

Spiritual Growth Lessons from Christian Ambassadors

Lesson 23

Vessels of Honor, Fit For The Master's Use

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II Timothy 2:20-21 (KJV) - "...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 [what is dishonorable or unclean], he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work."

These verses from Second Timothy are exciting scriptures. They tell us about two kinds of vessels, vessels that bring honor to God and vessels that bring dishonor to God. God is looking for honorable vessels who will purge themselves from every contaminating influence that is holding them back from service. He searches for those who will turn away from the evil ways of the world and prepare themselves for the Master's use. There is much work to be done, but God is not petitioning slave labor. He longs for willing servants who are ready to report for orders whenever the Master summons them. However, one thing needs to be made clear. Our goodness does not make us vessels of honor. It is our obedience to *God's goodness* that drives us to purify ourselves, as he is pure (I John 3:2b-3). Knowing that it is our obedience to His goodness that qualifies us, we can decide what kind of vessel we will become.

Anyone who desires to live the holy life that God offers should never give up, no matter how tough it is to get everything purged out. Yet many do give up, if for no other reason than their own projected feelings of inadequacy or inferiority. Because God is more committed to us, than we are to Him, His promise remains. *Anyone* who purges himself or herself from what is tainted and unclean can become a vessel of honor, fit for the Master's use.

If I were to give you one quality that sets apart a vessel of honor from that of a dishonorable vessel, that one quality would have to be the quality of "staying power"! A vessel of honor is so utterly dedicated (sanctified and set apart) in service to God, they will endure and outlast all the wiles of the devil sent to stop that work. A vessel of honor will stay with God, cooperating with the Holy Spirit to work out every

last impurity that could be standing in the way of service (Romans 12:1-2).

It may seem presumptuous for us to consider that we can become vessels that God honors. Aren't we supposed to give God all the honor and glory? Yes, and that is precisely the point. We do not honor God, when we do not serve Him with our life. Jesus describes how valuable our life truly is.

John 12:26 (Amplified Bible) - *If anyone serves Me, he must continue to follow me [to cleave steadfastly to Me, conform wholly to My example in living and, if need be, in dying] and wherever I am, there will My servant be also. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.*

Can you fathom God treating little ol' you and me with that kind of *honor*? We should never underestimate the honor that the Father bestows upon those who serve Jesus by following Him. In fact, did you know that we show God great *dishonor* when we continually tell him how worthless we are? This attitude is an insult to everything God represents. Our dishonor surfaces when we get discouraged by the ugliness of our past, rather than becoming encouraged about the beauty of our present and future life with Him.

I experienced important spiritual lessons this summer, by helping Alan with the remodeling and refurbishing of a house that had fallen into a state of deterioration. For 20 years this home had been neglected to the point where it had become completely run down. The first time we walked through the house after it was vacated, we quickly evaluated the situation and what we were up against. Because of uneven floors and rotted wood, caused by leaky plumbing and water damage, the entire kitchen and bathroom would need to be gutted. When we went outside and walked around the exterior of the house, we noticed the poor condition of the siding. We discovered later that there were several layers of old siding that needed to be torn out and completely replaced. If houses could talk, this house would be crying out, "Help, can't you see I'm falling apart and in desperate need here?"

With so much work to be done on the house, such as tearing out the old siding and insulation and replacing it with new, the job seemed overwhelming, almost too much to tackle. We knew the job ahead would be painstaking. With sadness, the Holy Spirit pointed out a sobering truth. This *physical* house we are busy remodeling, is not so different from the *spiritual* house of many people. Through years and years of abuse and neglect, many people have allowed themselves to fall into a state of spiritual deterioration. By the time God gets hold of them (they finally turn to God), they have barely enough strength to hang on. But, hang on they must, for God has a work he wants to do in them. The work that God wants to do in us, is the main reason Jesus sent the Holy Spirit. He knew we would need a lot of help making those changes (John 16:7-11).

But, even though God sent the Holy Spirit to help us, a new life does not suddenly appear over night, any more than this run down house is going to be completely remodeled over night. It is going to take a lot of time and effort. It will take hours and hours of hard work and dedication. However, the joy of cleaning out the "old" that we might enjoy the "new" is extremely rewarding. The Holy Spirit shared simple instructions that Alan and I strive to follow each day, "*Work diligently with your hands, include me in everything you do (in word and deed), when there are upsets remain steadfast in prayer, keep going and don't give up!*"

We have been created to have fellowship with God and we aren't going to be at rest (peace), living in our *spiritual house* until we do. A relevant question we should ask ourselves is, "Will I abandon the work God invested in me at the cross, every single time something goes wrong?" Or, will I diligently work with the Holy Spirit to become a vessel of honor, one that the Master can count on and use for His purposes? And, even though the devil is the troublemaker, out to ruin our lives, we must avoid pinning the blame on him for everything that goes sour in our lives. It all points back to what kind of vessel we will become.

When we wake up each morning, our big fear should not be, is the devil going to overthrow me today, but, *will I be obedient to God?* I don't know what your answer might be, but for myself, I have made up my mind that I will not abandon the efforts God has invested in me at the cross. His shed blood must account for something in my life. Therefore, I refuse to dishonor God by letting my life go down the tubes.

I Corinthians 6:19-20 (NIV) - *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.*

In our home we have a plaque on our refrigerator door with the caption, "*I know I'm somebody, cause God don't make no junk.*" (Genesis 1:31) This is the first thing I see in the morning as I open the refrigerator door to prepare breakfast. As I head down the hallway I see another plaque directly over my office door, with a scripture reference from Ephesians 2:10. It reads, "*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.*" No matter how discouraging circumstances may seem, these thoughts stimulate me:

- I take courage in knowing I'm not a piece of junk, because I belong to God. God isn't coming down heavy on me because of sin. He is simply telling me to get rid of it, and to keep it purged out of my life.
- As a new creation in Christ, II Corinthians 5:17, I know I have worth. That means I am a useful and valuable vessel to God.
- As His workmanship, I am created new, that His good works might be manifested in and through me as He sees fit.



Questions for Personal or Group Study:

1. If *our* goodness doesn't make us vessels of honor, why is it so important to purge ourselves from sin?
2. How do we show God dishonor when we continually tell him how worthless we are?
3. Can we become vessels of honor without the help of the Holy Spirit working in our lives? (John 16:7-11)
4. What one quality sets apart a vessel of honor, from that of a vessel of dishonor? If that one quality is to be manifested in the flesh, what ultimate sacrifice must we be making to God? (Romans 12:1-2)