

APPROVED UNTO GOD

Scripture: Selected passages from 2 Timothy.

Intro: The epistle of 2 Timothy is important for many reasons, but one especially, which we are often inclined to overlook is BECAUSE IN IT WE ARE PASSING (as far as Paul and Timothy are concerned) FROM THE PERIOD OF TIME WHEN GOD WAS REVEALING HIS WORD. With the close of the first century A.D. God was bringing to a close a work which had been going on for the preceding 1500 years--the revelation of His Word to man.

There is never any doubt about Paul's attitude toward the OT. He accepted its authority without question. But now, from such verses as 2 Tim. 1:14 and 2:2, we see that he realizes that his words, as recorded in the NT epistles, are also ^{to} be accepted with the same authority as the OT Scriptures!

We find Paul's testimony in 2 Tim. 4:6-8, and the reason for his great concern. (Read.)

What are his parting words of instruction for Timothy? We can sense that Paul may have realized that there were to be no further revelations. What was Timothy to do?

Let us divide the six passages I want to point out to you into two groups. First of all, we want to see what Paul says about Timothy's own understanding of the Scriptures. Secondly, we want to see how Paul expected Timothy to use the Scriptures in his own life and ministry.

I. TIMOTHY, AND HIS RELATIONSHIP TO THE WORD OF GOD.

A. 2 Timothy 2:15.

Before we notice what he tells him to do, let us notice why--because this is the main point in all that we find on this subject.

Timothy was to seek above all else to be "approved unto God." One day his work would be tested. Then it would not matter what men had said about him, whether good or bad. The only thing that would matter then would be whether or not he had pleased the Lord by his use of the Word.

This is what gave Paul such joy at the end of his ministry. It has not been easy for him. Cf. Gal. 1:10. But it had been the guiding principle of his entire ministry.

Because this was so, what did he do, and what did he charge Timothy to do? "RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH."

There are two ideas here:

- 1) He was to handle the Word as it was written--correctly and honestly. A man undertakes a most sacred responsibility when he professes to teach the Word of God.
- 2) He was to cut it straight, to proceed by straight paths, hold a straight course. It suggests that there are lines of truth which run through the Word of God. These must be recognized, and always kept distinct. A good teacher will do this. (E.g., the doctrine of salvation.)

B. 2 Timothy 1:13.

This verse clearly indicates that there is a path, there is a pattern to follow.

Cf. 2 Tim. 4:3

One of the most serious things Timothy could have done was to ignore all of the teachers of the Word who had gone before him. God's Word does not change from generation to generation. The pattern of Scripture does not change! Therefore, the child of God must not be carried along with all of the pressures that come to him for change his message and ignoring the ways of God.

While Timothy undoubtedly searched and studied the Scriptures for himself, yet he would forsake his teachers (and especially Paul) only to his great and eternal loss!

Assuming, then, that he knew the great truths of Scriptures, and was coming to understand them increasingly, Paul says another very important word:

C. 2 Timothy 3:14.

Here you have the same emphasis as before, only here it is practical.

The power of the Word of God in our lives is dependent upon (1) how well we know the Word, and (2) how well we live the Word!

Timothy had had a spiritual heritage unlike that of the Apostle Paul. His grandmother, Lois, had been

a believer, and so had his mother, Eunice (cf. 2 Tim. 1:5). (Read now 2 Tim. 3:15.) Throughout all of Timothy's ministry there was absolutely no reason for him to seek something else. He was not to depart from the teaching he had received!

How unique this is when compared with ever-changing human wisdom!

Timothy needed to continue right on living in accordance with the truth he had known all his life. Young people, and those who used to be young people, who have had the same background, need to recognize and obey this admonition.

Now let us turn to

II. TIMOTHY, AND HIS MINISTRY TO OTHERS.

Again, we have three passages which apply.

A. 2 Timothy 4:2.

When you think of preaching, do not just think of preaching in a church (although this is certainly a part of it. Nor should we think of a situation in which we are cramming something down a person's throat which they do not want to hear.

Preaching means to make known publicly the message of the Word of God. It implies a formal, accurate, serious presentation of the truth (possibly even in conversation)--and behind it stands the authority of God Himself (which we should recognize when we are preaching).

And, note, from the context that the attitude of men toward the preaching of the Word does not change our divine orders; it only makes it all the more necessary.

This was Paul's parting word to Timothy; it cannot and it must not be changed.

B. 2 Timothy 2:2.

"Commit" means, to deliver in trust. Every generation of believers needs to be concerned about the next generation. Paul was going to die. HOW WOULD TIMOTHY CARRY ON, AND WHO WOULD CONTINUE THE MESSAGE AFTER HIM, etc. Timothy was to protect the message from change, or from neglect. He was to keep it as

it was, and continue to teach it.

Our children will only continue on with the same message as we have been used of God to instill these truths in their hearts. Remember how concerned Moses had been about this. Cf. Deut. 6:6-9.

Paul was thinking two generations ahead

Finally--

C. 2 Timothy 2:25.

Two things stand out in this verse.

The first: that there are going to be times when our purpose in teaching will be to correct those who have fallen into error! This is the meaning of the word, "Instructing."

And sometimes this calls for some strong words. We must never hold back because of the difficulties involved. BUT WE DO NEED TO REMEMBER THAT HOW WE DO IT WILL OFTEN DETERMINE THE RESULTS.

And so we have, secondly: We are to do it "in meekness." This means that we are to remember always that we are "a sinner among sinners" (Trench. 153), that we ourselves are utterly unworthy of the knowledge we have of the Word of God--or of any other blessing that we have received from Him. An attitude like this can be used to turn people from error. We need to speak the truth, but we need to speak the truth in love.

Concl: Paul leaves little doubt but that Timothy's greatest need was simply to go on living and bearing testimony to the Word which he had known since he was a child, and which he had known even better after Paul became his teacher.

On these things would be determined Timothy's approval by God, and the blessing of God on the generation to come. It was not a suggestion, but a charge. There is nothing that we can do as a church, or individually, that will bring greater blessing to our generation, and to the next, than for us to give ourselves to the Word of God as Paul has instructed Timothy.