



World Christian Fellowship

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Worker

2 Timothy 2:15, *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

- Diligent
- Talk the walk
- Commitment to the cause
- Track record

Apostle Paul wants his younger associate in ministry, Timothy, to give attention to the quality of his work by remembering the One for whom he works.

Paul wants Timothy to live and labour for an audience of One.

Most of us have no problem accepting those words as Paul's words to Timothy.

But did you know that those words are also God's words to you this evening?

He is calling us to do our best.

- To be diligent,
- To make every effort.
- To present ourselves to Him as those approved, that is, as those who have given their all for His glory.
- To be laborers for Jesus Christ who are not ashamed of our labours.
- To be those who have earnestly sought to do everything we can with everything we've been given.

Is that your desire?

If it is your desire to give all for Jesus because He gave all for you, and to serve Him, just as He served you on the cross.

A Royal Commission

If you were a craftsman, maybe a carpenter, maybe a stone mason, maybe a tailor...and you were appointed to create something for the king himself, would you look at that project differently?

In comparison to your everyday work, would you give that project, that royal commission, more thought?

Would you give it more of your time and attention?

Would you handle that assignment with a higher degree of care and scrutiny?

Most people would absolutely give such a project more of their time and attention.

Why?

Because the work is for the King himself, and a good craftsman would want to create something fit for a king. Especially if he was a good king, and the craftsman was blessed under his reign.

Can you imagine a skilled labourer who didn't take such a commission seriously?

Who arrived in the king's presence with shoddy or incomplete work?

If you were that craftsman, how would you feel during a royal inspection of your chair or tapestry or whatever it was?

Be Diligent.

This command is set against the backdrop of false teachers.

Verse 14 Paul tells Timothy to avoid "word-battles" that only ruin the hearers.

Verses 16-18, false teachers had said that the resurrection of believers had already come. Their godless chatter was eating away at their audience like gangrene(cancer)!

We could almost translate it, "Make this your highest priority," or "Pour yourself into this task."

This is not restricted to mere study. It involves the whole person—heart, soul, and mind.

To translate this verb as "study" implies that the "word of truth" is a synonym for Scripture. However, "word of truth" refers to the good news of Jesus Christ which Paul had passed on to Timothy in oral instruction.

Intellectual diligence.

The pastor job is no picnic!

It takes hard work.

Yet every Sunday, throughout this country, thousands of ill-prepared sermons are delivered in evangelical churches.

Biblical illiteracy in epidemic proportions and down-right anti-Christian thinking.

Why is the Word of God treated so disdainfully today in most churches?

Why is our engagement with culture so equally superficial?

Christians are addicted to mediocrity.

Why?

Lack of willingness to engage our minds in the service of Christ. Because thinking is hard work. But we dare not neglect it.

The greatest danger besetting Evangelical Christianity is the danger of anti-intellectualism. The mind as to its greatest and deepest reaches is not cared for enough.

People are in a hurry to get out of the university and start earning money or serving the church or preaching the Gospel. They have no idea of the infinite value of spending years.

Conversing with the greatest minds and souls of the past, and thereby ripening and sharpening and enlarging their powers of thinking. The result is that the arena of creative thinking is abdicated to the enemy.

Evangelicals cannot afford to keep on living on the periphery of responsible intellectual existence.

Any time we take our eyes off Christ, any time we do less than study for the glory of Christ and Christ alone, we will drown in the task.

There is no fundamental contradiction between our hearts and minds. We are to offer to God the whole person. For the

minister of the Word, holiness is not an option. But neither is knowledge.

Someone say, "I would rather know a dozen verses and obey them than the whole Bible and do nothing with it."

My question is, why do we have to choose?

We should neither put a premium on ignorance nor on disobedience.

Further, the Bible is not just about behaviour modification.

It is also about belief modification.

What I believe if I truly believe it then it will affect my behaviour.

Approval of God.

Our society is fixated on approval ratings. Over and over again, we are told that President/ Prime minister's approval ratings.

The church is supposed to be above such things.

We don't do things in the church just because a majority of the members may be in favour.

The approval we seek is not that of the congregation but that of the Lord.

It is God's approval rating that counts. It is God's opinion that matters not the opinion of a very vocal minority or of the silent majority.

Don't forget, it isn't the opinion of the congregation that matters. What matters is the opinion of Almighty God. He is the One you are serving. He is the One you are trying to please. He is the One whose blessing and praise you seek.

Paul is writing to Timothy, a young pastor. He is giving him advice on how to carry out the duties of his office. This is advice not only for Timothy!

This is advice for all of us in our church.

Paul's advice for all is to seek the approval of God.

God does not want to you serve against your will.

1 Peter 5:2, *Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;*

Being Christian worker requires the best of your effort, your time, and your talents.

"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved"

Paul uses the image to get across the idea of seeking God's approval.

Be like "a workman who does not need to be ashamed"

The Greek word for "workman" is mostly used for one who works in agriculture. The worker is sent out to plough a field with a pair of oxen.

Remember the first time you did plough the field, if you happened to do?

What is the first advice you get?

Don't look back.

Pick an object at the other end of the field and steer straight for it.

God wants a ploughman who cuts a straight line, who fixes his eye on an object and aims straight for it.

Be like a ploughman who has no reason to be ashamed of his work.

Fix your eyes on God, His glory, and the growth of His church.

"a workman who has no need to be ashamed"

The apostle continues with a description of the person approved by God. He is a workman who has no need to be ashamed.

He is unashamed because he knows that God approves of his work, regardless of what anyone else thinks of it.

The imagery here is not that of great skill, but of deep integrity!

The workman does not need to be ashamed because he has put in an honest day's work.

This is what God requires of us:

Our greatest ability is our availability.

Purpose of Approval to God.

1. We are constantly showing ourselves to God.

We live knowing that God is watching.

Psalm 33:13-16, *The Lord looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men. ¹⁴From the place of His dwelling He looks On all the inhabitants of the earth; ¹⁵He fashions their hearts individually; He considers all their works. ¹⁶No king is saved by the multitude of an army; A mighty man is not delivered by great strength.*

We are to be living sacrifices.

Romans 12:1-2, *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”*

2. We are before God to be approved by God.

The word “approved” means one who has passed a thorough examination.

It is from the same root word as

1 Thessalonians 5:21, *Test all things; hold fast what is good.*

1 John 4:1, *“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”*

James 1:12, *“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”*

1 Peter 1:7, *“that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honour, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”*

3. God is Him to Whom we are to be approved.

Galatians 1:10, *For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.*

rightly dividing the word of truth.

What is this word of truth?

It is the Gospel.

Paul has mentioned the Gospel a couple of times already.

2 Timothy 1:9, *who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began,*

2 Timothy 2:8, *Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel,*

Why does Paul mention something as elementary as the Gospel to Timothy?

After all, he was raised in a Christian home. He heard the Gospel as a boy already from both his grandmother and his mother (**2 Timothy 1:5**).

Let me remind you of our hearts. Our hearts are so deceitful that they tend to stray.

They tend to stray from the Gospel.

They tend to corrupt the Gospel.

We need to hear the Gospel.

We need to hear it over and over again. Because once we stop hearing the Gospel we start to stray from the Gospel.

There is the temptation to turn the Bible into a 12-step program.

- 12-steps to overcoming addiction,
- 5-steps to financial security,
- 7-steps to improving communication,
- 3 ways to become a better husband.

The Bible becomes nothing, but a program and you hear nothing about the Gospel.

An approved workman, an elder and deacon that God delights in, "correctly handles the word of truth."

He makes sure the Gospel is preached and taught in this church and from this pulpit. He knows God's people need to hear the Gospel a thousand times and ten thousand times.

2 Timothy 1:13, *Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.*

2 Timothy 2:2, *And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*

2 Timothy 3:16-17, *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

The Consequence of a Worker.

a) You will be a labourer.

The kind of labourer for which Jesus told his disciples to pray.

Matthew 9:37-38, *Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. ³⁸Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”*

1 Corinthians 3:9, *For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building.*

b) You do not need to be ashamed.

There is no reason to be embarrassed.
Irreproachable.

1 Peter 3:15, *“But sanctify the Lord God[a] in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defence to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.”*

1 Peter 4:11, *“If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”*

c) Handling rightly the word of truth.

One needs diligence to do this.

Literally, this expression means to cut a straight line—not deviate from the intended course.

The object is the word of truth.

God expects us to use the scriptures correctly.

To use correct thinking in interpretation.

God wants us to reason with Him.

Isaiah 1:18, *“Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the Lord, “Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as*

white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.

To apply the word of God correction.

We must be doers of the word.

James 1:21, *Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.*

To proclaim God's word to others.

We must teach others.

Acts 5:42, *And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.*

What else does it mean to "correctly handle the word of truth"?

2 Timothy 1:14, *That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.*

"Guard the good deposit."

Protect.

Keep safe.

Don't let anyone steal it from you.

Elders and deacons who correctly handle the word of truth are quick to defend it and guard it against heresy and false teaching.

Paul devotes a big section of our Bible reading to "godless chatter."

An approved workman avoids "godless chatter." It becomes clear that "godless chatter" is the same as false teaching.

Paul mentions the specific example.

2 Timothy 2:17-18, *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.*

They "have wandered away from the truth"

"They say that the resurrection has already taken place"

Think of what this means. They believed that they were already fully living the new life in this life and on this earth and in this flesh.

They believed sin no longer touched them, that they were perfect and pure and holy. They believed there was nothing to look forward to. This "gangrene" will end up killing the body if it is not cut out and destroyed.

Not only does an approved workman avoid godless chatter, but he "gently instructs" those who engage in this. That is, he corrects and admonishes. The goal is to lead them to repentance, make them come to their senses, and escape from the trap of the devil.

2 Timothy 2:25-26, *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.*

A little bit of compromise here and there until the Creation story is no longer believed, a homosexual lifestyle is tolerated, abortion is okay, and couples living together before they get married.

"Guard the good deposit."

"Correctly handle the word of truth."

"Avoid godless chatter."

"Gently instruct."

That is what an approved workman does.

Conclusion:

I am always amazed at what the modern church does in order to gain approval. It borrows trends and techniques from the marketing world in order to gain members.

It changes its worship style.

It tailors' programs and ministries to one specific age group.

The church is seeking approval in the wrong places – the approval she needs is the approval of God. To gain that approval she needs to focus on the Word of God.

Jesus never condemned the religious leaders of his day for knowing the Bible too well, but for not believing it enough. Indeed, there were occasions when he chided them for not knowing the Scriptures well enough.

John 3:10, *You are the teacher of Israel and yet you do not know these things?*

The great martyrs of the faith died, by and large, for their beliefs, not for their behaviour. To be sure, their behaviour conformed to their beliefs (for the most part), but they suffered martyrdom because of their convictions.

The minister of the Word must be engaged in the breathless pursuit of truth. Whatever else "rightly handling the word of truth" means, it involves a commitment to the gospel message.

Christ must be central in our teaching and our thinking.

If our study of Scripture does not make us uncomfortable on a fairly regular basis, then we are not really, wholeheartedly, pursuing truth.

Thomas Bilney.

Bilney was an early sixteenth-century Englishman, a graduate of Cambridge University who fell in love with his Lord and marvelled at the face of Jesus in the Scriptures. Like Luther was doing in Germany, Bilney was speaking out against indulgences, Mariolatry, and the worship of saints. The exaltation of God and not that of saints was his Credo. He was instrumental in bringing **Hugh Latimer, the great English Reformer**, to a saving knowledge of Christ.

Latimer writes, Bilney was the instrument whereby God called me to knowledge. For I may thank him, next to God, for that knowledge that I have in the word of God. I was as obstinate a Papist as any in England. In so much that when I should be

made Bachelor of Divinity, my whole oration went against Philip Melanchthon, and against his opinions.

Bilney heard me at that time, and perceived that I was zealous without knowledge, and came to me afterwards in my study, and desired me, for God's sake, to hear his confession. I did so! To tell the truth, by his confession I learned more than I had in all my years of study. So from that time forward I began to smell [the sweet savour of] the word of God "

Years later, Bilney was burned at the stake, as Latimer put it, "for God's word's sake."

As the flames were rising around him, licking his flesh, and disfiguring his appearance, Thomas Bilney could be heard crying out but two words: "**Jesus! Credo! Jesus! Credo!**"

At his death, he was a man of few words. Those two summed up his life well.