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# An Unashamed Worker

By Bryan Hodge

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15)

It is a passage which many of us learned in our childhoods. This is one of the first passages my father committed to my memory.

Let us consider the meaning of this great passage. It is worth our meditation.

## 1. Effort

Translations: “study” (KJV); “give diligence” (ASV); “Be diligent” (NASB, NKJV); “Do your best” (ESV).

Lexicons: “to exert oneself, endeavor” (Vine’s); “to exert one’s self, endeavor” (Thayer); “be zealous or eager, take pains, make every effort” (B.A.G.).

How much effort do we make to present ourselves approved to God? Consider Proverbs 2:4-5. “If you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.”

## 2. Aim

Translation: “To shew thyself approved unto God” (KJV); “to present thyself approved unto God” (ASV); “to present yourself approved to God” (NASB, NKJV); “to present yourself to God as one approved” (ESV).

Lexicons: on the word “shew” or “present” – “to place beside or near... to place a person or a thing at one’s disposal... to present beside, put at someone’s disposal... present” (B.A.G.).

On the word “approved” – “accepted, particularly of coins and metals” (Thayer) “approved (by test), tried and true, genuine” (B.A.G.)

Commentary: “to present”, *parastesai*, suggests the idea of placing something next to an object for comparison, so as to be ‘approved.’ The word *dokimos* indicates that which is demonstrated as ‘genuine’ after ‘testing’ (Kittle, 181). What is the standard by which one is measured? It is the will of God, of course, as revealed in the scriptures. If more ministers would seek the approval of God, rather than from their congregations, or the cross-currents of the ‘brotherhood,’ their preaching might change tremendously” (Wayne Jackson, *Before I Die*, p. 238).

Who is it that we are truly trying to please? Paul said, “So we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts” (1 Thessalonians 2:4). “Do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ” (Galatians 1:10). “We make it our aim... to be well pleasing to Him” (2 Corinthians 5:9). Paul told Timothy that a soldier’s aim should be to “please him who enlisted him as a soldier” (2 Timothy 2:4). Jesus warned of those who “receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?” (John 6:44). Every Christian should determine that it is God, not man, who they seek to please.

N.B. Hardeman said, “Study to show thyself approved unto God’ – not for the sake of public controversy, not for

personal advantage over your fellows, not that you may receive the eulogy and commendation of man, but to be approved by Jehovah. 'Study to show thyself approved unto God;' and if Heaven's smiles are lavishly bestowed upon you, count all things else as naught" (Hardeman's Tabernacle Sermons, Vol. 1, p. 30).

### 3. Work

Translations: "a workman" (KJV, ASV, NASB); "a worker" (NKJV, ESV).

The idea of work is mentioned throughout 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus (1 Timothy 2:10; 3:1; 5:10; 5:25; 6:18; 2 Timothy 1:9; 3:17; 4:14; Titus 1:6; 2:7; 2:14; 3:5; 3:8; 3:14). We are instructed "be careful to maintain good works" (Titus 3:8, 14). We are to be "zealous for good work" (Titus 2:14).

Wayne Jackson comments, "The Christian teacher is to function as a 'workman' (ergates, one who labors); the preacher who does not work for the salvation of souls, but (as one example), 'throws together' last minute, superficial lessons, is unworthy of the noble responsibility" (Before I Die, p. 238).

### 4. Accountability

Translations: "A workman that needeth not be ashamed" (KJV, ASV); "a workman who does not need to be ashamed" (NASB); "a worker who does not need to be ashamed" (NKJV); "a worker who has no need to be ashamed" (ESV).

If a worker properly does his job, he will have nothing to be ashamed of before his supervisor. May we each conduct ourselves in such a way that we are not ashamed in the end. Paul reminded Timothy of his accountability saying, "I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word!" (2 Timothy 4:1-2).

### 5. Carefulness

Translations: "rightly dividing the word of truth" (KJV, NKJV); "handling aright the word of truth" (ASV); "handling accurately the word of truth" (ESV).

Lexicons: "'to cut straight'... what is intended here is not 'dividing' scripture from scripture, but teaching scripture accurately" (Vine's); "to cut straight" (Thayer).

Commentary: "to cut straight and rightly; to cut a straight path through the word, giving it a proper interpretation. Because of that, some have said it is a cut between the old and New Testaments... while this would include the correct treatment of God's work; this is not what Paul is dealing with. Paul has the idea here of treating the world correctly" (Denny Petrillo, Commentary on 1, 2 Timothy and Titus, p. 122).

Think of the old advice, "Measure twice, cut once." Even so, it should be for every teacher and preacher. Check and recheck the things before teaching. If we are not going to put in the time to study, then we should not be teaching. James warns, "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive stricter judgment" (James 3:1). This is not said to scare off people from developing themselves into teachers (Hebrews 5:12). It is set forth to warn of the seriousness of the task. It is set forth to discourage the unprepared rushing into teaching.