

Subject: *God's Approved Worker*

Scripture: *2 Timothy 2:14-18*

Second Timothy is one of the Pastoral Epistles written by the Apostle Paul to young Timothy who was the pastor of a local church in Ephesus. These letters address issues pertaining to the ministry of the local church in general and to the pastor in particular. Among other things the pastor is to be a man of the Word. He is primarily a man of one book, the Bible. He looks to Bible to know God and God's will for his life, family, and ministry. The Scriptures are to be the foundation of all he believes, practices, preaches and teaches.

One of the first books I bought for my library back in 1983 was *Explore the Book* by J. Sidlow Baxter. In that good book he refers to the statement of Benjamin Franklin and clarifies what Mr. Franklin actually said was: "Be a jack of all trades and master of one." Baxter states that as far as a minister or Christian worker is concerned that one thing must be Bible knowledge. He writes, "Other knowledge may be interesting, useful, and important, but to be a master in Bible knowledge is vital." This is what the Lord is saying in our text. Two things are vital for a worker who is approved by God:

He must have a SERIOUS CONCERN ABOUT FALSE TEACHING (vs. 14, 16-18)

False teaching is a constant danger and God's people must take it seriously. False teaching is something that not only concerns a pastor, but it concerns the whole congregation. Notice Paul's words in verse 14 (reminding them...charging them before the Lord).

- False teaching is destructive (vs. 14)

Subverting is the same word from which we get the word "catastrophe." False teaching destroys the people who hear and believe it. There is nothing more destructive than false doctrine. Somebody asked a young boy if he understood what false doctrine was, and he said, "It's like when a doctor gives people the wrong medicine and it make them sick."

God's workers must avoid (shun) profane and vain babblings because they cause more ungodliness (irreverence). People do what they do because they believe what they believe. Show me what a person believes and you can predict how they will live. False teaching and ungodly living go hand in hand.

- False teaching is deceptive (vs. 17-18)

It eats away like a canker (spread like a cancer). It is subtle, but spreads rapidly and is deadly. Hymenaeus was mentioned in **1 Timothy 1:18-20**. Apparently Philetus was Alexander's replacement. These men denied the reality of the bodily resurrection of believers. They were probably teaching a form of Gnosticism that held spirit to be good and matter to be evil. Paul confronted this false teaching many times and in many places. **1 Corinthians 15:12** *Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?* The result of this false teaching was to overthrow the faith of some (vs. 18). This refers to people whose faith was not genuine saving faith because real faith cannot be overthrown. **Matthew 24:24** *For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.*

He must have a STRONG COMMITMENT TO GOD'S TRUTH (vs. 15)

- A correct attitude about God's Word

He must believe the Word is true (the word of truth). ***John 17:17*** Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. The Bible is truth without any mixture of error.

He must believe the Word is inspired. ***2 Timothy 3:16*** All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. We believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of Scripture. Verbal means every word is inspired. Plenary means the entire Word is inspired.

He must believe the Word has absolute authority. When Scripture speaks, God speaks. The Bible cannot be improved, amended, or diluted. It stands as the Word of God.

He must believe the Word is all-sufficient. ***Psalms 19:7-9***⁷ The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.⁸ The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.⁹ The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

We have everything we need for faith and practice. We have everything God wanted us to know. We don't look for visions or dreams or any other experience. God's Word is enough. The great Reformers used the phrase *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture Alone). On that foundation they took a stand for all the other great truths. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, and salvation is for the glory of God alone.

Chuck Swindoll wrote in his book, *Growing Deep in the Christian Life*: "If I could have only one wish for God's people, it would be that all of us would return to the Word of God, that we would realize one for all that His Book has the answers. The Bible is the authority, the final resting place of our cares, our worries, our griefs, our tragedies, or sorrows, and our surprises."

- A correct approach to God's Word

He must be committed to read and study it. Many people who claim to believe the Bible from cover to cover have never read it from cover to cover. If every word of Scripture is inspired it deserves our attention and serious study. We must know what the Bible says and what the Bible means. This demands a commitment of time and effort. We need to "rightly divide the word of truth." We must cut it straight. We must be careful how we handle or interpret Scripture. Serious Bible study involves observation, interpretation, and application. "Study" means to do your best and give it the utmost effort.

I appreciate what John MacArthur said in his book on expository preaching: "An expository preacher must be a diligent student of Scripture. Because the Bible is God's holy and sacred Word, it must be treated with respect, its purity protected, and its intended message never violated or misrepresented. It is not to be handled flippantly or carelessly, but great deliberation and industry must mark all efforts to discern its truths. Fruitful expository preaching demands great effort. Since nothing is as important as the Word, no energy expended by anyone in any field should surpass the effort of an expositor seeking to rightly divide the Word."

All of us have work to do, and the pastor has his own special work. Work is not a bad thing; it is a good thing, and working in the Word is the best thing we could ever do.

If a man has a serious concern about false teaching and a strong commitment to God's truth then He will be a man who is approved by God, and not ashamed. What could be more important than to have God's approval? If we please Him, it doesn't matter whom we displease. But if we displease Him, it doesn't matter whom we please. Nothing could be better than to know the God's Word is honored, the work is well done, and the Master is pleased.