

## Paul, Timothy and Troubled Times Part 4

I want to continue our series looking at Paul, Timothy and troubled times. Last Sunday we talked about three metaphors Paul used to describe us as followers of Jesus: soldiers, athletes and farmers. In this section of chapter 2, Paul uses three different metaphors to describe us: workers, vessels and servants. We are going to look at that first one this morning, that of a worker. Let's read 2 Timothy 2:14-19

I memorized verse 15 as a child from the KJV. **“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”** I always took that to mean we needed to read our bible and study our Sunday School quarterly to prove we were a good Christian, a good worker that could rightly explain what the bible was teaching. That's not exactly inaccurate, but the verse doesn't necessarily mean we are to focus on hitting the books. The word KJV translates as study means to be diligent, zealous. NIV translates it as, **“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”** Be diligent and zealous in serving the Lord, diligent and zealous in honoring God's word and living by it...so you won't be ashamed when your work is inspected.

One who is approved means one who will pass the test, one who has no reason to be ashamed because you have correctly handled and lived according to the word of God. The KJV reads “rightly dividing the word of truth.” It literally means “cutting straight.” We talked a couple of Sundays ago about cutting a straight board. This can mean cutting a straight path through the countryside, cutting a straight furrow with a plow, cutting a straight path so that others can follow and won't get lost or sidetracked! Be diligent and zealous, remain focused as a workman so you cut a straight path as you follow God's word and apply God's word to your life, to your words and actions.

Notice he says, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved...” Our goal should be to please God, to stand before him having passed the test. As soldiers and workers we are “ready for inspection sir!” “Present yourself.” We are prone to find fault in others, to judge others, to want to fix what's wrong in others, but Paul told Timothy and is telling us, to work on ourselves first. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved! I've got plenty to do to work on myself, how about you? I need to be diligent in working on Phil. So let's look again at what Paul is telling Timothy in verse 15. Be diligent and zealous as a worker, one who will be

able to pass the test, who won't be ashamed to stand for inspection, focused on the right things, able to keep cutting a straight path, a path others can follow, a path based on the word of God.

I remember Bro. McQueen talking about plowing with a horse and plow. His dad would tie a red bandana on the fence post at the other end and tell him, "Now keep your eyes on the bandana and plow straight for that post." Cut a straight path. That's what a good workman is supposed to do, cutting a straight, clear path that others can follow.

Paul tells Timothy to be that kind of diligent workman. Unfortunately, there are bad workers as well. Paul mentions two in particular in verse 17. Hymenaeus and Philetus. He mentions Hymenaeus in 1 Timothy, saying he had shipwrecked his faith. Paul says instead of living according to God's word, instead of cutting a straight path, these two and others like them had "wandered away from the truth", they had veered from that straight path and as a consequence they were "destroying the faith of others."

Think about this. The work we do, the path we cut has an eternal effect on others. Good workers are diligent in cutting a straight path that will build up the faith, that will create a path, an example that others can follow. Bad workers veer from the path of truth and obedience to God's word and destroy the faith of others. These bad workers were engaged in what Paul calls godless chatter (v16), arguing and quarreling about stuff that didn't matter and that veered away from the truth. At the end of his first letter to Timothy, Paul writes, **"Timothy...turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith." 1 Tim. 6:20**

It suggests the early beginnings of the heresy called Gnosticism. Among other things it had the idea that through some esoteric initiation you could know secret mysteries, you could obtain a higher consciousness, a new level of spirituality but it denied some of the doctrines of the gospel. Paul says it's falsely called knowledge but it's really just godless chatter. It's supposedly focused on knowledge, but it isn't focused on Jesus and the knowledge of Him and his word. The bad workmen were eager to quarrel and debate but they weren't living holy lives and refused to turn away from wickedness.

The bad workers embraced bad doctrine, spreading heresy that the resurrection had already taken place. Perhaps they were claiming it was only a spiritual resurrection, that Jesus had only spiritually risen from the dead to live on as a new idea, a brighter path and we could know this resurrection of the spirit, but when you die, that's it, no resurrection, no eternal life.

Paul says because of this they have destroyed the faith of some. He said it was spreading like gangrene, poisoning the body.

While bad workers spread bad doctrine, good workers stay focused on the main things. The main things are the plain things and the plain things are the main things. I heard a preacher this week say, “the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.” That’s what Paul tells Timothy. Stay focused on keeping the main thing the main thing!

Paul writes in verse 14, **“Keep reminding them of these things.”** What things? The main things. He writes in verse 8 which we looked at a few Sundays ago, **“Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel...Remember if we died with him we will also live with him; if we endure we will also reign with him...remember if we are faithless, he will remain faithful for he cannot disown himself.”**

The main things. Don’t let yourself be drawn into quarrels about unimportant things. Remember to be diligent and zealously stay focused on the main things: What Jesus has done: that he died for us and rose again and offers us salvation and forgiveness and eternal life. Who Jesus is: that he is Savior and Lord, that He is the king descended from David that rules on the throne as Messiah and as our coming King. Remember the main things: stay focused on the faithfulness and the unchanging character of our God. If we are faithless, he will remain faithful for he cannot disown himself. Remember if we endure, as good soldiers, as athletes, as farmers, as workers, we will reign with him!

We are called to be faithful workers, cutting a straight path for others to follow. Your choice, the path you take, matters! Let’s be diligent and zealous to present ourselves to God. Let’s avoid godless chatter or quarrels about stuff that doesn’t matter and instead let’s remain focused on keeping the main things as the main things. It’s about Jesus!! Who he is, what he has done and what he is calling us to do. Let’s be faithful! Let’s be diligent to live a holy life, a life pleasing to him, a life we won’t have to be ashamed of. Verse 19 says he knows those who are his and all those who know him and confess him as Lord turn away from wickedness. Let’s be diligent and zealous in living as faithful workers for our King! May all who come behind us find us faithful. Amen!

Thanks for joining us. Stay safe. Receive the blessing of the Lord. May the Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you, the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen!