these false teachings.” His recommendation is to promote sound doctrine “in the spirit of love.” “Recovering dissident teachers is more important than the denunciation of their error.”
- Homer Kent in his *The Pastoral Epistles* (p. 277) takes a more accurate position—quoted in McCune, *Promise Unfulfilled*, p. 135: “*The Great House is a symbol of the professing church in its widest aspect. As wood and pottery vessels are unenduring and must be replaced, so in the church, false teachers arise from time to time, but eventually their worthlessness is recognized, and they are removed.*” *As the contamination of the dishonored containers must not be allowed to soil the honored ones, the true servant of God must purge himself from the company of the valueless ones. By doing so, he will have become separated from evil...and thus be of use...to the Master of the household*’ (278). *In the analogy, the cleansing/purging is from the false teachers themselves and not just the uncleanness of their message, much less some sort of warning against their doctrine.*”
- What about the parable of the wheat and the tares (Mt. 13:24-30, 36-43)? The argument is often given that false teachers are not to be rooted out of the church but left there until the end of the age; then God Himself will separate them. A pure visible church is unattainable in this age! **“This view is a colossal misinterpretation”** (McCune, 136). In the parable, Jesus clearly states that the field is the world, not the church (v. 38). Only God has infallible knowledge as to who are genuine believers. **“God’s longsuffering in the administration of cosmic affairs is no more an argument against the biblical doctrine of the purity of the visible Church than against the purity of the individual life.”**

CONCLUSION

I am a Fundamentalist—not an Evangelical/New Evangelical; I do not apologize for taking this position.

I have been guiding our church in the same direction; very few churches take this position any longer.

Far more people, pastors, churches are interested in Peace than in Purity.

I don’t believe that we must settle for only one. We will find genuine NT peace when we maintain Biblical purity.

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