

(2:20) – The Apostle Paul had charged Timothy to stand firm for God’s truth against all those who would deny and oppose it. We are attacked on every side, within and without, by Satan and the world. One of the most disappointing things for believers in this world is when we see heresies within the visible church, especially when those who at one time professed belief of the truth and whom we thought were brethren in Christ, turn against Christ and the church and deny the truth they once professed. But Paul says we can expect this disappointment – **“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”** (cf. 1 Cor. 11:19). The **“vessels of gold and of silver”** are those sinners truly saved by God grace, who live and abide in the **“honour”** of God’s grace and mercy, having Christ’s righteousness imputed to them and spiritual life and faith imparted to them. They are saved and preserved by the Lord unto glory. Those who are **“of wood and of earth”** are those who live **“to dishonour,”** like Hymenaeus and Philetus, as they forsake and deny Christ and His church. The vessels of dishonour did not lose their salvation. They were never truly saved but only had a mere empty profession. The vessels of honor are kept by the power and grace of God in Christ (1 John 2:19-20; Tim. 1:12).

(2:21) – **“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.”** If a man stays away from the company, the heresies, the errors, and the influences of these dishonorable vessels, he can be an honorable and useful vessel, set apart by God, filled with the spirit of grace, truth, and love, useful to the Lord for witnessing, teaching, and helping others in the household of faith. But evil communication and companions corrupt good manners. Association and fellowship with unregenerate, murmuring, indifferent, troublemakers in the church have a corrupting influence (Rom. 16-17-18; 2 Tim. 2:14,16-18). So, whenever error arises within the visible church, we who are truly saved are to seek to separate ourselves from any who promote it (Rom 12:1-2)

(2:22) – **“Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”** Certainly, all men and women of all ages who are saved by God’s grace are to fight sin in a godly way in the warfare of Spirit against the flesh (Gal. 5:16-26). But in the context Paul probably has in mind here of encouraging Timothy, as well as all young ministers and leaders, to be careful to avoid sins such as lusts, vain glory, seeking popular applause and preeminence among men, and becoming involved in disputes, debates, and divisions. If some debate arises, problem is presented, or contention appears, young men more quickly grow angry, more

easily irritated, and blunder through lack of experience; they are given to rashness. Flee this! Follow after conformity to the will of God and exhibit faith, love, and peace with all of the believers who call on the name of the Lord in sincerity and truth.

(2:23) – “But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.” Foolish and ignorant controversies over issues that are not essential to true faith and do not edify the church and are not clearly resolved by the Word of God are to be avoided. These speculations and arguments over secret mysteries, silly trifles, and unprofitable traditions only serve to foster strife and breed quarrels divisions. The only issues we should stand firm against are those that deny, ignore, or confuse the Gospel of God’s grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ.

(2:24) – “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,” – The servant of the Lord, especially the minister of the Word, ought not to strive and contend about words to no profit. He ought to strive for the faith of the Gospel and that which promotes growth in grace and knowledge of Christ. To be quarrelsome and contentious over mere non-essential words, customs, and doctrines just to show off his intelligence, mastery, and piety is to defeat the very purpose of his office. He is to be kind, mild-tempered, and gentle to all people, preserving the bond of peace. He must be a skilled and suitable teacher, patient, and willing to bear reproach (2 Cor. 2:15-17; 3:5-7).

(2:25) – “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;” – Let the minister learn to correct with courtesy and gentleness those who oppose the Word of God, and in turn oppose “themselves;” for any man who opposes truth does so to his own ruin. We must be firm in the truth, yet tender in spirit with our opponents in the hope that God will grant to them repentance and an understanding of the Word. Remember, both faith and repentance are gifts from God to His people. We cannot change anyone’s heart. It takes the Holy Spirit in the new birth to bring a dead sinner to spiritual life, faith, and repentance of dead works and idolatry.

(2:26) – “And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.” Our goal in all this is the recovery of those who have been distracted and deceived by false professors. They have in essence been attacked and “taken captive” by Satan who uses such false witnesses to do his bidding. Only the Lord can save us, keep us, and recover us when we go astray, but He uses His ministers as instruments of His grace and power to accomplish this task (cf. James 5:19-20).