**An Approved Workman (Part 1)**

***[slide 02]*** *2 Timothy 2:14-19*

*14 Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers. 15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. 16 But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, 17 and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, 18 men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some. 19 Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness."*

Tonight we begin to answer the question that results from a reading of these verses; that question being: How can we become approved to God as a workman?

***[slide 03]***Let me remind you that according to 1 Corinthians 3:9 Paul calls believers “God’s fellow workers.” What an amazing statement. It is a tremendous privilege to participate in the work of seeing God’s kingdom built up on earth by evangelizing the lost and discipling believers. However, shortly after referring to us as fellow workers with God, he describes how one day there will be judgment of our work. Some will be rewarded and some will experience loss of reward based on how they built. ***[slide 04]***And so we read in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 -

*12 Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. 14 If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. 15 If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*

This is referred to as the judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10). ***[slide 05]***And so we read in 2 Timothy 2:15, *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.*  The Greek word for “approved” was used of a metalsmith testing a metal to determine its quality or worth (interesting, beating the metal – the idea of suffering – 2 Timothy 3:12). In the same way, our faithfulness with God’s Word will be tested, and some will be approved and others will not be. Sobering thought?! We see this in the parable of the talents of Matthew 25:14-30 --- ***[slide 06]***

*14 "For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. 15 "To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. 16 "Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. 17 "In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. 18 "But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. 19 "Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. 20 "The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, 'Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.' 21 "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' 22 "Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, 'Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.' 23 "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' 24 "And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. 25 'And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.' 26 "But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. 27 'Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. 28 'Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.' 29 "For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. 30 "Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

Some will hear, *“Well done, good and faithful slave,”* and others will hear, *“You wicked and lazy slave”* (Matthew 25:23, 26). Such would be an unfaithful “fellow worker” putting other things before God and His work and, in the end, prove he was not truly a worker at all (Matthew 25:30).

The primary tool that we have been given as God’s fellow workers is…the Word of God. Because it is God’s sword, it can bring about great good or inflict great damage. ***[slide 07]***In Hebrews 4:12 we read, *“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”*

The Word of God can protect believers, defeat the enemy, and heal—being like a scalpel used for surgery. Let remember however that the Word of God can also be twisted in such a way that it harms and pushes people away from God.

In 2 Timothy 2:14-19, Paul challenges Timothy to be approved workmen rather than unapproved ones like Hymenaeus and Philetus—two false teachers in Ephesus. From these verses I would have us consider six qualities of an approved worker, asking ourselves the question, “Do these thing describe me?”

***[slide 08]***

1. An Approved Workman Expounds Sound Doctrine (14a)
2. An Approved Workman Enjoys the Awareness of God’s Presence (14b)
3. An Approved Workman Evades Quarrels (14c)
4. An Approved Workman Excels in Teaching God’s Word (15)
5. An Approved Workman Exposes False Teaching (16-18)
6. An Approved Workman Espouses the Marks of True Conversion (19)

***[slide 09]***

1. **An Approved Workman Expounds Sound Doctrine (14a)**

*Remind them of these things…*

Paul calls for Timothy to “Remind them of these things.” “These things” refers back to the essentials of the gospel mentioned in verse 8 which includes; Christ being raised from the dead (confirming His Deity) and a descendant of David (confirming His humanity). Also in verses 11-13, Paul quoted an ancient hymn reminding Timothy of the importance of suffering for Christ.

*11 It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; 12 If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; 13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.*

As we serve in the church, there can be the temptation to be always be novel and fresh. The problem is that there some things, ancient things, God’s people must hear over and over. We need to hear the essential doctrines of the gospel, again thinks like Christ’s full humanity and deity, but also the Trinity, the atonement, and the importance of righteous living and spiritual disciplines. These are the very foundations that God’s fellow workers must be reminded of again and again.

This approach of reminder is nothing new to Paul. ***[slide 10]*** We read in Philippians 3:1, *“Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.”* The context here is Paul reminding believers about the importance of rejoicing in the Lord and being aware of false teachers. ***[slide 11]*** Peter delivers a similar message in 2 Peter 1:12-15 saying,

*12 Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you. 13 I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder, 14 knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. 15 And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind.*

Beloved, God’s fellow workers must be diligent to constantly remind one another of the foundational truths; of sound doctrine or teachings. Why? Because both a church as well are individual Christians are susceptible to forget and neglect such things which means we are no longer building with God.

Churches are often tempted to get off message; that is the gospel and become entertainment centers rather than expository centers for truth that inspire evangelistic outreach into the community. Churches can become tempted to spend energies on social services rather than on speaking about salvation in Christ alone. The only way to resist these temptations is to constantly remember and remind others of the truth of God’s Word.

So, with this very short introduction, let me ask you some questions; do you remind others of the essential doctrines of the Word of God? Are others reminding you?

What would you consider to be essential doctrines we need to constantly remind one another? What are peripheral doctrines? What dangers do you see in building a church on non-essential matters?

***[slide 12]***

1. **Approved Workers Have a Strong Awareness of God’s Presence (14b)**

*and solemnly charge them in the presence of God*

Paul adds, *“solemnly charge them in the presence of God.”* The word *“charge”* is a command in Greek, and it is reinforced by Paul’s emphasis on the presence of God. God would be present when Timothy warned the Ephesians, and God would be present to watch their response to the command. ***[slide 13]*** We see this again in 2 Timothy 4:1-2

*1 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.*

If Timothy and the Ephesians were going to be faithful, they had to remember that God is always watching and that one day they would give an account to him. This is true of every approved workman. An approved workman is someone who works with an eye towards pleasing his Master and has a healthy fear of His disapproval.

***[slide 14]*** In Proverbs 9:10 we read, *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”* Having a reverence for God enables a person to live a wise life—a life that honors God. It affects their career, family, friendships, thoughts, and hobbies, as they always are keenly aware of God’s presence.

Paul believed it was necessary for the Ephesians to be continually aware of God’s presence if they were going to be approved workers, and this is true for us as well.

***[slide 15]***

*Application* *Question:* How can we grow in awareness of God’s presence?

***[slide 15]***

1. We must practice regular spiritual disciplines.

Regular spiritual disciplines like morning and evening devotions, daily prayer, and corporate worship help believers continually think about God, his Word, and his pleasure (see 1 Timothy 4:7). Those who don’t regularly meet with God, tend to live for their pleasure or the pleasure of others rather than God’s. Do you faithfully practice spiritual disciplines? ***[slide 15]***

2. We must have regular accountability.

Timothy was called to warn the Ephesians in the presence of God, and later, Paul warns Timothy in the presence of God. We need people to continually challenge us and help us focus on our Master’s will, instead of our will or that of others’. Who regularly holds you accountable through exhortation and prayer?

An awareness of God’s presence is essential to being an approved worker. His approval should guide everything that we do.

*Application* *Question:* Why are we so prone to forget or ignore God’s presence? What disciplines help you maintain an awareness of God’s presence?

*Soli Deo Gloria*

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