

A Worker Approved by God – Part 4

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**: “*present yourself to God as one approved [through testing], a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth*”
 2. **LOW:** 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. the goal – what is the goal of being an approved worker; for *what* does he strive?
 1. to pass to the next generation **a Christocentric catechism** of the Christian faith – to instill a legacy of faith in Christ into the next generation *under the direction of Christ himself*
 - b. 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
 2. *i.e.* remind the teachers (**see v. 2**) to focus on *central matters* of the faith (**v. 14**), avoiding discussion about matters that are “less” important – avoid teaching matters that will retard the student growing in faith (**see the example below**)

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

Content

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**
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. *e.g.* 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. “[*leading*] to more and more ungodliness” = incessant conversation (or teaching) that is focused on *worldly matters* will lead those participating in it to more and more worldliness
 1. *i.e.* such talk will “*spread like gangrene*” = a flesh-eating disease spreading in the body
3. an example of “*irreverent babble*”
 - a. Paul (again) names some individuals responsible for this in the church
 1. **note:** Paul is not worried about “naming names” of those who are damaging to the church – sometimes it is *necessary* to “call out” purveyors of error *to protect the rest of the flock*
 2. Hymenaeus (**1 Tim. 1:20**) – one who had “*made shipwreck*” of his faith (with Alexander)
 - a. Paul had placed these men under *church discipline* – he had abandoned them *to the world* in order to force them into repentance in order to be restored to fellowship
 - b. **note:** these men *were teaching worldly things*, so Paul put them *into the world* in order for *the very thing they loved* to chasten them *back* into a focus on *godly things* (*i.e.* the *unfulfilling* nature of “things” driving the true believer back to the church and to Christ)
 3. Philetus – not mentioned anywhere else in Scripture, but clearly in the same “camp”

- b. they had “*swerved from the truth*” – somewhere along the way these men had *known* the truth, but had begun to teach “*irreverent babble*” – they had “*swerved*” from what *mattered*
 - c. specifically, they had begun to teach that “*the resurrection has already happened*”
 - 1. **note:** the phrase is difficult to understand because Paul doesn’t *elaborate* on what these men were *actually teaching* in regards to resurrection itself
 - a. Paul *certainly* was not condemning them for teaching that *Jesus* had already risen
 - 1. we purposely picked some **hymns** this week that have a resurrection *motif* – a reminder of the importance of the resurrection of Christ as *the objective truth upon which the entire Christian faith is built* (**remember v. 6** – “*remember Jesus Christ, risen from the death*”)
 - 2. so, it is *impossible* to believe that this phrase means the resurrection of Jesus himself
 - 2. so, the concept of “resurrection” here must apply to *others* – the “general resurrection”
 - a. Paul *may have* been condemning them for teaching about the resurrection similarly to other heresies that he had addressed in other places
 - b. **e.g.** that there is no resurrection of the body for human beings (**as in 1 Cor. 15:12**)
 - 1. probably a *gnostic* teaching that “release” from the physical nature is all-important, and there would be no desire/need for us to be “embodied” after such an “escape”
 - a. **modern:** the goal of spirituality/religion is freedom from our physical nature; to escape from the “limitations” of human nature in order to become “divine” (as in Mormonism)
 - 2. the central rebuttal by Paul in **1 Cor. 15:22-26** is that the resurrection of Jesus (as an objective fact) is a “first fruit” of what God has in store for his elect – our resurrection is the hope we have in Christ that *death itself has been conquered*
“For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ, the first-fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.”
 - 3. because we are physically-embodied creatures *in our original formation*, it is essential to our existence under our Creator that we will *always* be embodied
 - a. to be “disembodied” is to no longer be human
 - b. to be *glorified* is to be raised from the dead, *just as our Savior was*, and given a permanent physical body that no longer suffers, has temptations, ages, is limited by the corruption of the Fall, or dies
 - c. a perfect physical state *even greater than the original physical nature of Adam himself*
 - c. **e.g.** that those who die *before* the coming of Christ are eternally lost (**as in 1 Thess. 4:13**)
 - 1. or, only those who are alive at the Parousia will be able to live with him forever
 - 2. the central rebuttal by Paul in 1 Thess. 4:15 is that the coming of Christ *is still future*, and he will call all of his own *in order*, both the living and the dead
“For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep”
 - d. **e.g.** or (as in these words) that the resurrection was a “limited time” event that has already occurred, probably amongst “special” people at or near the time of Christ’s resurrection
 - 1. maybe a reference to those “raised” at the crucifixion of Christ (**Matt. 27:52**)
 - 2. possibly a teaching in the church similar to the above *intended* to say that any desire by Christians for glorification was misplaced – this life is all we get, and our blessings from God in faith are only granted here (**i.e.** similar to a health-wealth-prosperity teaching where what matters is what God will grant to us *in this life*)
 - d. the result is always the same: “*they are upsetting the faith of some*” = they are making “*shipwreck*” (**1 Tim. 1:19**) of other people’s trust in Christ, perverting the gospel message into something *other* than a glorious hope, and turning the resurrection of Jesus into something *insignificant*
 - 1. “*upsetting*” = not making one sad or worried (although *partly* that); destroy; ruin; lit. to turn over, as in “upsetting the apple cart” – turning faith into **apostasy**
 - 2. **point: when the gospel teacher dabbles in direct heresy (like above) or matters that are peripheral to the central truths of the gospel, the student can be ruined by it, and the gospel is diminished – its power is lost when unfaithful teachers contradict it**
 - a. “*irreverent babble*” is *dangerous*, because it has a tendency to **erode** genuine faith – which is why we need a consistent and stable “foundation” under our faith (**see below**)
- d. the **foundation of the approved worker (v. 19)**
 - 1. Paul uses a word-picture in this verse to “shore up” a foundation under *both* those who are the students of the gospel *and* those who teach it faithfully under Christ
 - a. **note:** the two “quoted” statements are probably not quotations from the O.T. (although the first has elements found in **Num. 16:5; Nahum 1:7**) – they are probably *adages* that were common in the 1st C. church, which Paul now applies to his point
 - b. the picture of a “*foundation*” = a support structure; undergirding; poss. a cornerstone

- c. the picture of a “seal” on the foundation = an etched inscription on the cornerstone that announces to all who see it that the structure has certain “characteristics”
 - 1. typically, a date of erection, the builder, the purpose of the structure, etc.
 - 2. here, two (2) inscriptions that are *fundamental statements of truth within the gospel* that bring assurance to all, *even in the face of teaching that might erode faith*
- d. **adage #1:** “*the Lord knows those who are his*”
 - 1. “*knows*” = a generic word for knowing something or learning of something – when applied to God, his *inherent knowledge*; his active *foreknowledge of those who are included in his Covenant of Grace (i.e. the elect)* – not God “learning” by observing, but knowing by *intention*
 - 2. **principle: our assurance of faith (and protection against irreverent babble) is in knowing that God has a people he knows because he purposed to know them in eternity past**
- e. **adage #2:** “*let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity*”
 - 1. “*depart*” = abstain; desert; leave; let go; withdraw – to *repent of sin* by letting it go
 - a. although stated in the form of an *imperative*, the command reveals a truth: those who are truly born-again by the Spirit *hate their sin and desire to flee from it*
 - 2. **principle: another assurance of faith (and protection against irreverent babble) is in hating our sin because that is what regenerate men truly desire before God**
- f. **the goal of the true gospel teacher is to “rightly handle the word of truth” – to place a solid foundation under the Christian student, to teach that which builds assurance in faith**
 - 1. Timothy is encouraged by Paul to appoint such men and lead them to do this