

THE BOOK OF SECOND TIMOTHY

"Christian Workers"

2 Timothy 2:1-26

Introduction

1. This is a personal letter of Paul to Timothy. It comes from an experienced veteran of the Gospel to his young son in the faith. The truth about the ministry is clear.
2. The opening words of this chapter are focused on the important aspect of preparation (v. 1). Timothy needs to be strong. But one might just as well tell a snail to run or a horse to fly as to tell a man to be strong. It is an impossibility. But GOD! So, Paul instructs Timothy to "be strong." The verb is a present passive imperative. That is the sense to it all. The passive voice points to God as the source of help! Timothy is to be strengthened by the grace of God! Without God, Timothy is useless.
3. There are areas of service for Timothy. God's grace will equip him. Paul uses the metaphors of seven secular occupations to catalogue his witness unto Christ. Each emphasizes a different quality of the Christian worker. Indeed, all of us need these qualities. Here they are:

1. The FAITHFULNESS of the STEWARD v. 2.

It is true that the word "steward" is not employed here, however, the concept is implicit. The function of a steward is here: he is to dispense to others what he himself has learned. Actually, the thought is that a deposit has been made with Timothy (1:12) and this is not only to be guarded but also handed on to others for safe communication. Apostolic truth is to be handed on. This is a great word for all workers of the Lord. The sacred deposit which we have must be passed on. It is not for guardianship alone.

2. The SELF-SACRIFICE of the SOLDIER vv. 3, 4.

The key function of the soldier is his selflessness. He throws himself into his responsibility. He is totally committed. He is a dedicated man. He has to take his share of the hardship of the Gospel (v. 3). He is a man galvanized into action. He is fully mobilized. He is not to be entangled or woven into the fabric of the affairs of this life. The present tense of the verb shows there must not be any linear entanglements. He is a military man for God! Now that means discipline.

3. The OBEDIENCE of the ATHLETE v. 5.

Paul often uses the athletic terms of the day. Here is a case in point. What is emphasized here is the strict adherence to the rules of the game. To play well, an athlete

must play fair. He must keep the rules if he hopes to win the prize. The Christian life has rules and it also has a Rule Book. In the Greek games, an athlete was bound to these rules: 1) Must possess a certificate of Greek birth. 2) Must have rigorous pre-contest training. 3) Must keep regulations of the game. All of this is applicable to the believer and his work.

4. The INDUSTRY of the FARMER v. 6.

The verb "labor" really means to "toil." Farmers know constant toil, early hours, frequent problems, and perpetual sameness--toil! No lazy farmer will have good crops. His plowing must be competent and his sowing must be proper. He must weed, water and hoe. To be slack in any of these means to lose out. If a farmer does not bother, he will not gather. If he takes great pains, he will have great gains! The application to spiritual work is obvious. There can be no end to tireless effort!

5. The ACCURACY of the WORKMAN v. 15.

According to this verse, a workman may be: approved or disapproved, ashamed or unashamed. The difference is due to the treatment of the Word of God. It must be "rightly divided." This Greek word is only used here in the New Testament and it means to "cut straight" or "lay out in a straight line." It is used in the LXX (Prov. 3:6) for laying a road. Similarly the Word of God must be laid straight like the road. The reference to dispensational teaching is implicit. Certainly, the concept of giving the Word clearly, accurately, and simply is included here. A spiritual approach is obvious. Painstaking study is patent.

6. The CLEANNESS of the VESSEL vv. 20-22.

The key thought here is cleanness for the vessels to be used in God's house. There are various kinds of vessels, but that is not the emphasis here, rather, the quality of cleanness (v. 21). Three issues are at stake here: separation, usefulness, and readiness for service. God uses "sanctified" vessels (perfect passive). It is all for a good work.

7. The GENTLENESS of the SERVANT vv. 23-26.

The wise worker for the Lord is to avoid controversies (v. 23) because they only breed quarrels. He should be gentle (v. 24) along with his teaching. The aim of the servant is to win a soul and not an argument (vv. 25, 26). It is a great lesson here and one which was exemplified in our Lord (2 Cor. 10:1).

Conclusion The need for Christian workers is so great that it really should not be mentioned. The call for workers has been expressed by our Lord (Matt. 9:37, 38). Oh, that God would be pleased to provide these with the quality described by Paul.