

## ***“Passing On The Torch”***

### **A Study of 2 Timothy**

#### **Sermon # 3**

#### ***“The Characteristics Of An Approved Workman.”***

#### **2 Timothy 2:14-26**

Paul is writing to his young son in the faith, Timothy. Timothy is the young pastor that Paul has left in place in Ephesus with the task of grounding the new Christians and strengthening the Church. Paul is writing Timothy to encourage him, so that he will not give in or give up when the difficulties come. He wants him to know God will use him if he makes himself available.

The key to this whole section is verse fifteen and if you have been a part of this church very long then you recognize this as the theme verse for the A.W.A.N.A program. This verse establishes that if we are going to be used by God to reach others, we must *“be approved workmen.”* *“Be diligent (spoudason-imperative) to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”*

How then does one “become” an approved worker? The King James Version says, *“study to show yourself approved.”* Other translations use phrases like *“be diligent”* or *“make every effort.”* The point seems to be that this is not something that happens by accident.

We must be willing! Many years ago the preacher, Richard Baxter, had some wise words to share with the people of Kidderminster: *“Were you but as willing to get the knowledge of God and heavenly things as you are to know how to work in your trade, you would have set yourself to it before this day, and you would have spared no cost or pains till you had got it. But you account seven years little enough to learn your trade and will not bestow one day in seven in diligent learning the matters of your salvation.”* [John R. W. Stott. *The Preacher’s Portrait; Some New Testament Word Studies.* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1961), p. 27]

Paul reminds Timothy that he should seek to be a workman who is “approved” (*dokimos*). *“In the ancient world there was no banking system as we know it today, and no paper money. All money was made from metal, heated until liquid, poured into moulds and allowed to cool. When the coins were cooled, it was necessary to smooth off the uneven edges. The coins were comparatively soft and of course many people shaved them closely. In one century, more than eighty laws were passed in Athens, to stop the practice of shaving down the coins then in circulation. But some money changers were men of integrity, who accepted no counterfeit money. They were men of honour who put only genuine full weighted money into circulation. Such men were ‘dokimos’ or ‘approved.’”* (Donald Barnhouse)

The point was that if you knew a money changer who did not make the coins according to the rules, you would not use him. You would find a man who had a reputation for making valid coins. Paul wanted Timothy to be such a man when it came to the gospel, a man who could be counted on to preach the truth.

In today's text I want us to see three characteristics of an approved workman.

First, To Be An Approved Workman We Must Demonstrate A Proper Handling Of God's Word (vv. 14, 16-18, 23).

As we have already seen in verse fifteen we are to present ourselves as an "... approved....worker.... rightly dividing the word of truth." So what does the phrase "rightly dividing the word of truth" mean? The Greek word means something like cutting a straight furrow or making a straight path. That is that we are not to use the Word of God to support our pet theology or our own ideas. We are to handle the Word of God in a proper method.

There would seem to be four simple principles on to understand here before we proceed.

1. We must know the word of God!
2. We must apply the word of God to our own lives!
3. We must diligently study the word of God!
4. We must teach it correctly so that others can understand it!

Three times in this brief passage Paul reminds Timothy to not allow himself to be sidetracked (vv. 14, 16-18, 23). The importance of each of these passages is demonstrated in that it is led by an imperative command, "remind (v. 14), shun (v. 16), avoid (v. 23).

The first command we find is to - Remind them to avoid disputing about words (v. 14).

He begins in verse fourteen by saying, "Remind (*hupomimneske-imperative*) them of these things, charging *them* before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers."

As the Battle of Trafalgar was about to begin, Admiral Nelson came across two officers of his own flagship who were hotly arguing and about to come take swords to each other. Nelson stepped between them and said, "Stop." Then, pointing to the French fleet, he said, "There is the enemy." Some times we as Christians need to be reminded who is and who is not the enemy.

? Paul reminds them that this striving about words is not only not profitable but indeed causes “ruin” that is that it is literally a “*catastrophe*.”

The second command we find is to - Shun godless chatter (v. 16). “But shun (*perlistaso-imperative*) profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. (17) And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, (18) who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.”

Paul says that it is not enough to just remind them of the affects of such squabbling but they are to actively “shun” or literally “*walk around*” such arguments because they are like “*gangrene*” (the NKJV has cancer but it is literally gangrene).

Gangrene was notable for several reasons, it is an infection of the bloodstream that not only spreads rapidly throughout the entire body destroying members of the body, but also smells horrible. Gangrene continues until it requires amputation or leads to death.

The example given of the ruin of this kind godless chatter is found right in Ephesus in the life of “Hymenaeus and Philetus” whom Paul identifies as teaching falsehood in connection with the resurrection of the dead. These men have evidently taught that the fullness of the resurrection was to be had now – all its health, all its wealth and all its privileges. That sounds a lot like the health and wealth gospel of our own day.

The third command we find is to - Avoid senseless controversy (v. 23).

“But avoid (*paraitou- imperative*) foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife.”

We need to establish a couple of things. First, Paul is not saying that there are not things that are worth arguing for. As Ray Stedman points out, “It is not wrong for Timothy to defend the faith and stand up for the truth of Scripture. Paul has urged him to do that before, and he himself is a model of that kind of defense of the truth. But what he warns against is the pride that takes a position, refuses to listen to anyone else and assertively concludes that everyone else must be wholly in the wrong if they disagree.” [Ray Stedman. “Fit To Be Used” 1 Tim 2:20-22. - [www.pbc.org/dp/Stedman/timothy/3787](http://www.pbc.org/dp/Stedman/timothy/3787)]

Second, it is the argumentation that is ignorant not necessarily the questions themselves. In fact he uses two different words to describe the types of controversy that may arise, “foolish” and “ignorant.” The word “foolish” comes from the Greek word that means “*moronic*.” We can spend a lot of precious time on trivial matters which even if they are settled after long and hot debate do not advance the cause of Christ. Some individuals get all wrapped up in eschological debate, such as what current world figure’s name can be reduced numerically to the number 666. (An attempt to deduce the identity of the Anti-Christ).

*To Be An Approved Workman We Must Demonstrate A Proper Handling Of God's Word and...*

Secondly, To Be An Approved Workman We Must Live Cleansed Lives (vv. 19-22)

“Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart (*aposteto- imperative*) from iniquity. (20) 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. (21) Therefore if anyone cleanses (*aoorist*) himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.”

Paul says there is always one infallible test to spot those who really belong to God. If anyone who calls themselves Christians promote what the Bible names as sin, then they cannot really be a Christian.

In verse twenty Paul begins to use the illustration of home, to show how in any home there are different kinds of vessels with different functions. For example most homes have china dishes and silver serving vessels that they use for special occasions. Then there is the ordinary dinnerware they use on a regular basis. There are of course cooking utensils that never make it to the dining room, they serve a different function. So the Lord has different function for different Christians, some serve behind the scenes and some serve in the dining room. But the one thing we demand in any vessel whether it is fine stemware or a jelly jar is that it be clean.

“What if you went into a friend's house one day and wanted a glass of water. You go into the kitchen and see across the counter numerous glasses. As you look closer, you see every one of them is dirty – smeared with lipstick, old coffee, mold or food. But behind the sink you notice a peanut butter jar that is sparkling clean. What would you drink from?” Surely God is smarter than we are!!!

The way that we make ourselves available to be used by the Master is to present ourselves as clean vessels. To present ourselves as clean vessels it is necessary to do two things; one negative and one positive.

First, the negative, verse twenty-two,

“Flee (*pheuge- imperative*) also youthful lusts.”

Often this is interpreted to mean flee sensual lust and tied with the example of Joseph fleeing from the sexual advances of Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39:11-18). But the Greek literally reads “and flee youthful desires” and Dr Charles Erdman says in his commentary, “we may conclude from what precedes and follows that he refers not so much to bodily appetites as to the

temptations of a young pastor to pride, conceit, to dogmatism, to contentiousness and to the display of his own wisdom, either in exploiting false theories or in defending the faith.”

But presenting ourselves as clean vessels is not just what we refrain from doing but also in the positive directive given in the second part of verse twenty-two, “... but pursue (*dioke-imperative*) righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

Those who would be honorable vessels must aim at certain honorable things. “Pursue” righteousness (which means right behavior), faith (those things that lead to faith), love (deliberately choose to respond in love) and peace (be a minister of reconciliation). And just as he is to purge himself and separate himself from things and people who lead to dishonor he is to associate with other vessels of honor.

To Be An Approved Workman We Must Live Cleansed Lives and...

Third, To Be An Approved Workman We Must Deal Gently with Those Who Oppose Us. (vv. 24-26). “And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, (25) in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, (26) and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.”

One who would be a servant of the Lord is to live a life that is characterized by not being quarrelsome, being kind to all, ready to speak to anyone who will listen. Correction is to have the two-fold purpose of repentance and recovery.