



“THE VALUE OF A PURE HEART”

2 Timothy 2:20-23

Theme: *The believer must strive for purity in order to be useful to the Master.*

Introduction: Recently, Pat was out of town, and I was functioning as a bachelor. One morning, I scrambled some eggs using a fork. I had put the fork on the counter next to the stovetop. After they were scrambled, I pulled another fork out to eat them, leaving the “scrambling fork” on the counter. I failed to put it into the dishwasher. Later in the day, I pulled some food out for dinner, and I picked up the fork I had left on the counter earlier in the morning and was about to use it to eat dinner – some 11 hours later. Suddenly, I realized what I was doing – there had been raw egg on that fork. I quickly put it down and got a clean fork out to eat. This seems excessively mundane, but it illustrates the thrust of this passage. There are vessels of honor within the church and others of dishonor. Some that God can use, and some that disqualify themselves from being used by the Lord. Those whom the Lord will use must possess a pure heart.

Read the text ... Our text demonstrates that *“The believer must strive for purity in order to be useful to the Master.”* There are three points: 1) The Priority of Purity, 2) The Preservation of Purity, and 3) The Perversion of Purity. Let’s begin ...

I. THE PRIORITY OF PURITY – 2:20-21

A. The Presence of Corruption – v. 20

1. Having referred to the foundation of God, which is the church built upon the truth about the identity of Christ Jesus as God’s Son and our Savior, Paul continues in his analogy of a house – *Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and earthenware ...”*
2. There are those who “have gone astray” from the truth because of false teaching and a desire to influence the church to follow them.
3. The church possesses *“gold and silver vessels”* representing true believers and *“vessels of wood and earthenware”* representing hypocrites within the church – cp. [Matthew 13:24-30](#).
4. Like a field containing tares and wheat, the visible church contains people who publicly confess Christ but deny Him privately – without integrity of love for Him.
5. By describing them as *“... some to honor and some to dishonor,”* he distinguishes genuine believers from false believers - [Romans 9:21](#).

B. The Purging for Consecration – v. 21

1. Paul states clearly that we cannot allow the corruptions of false teaching and the gangrenous ungodliness that results from false teaching to dwell

in the church.

2. **“These things”** refers to *“evil men (“utensils for dishonor”) and their defiling doctrines and practices; from such men as Hymenaeus and Philetus and their disciples, and from their false teachings and evil habits.”*¹
3. **“cleanses”** [ἐκκαθαίρω] – is an intensified word from which we get “catharsis” to rid oneself of what is corrupting or unclean.
4. He says, **“Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor ...”** characterized by several things:
 - a) He will be **“sanctified”** [ἀγιάζω] – set apart for ritual purposes or holy pursuits.
 - b) He will be **“useful to the Master”** [εὐχρηστος] – able to be utilized for sacred purposes.
 - c) He will be **“prepared [ἐτοιμάζω] for every good work”** – to put something into a state of readiness **“for every good work.”** – ***Ephesians 2:10.***
5. Being **“useful to the Master”** is the aspiration of every believer, and we are told here that we can be if we will be intolerant of false teachers and their false teaching.

II. THE PRESERVATION OF PURITY – 2:22

A. Seek Safety from Vices

1. He extends his exhortation with the word **“now”** [δέ] – which can serve as a marking linking related items – here, it connects **“cleansing oneself”** and **“flee from youthful lusts ...”**
2. **“youthful lusts”** [νεωτερικός] - describe cravings that are often blatantly viewed in immaturity.
3. These **“lusts”** [ἐπιθυμία] – do not refer merely to sensual desires but refer to those things that are craved with intemperance, indulgence, and defilement.
 - a) Pleasures – immorality, gluttony, alcohol, drugs, etc ...
 - b) Power – pride, self-promotion, domination
 - c) Possessions – materialism, coveting, greed, etc ...
4. **“flee”** [φεύγω] – indicates our priority must be to seek safety from the defilements these things bring, avoiding or shunning these desires.
5. This is done primarily by replacing such desires with desires for appropriate things.

B. Strive Strenuously after Virtues

¹ Hendriksen – p. 271.

1. Instead, we are **“pursue”** the basic Christian virtues of godliness.
2. These include:
 - a) **Conformity** – **“righteousness”** [δικαιοσύνη] – the state of one’s soul that is in harmony with God and results in conduct conformed to Christ.
 - b) **Confidence** – **“faith”** [πίστις] – the state of one’s soul that relies on God with confidence.
 - c) **Compassion** – **“love”** [ἀγάπη] – the state of one’s soul that possesses affection for both members of the family of God as well as outsiders.
 - d) **Comaraderie** – **“peace”** [εἰρήνη] – the state of one’s soul that is undisturbed and unperturbed by other believers because of the previous characteristics of righteousness, faith, and love.
3. These things are found exclusively in the grace of the Lord – **“... with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.”**
4. Only when we persistently look to the Lord and rely on Him for His grace can we succeed in pursuing the virtues that enable purity to be preserved.

III. THE PERVERSION OF PURITY – 2:23

A. The Frustration with Dogma

1. Dissatisfaction with God’s Word is the greatest obstacle to pursuing these virtues from a pure heart and reliance on God for His grace.
2. If God’s Word is not sufficient for your faith and you are frustrated with the doctrine taught in the Scriptures, you will engage in **“foolish and ignorant speculations ...”**
3. **“speculations”** [ζήτησις] – describes exploring things the Scriptures do not address or settle for us – going “beyond what is written” – cp. **1 Corinthians 4:6**.
4. When we go beyond what is written, we enter the realm that is “foolish and ignorant” –
 - a) **“foolish”** [μωρός] – from where we get moron – one given to folly or stupidity.
 - b) **“ignorant”** [ἀπαίδευτος] – lit. refers to the unlearned or uninstructed – that is, they don’t know what they are talking about – cp. **1 Timothy 1:7**.
5. Since they are frustrated with the straightforward truths presented in God’s Word, they venture into the unknown, unrevealed, and uncertain and make assertions that result in error and defilements.

B. The Formation of Disputes

1. When people engage in *“speculations,”* they inevitably generate disputes and quarrels — *“... knowing that they produce quarrels.”*
2. This is something “the Lord’s bond-servant must not” do – cp. v. 24.
3. Our task is to remain faithful to what is written – to allow the power and influence of God’s Word to stand without corruption or “wrongful handling” – cp. v. 15.
4. Many are the quarrels within the church when we depart from the clear and biblical teachings of the faith to venture into speculation, foolish arguments, theological cilia, and wrangling about words.
5. Our faith must be exegetically obtained, clearly unfolding what God’s Word teaches – cp. **2 Timothy 1:13; 2:2, 15; 3:14; 4:2.**

So What?

1. **Am I conducting myself in a manner that demonstrates I am a vessel of honor?**
2. **Do I aspire to be useful to the Master?**
3. **From which of these do I need to work harder to flee ... pleasures, power, or possessions?**
4. **In what ways does my community influence my pursuit of righteousness?**
5. **How can I avoid being distracted by speculations and focus on God’s mission instead?**

The believer must strive for purity in order to be useful to the Master.