

Sometimes, two things seem true/only one is/ neither is/ both are.

October 22, 2006

PAY THE PRICE!

2 Timothy 2:14-22

A Two-Sided Seal

Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some. Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness." Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

In this text: Both "Human Responsibility" and "Divine Sovereignty"

HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY: *It's up to us!*

1. We are responsible to avoid bad behavior

- Vs. 14** Remind them and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words
- Vs. 16** avoid worldly and empty chatter
- Vs. 19** abstain from wickedness
- Vs. 21** cleanse [yourself] from these things
- Vs. 22** flee from youthful lusts

→ That was then, the 60's, and Timothy was living in Ephesus. This is now, the 21st century, and here you are in London. As you are well aware, there are ways you could disobey God, with your words, with your actions, and **it's up to you to refuse!** (*"Pushing sins and spitting sins"*) If you mess up, it will be your fault! If I mess up, it will be my fault! **"Responsibility!"**

2. We are responsible to prevent moral disasters

- Vs. 14** wrangling about words is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers
- Vs. 16** worldly and empty chatter will lead to further ungodliness
- Vs. 17** their talk will spread like gangrene
- Vs. 18** they upset the faith of some

→ That was then, and this is now. As you are well aware, there are moral disasters that each of us could cause by our actions, and it's up to us to prevent them! If you end up there, if I end up there, we will have ourselves to blame. **"Responsibility!"** And the more responsibilities you have, the more you are responsible for/to! You are not the only person who will suffer from your disastrous moral choices. **"Responsibility!"**

1 Corinthians 3:10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. **But each man must be careful how he builds on it.**

Matthew 18:6 "...whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea."

3. We are responsible to attain God's approval

- Vs. 15** Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.
- Vs. 21** Be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work
- Vs. 22** Pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart

→ It was up to Timothy. **It's up to us!**.... If we fail in this, we have really failed, and we have only ourselves to blame! **"Responsibility!"**

DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY: *It's all in God's control!*

Verse 19 Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His"

NOT the **FIRST** reference to the sovereign rule of God:

2 Timothy 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus **by the will of God**, according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus...

2 Timothy 2:10 ...I endure all things for the sake of **those who are chosen**, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory.

→ **What is Paul telling Timothy?** *"Calm down, cheer up and keep on!"* [→ *"Nevertheless!"*]

Paul was in prison and about to be beheaded! And that's not all the bad news!

- all who were in Asia (e.g. Phygelus and Hermogenes) had turned away from him
- men like Hymenaeus and Philetus had gone astray from the truth
- their talk was spreading like gangrene --- and it was upsetting the faith of some
- bad behavior was NOT being avoided, and many moral disasters WERE being experienced,
- and there were lots of reason to expect these bad things to get worse, **BUT "nevertheless!"**

BUT The church was being formed. **"Christ was building His church,"** just as He said that He would --- and the forces of evil were not able to prevail against it, just as He said that they wouldn't! He was building His house, and the foundation of what He was building was standing firm!

The foundation of this church? The original recipients of the gospel: *the apostles and prophets*

Ephesians 2:19,20 ...you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, **having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets**, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone

Matthew 16:17,18 "...I also say to you that **you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church**; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it."

And Paul **KNEW** that the work of Christ was going to stand --- that the foundations were standing firm: He had proof! **"Look. Look closely. There is a seal on the foundation. Read the inscription! Read it!!!! See what it says?"**

Verse 19 Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His"

"knows": a very active concept, like "believing": not merely a thought flitting through a mind. A solid reality

Again, **DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY!** *"It's all in God's control!"*

→ **What's Paul doing for Timothy?** He's encouraging him to diligence and commitment and sacrifice: Pay the price! *Good soldier! Winning athlete! Hard-working farmer!*

"Be a workman who does not need to be ashamed!" "Be a vessel for honor"

"Be diligent!" "Pursue righteousness!" "Abstain from wickedness!" "Flee youthful lusts!"

→ **What's Paul NOT doing for Timothy?** He's NOT trying to relax him! To get him to back off or slow down.

It's all in God's control AND it's up to us!

Verse 19 Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," **AND**, "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness."

NOT EVERY SEAL IS TWO-SIDED...



The Great Seal of Canada isn't! It bears the impression of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, in her robes, holding the orb and sceptre, and sitting on the Coronation Chair in Westminster Abbey. The bilingual inscription reads: REINE DU CANADA ELIZABETH II QUEEN OF CANADA. It is made of tempered steel, weighs about 3 ¾ kg (8 lbs.) and is about 12 ½ cm (5 in.) in diameter.

The Great Seal of the United States is! The reverse has never been cut as a seal but it appears on the reverse of the One-Dollar Bill of the United States.



But the seal on the foundation of Christ's church has two sides!

2 Timothy 2:19

Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," **and**, "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness."

QUESTION: Why are there two inscriptions on the seal? ANSWER: To keep two facts clear!

Fact # 1) God remains in control of all of life

Fact # 2) We remain responsible for all that we do!

QUESTION: How do we keep clear about both these facts? ANSWER: By not using one to cancel out the other!

In other words, impress upon your thinking what you know about the sovereignty of God in order to stay hopeful and confident

--- but not to slack off! *"It doesn't matter what I do!"* is never the right thing to say.

That would mean you are **clear on God's sovereignty** [Good!] **but fuzzy on our responsibility** [Not good at all!]

AND impress upon your thinking what you know about our responsibility in order to stay diligent and dutiful and whole-hearted --- but not to stress out, or to overestimate your own importance, or to fail to see your complete dependence on God at all times. *"God has turned over the control of my life to me" or "God does nothing but in answer to prayer." Or "God is a gentleman and will never impose His will upon us without our permission" --* these things are never the right thing to say.

That would mean you are **clear on our responsibility** [Good!] **but fuzzy on God's sovereignty.** [Not good at all!]

These two truths must both be held firmly at the same time, like the two natures of Christ: God AND man. And the two identities of a Christian: a temple of the Holy Spirit (**I Cor. 6:19**) **AND** a living stone in the temple of the God (**I Peter 2:5**)

And this is what Paul was doing! He was at the end of his career: ***BAD results!***

But he urges Timothy to stay at it! ***Good soldier, winning athlete, hard-working farmer!***

And Timothy was to do the same... **2:2**

And so are we, as a church and as individual Christians: ***"Do your work! Do what you are responsible for! Take what is yours and pass it on. Get the gospel out! And watch to see how God, in His sovereign rule over all things, will use your obedience to accomplish His purposes in your life." "Stay calm, cheer up and keep going!"***

We are responsible: There are some deadly behaviors we must avoid!

Vs. 19 "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness"

Vs. 22 "Flee youthful lusts"

We need to be serious! --- as serious as we can be -- about the tendencies we have to get involved in disobeying God.

We are responsible: There are some great privileges we must pursue.

We need to be serious --- as serious as we can be -- about becoming the people that God calls us to be: people who *"call upon the Lord from a pure heart."*

Vs. 21 Be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work

Vs. 22 Pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart

And because becoming a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to God, prepared for every good work, and becoming a righteous and faithful and loving and peaceful person depends so much on us understanding the Word of God, there is something else we must become!

Vs. 15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as **a workman who does not need to be ashamed**, accurately handling the word of truth.

And all the while, we continue to trust in God, so we should remain joyful and peaceful --- abounding in hope -- because our great God remains thoroughly in control of all the details of life: as the Sovereign Ruler of all.

What was Paul telling Timothy?

What is the Holy Spirit telling us who believe in Christ: "Calm down, cheer up and keep on!"