

# Paul and Timothy: Passing the Torch

## How To Live Clean in a Dirty World

Rough Transcript

Jeremy Schurke

**Jeremy Schurke:**

How's everyone doing this morning?

I hear some grumbling over here. I'm doing all right. It's good to be with you guys. And I'm thankful to have an opportunity again to lead this Bible study. Again, my name is Jeremy Schurke. I work at Man In the Mirror and we are in a series called **Passing the Torch**. How do you all like this series so far? Pretty good. Okay. Good.

Well, this morning we're going to pick up where we left off last time in the series. We're going to be in 2 Timothy 2:20-22. This talk is titled, **How to live clean in a dirty world**. How to live clean in a dirty world. So I'll break down these three verses. Three verses that one commentator said was a minefield to navigate. Thank you, Pat and Brett for giving me the opportunity to navigate this minefield. And yeah, let's go ahead and read it together and we'll get started.

“Now in a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay. Some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, prepared for every good work. So flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace. Along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.”

All right. So from a breakdown level, this is actually the simple part. The first verse, verse 20 is a metaphor. The second verse, 21 is an interpretation of the metaphor. And the third verse is an application that we can apply what we learned from this metaphor that Paul used. So before we get started and dig in, let's pray. And then we'll get ready.

God, we ask you to be with us now here. Allow us to remove any barriers and any distractions that would distract us from seeing you because that's all we want. We want to see you and experience your presence here now. Watch over my words and protect your word. In your name me pray. Amen.

All right. Now in a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay. Some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Now is said in the Bible, it a new thought. Right now it's a metaphor. We had been talking about false teachers. I think Pat, the past few weeks was talking about being led astray. Timothy can be led astray by false teachers and his disciples. But now we have a new thought. And in this metaphor we have a great house and we have these vessels.

What is a vessel? When I read this, there're different words, articles, different things, utensils even. But what it denotes is a vessel. When I looked it up, the definition was it denotes any object used for any purpose, which I thought was very unhelpful because that's the most vague definition I've ever heard. It denotes any object used for any purpose. But going down a few lines, it's used, especially of household objects, like jars and dishes, bowls, and cups. So when we're thinking about a house, thinking about things that hold substance in your house, okay?

And there's these two different types of vessels for two different types of occasions. And in a wealthy Roman home back in the day, you have two types of vessels. You have some for everyday stuff and some for very special occasions. Which one of these do you think are for the special occasions? Gold and silver. Got to be the gold and silver.

And you would use these vessels if you have, let's say a public meal for special guests of honor. So the closest idea to this is fine china. It's the thing that boomers keep wanting to pass on to us, millennials, and us millennials keep trying to navigate not to get. But this vessel, it bestows and it signifies honor. You bring it out for a guest of honor. And the wooden clay vessels would be used for at best, maybe a private low key meal, and at worst things to take out the trash or even excrement out of your house. So these are breakable, replaceable, dishonorable vessels. And today, that would look like a trash can, maybe paper plates. In my house, a diaper disposal, or even a toilet bowl. These are dishonorable vessels.

So why would Paul share this metaphor with Timothy? Why would he break up talking to him, engaging him and say, "Now, give him this metaphor." What do you think he would want Timothy to be wondering about? Any thoughts?

I would think he's using this metaphor as a teaching moment in trying to say, which vessel are you? Which vessel are your disciples? So how should Timothy, or us the reader, answer that question? How would we know which vessel we are? Well, we need some more insight here. So we'll go to the next verse.

Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, prepared for every good work.

Whenever you see a therefore in scripture, you need to ask what the therefore is there for. It's pretty easy to remember. But every time it's an important word, anytime you see in scripture. And when you see it, you should stop and say, "Wait, what's the therefore there for? And here, it's indicating that Paul will be interpreting the metaphor from the verse above.

So what's he implying here? In short, he's saying that we have the ability to change our usage, to change our purpose through the responsibility of cleaning ourself. We have the ability to change our usage and purpose through the responsibility of cleaning ourself. Our choice is to be clean and stay clean, or get dirty and remain filthy. That's the choice we have on our end. And I'm going to give you some good news and I'm going to give you some bad news. All right, we can change for the better, and we can change for the worse. One of the church fathers said it like this, "Paul was an earthen and vessel who became a golden one. Judas was a golden vessel who became an earthen one."

God wants us to be clean and cleansed because God wants us to be the kind of man who is set apart for his purposes. He wants us to be the kind of man who is useful for his service. And he wants us to be the kind of man who is ready for whatever God wants us to do.

He will be a vessel for honorable use set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, prepared for every good work. So I don't know about you guys, but in my house, we set apart our clean dishes from our dirty ones. I'm sure you do too. We don't keep the dirty ones and the clean ones together. Why? Because the dirty ones will get the clean ones dirty. The clean ones will not get the dirty ones clean. So when they're clean, you set them apart because you want them to remain clean. And why do you want them to be clean? Well, because dirty ones aren't useful. If anyone was to come over to my house and they said, "Hey, this bowl has film in it. Or this glass has stains in it." I would change it out in a heartbeat. Because clean vessels are useful for the purpose of the master of the house.

And then finally, not only is it useful, you have to have clean ones that are prepared for whatever need you have. Right? So if I had a child who had a birthday party and invited all of his friends over, which this has happened, so I wouldn't say this is hypothetical, this has actually happened. Everyone shows up. I'm

not going to say, "Hey guys, welcome. I'm glad you're here. Take a seat. I'm going to actually go do some dishes for about 25 minutes because I don't have anything for you guys, but then we're going to eat some cake. So just sit tight and we'll be right back." No. I'm not going to do that. We need clean vessels prepared for every moment. So to be an honorable vessel to the master. Who's the master of the house? What does that mean?

One of the ways that commentators have translated this and kind of disagreed is, what is the house? Is it the world? Is it the church? I believe it's the church, mainly because when we see that set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, it's implying that God's the master of this house. And what is the household of God? It's the church. So to be an honorable vessel to the master, God, of the house, the church, we need to cleanse ourselves from what's dishonorable. Now, what's the stuff that's dishonorable? Well, if we're reading in context and what you've heard Pat and Brett talk about in the past few weeks, these are the false teaching and broken promises of a secular society that we get caught up in. We get stained, we get dirtied. And we then are being used for dishonorable uses. So how do we cleanse ourselves?

So flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace. Along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. How can we live clean in a dirty world? That is the main question I think we need to consider this morning. And I want to propose to you through repositions needed to live clean in our dirty world. Are you ready? Let's get it.

#### **IDENTIFY YOUR VOICES AND FLEE FROM SIN**

Number one, identify your vices and flee from sin. Flee is an interesting word in verse 22. Flee means to move quickly from point or an area to avoid presumed danger or difficulty to run away, to seek safety by flight, to run or move hastily from danger. The Greek word here is *pheugō*, which is where we get the word fugitive. When you flee, you it's like running like a criminal from authorities. You're doing everything you can to get away from the thing that will own you and imprison you.

When you flee from the authorities, you're not just saying, "Oh, come and get me. Oh, come and get me." You're jumping over cars. You're jumping over fences. You're doing whatever you can because you don't want to be in prison. Because there's two types of people that need to flee. There's the people, the ones that are in trouble that have never been to prison. And then the ones that never want to go back. And if you don't flee from the evil desires of your youth, there's only one destination waiting for you. A life imprisoned and shackled to sin, to loneliness, to hopelessness. So we need to flee. Our youthful desires don't exist just in our youth. They start there.

So what's important here is it's not the things that of old, it's what these things started as and what they've manifested into over time. Because even though they start there, they follow us as we age in manhood. And they can easily become vices, evil habits. And our only healthy response to them is fleeing. So the danger of not fleeing are vices is well described by Alexander Pope in one of his poems.

And he says, "Vice is a monster of such terrible character. That to be hated needs but to be seen. Yet seen too often, familiar her face, we refer endure, then pity, then embrace."

So several years ago I had this dream. I was living in Jacksonville at the time and you know how dreams work, you don't ever plan to have any dreams. They just kind of happen. And I remember in the dream I was walking and all of a sudden I looked to the side and there was a cave. It was a big cave, which is odd, I'm from Florida. I don't see caves ever. And I walk into the cave because I saw something in the cave. And as I got in the cave, I saw on the wall that there was a diamond actually in the wall. And then I looked over to the other side, a little further down and there was a bigger diamond.

And then I was really excited. I thought, "Wow, this is really cool." There's a lot of jewels and all this shining treasure, basically sparkling through the walls. And so when I kept rubbing it, I kept seeing the sparkling stuff. So I kept going further and further in and there was more and more diamonds, more and

more rubies. But it was getting smaller and smaller as I was getting deeper, deeper in the cave. And then I remember at one point the wall slightly moved. And this was enough to scare me, and I actually woke up. I'm thinking what in the world, this is a very vivid dream. I fall back asleep and I go right back into the same dream.

And then I keep walking because it's just... I keep thinking like, I'm going to be rich. This is unbelievable. And I'm excited. Everything's exciting. And I keep wanting to go further and they're in because there's this bigger and bigger rubies, jewels, diamonds. And it gets to the point that I realize I've gone too far and I'm stuck. I can't turn around. Then all of a sudden the whole cave moved. And I realized I was inside a giant snake. And I was stuck. And I couldn't breathe. And it was constricting me and I was dying. And I was terrified. I remember, I still get goosebumps talking about it. I was terrified. I had no hope, nothing could happen. I was stuck. It's moving. I fell for his trick. I was in and I was stuck.

And then I remember in my last hope of desperation, I remember saying Jesus. And my arm freed up and there was a dagger in it. And then I just cut through the belly of the snake, put my head out, breath, got out and woke up in a cold sweat. My wife was looking at me like, what is going on? And I'm like, "You have no idea." But something was happening in that dream. And why it applies here today is, we should waste no time with our vices. Nothing good will come out of it, and trust me and I get it. It's hard because vices, especially with the encouragement and with the endorsement of the false teachers and the cultural influences that we have, vices can look like sparkling treasures.

But it's fool's gold that will ultimately end up leading you to death. So don't entertain them. Don't rationalize them. Don't negotiate with them. Don't try to challenge them or try to endure them. Just flee from them. That's the only hope we have for them. So what are these evil desires of youth that Paul speaks of here that can be enslaving to us?

Well, there's many. He's not specific. But I want to share five of them. The five that I struggle with, that my friends struggle with, that I see us and also many of my peers as well. Five youthful desires. First, sexual distortions. So uncontrollable lust, porn addictions, even adultery, were once just useful desires that were birthed in puberty. For some men, birthed before puberty. And those desires still cling to us as we try to navigate neck deep in a hypersexualized culture.

Two, impatience. Good things take time to grow, but who's got time for that. I live in an everything now world. My timeline has been shaped by high speed internet. And we, culturally, young men wait for no man, and we expect change instantaneously. The problem is most things are complicated, especially humans. So our marriages, our friendships, our kids suffer from our impatience.

And I once heard that ministry is like trying to get a giant ship to change course. Do you know how long it takes for an ocean freighter to turn around? Seven miles. And yet most of my friends are gone after the first hundred meters, because it's taking too long.

Number three, contentiousness, or basically the love of debate. This is where stubbornness flourishes. This is fed by the inability to comprehend or tolerate other points of view. So listening here remains underdeveloped. Do you know people who have conversations, but they always are upended by this, "But... Well, yeah... But... Okay, but." And the rules of this are winning's nice, but trolling is king. So there's no reason in to have debates. They're silly debates. And they don't even try and win, there's no graciousness in it. It's just to have a debate. To be the person that wants to troll you.

Number four, love of novelty. We like new things. We love new things. New photos, new dining experiences, new travel, new toys, new adventures, new cars, new jobs, new spouses, you name it. As long as it's new, we love it. And we don't want to think too deeply of its long term implications.

Finally, self-centeredness. We love to build our own platforms. And we love to have the world come to us and praise us with likes and comments and direct messages. You know what? When we were young, we were told we can be anything and do anything. Be anything you want, the world's yours. And now

we have this grandiose sense of self importance and entitlement. So we look to ourselves and we're not really looking out to help others.

### **REDIRECT YOUR DESIRES AND PURSUE GODLY VIRTUES**

The first step of living a clean life in a dirty world is you have to identify your own vices and flee from them. All right, number two. Redirect your desires and pursue godly virtues. In our world, the desire for power, for possessions, for sex, rules the hearts of men, until that power is broken and then redirected to the source of true life and goodness. St. Augustine spoke of God saying, "To praise you is the desire of man, a little piece of your creation. You stir man to take pleasure in praising you because you have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until it rests in you."

We probably all heard the bottom line on that quote before. But our desires, though perverted in youth are ultimately desires for God. We want power. Why? Because we think God is powerless. We want possessions. Why? Because we don't believe God alone can sustain us. We want sex. Why? Because we don't experience true intimacy with God.

Here's the thing about passion and desire. Does God want us to kill it or control it? That's a question for you guys. Does God want us to kill our desire or to control our desire? So the Stoics taught that passion itself, whatever it was for should be avoided because it will only disturb our peace. Paul suggests that it should not be avoided, but redirected to the pursuit of godly things. The goal here is to reorder every disproportionate desire that we have that we developed in our youth, because we can't just kill desire. We don't want dead men walking around. God made us beings of desire and passion.

John Owen said, "We must kill sin lest it kill us. The goal is not to kill desire, but to kill sin and stoke holy desire." Because we can't rid ourselves of anything unless we replace it with something else. We can't just leave a void in our hearts. So vices can only be replaced by virtues or by other vices.

In the Greek word for pursue, it means to hunt down, to chase, to persecute with zeal. It's the same word that Paul used when referring to him pursuing Christians, to kill them. Like he was hunting them down. That's the extent of his pursuit. So the juxtaposition here highlights the intensity of both fleeing sin as a fugitive and hunting down godliness. So what are some holy pursuits?

Pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace. How do you pursue righteousness? You obey God. It's never enough to not just do evil. We must actively and positively do what is good. The command not to murder isn't merely obeyed by abstaining from bludgeoning someone in their head to death. It's fulfilled only when we give of up our own life for a person in love. Righteousness is defined more by what is pursued rather than what's run from and avoided.

How do we pursue faith? The goal is to pursue the consequences of having faith. It's not to pursue faith. It's the consequences of having faith? What would the consequences be of having faith? Well, what kind of decisions would you make today if you knew God's promises were actually true? It didn't take faith. If you knew they were true, what would change about your day if you knew his promises were actually true? What would the consequences of that be? We need to pursue faith, the consequences of having faith.

How do we pursue love? Love is both a possession and a pursuit. We are loved by the Father through Christ in the spirit, therefore we can pursue loving saints and we can pursue loving sinners in all their glory, in all their faults. And how do we pursue peace? Well, in the Hellenistic world, the Greeks, peace was conceived as negative. It's negative terms. It's the absence of armed conflict. It's the absence of personal pain. But in the New Testament, peace is understood by this word called Shalom. It's not just the absence of pain and violence, but it's also the presence of God's blessing and the wholeness of life only God can offer. So pursue God's presence. Pursue a godly life and you'll experience true peace. So how can we live clean in this dirty world? Identify your vices, flee from sin. Redirect your desires and pursue godly virtues.

## **KEEP FRIENDS WITH A HEART OF GOLD**

And lastly, keep friends with a heart of gold. What's the point of a vessel? Is it just to receive things? They're containers, right? Are they just supposed to be filled and hold things? No. In a house, they feed, they provide, they have purpose. When we don't feed our flesh, we want to make sure that we feed our soul. And if you are honorable, then please feed others. The point of a vessel is to hold and pour out. And if you're holding honorable things, you want to pour out honorable things onto others.

So flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace. Along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. The adventure of faith is not a solo journey. It's not one to be traveled alone. Holiness isn't about quietly meditating in your closet every morning before sunrise. It's a communal pursuit. There's something that's involved with others. So what kind of community? Is it those who call on the Lord? That's half true. But it's not just those who call on the Lord, but those that do it with a pure heart. Kierkegaard says that, "Purity of heart is to will one thing. It's so pure that there's only one thing you're willing to do. It's an undistracted, undivided loyalty to God and a single minded commitment to God and God's purposes."

How do you know if your friends or your community has a heart of gold? Meaning, how do you know if they are golden vessels who have cleansed themselves for honorable purposes to pour into you?

I was thinking about that a lot this week. To me, the easiest way to know is when or if they walk through the fire with you. When life gets hard and answers, they don't come easy. Fiery trials reveal everyone's true character. And what happens to golden silver when it burns? It refines, it purifies. What happens to wood when it burns? It disappears and turns into ashes. What happens to clay when it burns? It shrinks back and it hardens.

People say what they think, but they do what they believe. People say what they think, but they actually do what they believe. Many call on the Lord, fewer call with a pure heart. So find those who are honorable vessels with hearts of gold and together encourage one another to flee from evil and pursue the goodness of God.

Here's the **Big Idea** for today. **A clean life is your choice. Run from sin. Run to God, and Run with other believers.**

Let's pray. God, we're here and help this message sink into our hearts, help us understand your desire for the men that you want us to be. You don't want us to be vessels of dishonor. You want us to be vessels of honor for special occasions. But to do that, it's our responsibility. Are we going to be cleansed and remain clean and keep coming to you in confessing our sins and asking for forgiveness and having the blood of Jesus wash over us and cleanse us? Or are we going to get dirty with the world and then stay filthy, and stay in the dark and let it fester? Help bring men this morning into the light, your light, you're refining pure light. And let it burn and test our character. And if we're not in a place where we're gold and silver, bring men alongside of us who have hearts of gold, that will pour in into us and lead us down the path of righteousness. In your name we pray, Amen.