**A WORKMAN APPROVED BY GOD**

2 Timothy 2:14-26 Key Verse 15

**“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”**

 From the last Sunday’s message, Dr. Jason challenged us to find ‘my gospel’ or ‘my project’ in sync with God’s will. His challenge made me to define what my gospel project was and is. Since 1996 when I received God’s calling to be a disciple of Jesus, my gospel mission was to preach the gospel and teach the Bible and raise disciples of Jesus wherever I have been, beginning from the college I attended, during family dinner, with a person sitting by me on a public transportation and even in a public Sauna. Since God sent me to America as a missionary and to COD campus pioneering, God expanded to reach out to many students and residents in DuPage County, to Wheaton College through Ester and even Harper College. As I prayed about this, God helped me to realize that one thing is missing, which is Jesus’ world mission command. Though we sent two short-term missionaries, I pray that God may move the hearts of our members to accept Jesus’ world mission and go, not only short-term but also long-term, beginning from me.

In today’s passage, Apostle Paul is encouraging Timothy to be an approved worker to God with 7 instructions; one for the church and six for himself.

**One instruction for the church.** Look at verse 14. “**Keep reminding God’s people of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen.”** Paul wanted Timothy to keep reminding God’s people, warning them not to quarrel about words. For there are two reasons why they should not.

1. It is of no value. It seems worthwhile to clarify about the Scriptures when some parts are not clear but controversial. Yes, but God’s people should not quarrel about the word of God, acknowledging human limitations in understanding God’s word in full reality. All Scriptures are written by people through the Holy Spirit. Knowing no translation is perfect, the Scriptures should be interpreted by the Scriptures with the help of the Holy Spirit.
2. Most of all, human quarreling about God’s words ruins those who listen to it. Arguments about the words do not help them to understand but confuse them and they may fall into doubt about the power and authority of God’s word. This is one of the ways to divide people and the church.

Therefore, Timothy should warn God’s people not to quarrel about God’s word. In addition, Apostle Paul encouraged his disciple to work on himself. Look at verse 15. “**Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”**

There are several points in this verse.

1. Do your best to present yourself to God. As a young disciple, it is easy to live before people and try to prove oneself to people. But as a man of God, Timothy should do his best to present himself to God. This means that he should live before God who sees and knows everything.
2. So that he may be approved by God. How? A worker should not be ashamed but diligent on the task his boss gave him; otherwise, he will be ashamed. There are 6 tasks a man of God should be diligent in in order for him to be approved by God.

**The first task** **is correctly handling the word of truth.** How? He should study the word of God diligently. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, **“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”** He should study the Bible until he learns to teach, rebuke, correct and train **himself** how to have right relationship with God and with others, so that he is thoroughly prepared for any work God gives him. This means he should not only understand God’s word but also put it into practice so that he builds his faith on the rock and bears much fruit in his heart and life. He should hold onto God’s word until he comes know the truth and become a true disciple who experiences freedom through the power of Jesus. (John 8:31-32)

**The second task is to avoid godless chatter.** Look at verse 16. **“Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly.”**  What is godless chatter? The example is in verses 17-18. **“17Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, 18who have departed from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some.”** Many people in the Ephesus church chatted about the resurrection, saying that it has already taken place. It is called Preterism today. The problem is that some believed this and departed from the truth. They hear the word of God but do not understand it. What is worse? Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Therefore, we should warn such people and even stop them from chatting about it.

Yet, Paul gives two marks of true believers. Look at verse 19. “**Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: ‘The Lord knows those who are his,’ and, ‘Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.’”** Two marks of true believers are 1) God knows them, which no one knows but God and himself. Yet it will be revealed by the second mark, which is 2) they will turn away from wickedness through God’s word and the help of the Holy Spirt. This generation has the worst time on this matter. There are so many chats about the prophecies in Revelation and conspiracy theories. Those who are lost will follow such wicked people, living in fear and confusion. Nevertheless, those who are saved will stand firm on God’s solid foundation, believing Jesus and living out the gospel.

**The third task: sanctify yourself.** Look at verses 20-21. “**In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for special purposes and some for common use.”** A church is like a house with all kinds of articles, made of gold and of silver, of wood and clay; some for special purposes and some for common use. No matter what the material was made of, some are made for special purposes. We all want to be made for a special purpose, don’t we? How do we know that some are made for a special purpose? Look at verse 21. **“Those who cleanse themselves from the latter will be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.”** There are many articles to use, but dirty ones cannot be used even if they are made of gold or silver, which may be sold for money but cannot be used. Even if it is made of wood or clay, we can use it when it is clean. Therefore, those who cleanse themselves will be articles for special purposes, made holy and useful to our Mater Jesus. How can we cleanse ourselves? Jesus prayed for his disciples, saying, “**Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”** (Jn 17:17) As 2 Timothy 3:16 says, the word of God cleanses us and prepares us to do any good work God prepared in advance for us to do. May God help us to sanctify ourselves through the word of God, so that we may be holy and useful to our Master, Jesus our Lord!

**The fourth task: Flee the evil desires of youth.** Look at verse 22a.Here Paul was referring to strong uncontrolled desires that are characteristic of the young and immature but may continue throughout life without the Holy Spirit's guidance. You may have a strong desire for sex, money, food, recognition, promotion, order, respect, status, material goods, and so on. Who does not have such desires, at least one of them? The problem is that lusting after them will lead a person to evil, as the love of money is the root of all evil, so the love of any of these can lead us not to worship God but something else. Therefore, we must flee from lusting after any. How? Psalm 119:9 says, **“How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word.”** Let’s live according to God’s word!

**Fifth task:** **pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace with a pure heart.** Look at verse 22b. Pursue is the opposite of flee. We must run toward getting a right relationship with God and with others, learning how to please God by faith, loving even our enemies with the power of Jesus’ love, finding peace through prayer even in the midst of trials in life, not out of our mouth only but out of a pure heart.

**Sixth task,** **do not argue but teach gently.** Look at verses 23-24. “**Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. 24And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.”** Paul keeps reminding Timothy not to argue, not only about the word but about anything. It is because arguments become stupid and produce nothing but division among believers. Instead, he must be kind to everyone, though they may not make any sense or even when they try to argue with you about anything. Even if someone offended him, he must not be resentful but be able to teach the word of God with great patience. Why? Look at verses 25-26. “**Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 26and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.”** Gently instructing with the hope of God will open their hearts 1) to repent, 2) leading them to a knowledge of the truth, so they will 3) come to their senses, and 4) escape from the trap of the devil. Timothy must know that his battle is not against another human being but against the devil who is working hard to provoke him to fall into arguments with people and thus divide the church. His goal is not to win arguments but win their souls through prayer and the word of God. Let’s lose arguments and win many souls!

Through today’s passage, we learned one instruction for the church and six tasks for each young disciple who would be an approved worker for Christ. For the church, we should never quarrel about the word of God but prayerfully learn the Scriptures, depending on the help of the Holy Spirit! We must do our best to present ourselves to God and be an approved worker for Christ by not only receiving God’s word but also living according to it so that we may be a clean article for God’s good work and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace with pure hearts, fleeing from evil desires and avoiding stupid arguments but fighting against the devil with the word of God and prayer for the glory of our master Jesus. Amen!