

Vessels of Honor and Dishonor

by Stephen Kaung

The sermon emphasizes the importance of holding on to the deposit of God, even in times of suffering and falling away, and reminds us that the firm foundation of God stands firm.

Duration: 1:06:42

Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:14

Topics: "Vessels of Honor", "Spiritual Purity"

Description

Stephen Kaung emphasizes the distinction between vessels of honor and dishonor in the church, drawing from 2 Timothy 2:14-21. He warns of the dangers of false teachings and the need for believers to purify themselves from iniquity, highlighting that the church has become a 'great house' filled with both honorable and dishonorable vessels. Kaung encourages individuals to strive for holiness and to pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace in a time of spiritual decline. He reassures that despite the chaos, the Lord knows those who are His, and calls for a personal responsibility to maintain one's faith amidst the falling away of the church. Ultimately, he stresses the importance of being a vessel prepared for every good work, serving the Master faithfully.

Transcript

This is Monday evening, December 2nd, 1974, in Richmond, Virginia. The ministry is given through Brother Stephen Kong. Will you please turn to 2 Timothy.

We'll read from verse, chapter 2, verse 14. 2 Timothy, chapter 2, verse 14. Of these things put in remembrance.

Testifying earnestly before the Lord. Not to have disputes of words. Profitable for nothing.

To the subversion of the hearers. Strive diligently to present thyself approved to God. A workman that has not to be ashamed.

Cutting in a straight line the word of truth. For profane vain babbling shun. For they will advance to greater impiety.

And their word will spread as a gangrene. Of whom is Hymenus and Philetus. Men who ask the truth have gone astray.

Saying that the resurrection has taken place already. And overthrow the faith of some. Yet the sure foundation of God stands.

Having this seal. The Lord knows those that are his. And that everyone who names the name of the Lord.

Withdraw from iniquity. But in a great house. There are not only gold and silver vessels.

But also wooden and earthen. And some to honor and some to dishonor. If therefore one shall have purified himself from these.

In separating himself from them. He shall be a vessel to honor. Sanctified, serviceable to the master.

Prepared for every good work. But youthful lusts flee. And pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace.

With those that call upon the Lord. Out of the pure. We have been fellowshiping this time.

On the second letter to Timothy. As we mentioned several times. This second letter to Timothy.

Is the last of all the letters written by Paul. We may say that this is his last will and testament. He leaves behind him a legacy.

For us to receive. And for us to carry on. As Paul wrote this letter.

The condition of the church in general. Has greatly changed. Not only there was great change inwardly.

But there was great change outwardly too. Inwardly we find the church has fallen away. To a very great degree.

And outwardly the whole power of the Roman Empire. Was out to wipe out. And Paul was put in prison.

He knew that his day of relief. And in view of that he wrote this letter to Timothy. His beloved son in the church.

We feel there is an analogy. Between the time of Paul. In his last days.

And our time. Because we are living at the end of the last days. And as we live in the end of the last days.

What do we see around us. Not to say about the world. But to say about the church of God.

What do we see in the church. What has happened to Christianity. As we know it.

There is a great similarity. Between our time. So far as the church is concerned.

And the time of the church. In the last days. Because of the corruption within.

It seems as if. The church today is not able to withstand. The pressure that is coming from outside.

And we can almost see. That there will be falling away. To a very great measure.

And as we see the days are approaching. What is the word of God to us. How can we.

Conduct ourselves. In such time. There is a great contrast.

Between first Timothy. And second Timothy. I think everyone who reads.
These two epistles. Can see the difference there. As a matter of fact.
These two letters of Paul. Were written only. Within a few years apart.
He wrote first Timothy. After he was released. From the Roman prisonment.
After he had visited Ephesus. And he was expecting to revisit Ephesus. And in between that time.
He wrote this letter to Timothy. Instructing him. How to conduct.
Oneself. In the house. You remember that verse.
In the third chapter. How to behave. Not only Timothy.
How to behave. But everyone. In the church.
How to behave. In the house of God. Here is the house of God.
God's house. God's habitation. God lives in that house.
And because God lives in that house. We need to know how to behave in the house. Of God.
And this God's house. Is the church. The assembly.
Of the living God. The living God is in the assembly. Is among God's people.
And because of that. This assembly is the pillar. The testimony.
And the base. The deposit. Of the truth.
Now knowing the church in such a way. Surely we need to know. How to conduct ourselves.
In the church. And during that time. Even though there was this order.
And there were other teachings. Paul had to leave Timothy behind. To set everything in order.
To look to it. That the elders should be of such quality. The deacons should be of such qualification.
To see that everything. Will be done in order and decently. And those who teach.
False teachings. Are to be stopped. So that the truth.
May be maintained. And even then. You'll find Paul can say.
Great is the mystery. Of Godliness. This mystery of Godliness.
Is Christ and his church. It is not only Christ. It is Christ.
And his church. This great mystery. So even though.
When Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy. There was. A certain degree of.

Degeneration as it were. In the church already. There was chaos.
Disorder. Things other than. What they should be.
And yet Paul could still treat the church. As the house of. As the assembly.
Of the living God. As the pillar. And the base.
In other words. He was trying to help. To restore.
The church. To what it should be. And that's the reason why he wrote the first letter.
To tell us how to conduct ourselves. When we were. We are in such a situation.
But after. Only a few years. When he wrote.
Second Timothy. Something had happened. So drastically.
That when he wrote. The second Timothy. You'll find that.
The condition of the church. Was very very different. From the time.
When he wrote the first letter. There was not only. Certain changes.
There was not only. Some corruption. There was not only some.
Teaching other than. There should be. There was not only some disorder.
In the church. But it seems that. At that time.
The church had almost. Changed. Its very character.
No longer Paul. Mentioned the church. As the house of God.
Instead. In second Timothy. He called the church.
The great house. In a great house. And we know what he means.
He is referring. To the church. And yet he does not call it.
The house of God. He called it a great house. Now what is.
The difference between. These two terms. When you say.
God's house. It means that this house belongs to God. God is in the house.
He inhabits the house. It is for his pleasure. This is what God's house.
Really is. But at that time. Even awkwardly.
It is still Christianity. It is still. So called church.
And yet Paul said. It is a great house. Awkwardly it has become great.

Because during that time. Christianity has spread. All over.
The world. It has become great. A great house.
But. As it became great. It was.
Corrupted to the very core. The nature began to change. And that reminds us.
Of a parable. Used by our Lord. You remember in Matthew chapter 13.
Our Lord used a parable. The parable of the mustard seed. You know the mustard seed.
Is the smallest of all seeds. And the Lord uses that. As an illustration.
Of living faith. If your faith is. As a mustard seed.
You know the disciples think that. They need great faith. But the Lord said no.
It is not great faith. It is living faith. If your faith is.
As a mustard seed. It is small. And yet there is life in it.
It is living. So here you find our Lord Jesus. Mentioned the mustard seed.
He said the kingdom of the heavens. Is like a mustard seed. There is faith there.
There is living faith there. But it is very small. And if you put the mustard seed on the ground.
It will grow into mustard. A vegetable. A plant.
But instead of coming up. As a mustard vegetable. A plant.
It becomes a seed. A mustard seed. Should never grow into a tree.
Because. In God's order of creation. Each after its kind.
The plant is a plant. The tree is a tree. This is the order of creation.
And yet here you find this mustard seed. That should grow up into a vegetable. And yet.
Unexpectedly. It becomes a tree. A big tree.
So that all the birds. Of the air. Come to roost.
Upon its branches. And of course we know. Whenever the bible speaks of the birds.
Of the air. We know. It refers.
To the enemy. There is faith. It is true.
It is living. But. Instead of keeping within its bounds.
As God has ordered it. The church. As God has ordered it.

Is never meant to be great. On this earth. Fear not little flock.
For it is the pleasure of your heavenly father. To give you the kingdom. The church.
Is never meant to be great. It is a pearl of great price. In the eyes.
Of the merchant. Of the seeker. For pearl.
He has the eye for it. And it is a pearl. Of great price to him.
But so far as the world. Is concerned. It is living.
And yet it is small. But when it becomes abnormally great. Something.
Has gone out of the bounds. Of God's order. So here you'll find.
Paul does not call it. God's house. We know.
What he needs. And yet he just called it a great house. He can.
He has become great. And because it has become great. We wonder.
If God dwells there. We do not know whose house is that. It has become such a mixture.
A great change. Christendom. Dear brothers and sisters.
Is it not true. Now. When we look at the church today.
Has it not become. A great house. It is supposed to be the house of God.
There should be the presence of God there. When people come into his house. They should meet God.
They should bow down and say. God is indeed in your midst. But is it.
Still true. Or has it become something great. Great.
Now before. We describe this great house. Probably.
We should see the connection. How does Paul lead. To that point.
So if we will go back. To the second chapter. And.
Start with. Paul. Exhortation to Timothy.
Here he exhorts Timothy. He said of these things. Put in remembrance.
The situation of Paul. At that time. Was a reflection.
Of the condition. Of the church. Of his time.
He was imprisoned. All Asia. Forsook him.
There was no one standing by him. Only Luke. The beloved physician was with him.

He was deserted. And that. If you enlarge it.
Can typify. The condition of. Christianity of the church.
At that time. There was falling away. On all sides.
Even those who were faithful. In the beginning. Had begun to draw back.
Only Paul. As it were was left alone. Struggling.
For the testimony. And he was soon. To die.
Now that was the situation at that time. How should we meet. Such a situation.
We mentioned last night. And this morning. That when the church situation.
Is so abnormal. How should we. Behave ourselves.
As to be considered. Faithful unto God. When everything.
Is shaken. And falling away. What should we do.
Should we go with the crowd. Here you find the faithful servant Paul. Paul says.
There is a deposit. You need to remember. We have a deposit.
With us. When everything is changing. And falling away.
The deposit. Is still there. And we mentioned last night.
That the deposit is of two sides. On the one hand. We have deposited.
Ourselves. In Christ. On the other hand.
Christ has deposited himself. In us. We do not know what will happen to us.
When everything changes. We are not sure. Whether we too will change.
Don't be so self confident. As if everybody will fall. But you will not.
Where is our confidence. Our confidence is. We know whom we have been.
And we are fully persuaded. That he is able to keep. Till that day the deposit.
Which we have entrusted in him. In other words. If we have committed.
Committed ourselves. Our spiritual life. Our whole life on earth.
Our days ahead of us. If we have deposited ourselves. As it were.
In Christ. He is able to keep it. We are not able.
But he is able to keep it. Now that is one side. The other side is.

We need to remember. That God has deposited Christ. All that we have heard and seen of him.
The truth. The gospel. God has.
Deposited Christ. And if he has deposited Christ in us. How we need to keep.
Our deposit. By the power. Of the Holy Spirit.
And this is something Paul said. To Timothy. You need to remind people about.
When everybody is falling away. Then just remember the deposit. To be reminded of that.
But in connection with that. We mentioned this morning. With the deposit.
There is the suffering. Do not think that suffering. Is something strange to Christians.
Because we have. Such a precious deposit with us. The enemy of course.
Will not allow us. To have a peaceful time. We have to suffer.
For the gospel. We have to suffer. For the name of Christ.
We have to suffer as Christians. Just like Paul had to suffer. Because he was a Christian.
To be a Christian was a crime. During those days. And this will happen to us too.
We should know that suffering. Is related. With the deposit.
So when suffering. Shall come. It will not be strange to us.
You remember Peter said. Do not suffer. Because you have done evil.
Now that's shameful. But if you suffer. For the name of Christ.
If you suffer as a Christian. Rejoice. The spirit of glory.
And the spirit of God. Rests upon you. It is not something.
To be ashamed of. Paul was not ashamed. Of his sufferings.
Even unto God. But lots of Christians. Were ashamed of Paul.
Or how he needed. To have the mind prepared for it. But thank God.
In connection with suffering. There is always glory. There is always appearing.
And the kingdom. We know that the Lord. Is return soon.
And when he shall appear. He will bring his kingdom. Upon this earth.
And what is the kingdom to us. He will reward us. As Paul said.
With the crown of righteousness. If we. Die with him.

We shall live with him. If we endure with him. We shall reign with him.

If we deny him. He will also deny us. Not eternally.

But during the kingdom time. That is to say. We will lose the reward.

Even if we shall deny him. He cannot deny himself. He is faithful.

Now these are the things. That need to be reminded. We are living in such an abnormal time.

We need constantly. To be reminded. Of the deposit.

That is with us. We need constantly to be reminded. That to suffer.

Is nothing to be ashamed of. We need to be constantly reminded. That if we endure.

That we shall reign with him. These are the things. That will strengthen us.

That will help us to press on. Be strong. In the grace.

That is in Christ Jesus. As we are reminded. Of these things.

Paul exhorted Timothy. To be a person. Approved.

Not trying to be popular. To be approved of men. But try to be a person.

Approved of God. In other words. When everything begins to change.

And falling away. What are you seeking? To be approved. Avoid all these profane.

Dabbling. Dispute of words. All these non-essential.

All these. Philosophical. Discourses.

Shun these things. But rightly dividing the word of God. Holding fast.

The word of God. And because some people profess. They had greater knowledge.

Hymenas. Philenas. Philetas.

They perverted the truth. They said resurrection has already happened. Now what does that mean? It may mean.

Resurrection has already happened. That is to say. What is resurrection? It is the resurrection of your spirit.

That is to say. When you believe in the Lord Jesus. Because you are resurrected.

There is no bodily resurrection. Resurrection is your spirit being resurrected. It sounds very spiritual.

But how it is. Only recently. Just last week I heard.

Someone was preaching this. A great preacher. Well known in this country.

He was preaching this. Resurrection is. Regeneration.

When you are regenerated. You are resurrected. And that is it.

It takes away our hope. The blessed hope. Even the adoption.

The redemption of our body. So here you will find. When people begin to move away from God.

They thought they knew. Paul's exhortation. To Timothy was.

To hold on. And in that connection he said. Yet the firm foundation of God stands.

Having this seal. The Lord knows those. That are his.

And let everyone. Who names the name of the Lord. Withdraw.

As if the house. Is shaking. As if the house is going to fall down.

Paul said. The sure foundation of God. No matter what happens.

To the outward structure. Of the house. The sure foundation of God stands firm.

You cannot shake. The foundation. The foundation of God stands.

And what is the foundation. What is the seal. Upon the foundation.

The Lord knows those. Dear brothers and sisters. When everything is in confusion.

God is not confused. We do not know. What is the true.

What is the false. We do not know. As it.

As it were. We do not know. We are confused.

We are literally confused. Everything was thrown into turmoil. The whole church condition.

Is. In ruin. The sure foundation of God stands.

He knows. Those. What a comfort it is.

He knows. Brothers and sisters. People may not know.

We are living in a day. That people will take falsehood as truth. As truth.

As falsehood. You will find everything is turned around. They will consider light as darkness.

And darkness as the light. And people's ears. Will be so itching.

They just want to hear what they like to hear. And there will come a time. When nobody wants to hear the truth.

And you begin to wonder. What is the truth. You begin to wonder.

Whether you are following the truth. Everything is so confused. But there is one thing.

That stands firm. The Lord knows. He knows.

What does it matter if people do not know? What does it matter if people misunderstand? What does it matter if people call Paul an evildoer? A criminal. What does it matter? If only the Lord knows. The Lord knows those that are sin.

Dear brothers and sisters. As we come to the end. It is not appearance that matters.

It is the reality. It is not what this appears before man. That really matters.

It is the sight. The Lord knows those that are his. There is that seal there.

The Lord knows. But how do you know? How do you know whether you are his? How do you know whether you are following him? How do you know? We have the seal. Of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit within us will let us know. If we follow him he will let us know. But there is another evidence.

And the other evidence is that all who name the name of the Lord depart from iniquity. The Lord knows those that are his. But here you'll find on the other side let all who name the name of the Lord depart.

Withdraw from iniquity. What is the iniquity here? You know, often times we think of iniquity as well, you do something very sinful. That's iniquity.

Of course. That is. But when you read the context, you'll find that iniquity here speaks something deeper than what we ordinarily call sin or iniquity.

You know a priest in the temple has to bear the iniquity of the sanctuary. In other words it is not something that you do sinful in the world. It is something that is done in the sanctuary.

Which is not according to the will of God. For instance Aaron's two sons on the very first day of their priesthood we don't know why they got drunk and these two sons began to offer strange fire to God. They went into the tabernacle to burn incense to God.

That was commendable. That was good. But they did it without the order of their father Aaron.

They were supposed to serve God under Aaron. Aaron and his son. It was a priesthood.

But instead of following their father's order, these two brothers that came to their mind, they wanted to offer incense and they went ahead and did it. And instead of taking the fire that is from the altar which came down from heaven, they took strange fire to burn incense to God. From all our appearance they were worshipping God.

But they committed the iniquity of the sanctuary. They were smitten, burned to death by the fire that came from the presence of God. Brothers and sisters, here you'll find the whole context is this.

Not in connection with the world. Not in connection with sin that is committed in the world. No.

The whole connection is within the house. Within the house. In the house, it has become such a great house.

It has become such a confusion. You do not know who is the Lord and who is not. But the foundation stands first.

The Lord knows those that are His. But on our part how do we know we are the Lord? It is true. The Holy Spirit within us will tell us thus more.

All who name the name of the Lord must withdraw. So I do believe that iniquity here speaks deeper than some sinful thing you do in the world. Of course these are iniquities.

But I believe that iniquity here has a deeper application. And that is to say if you name the name of the Lord then you have to do the will of the Lord. Anything that is not in the will of the Lord is iniquity in His sight.

You name the name of the Lord and yet you do things on your own. These two are not compatible. They are contradictory to each other.

How can you name the name of the Lord and go ahead and do your own will? That's iniquity. And all who name the name of the Lord must withdraw. That is to say we have to not only name the name of the Lord but there must be that reality.

To dear brothers and sisters is it true that in our lives we not only name the name of the Lord but we walk. That is to say His name is real to us. You know what is the name of the Lord? The name of the Lord represents Himself.

That is His headship, His lordship, His authority. All who call who name the name of the Lord let all everyone who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity. And now in this connection Paul says, but in a great house.

So that's the connection. Paul is not talking about the people in this world. He is talking about people in the house.

Because the condition of the church has so changed. We may say its very character has changed. What should we do? He says in a great house there are not only gold and silver vessels but also wooden and earthen and some to honor and some to dishonor.

When you enter into the temple when you enter into the tabernacle all the vessels in the holy place there is nothing but gold. All silver. And yet you find in this great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also vessels of wood and earth.

Just like an ordinary house. In an ordinary house probably in your dining room you have silver or you may have gold. But in your kitchen you have lots of wooden and earthen vessels.

So here you find instead of seeing the picture of the sanctuary which is all gold and silver. And gold in the scripture speaks of God's nature. Silver in the scripture speaks of the redemption of our Lord Jesus.

In God's house everybody, everything speaks of the nature of God and of the work of the redemption of our Lord Jesus. That is to say everything is of Him. But instead of that you have vessels of earth and wood.

And wood in the scripture always speaks of human nature. Gold is divine nature. Silver is the redemptive work of Christ.

But earth is the use of the earth to claim man's worth. The work of the flesh. Here in the great house you'll find gold and silver vessels and wooden and earthen vessels.

Now the golden and silver vessels are to honour for honourable purposes. But the wooden and earthen vessels are in the great house you have found. Now these vessels represent each individual.

Every individual believer is a vessel. We are all vessels. We are all for a purpose.

We are all to serve the Master. But you'll find among believers there are two different kinds. Some live in the divine life by the redemptive work of Christ.

Gold and silver. Some live by their human earthly life. And does the work in their flesh.

You'll find among believers there are two different kinds of that. Please turn the cassette over at this point. What does it mean that? So and so is a gold vessel.

So and so is a silver vessel. But so and so is a wooden vessel. So and so is an earthen vessel.

If you read on you'll find And if therefore one shall have purified himself from these in separating himself from these he shall be a vessel to honour sanctified, serviceable to the Master, prepared for every good work. In other words you may be a gold or silver vessel or you may also be a wooden and earthen vessel. It depends on.

God is not partial. He has not predestinated you to be a gold vessel and another person a wooden vessel. The grace of God knows no partiality.

He gave His grace to all of us just the same. And yet you'll find there is a responsibility upon each individual. Now dear brothers and sisters, when the church begins to enter into ruin when the church enters into chaos, into confusion there is a personal responsibility that comes upon every believer.

When the flow is in the right direction, you just flow along. But when the flow is in a wrong direction, then each has a responsibility. So here you'll find you may be a gold and silver vessel, a vessel to honor but you may also be a vessel to dishonor.

It is up to you. What makes the difference? If you purify yourself from these. Now what are these? These are the wooden and earthen vessels.

In other words, if you are not willing just to be a wooden and earthen vessel now some people are quite contented to be such. After all, I'm saved. I will go to heaven.

Why should I deny myself, take up my cross and follow the Lord? I'm saved. Let me have a good time today. I want the benefits of the true world.

This present world. Now if you're contented to be such, you are contented to be earthen and wooden vessel, you will be such. There is no one to forbid you.

God will allow you to be such. And that's what you will be. To dishonor.

But if you are not willing to be such, a vessel to dishonor. If your heart is really towards the Lord, Lord, I do not want to be a vessel to dishonor to you. I want to be a vessel for your sake, self from thee.

If you're willing to deny yourself, if you're willing to take up the cross, if you're willing to let go the works of the Lord, if you're willing to yield yourself, deliver yourself by the Holy Spirit, the wooden. Let the wooden go. Let the earthen go.

You know what will happen. You will become a golden or a silver vessel. A vessel.

Dear brothers and sisters, we have tremendous individuals. Everyone is responsible. Especially in abnormal times.

Whether we want to go with the crowd, it's easy. Or whether we want to withdraw ourselves from iniquity because we name them. Whether we will just go away, falling away.

But does it mean that? So and so is a gold vessel. So and so is a silver vessel. But so and so is a wooden vessel.

So and so is an earthen vessel. If you read on, you will find if therefore one shall have purified himself from these, in separating himself from these, he shall be a vessel to honor, sanctified, serviceable to the Master, prepared for every good work. In other words, you may be a gold or silver vessel or you may also be a wooden and God is not partial.

He has not predestinated you to be a gold vessel and another person a wooden vessel. The grace of God. No, no popularity.

He gave His grace to all of us and yet you find there is a responsibility upon each individual. Now dear brothers and sisters, when the church begins to enter into ruin, when the church enters into chaos, into confusion, there is a personal responsibility. When the flow is in the right direction, you just flow along.

But when the flow is in a wrong direction, then it has... So here you'll find you may be a gold and silver vessel, a vessel to honor, but you may also be an idiot. What makes the difference? If you purify yourself from these. Now what are these? These are the wooden and earthen vessels.

In other words, if you are not willing just to be a wooden and earthen vessel. Now some people are quite contented to be such. That's all I'm saying.

I will go to heaven. Why shall I deny myself, take up my cross and follow the Lord? I'm saying let me have a good time today. I want the benefits of the two words.

His presence. You are contented to be earthen and wooden vessel. You will be such.

There is no one to forbid you. God will allow you to be such. And that's what you will be.

To dishonor. But if you are not willing to be such a vessel to dishonor. If your heart is really towards the Lord.

Lord, I do not want to be a vessel to dishonor to you. I want to be a vessel to honor. For your sake.

If you are willing to deny yourself. If you are willing to take up the cross. If you are willing to let go the worst of the things.

If you are willing to yield yourself. Deliver yourself by the Holy Spirit to death. Deliver.

Let the wooden go. Let the earthen go. You know what will happen.

You will become a golden vessel. Dear brothers and sisters. We have tremendous individual.

Everyone is responsible. Especially in abnormal times. Whether we want to go with the crowd.

Or whether we want to withdraw ourselves from the ministry. Whether we will just go away. Falling away.

Or whether like Paul. Now if anyone shall have purified himself from these. He shall be a vessel to honor.

Sanctified. Serviceable to the master. That is the first step.

And then secondly is a but useful lust flee. And pursue righteousness faith, love, peace with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart. First there is an individual responsibility.

But we all know. So far as God's purpose is concerned. It is never individual.

It is always corporate. But we see the corporate is falling apart. And when the corporate is falling apart.

Each on his own. Each for his own. That will be right attitude.

You know. When the corporate seems to be falling apart. The church seems to be entering into ruin.

It is true. Individual responsibility becomes essential. But you do not stop there.

After you have responded to the Lord. To purify yourself from the earthen and the wooden. Now often times we think the earthen and the wooden are the others.

You have to be purified from the earthen and the wooden in you. Then you will become golden and silver. But this is the first step.

After you have taken the step. Does it mean that God has given up the corporate testimony? No. Useful lust.

Flee from useless lust. Now we say this of course. Primarily is referred to Timothy.

Because he is comparatively a younger person. But we must remember the useful lust here does not is not just to be acquired from old sexual lust and things like that. Not at all.

The useful lust here speaks of a great deal. In other words seeking something for yourself. Proud, jealous.

Now these are useful lusts. Flee from these things. But pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, alone.

We cannot be alone. Not because it is not possible for us to be alone. But it is because God's purpose is always corporate.

Always corporate. You know when you come into a time of trouble, naturally you will try to withdraw yourself, say from all iniquity and just try to keep yourself pure. That would be a natural reaction.

And this is true. But this is only the first step. After you have done that you have to pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace.

But not alone. With those that call upon the name of the Lord. Now, God never gives us His original purpose.

Man may fail, but God. When the general condition of the church falls away, God is calling for not just one individual, not just individual, but God is calling individuals, yes. But these individuals who call upon the name of the Lord out of a pure heart, they need to pursue.

That's the corporate. That's the corporate. You know our problem is when we see the general condition of the church is falling away, then we say the corporate is gone.

Now, you have to begin that way. But, when the Lord begins to exercise you in being faithful to the Lord, you will find you are not alone. Elijah said, I'm the only one left.

I'm the only one left. And they are seeking my life. Now God's your city.

You have no testimony on this earth anymore. Dear brothers and sisters, how we do from the Lord. Even in this abnormal time, God is calling, and this is the principle of the overcoming.

When the church in general degenerates, how is the testimony of the Lord to be maintained? The general public, that is to say, Christianity in general has entered into ruin. There is no hope. But God does not do it.

He is calling you, comparatively speaking. He is calling some out of the ruinous condition to be faithful to the Lord, and within the testimony of the Lord. So here you'll find in chapter 2, Paul's instruction to Timothy in the beginning of chapter 2, he says, verse 1 and verse 2, Thou therefore, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and the things which thou has heard of me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, such as shall be competent to you.

Here you'll find it is not a matter of the official. Nothing official is mentioned. It is a matter of the spiritual, of the reality.

Paul is handing over to Timothy the deposit. And Paul asks Timothy to share with those who are faithful, who are able to instruct others, the same deposit. That is to say, to carry on the course by hope, by belief.

And you'll find this principle throughout the Bible. In the Old Testament times, when Israel as a nation failed God, and were taken into Babylonian captivity, God restored his testimony on earth. Threw a remnant to return to Jerusalem, to rebuild however weak they were, yet by God's grace.

Dear brothers and sisters, when you come into the last book of the New Testament, the book of Revelation, in practice two and three, the Lord's letters to the seven churches. The Lord wrote seven letters to the seven churches through Paul. When the churches were more or less in their normal condition.

And now you'll find the Lord wrote another seven letters to the seven churches through the Apostle John. And when these letters were written, the condition of the church was, to every church, you'll find there was something drastically wrong. Only the church in Philadelphia had all praise, but you'll find the general condition of that, and in every letter there is a call.

He that overcomes even though the general condition has fallen, yet the Lord is calling that will respond to him. To his revelation. And those who are responding to his revelation, they are the overcomers.

And they are to maintain the testimony of Jesus for, and what they do is considered as dear brothers and sisters, this principle of the overcomers. Is God's principle doing as not? Do you think we can expect Christianity as such to be restored completely to the early days as we find in it? The more you look at Christianity, the more you'll realize how impossible for thank God, as the church seems to go in one direction further and further away until finally as we find in the scripture, it will be absorbed into that one religion under the Antichrist. Even Christianity will be Antichrist.

And yet on the other hand, the Lord is calling his people out. The Lord is calling his people to respond to him. And thank God, you do find there are people who are calling upon the Lord out of pure heart.

And the Lord is gathering them together. The testimony of Jesus is to be maintained through those who call upon the name of the Lord out of pure heart. Not alone, but with the others of kindred spirit.

And dear brothers and sisters, we believe that is what the Lord is doing today. The Lord knows those that are his. Our Heavenly Father, how we praise and thank thee that thy purpose can never be defeated.

How we praise and thank thee that man may fail, but thou failest not. We praise thee because thou dost show us thy way. When everything seems to be in ruin, thou has a way to restore and to maintain thy testimony.

O Lord, do show us thy way, that we may walk in thy way. O Lord, that we may be serviceable. Have mercy upon us.

We ask in the name of our Lord Jesus.

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