

# A Worker Approved by God – Part 5

## 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 2 Timothy
  - a. **chap. 1:** Paul's very personal words to Timothy about his legacy
  - 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*"
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. to rightly handle what God has revealed, focusing on *central matters* of the faith, avoiding discussion about matters that are "less" important or that *retard* the student growing in faith
  - c. (**now**) the attitude – how does the approved worker approach this goal; how does he react to it?
    1. **IOW:** going in, how does the true teacher *think of himself in relation to this goal*?
    2. **reminder:** this letter (like the first) is written *not just to Timothy*, but to all of those "behind" Timothy (*i.e.* the church at Ephesus and [by extension] *all of us in the church*)
      - a. *i.e.* the attitude that Paul expects from Timothy is the attitude expected of all of us by Christ

## III. The Attitude of the Approved Worker (2 Timothy 2:20-26)

### Content

#### a. an illustration of this attitude (vv. 20-21)

1. Paul uses an illustration to *transition* from the point he just made (**v. 20**)
  - a. in some ways, **v. 20** is similar to the parables of Jesus
    1. **e.g. Matt. 20** (The Vineyard Laborers); **Matt. 22** (The Wedding Feast)
    2. *i.e.* a story or illustration where the elements have some parallels to real life ultimately designed to make a **singular point** (not an allegory, per se)
    3. here, Paul makes use of real life elements (*i.e.* a great house, vessels, gold, silver, etc.) to create an image in the mind of the reader, which then allows him to make a point
  - b. the elements of the illustration
    1. "*great house*" = a powerful or beautiful house; a palace or castle; lit. a building that houses someone of great power or prestige (*i.e.* the church as the *abode of Christ*, his house)
    2. "*vessels*" = an implement; equipment; container; vessel; here (very likely) a drinking vessel
      - a. the various substances seem to imply various kinds of drinking vessels, some ornate and expensive (gold and silver), others ordinary and inexpensive (wood and clay)
    3. "*honorable*" vs. "*dishonorable*" = the *function* that each vessel has by virtue of what it contains
      - a. **note:** Paul is *not* suggesting that it is the *substance of the vessel itself* that determines its honor; rather, it is *how it is used* or *what it contains* that makes it honorable or dishonorable
      - b. *i.e.* the gold and silver vessels are *not* inherently "better" than the others – rather, it is what they are *used for* that determines their honor (each holds drink precisely the same)
      - c. **e.g.** a \$500 wine is expensive-tasting *regardless* of being drunk from a golden goblet or a wooden cup – ripple wine is not improved when poured into a chalice

- c. it is **undeniable (in context)** that Paul is referring to **the church and its members**
    - 1. “great house” = the church as *the abode of Christ*; his “house” made up of his people
    - 2. “vessels” = the people of the church *in their various statuses and states*
      - a. **i.e.** the *diverse* nature of the church, made up of people from every social, economic, racial, intellectual, and personal background *all united in Christ and saved by grace*
    - 3. “honorable” vs. “dishonorable” = how each person *serves* regardless of their specific status
      - a. serving *honorably* by living a holy life and pursuing truth, or
      - b. serving *dishonorably* by continuing in sin and denying the truth (**e.g.** Hymenaeus)
      - c. **LOW:** it’s not about *who we are in the world*, but *what we do with what we have been given*
        - 1. it’s not about being a *victim*, but about **what we pursue before the Lord**
    - 4. contra **Critical Theory** which says that the church is to be *divided* between the *oppressed* and the *oppressor*; that the “true” Christian is the one who is “oppressed” by belonging to a “victim” group (and, *intersectionally*, the more, the better)
      - a. so, the oppressed is the *only one* able to truly “live” the Christian experience
      - b. and, the oppressor is not able to *speak into* the situation of the oppressed
      - c. Critical Theory would stress the *differences* between the types of vessels; Paul sees each type of vessel being useful *regardless* of its substance *as long as it is clean*
  - 2. Paul uses an illustration to *transition* into his **point (v. 21)**
    - a. “cleanses himself” = lit. to wash away dirt; sym. to eliminate everything that is contrary to holiness
      - 1. to confess and repent of sin, or (**in this context**) to abandon forms of doctrine that are contrary to the apostolic message – **i.e.** to recover a proper biblical understanding and teach it to others
    - b. “a vessel for honorable use” = an instrument worthy for the advancement of the kingdom
    - c. “useful to the master of the house” = a servant of the Lord; a minister of the gospel
      - 1. **note: (again)** it is not *who we are* that matters to the Lord – the church is *purposely designed* to be a diverse place, and the Spirit uses *every single true believer* to advance the gospel
      - 2. **e.g.** this is the point of the various “spiritual gifts” lists in the N.T. – that *everyone*, regardless of ability, is useful to the Lord in the life of the church – **i.e.** why we ask as a part of the membership process where you intend to serve as a member of the church
    - d. **principle: the attitude that should characterize every true follower of Christ is one of humility, the sense that we are to cleanse everything in our lives that would divide us from others and humbly submit ourselves to be useful instruments in the hands of the Spirit**
      - 1. Critical Theory would actually have us “raise ourselves” above others (by playing the “victim”)
      - 2. biblical Christianity “flattens out” those *external* differences before the cross, making us *all* equal in the sight of our Savior and (thus) humble before him because of his *mercy*
- b. an exhortation to this attitude (vv. 22-25a)**
- 1. this paragraph is a **quick recap** of a number of topics already discussed in both **1 and 2 Timothy**
  - 2. the exhortation to “*flee youthful passions*” (**v. 22**)
    - a. **note:** this statement is virtually the same as **1 Tim. 6:11** (“*flee these things*” – as listed in **6:3-10**: conceit, controversy, monetary greed, etc. [**see below**])
    - b. “*youthful*” – an adjective that may imply that Paul was referring to things that are “common” in youth; not just “sexual” passions, but habits of **immaturity**
      - 1. **e.g.** the tendency of the young to think they know more than their elders
      - 2. **i.e.** precisely the problem with the unfortunate reality of *biblical and theological immaturity* in the church leading to an “easy” embrace of what is false (**e.g.** Critical Theory)
  - 3. the exhortation to “*have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies*” (**v. 23**)
    - a. **note:** this statement is virtually the same as **1 Tim. 6:4** (“*an unhealthy craving for controversy*” – quarrels about words [**see v. 14**]; see also “*irreverent babble*” in **v. 16**)
    - b. (**again**) Paul is exhorting followers of Christ (esp. teachers) to stay focused on the *core matters* of the faith and avoid controversies over “secondary” matters (**e.g.** tastes, traditions, etc.)
  - 4. the exhortation to “*be kind to everyone, able to teach*” (**vv. 24-25a**)
    - a. **note:** this statement is very similar to **1 Tim. 4:11-12** (“*set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love in faith, in purity*” [**see v. 14**])
    - b. a summary of the entirety of Paul’s point in the letter: all who are a part of the “*great house*” must have an **attitude of humility** in the goal of passing a catechism on to the next generation:
      - 1. “*not quarrelsome*” – not an *angry* person “pushing” their views onto everyone else
      - 2. “*kind to everyone*” – an attitude of gentleness and respect that causes others to listen
      - 3. “*able to teach*” – having not just an *intellectual* ability to pass on knowledge, but a *giftedness*
      - 4. “*patiently enduring evil*” – recognizing that “pushback” is inevitable when teaching truth
      - 5. “*correcting ... with gentleness*” – apologetically in humility and reverence (**1 Peter 3:15**)

**c. the need for this attitude (vv. 25b-26)**

1. “grant them” – either a) the students of these teachers, or b) the false teachers in the church
  - a. certainly Paul would desire for the **catechumen** (i.e. students of catechism, before baptism) to come to repentance and faith – this is *always* the goal of preaching the gospel
    1. and, repentance *is a gift from God* (like faith; see **Eph. 2:8-9**) – the ability to *repent of sin* is as much a gift of God in *regeneration* as is the ability to *trust in Christ, and just as necessary*
  - b. however, it is **more likely** (here) that Paul is referring to the false teachers (like Hymenaeus and Philetus), finishing the thought of **vv. 16-19**
    1. **i.e.** the entire illustration and exhortation was to say that “all true believers are equally valuable in the house of God as his servants, thus we are to come to our work with an attitude of *humility*, recognizing that we are *his* servants, not ‘independent contractors’ able to decide for ourselves what is to be taught and how it is to be engaged”
    2. “*come to their senses*” = realize that they are lost and leading others astray
    3. “*escape from the snare*” = escape from the “delusion” of “*the devil*” that they are free to teach and act any way that pleases them
2. **application: the worker approved by God is one with an attitude of *humility*, who desires to submit himself or herself to the Lord in a pursuit of holiness in order that the goal of passing on a Christ-centered catechism may be fully accomplished in the church**