

2Timothy 24-11-04a

Greetings to you on this third day of November, 2024. We continue our study in the book of 2 Timothy here at Grace & Truth Bible Church. We're going to pick up at chapter three.

We're going to pick up one concept from chapter two and then move into this very fascinating chapter three. But these concepts associated with chapter 21 deserve a bit more treatment than we have given it thus far. So we will take a look at that.

It is an important understanding to have, especially relative to some fellow believers who misunderstand the truths associated with that particular verse. Then we will move into chapter three. And when you get to the last days, that is a subject of perennial interest.

So it'll be fun to go down through these characteristics and see exactly what Paul meant by that term. But let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and our time of study and we'll begin. Father, we are so grateful that we are not left to our own strength and our own devices and our own wisdom to negotiate this life and to then be held accountable for it at the end.

Rather, we have the wonderful strength that comes from the grace that is in Christ Jesus. We have the ever-present Holy Spirit. We have the illumination on our path from your word, which is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

We thank you for the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, who in his days on this earth served as the model and example for how life can be lived, guided by your spirit and enabled and defined by your word. We thank you for the opportunity to look at this particular portion together. And we ask your blessing as we seek a better understanding, not only to know what it says, but also to see clearly how it will make a difference in our own lives as we reflect on it and as we seek to apply it in the days ahead.

We pray your blessing on this time of worship and ask that we will be strengthened with might in the inner man, that we will be renewed in our minds and we'll come to an understanding of your good and acceptable and perfect will. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen. It's always good to read our passage.

And since we are going to take a small step backward to clean up and be sure we have a full understanding of verse, you know why I can't see? George Washington famously had to put his glasses on when he read his resignation speech at the end of his service as commander of the Revolutionary War troops. Now I know why he needed them. But we are looking at the verse 20 and 21 this morning from 2 Timothy chapter two.

In a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from the

latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the master, prepared for every good work. It is the good work that Paul focuses on, not only here, but in the 16th verse of chapter three and the 17th verse scripture, why it is given, what it is profitable for that the man of God may be complete, may be mature, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Being equipped for every good work, prepared for every good work in 221. And this idea that there are vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor, some for noble use, some for common use, some made of gold and silver, some of wood and clay is important to understand because there are two schools of thought. There are two beliefs about the origination of honorable and dishonorable vessels or the gold and silver versus the wood and clay.

And much of this hinges on what Paul says back in Romans chapter nine, verse 22. If you would like to turn back to Romans chapter nine, we have discussed this across the years. We covered it in depth when we did Romans, but because of the importance of this concept and because it is mentioned in 2 Timothy chapter two, it would be good for us to review it.

And this should be a part of your conversational knowledge of the Christian faith. If you cross paths with someone, family, friend, coworker, fellow believer that seems to have an interest and a grasp of Christian faith, Bible truth, scriptural understanding, and they misunderstand this particular truth, it is good that you have this at your fingertips. You don't have to say, put a semicolon there and let me get back to you.

It is not hard. It isn't difficult. And the link to understanding Romans chapter nine, verse 22 and following is to understand 2 Timothy chapter two, verse 20 and following.

So look back at Romans chapter nine. We're not going to belabor this, but we are going to review it. When you have in verse 18, Paul saying, he has mercy on whom he wills and whom he wills, he hardens, talking about God.

The immediately preceding illustration is Pharaoh, where God tells him for this very purpose, I have raised you up that I may show my power in you and that my name may be declared in all the earth. So looking at this reformed and Calvinist theology and those who embrace the teaching that stems from it, believe that God sovereignly ordains and has done in eternity past, who will be believers and who will be unbelievers. You can go into double predestination and does he actually predestinate people to hell or does he just fail to predestinate them to heaven? There's no difference in the outcome either way in this understanding, God is responsible for who moves forward into eternity, walking the streets of gold and so on, and who is consigned to the eternal lake of fire.

And this is inconsistent with so many other clear passages in scripture where there is an element of choice. I was just thinking of this a couple of days ago when the story of Lot

being delivered from Sodom immediately prior to its destruction came to mind. And you remember the story, God tells Abraham, shall I hide from you what I'm about to do? I'm gonna destroy these cities.

Abraham makes intercession for his nephew, Lot. And so God details two angels to go the preceding night and give Lot and his family a chance to pack and depart prior to the destruction of the city of Sodom. And skipping over many details, destruction is beginning to fall.

The angels have forcibly removed. They have grabbed hold of and are dragging Mrs. Lot, the two daughters and Lot himself. They have been commanded by God, do not look back.

You need to move obediently with alacrity and taking care to meet the conditions of your deliverance that God has set. The condition for deliverance is that you consent, that you obey and follow the two angels and that you do not look back. This is God's condition.

Does God want the family to be delivered? Has he not sent two angels? Did he tell the two angels, well, Mrs. Lot, she's not a keeper, she's kind of a bad egg, leave her there, only bring Lot and the two daughters. Those are the only ones I want to save. No, they take all four of them.

Mrs. Lot exercising her chooser, her volition, her free will, as she is being dragged by the angels away from the city, disobeys God, violates the condition of salvation, turns her head and looks back at the city. And she is immediately judged, pillar of salt. And she is not delivered.

Now, to whom is this lack of salvation to be charged? Is it God who responded to the request of Abraham, who went and sent two angels the day before to ensure that they had a chance to prepare themselves, to be ready, to reconcile themselves to the loss of their goods and so on. And to leave, who has made elaborate preparations and arrangements for their deliverance? And whose choice is it that Mrs. Lot doesn't make it? It is her own individual choice. That is one of, I could sit here all day and give illustrations.

That is one of many clear illustrations that our fate, after God makes provision, makes arrangements, expresses his grace and his love in the offer, it is all by grace. They could not have been delivered. They would not have known if God had not made deliverance known, had not arranged the means by which that deliverance would be accomplished.

And opting out of his deliverance was Mrs. Lot's free will choice. It is ever thus. That's why in Romans chapter nine, you can go back up to verse 14.

What shall we say then? Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated. What shall we say? Is there unrighteousness with God? Is God unrighteous even from a human point of view

that he would love Jacob and hate Esau? Love and hate, of course, are not uncontrolled, passionate emotions. These are policies.

He says to Moses, I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion. This is a quote from Exodus chapter 33, verse 19. And we have seen in the past that this is a mistranslation both Hebrew and Greek.

I will have mercy on whomever I have had mercy. I will have compassion on whomever I have had compassion. I will do in the future what I have done in the past.

Why is God able to have compassion on some? Why is God able to express mercy on some? Because they respond and meet the non-meritorious, non-works condition of accepting, of repenting, of believing. Faith is not a work, Ephesians 2, 8 and 9. By grace, you are saved through faith that is not of yourselves. It is a gift of God, not of works.

It being salvation by grace through faith, being saved by God's grace through meeting the condition of faith is not a work. Paul says so in Ephesians 2, 9. Ephesians 2, 9. It is not of works, so no one can boast. Here, it is not of him who wills nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy in verse 16.

We do not earn it by willing. We do not earn it by running. Our choice is non-meritorious.

Any works that we may think that we've accomplished are non-meritorious. It receiving mercy and compassion is not of us. We don't earn it or deserve it.

It is of God. So important when you're reading Paul, especially in Romans to know what it is. You've got to go back to the antecedent.

What is it? It is not of him who wills. What? God's compassion and God's mercy. It is of God.

God's mercy and God's compassion is sourced in God. It isn't something we merit. And he uses the illustration in verse 17.

Scripture says of the Pharaoh, for this very purpose, I have raised you up, that I may show my power in you and that my name may be declared in all the earth. There are a few biblical stories more famous than the 10 plagues and the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. And this has spread the knowledge of God both in that day and ever since.

But notice what God says, for this very purpose, I have hardened your heart. For this very purpose, I have steeled your resolve. For this very purpose, I have predestined you for wrath and punishment.

What is it that God did to Pharaoh? I elevated you. I have made sure that it is you who is the Pharaoh at this point in history. He could have been in any of the dynasties.

He could have been descended from earlier or later Pharaohs. For this reason, I have raised you up. I have raised you up.

I haven't predetermined your decisions, your assent or your refusal. God didn't determine that. God raised up a man who he knew in advance would be resistant until his will was broken by the death of his firstborn son.

Can God manage circumstances so that the true heart and will and desire of people is evident and made known? Absolutely. One of the reasons I am bringing this up this morning is for a point of application. In this letter and in the previous letter to Timothy, Paul has encouraged him to endure hardship as a good soldier.

That we have to work through difficulties and challenges, friction, opposition, even persecution in some cases. And God doesn't move that out of our way. He doesn't keep it at a far distance from us.

He knows we're going to go through it. And you could read this verse, what God says to Moses in verse 15. I will have mercy on whom I have had mercy.

I will have compassion on whom I have had compassion. Who is that in Moses' day? It is the people of Israel. And yet it is those same people of Israel that have descended into bondage and slavery and persecution and hardship.

But God says, we have a standing relationship. I have had mercy on Israel in the past and I will have mercy on Israel now and in the future. I have had compassion and I will have compassion.

That's on the response side. So that is God's action. God chose Israel of all the nations, the least and most insignificant.

He gave Satan free reign over all those who reject God. And he said, I will keep the descendants of Abraham. They will be my people.

And I will have mercy on those that I have had mercy on. I will have compassion on those I have had compassion on. But it is not of him.

It did Israel earn or deserve deliverance from bondage? Were they a wonderful worshipful people? Had they been working acts of good and caring for widows and orphans? And God said, oh, you know, this is such a good people. I just have to deliver them. There is nothing.

The one word of the act you can see is the midwives who refuse the order to murder the male babies and throw them in the river. And they are named as examples, but two people out of the entire nation, God's gonna rescue the whole nation. And he's gonna say, I'm rescuing you because of the midwives.

They have earned, this is the Catholic view of saints, they have earned enough righteousness that I can distribute it to others. Only the Lord Jesus Christ has the kind of righteousness that can be imputed to others. But then in verse 17, for this very purpose, I have raised you up that I may show my power in you and that my name may be declared in all the earth.

God says that to us. For this reason, he has raised us up, both in human life to be alive at this time, in this place with the relatives, with the situations, with the connections that are established in the past and up to the present. God has placed us in human history and has raised us up out of the dust of the earth.

And to expand a bit on the original meaning, he has raised us up in Christ. We have been raised up once at birth. We're no longer mere dust and random molecules.

We have been raised up to human life. Now we have been raised up to spiritual life for what purpose? This is the reason God raises any of us up, that I may show my power in you and that my name may be declared in all the earth. We fulfill our purpose in being alive and in given new life in Christ when God's power and glory are reflected in our lives and others can see Christ in us, can see the grace and the power of God in our lives, enabling us in situations that would crush the average unspiritual human being.

This is the reason God raised us up, the reason God brought us to this hour. You think of Hadassah and her uncle Mordecai telling her it may be that God has brought you to the kingdom for such a time as this, the persecution of Haman, his plot to eliminate all the Jews in Persia and beyond. Therefore, verse 18, he has mercy on whom he wills and whom he wills, he hardens.

This isn't inscrutable, unknowable, sort of randomized choosing. God has reasons for showing mercy. What are his reasons? He has chosen, as Paul says, a little further down, he has chosen to make his mercy known.

Look at verse 23, that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy. Which he has prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom he called not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles. And the purpose for that is that God and his grace and his salvation can be known to all.

And he uses vessels that are going to come under judgment to display his power and to call those who will respond. It is all about choice. But in particular, when it comes to 2 Timothy, the illustration that follows here in verse 20, indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, why have you made me like this? And the thing formed is assuming that it has the wisdom to judge whether God is doing a good thing or not in his raising up or his judging of people.

Verse 21, does not the potter have power over the clay from the same lump to make one

vessel for honor and another for dishonor? If God, now this what if, do you see the what in verse 22? Scratch that out. This is not a what if, like it's an abstraction. This is an if, if God wanting to show wrath and to make his power known.

Now, why does he particularly say that? This is still referring back to verse 17. For this purpose, I have raised you up that I may show my power in you. That I may show my power in you.

I have raised Pharaoh up. If God wanting to show wrath and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering, vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, he endures them to make his power known. Now, how is enduring them making his power known? I thought his power is judging them and casting him into the lake of fire, smashing them and saying, I'm making this just to smash it.

What is it that makes God's power known? It's his endurance. If God wanting to show wrath and to make his power known endures, enduring these that he made knowing that they are going to reject him. They have no use for him.

They don't appreciate him, his character, his plan, his purpose, but God endures them. And that shows his power. God is powerful enough to endure agents that choose against him.

Why isn't Satan already destroyed? Why are one third of the angels who fell not already judged? Did God cause them to rebel? Did he cause them to fall? He is allowing them their space. He is giving them the opportunity to make their argument and to make their point. With great patience, an almighty righteous God is enduring those who hate him, who rebel against him.

Even though they are destined for destruction in verse 23, that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he prepared beforehand for glory. Even us whom he called not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles. Now in short, there's a lot you can say about Romans nine.

It's a theological swamp where many boats have gotten stuck. We are primarily interested in this illustration because as many perambulations and permutations and convolutions as you may find in this passage, there is one very clear illustration. Verse 22 and 23, God wanting to show wrath and to make his power known, endures with much long suffering, much long suffering.

Vessels of wrath prepared for destruction. These are clay vessels that are made for dishonor. It's known that they are going to be for common use.

And you say, well, obviously God just made them to hang around to be unbelievers so that he can swell up in wrath and vengeance and cast them into the lake of fire and judge them. And he's putting up with them just long enough to show all of the angels

and the vessels of honor what a powerful and wrathful God he is. Is this the God you see depicted in all of the rest of scripture? All he's interested in is showing everybody how mighty he is and the consequences of his anger.

Is this the compassionate God that sends angels to rescue Lot and his family? Is this the compassionate God that endures the disobedience and the rebellion of his people for centuries before sending them into captivity and so on? The key to understanding this, the simplest, fastest way to understand Romans 9 and what's going on here is our passage, 2 Timothy chapter two. There are those who issue forth profane and idle babblings in verse 16 of our passage. 2 Timothy 2.16, shun profane and idle babblings.

They increase to more ungodliness. Their message spreads like gangrene. Here are specific individuals, verse 18, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying the resurrection has already passed.

They overthrow the faith of son. Verse 20, in a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. The very same terms you find in Romans 9. Some for honor, some for dishonor.

So does God make from the same lump at his own whim and in his own inscrutable purpose, some people that he's just going to judge and send to the lake of fire? Verse 21, if anyone cleanses himself from dishonor, there are vessels of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. If anyone cleanses himself from that last, from dishonor, from profane and idle babblings, ungodliness, gangrene, straying from the faith, if anyone cleanses himself, anyone cleanses himself from these latter, he will be a vessel for honor. So now who's determining what kind of vessel? It is a decision on whether or not we choose to cleanse ourselves from sin, from disobedience, from rebellion, separate from that which departs from the faith, striving about words to no profit, ruining hearers, instead being diligent to present ourselves approved unto God.

Who is it that cleanses himself from the latter to be a vessel for honor? Verse 15, those who bend every effort to present themselves approved to God, not needing to be ashamed. This isn't predestined. It is determined to be honor or dishonor by the person.

We make this decision. So if we cleanse ourselves, we will be a vessel for honor sanctified and useful for the master prepared for every good work. So in Romans chapter nine, verse 22 and 23, right out in the margin, 2 Timothy 2, 20 and 21.

In the margin of 2 Timothy 2, 20 and 21, write Romans 9, 22 and 23. For every passage of scripture, every teaching of scripture, every example that someone wants to adduce and they want to take it to an extreme, something that can be pressed beyond its meaning, there is other scripture that will balance it, that will prevent it from being misunderstood and misapplied. And those who land on Romans 9 and flout and preach and teach and become missionaries for sovereignty and Calvinism and Tulip, they fail to

account for 2 Timothy 2, 20 and 21 and 22, which goes on to say, flee also youthful lusts, pursue righteousness.

This is a choice. There are people who do and people that don't. Paul and Timothy are examples of men who went the positive way.

Hymenaeus and Philetus have strayed concerning the faith. Hymenaeus and Alexander in the first letter have strayed. Rather than debate and quarrel and try to beat someone over the head with, is it sovereignty or is it not? What is helpful? What is useful? What is profitable for doctrine and reproof and correction and instruction in righteousness? Avoid foolish disputes in verse 23.

They just generate strife. Calvinists wanna convert somebody they call an Arminian, someone who thinks that you have free will. Free will people can tilt at windmills with Calvinists trying to show them that they're wrong about scripture.

Scripture itself says avoid these controversies. If you're unsure about the teaching of scripture, if we lack wisdom, if we lack understanding, what is the recourse? Do we go debate and see if our arguments will overcome someone else? How do we arrive at confidence in our understanding of scripture? Go to God. God in heaven, whatever else you wanna say about Him, however sovereign you wanna make Him, God wants us to understand His will.

If God willing to make known His power, willing to make known the necessity for judgment in wrath, God is in the business of making Himself known. If I look at scripture and I'm not sure, is this a God that in eternity past just made some of us and just initially split us up at kindling so that we could be thrown into the fire and others He set aside and has carved into beautiful furniture and ornamentation? Did God make that decision and we really have nothing to say about it? Is that the God of the Bible or is He a God of compassion who all day long holds out His hands to disobedient and stiff-necked people whose will is not that any should perish but that all should come to repentance and change of mind? Which God is it? If any of you lack wisdom, go to God, ask of God. Ask and it shall be given.

Seek and you will find, knock and it will be open to you. And I would suggest that if someone gets stuck in a faulty understanding of God in any area, and they remain stuck in a faulty understanding, you're not going to be able to argue them out of it. If I'm stuck in a faulty understanding, you are not going to be able to argue me out of it.

The key to removing the fault and understanding the good and acceptable and perfect will of God is to present ourselves before God, a living sacrifice, to present ourselves before God, an approved workman. Our understanding of scripture right or where it needs improvement is between us and God. It's an issue between us.

How can I be a vessel of honor fitted for His good use if I'm busy quarreling with a nearby vessel about whose purpose is what? It's the master of the house. It is the creator. It is the potter who is going to determine my future.

I can't stand before Him and appeal and say, but this pot over here said something about my purpose and about His purpose. God's not interested in the opinion of pots. God is wiser.

He is more loving. He is more compassionate. He is more gracious than we could possibly comprehend.

And it is His goal that we come to know Him, to make known His glory, to make known His power, not just His power in wrath, but His power in taking that which is of the earth and fitting it for glory and fitting it for eternity, to make His power known. God's intention in human history, in creating so many of us and giving us free will is to make His power and His glory known. So our goal should be to come to that knowledge, grow in grace and knowledge.

To do that, we flee youthful lusts, we cleanse ourselves from the dishonorable things in the context, and we call on the Lord in verse 22 out of a pure heart. Call on the Lord out of a pure heart. God's cleansing grace is available.

What do we do with it? So when you think about vessels of wrath and vessels of honor, you think about Romans 9, you think about Calvinism, you think about sovereignty, you think about predestination, come to Timothy. Paul makes it amazingly clear for Timothy. Flee that which is unclean.

Flee that which is ungodly. Pursue righteousness. Call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Pursue faith, love, and peace with others who are like-minded, who have that understanding. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel. Be gentle, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, hoping that God will grant them enough clarity that if they have the humility, if they will cleanse themselves, they can change their minds.

They will come to repentance and know the truth. Notice verse 25, so that they may know the truth. God willing to make known so that we can know.

Come to our senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will. Escape the snare. We have the ability to escape.

Do you want to be Lot or do you want to be Mrs. Lot? Do you want to escape by the grace of God? Meet the condition. We cleanse ourselves. We endeavor to present ourselves approved to God.

That is the key. If we flee these unclean and corrupting and defiling elements, we will be vessels of honor, sanctified, prepared for every good use. That's our goal.

And it's important not to forget that. Don't be deceived. Don't be deflected.

Don't shrug your shoulders and say, it's all been predetermined. God in eternity past predestined some for glory and some for wrath. And I'm just kind of waiting to see which I am.

I don't really have any control over it. That is the devil's lie. To remove responsibility, to remove opportunity from people, especially God's people, and to lead them astray into thinking it's all been written in the past and decreed.

Well, that brings us to chapter three. Know this in the last days, perilous times will come. How do you know if it's the last days? This is what we're going to see when we come back from the break.