

A Worker Approved by God – Part 1

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 **applicability** of the next chapter of 2 Timothy
 - a. a hearty “thank you” to all who made BYBC another grand success (**no names specifically**)
 - b. (**now**) a chapter that is **extremely relevant** to the intention and purpose of BYBC:
 1. **question:** what exactly did we hope to achieve with this program – why is it valuable for us as a church to spend all of the human and monetary capital we did putting it on – why do it?
 2. **it is a part of our larger vision of what the church is to do with the next generation**
 3. or, the *seeds* that are planted through it are a part of the larger vision *mandated to us by Christ himself* in the lives of our children and grandchildren
2. 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. **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. the goal – what is the goal of being an approved worker; for *what* does he strive?
 - b. the pursuit – how does the approved worker accomplish this goal; what does he *do*?
 - c. the attitude – under what attitude does the approved worker seek this goal; how does he *think*?

I. The Goal of the Approved Worker (2 Timothy 2:1-13)

Content

a. stating the goal (vv. 1-2)

1. “*you then, my child*” = not that Timothy is *childish* or a child *chronologically*, but that (**in context**) Timothy is Paul’s “child” by virtue of having learned faith from Paul, having been mentored by Paul in church leadership, and by having been established as Paul’s *successor* in the work of ministry
 - a. (**again**) that Timothy has a great *legacy* of faith, and now it is time to fulfill his **destiny**
2. “*be strengthened by the grace*” = draw strength from this reality; find a sense of *assurance* and *confidence* to carry on the work because of the *choice of God to set you apart in Christ Jesus*
 - a. the grace of God = the **radical choice** of God – the choice whereby God has *purposed* to redeem a rebellious people, not because of anything good in them, but solely for his own glory
 1. a *personal* choice – a choice of *specific individuals* out of a divine love for them
 - b. **i.e.** Timothy knowing this Christ by faith is *evidence* of the electing grace of God; therefore, Timothy is to find *confidence* and *assurance* in knowing that God has set him aside to a task
 1. **principle: it is (even weak) faith in Christ that stands as the evidence of the electing grace of God – the unregenerate (reprobate) man has no such faith, nor desire of it**
 2. just as Paul was set aside by Christ *in a personal way*, so Timothy was to see that *he* (too!) had been set aside *personally* through the work of Paul, et. al.
 3. thus, Timothy was to take up the mantle of leadership under the assurance of his *history*

3. “*what you have heard from me*” = the apostolic gospel; the message that Paul had delivered from Christ to the church; **the orthodox Christian faith** that Paul had received from the Spirit of Christ
 - a. “[before] many witnesses” = not a *private set of beliefs*, but the *public proclamation* of the gospel
 1. **i.e.** not a set of “personal” beliefs that are subjective and conjectural based on “feelings”
 2. all that the apostles had spoken of, preached, written about, and taught *and that had been recognized by the church as the authoritative message of Christ himself*
 3. **at this point:** an *oral tradition* that is slowly being incorporated into a canon of Scripture as individual writings from the apostles are being gathered, analyzed, codified, and distributed
 4. **LOW:** the totality of the message of Christ, understood through the lens of the O.T. (**see 3:14-16**)
 1. (**again**) the simple (not simplistic) gospel *supplemented by the rich teaching of doctrine*
 4. “*entrust to faithful men*” = appoint and train men *who also show true evidence of conversion* to teach this message **to the next generation**
 - a. **i.e.** just as *you* (Timothy) have received a great legacy of faith from a “previous” generation, now entrust that message to faithful men who can pass it on to the next generation
 - b. a **succession plan** – how the leadership and vision of an organization is passed down to those who will continue it once the leader himself is no longer around – **i.e.** who will “take over now”
 1. **e.g.** many churches make the “mistake” of building their entire church around a single, charismatic individual, and find themselves “dying” immediately upon his departure
 - a. **i.e.** they should be *grooming* faithful, gifted, and called men to take up the reins of leadership *without interruption or change of vision*
 2. **principle: the guiding succession plan of the gospel is its self-replication into the minds, hearts, and lives of the next generation through faithful catechism**
 1. a disciplined method of teaching truths (**e.g.** the Children’s Catechism [**describe**])
- b. **illustrating the goal (vv. 3-7)**
 1. **IMO: vv. 3-7** are *illustrations* (or *analogies*) designed to solidify the above in the mind of Timothy
 - a. in many ways, similar to Jesus’ use of *parables*, ending with “*he who has ears to hear, let him hear*” (**compare to v. 7**) – stories designed to help *true hearers* understand the point
 2. “*share in suffering as a soldier*” = to do the difficult (**i.e.** suffering) work of Paul (**i.e.** to share in it)
 - a. “*suffering*” = not painful circumstances (although that may be true at times); rather, the hard, often thankless work of helping others to *understand* the fullness of the gospel; dealing with immaturity, with heterodoxy, with traditionalism, with personalities, with opposition of every imaginable kind
 - b. “*as a good soldier*” = not as though going to war (although it will often be just that); rather, doing the kinds of work that soldiers are called upon to do in peacetime (**e.g.** guarding, protecting)
 - c. **principle: the work of replicating the gospel into the lives of the next generation will require effort and commitment consistent with being a soldier (discipline, obedience)**
 3. “*of Christ Jesus*” = the “commanding officer” of the soldiers in the church – the *true leader* of this work to bring faith and gospel understanding into the hearts of the next generation
 - a. Timothy is not (fundamentally) “taking over” for Paul, *per se* – he is simply continuing the same calling by Christ that had been Paul’s *up until now*
 1. nowhere does Paul ever call Timothy a new “apostle” – yet, he assumes that Timothy will be doing *much of the same work* that he himself was doing (but can *no longer do*)
 2. **LOW:** Timothy “answers” to the Lord of the church just as Paul did – his work to continue the ministry of Paul is (in fact) simply a continuation of a *larger calling* that encompasses them *both*
 4. the three (3) illustrations that help make the point:
 - a. the soldier who works to “*please the one that enlisted him*”
 1. he does not get “*entangled*” in civilian affairs (**i.e.** things that are ancillary to his primary duties)
 2. because he wants to get the commendation *from his commanding officer*
 - b. the runner who “*competes according to the rules*”
 1. he does not *cheat* (**e.g.** cutting across the infield as a shortcut)
 2. because he wants to get the prize as a *true winner in the eyes of the judge*
 - c. the farmer who is “*hard-working*”
 1. he does not simply “*hope*” for a crop to arise (**e.g.** without planting, watering, fertilizing, etc.)
 2. because he wants to get the “*first share of the crop*” from the land owner
 - d. all of these illustrations demonstrate working hard under *someone else’s authority* (**i.e.** the commanding officer, the race judge, the landowner) in order to get “the prize”
 - e. **principle: the work of replicating the gospel into the lives of the next generation is under the authority of Jesus Christ himself, and we must never forget that he is the one to whom we look for our commendation – i.e. it must be done *his way and with his message***

c. clarifying the goal (vv. 8-15)

1. **note your time constraints here ...**
2. *“remember Jesus Christ”* = not as though Timothy had “forgotten” about Jesus as the center of his life and ministry; rather, the *prioritization* of everything “around” this Jesus in the life of the church
 - a. **i.e.** the primary message of the church is the person and work of Jesus Christ (**Christocentric**)
 - b. *“risen from the dead”* = the *objective* reality around which the entirety of the faith is built – all of God’s plans and purposes, redemptive history (O.T.), the words of Christ, the salvation of individuals, etc., etc. flow out of this *historical fact* (**remember 1 Corinthians 15:14-19**)
“And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.”
- c. *“the offspring of David”* = either 1) the *nature* of Jesus as descended from the *human* line of David (**i.e.** the human messiah) or (**more likely**) 2) the *position* of Jesus as now seated on that royal throne (**i.e.** with all authority as the King of Kings)
 1. the audience of this letter would have understood David as the greatest king in the history of the nation of Israel, and the one who’s throne would be occupied *forever* by a new king coming to “complete” David’s reign under the covenant made with him by God
 2. thus, the statement is *probably* a reference to the *continuing position* of *Christ* after his resurrection: the One who is the King, esp. of the church, who has the authority to *demand from Timothy* obedience and discipline in the work of the gospel
 3. note how Paul connects this *with his own ministry* of “preaching the gospel” which resulted in him being “bound with chains”: just as Paul was obedient to this risen and authoritative Christ, so Timothy is to submit to this same Christ and entrust the gospel to the next generation
3. **application: to be a faithful follower of Christ is to pick up the mantle of obedience, stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us, and catechize the next generation in a Christ-centered gospel**