

# ALAN TAYLOR

P O BOX 700623; TULSA, OK 74170-0623

918-447-8951

alantaylorministries.org

## Clay To Gold

Fine china is the name for beautiful dinner and serving dishes that originally came only from China. China is fancy, expensive and if kept nice, passed down from generation to generation, from mother to daughter. They are the special dishes that only come out a few times a year for the most special occasions. There is a good chance that you had fine china in your home growing up.

In the area of family traditions, things haven't changed much over the centuries. The Apostle Paul wrote something similar to Timothy, making a point about the church. It says in 2 Timothy 2:20-21, *"But 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."*

Now, he is not giving us a lesson about having a fancy dinner party but is using this as an analogy to explain people in the church. He calls us a great house with different vessels for different uses. Just like in my home, we have the fancy dishes that come out for exceptional, honorable moments, but we also have a trash can for the garbage and another vessel called a toilet for dishonorable jobs. In our culture, it is not polite to switch their uses for any possible reason.

My wife Christy will never announce at Christmas dinner that "the bowl that holds the gravy broke, but it's okay because I cleaned out the trash can really well, and it will work just fine." Just as we could try to sanitize our toilet bowl with enough bleach and extreme scrubbing, we could technically use it to replace the soup bowl. We would never do that!

In these verses, we see that the two types of contrasting material are emphasized, wood and clay, versus gold and silver, and the type of material determines the usefulness to the Master. The point of wood and clay refers to our outward man made of this earth, while the gold and silver refer to our born-again inner man.

A similar example is found in 2 Corinthians 4:7, *"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us."* The gold and silver here are inside of the earthen or clay vessel. It is important to note that God does not decide what type of material we are, but we do. That is why the scripture says that we can become vessels of honor and no longer need to remain as clay or wood, which is the amazing power of this verse. Each of us starts at the same place in our salvation living out of our old man, but those who build up the new man can begin to live from a new place.

Most of us began following God with the instructions to clean up our act. We are told, "A good Christian doesn't smoke or drink and lives right before the Lord," and I have to say I agree with that statement, at least at the beginning of our walk. Yet this is only to be the beginning of

our steps; it is not the finished process. If we look closely at the 21st verse, it says, *“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.”* The word *“cleanses”* does not mean to wash sparkly clean with no more grime or marks on it; otherwise, I could scrub my trash can, but you still would not accept it as a salad bowl. Here, a better definition is to purge out or purify yourself from the wood and clay and become gold and silver. This single verse is a fantastic powerhouse for us to see the possibilities ahead of us on this walk.

I hope you can see the incredible meaning within Paul’s writing as it is a promise for you that you don’t need to stay the same. He is not asking us to change our habits but to transform from clay into gold. Too many believers live as the cleanest wood bowl you’ve ever seen, and they are wondering why God can’t use them for works of great honor. For many years I would beg God to use me and put me to work, and the whole time He was waiting for me. He needs the church to stop being clay and become gold and transform their love into His love.

If they only knew how to build up their inner man to live out of that gold instead of the clay. There is a verse that tells us one of the ways to build up that golden inner man so that we can purge out the clay. *“But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit”* Jude 20.

There is an incredible work that your Heavenly Father has for you, and your past has no power to stop you. Can I convince you to spend time praying in the Holy Spirit today? Every minute you spend with Him is walking you down a path of transformation where you can exchange wood for silver and clay for gold. When we live from that gold place, we will be prepared for every good work of the Master.

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