

A Worker Approved by God – Part 3

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Paul instructs Timothy to take up the mantle of leadership for the next generation
2. aim – to cause us to seek wholeheartedly to inculcate the truth of Christ into the next generation
3. passage – 2 Timothy 2:1-26

b. outline

1. The Goal of the Approved Worker (2 Timothy 2:1-13)
2. The Pursuit of the Approved Worker (2 Timothy 2:14-19)
3. The Attitude of the Approved Worker (2 Timothy 2:20-26)

c. opening

1. the **movement** into the next chapter of 2 Timothy
 - a. **chap. 1:** Paul's very personal words to Timothy about his legacy – that Timothy should never be ashamed of the legacy of faith that he has received from so many (*i.e.* his realization of it)
 - b. **chap. 2:** Paul's words of instruction of what Timothy is to do with that legacy (*i.e.* his use of it)
 1. the key phrase of the chapter is from **v. 15 (see below)**
 2. **IOW:** the legacy of Timothy is now an *opportunity* to do something with this faith
 3. or, to pick up the mantle of leadership from Paul now that *his* ministry has come to an end
3. the **outline** of the next chapter of 2 Timothy
 - a. (**see above**) the goal – what is the goal of being an approved worker; for *what* does he strive?
 1. a **Christocentric catechism** of the Christian faith – a faith that is centered on the person and work of Christ and holds a confession of loyalty to Christ even in the face of opposition
 - b. (**now**) the pursuit – how does the approved worker accomplish this goal; what does he do?
 1. key phrase: to be “*rightly handling the word of truth*” = the *pursuit* is rightly handling **what God has revealed**, properly teaching it to the next generation

II. The Pursuit of the Approved Worker (2 Timothy 2:14-19)

Content

a. the **focus** of the approved worker (v. 14)

1. “*them*” = the pronoun hints at a group of people *already mentioned* in the chapter above
 - a. **probably not:** the “*elect*” of **v. 10** (although much of what Paul commends Timothy to do here *would* apply to the elect *as they are represented in the local church*)
 1. because the term is too “vague” – Paul *rarely* uses it as a descriptor of church-members
 2. because the term is embedded in a phrase *not really about the elect* – Paul “*endures everything*” for them, but they (in that general sense) are not the “audience” of the chapter
 - b. **more likely:** the “*faithful men*” of **v. 2** – the teachers to whom Timothy was to entrust the gospel
 1. because the structure of the chapter points to the *teaching ministry* that Timothy was to engage
 2. because Paul will mention some “bad” examples of such men in **v. 17**
 3. because the overall picture is one of passing on the *legacy of faith* to a new generation, and this was to be done *in concert* with trusted teachers working in a solidarity of truth
 - c. “*remind ... these things*” = the phrase suggests everything Paul has said in **vv. 1-13: (see above)**
 - d. **Timothy is to remind the teachers that the faith they are delivering is Christ-centered (all about him), Christ-honoring (trusting in him), and Christ-retaining (remaining loyal to him)**
2. “*quarrel about words*” = meaningless argument; teaching with no *practical* impact on its adherents
 - a. **question:** does Paul mean to imply that the *meaning of words* is irrelevant or unimportant?
 1. given that the *entirety* of the biblical revelation is built on *words*, words that have *revealed* meaning and depth *beyond their common usage* (*e.g.* *ecclesia* = the gathered ones)
 2. given that he (himself) often used *significantly difficult words* to describe elements of the faith?
 - a. and used words in *highly systematic* ways to describe God and his purposes (*e.g.* **Eph. 1**)
 3. a **modern** view: Christianity is not *really* about the meaning of specific words, but more a sense of just “loving Jesus” and trying to do the “best we can” with what (little) we know
 - a. as though words like “*the elect*” are **elastic** and subject to **endless personal interpretation**

- b. therefore, we shouldn't "argue" about the meanings of these words, but simply "agree to disagree" and focus our attention more on just "doing" the Christian faith "well"
 - 4. a **biblical** view: words have meaning, and the meaning of those words is *revealed* by the Spirit of God to create "boundaries" as to what constitutes *genuine* Christianity
 - a. **principle: he who controls the dictionary controls the conversation – those who define the words being used in the conversation get to drive the direction of that conversation where they wish it to go**
 - 1. **e.g.** in the culture: marriage, gender (transgender), racist (Nazi), etc.; in the church: Christian (as a descriptor), gay Christian, etc.
 - 2. **i.e.** "inserting" new meaning into words forces everyone who uses them to "accept" the new definition *and (ultimately) the intention*, leading away from orthodoxy *little by little*
 - b. **the revelation of God is entirely based on words**, words spoken in creation, through law and prophets, through Scripture, and even through the *Logos* of God – **words matter!**
 - 5. therefore, it is *highly unlikely* that Paul is suggesting that teachers in the church simply "acquiesce" to whatever definitions are applied to key Christian terms
 - a. rather, Paul is instructing teachers to *refrain* from introducing *concepts* without **practical application** into the lexicon of the church – **i.e.** subjects that are open to *interpretation* simply because they are not "core" to the mission of the church
 - b. **e.g.** arguments over *style* or "traditions" or preferences, etc.
 - c. **IOW:** focused on "*the word of truth*" (**v. 15**) – the revelation that God has given
 - b. **Timothy is being instructed to focus the teaching on core matters of the faith, keeping everything about Christ Jesus and what God has revealed about him (see below)**
- b. the nature of the approved worker (v. 15)**
1. the key statement of the chapter – all of what it means to "transfer" this legacy to others – all of what Paul wanted Timothy to do in taking up the mantle of leadership from himself
 - a. **note:** Paul believes that *he* has succeeded at this (and is about to face the judgment seat of Christ), thus he wants Timothy to do the same
 2. "*present yourself to God*" = to come into the presence of God; to appear before a **potentate**; to stand before the sovereign throne of God and answer for yourself (primarily in actions)
 - a. all men will stand before God and give an "*account*" of themselves (**Romans 14:10-12**)
"Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; ¹¹for it is written, 'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.' So then each of us will give an account of himself to God."
 - b. this **will include believers**, although their judgment will never be "outside" of being in Christ – **i.e.** their judgment will be (ultimately) to demonstrate their connection to him (the reprobate will be shown, by their actions, to still be in rebellion against him)
 - c. true believers **desire** to serve Christ, and such a judgment will reveal this desire ...
 3. "*as one approved*" = one who has been **tested** and demonstrates full fidelity; the true lover of Christ that desires to serve him and (at the judgment) is shown to have such desire *by his actions*
 - a. **i.e.** "*no need to be ashamed*" = having served in a way that is consistent with the claim of being a follower of Christ – not someone who stands at the judgment **guilty** of being "inconsistent"
 4. "*rightly handling the word of truth*" = taking what has been given (**i.e.** the legacy of faith) and properly doing with it what is required; in Timothy's case, entrusting that legacy to "*faithful men*" (**v. 2**) and making sure that the faith is being properly "handed down" to the next generation
 - a. **IOW:** standing on the shoulders of those who have gone before us and "transferring" the legacy of faith we have received to another generation – not just "sitting on it"
 - b. **question:** what is the *foremost* command that Jesus gave his disciples before he ascended?
 - c. **answer:** to "*make disciples*" of every nation (**Matt. 28:18-20**) – to *replicate* the saving power of the gospel into future generations of believers – the **Commission** of the church
 5. **Timothy is instructed by his mentor to follow in the footsteps of those who went before him, taking up the mantle of leadership, focusing his energies on the true substance of the gospel, and making sure that it was being passed on well**
- c. the dangers for the approved worker (vv. 16-18)**
1. **note:** these verses are a "*but*" – designed as a contrast to "flesh out" what he meant in **v. 14**
 - a. which we will only be able to **start this morning** ...
 2. "*irreverent babble*" = incessant talk that is **godless** or **worldly**; topics of conversation (or teaching) that are not centered around God and his ways, but a "running commentary" on worldly matters
 - a. **i.e.** the **conversations of the immature** – having no ability/desire to discuss *theological matters*, thus focusing on *worldly matters* – making *temporal things* more important than the *eternal*
 - b. **question: in the hallways of this church, what are the primary topics of conversation that you have with other believers? (your answer will tell you a lot about your spiritual maturity)**

3. “[leading] to more and more ungodliness” = fundamentally, incessant conversation (or teaching) that is focused on *worldly matters* will lead those participating in it to more and more worldliness
 - a. such talk will “spread like gangrene” = a flesh-eating disease spreading in the body
 - b. **BTW:** there is (generally) no **neutral** conversation – either we are building one another up in *spiritual maturity*, or we are creating a deeper and deeper sense of *worldliness*
 1. **e.g.** the *primary problem* with non-expository forms of preaching, whose primary purpose is to “help” with the issues of life (**i.e.** worldly matters)
 - c. **a catechism purpose:** to prepare the children of this church to be able to defend their faith in the world, but (more importantly) to **live by that faith and shun what is worldly**
4. **the conversation will continue ...**