

Prepared, Cleansed, and Active = Useful, 2Timothy 2

Most of us have heard and read lessons on 2Tim.2:15. The importance of *diligent preparation* (*study*, KJV) to *handle accurately* (or *rightly divide*, again KJV) the *word of truth* is vital to our *not being ashamed* but *approved to God*. But, as this week's bulletin article points out, while this verse is the best known of the text, it may not be the most critical to our overall understanding of the context.

Paul is undoubtedly writing to a *younger* evangelist regarding his understanding and fulfillment of his duties as such. Thus, Timothy specifically and evangelists generally are the primary target audience for these admonitions and advice. However, there are indications of a secondary audience also. Note vv.2,14,19 in this connection. Therefore, these instructions, including v.15 as it is so often quoted and applied, are for both the *pulpit* and the *pew*, so to speak!

The Key Verses:

While I don't think v.15 is the "wrong" *key verse* to this chapter, I do think it is only *one of a pair*- the other one being v.21; and that having *only one* of the *keys* leaves us locked out of the true meaning and benefit of these instructions.

While v.15 stresses *diligent preparation in and with the word*, the other key component to our (*preachers* and *faithful men*, v.2) to *usefulness to the Master* that is manifested in v.21. As important as *diligent preparation in the word* is, it finds no *useful* outlet in the service of the Master without the *cleansing* of the *vessel* or *implement*. In other words, unless we *cleanse ourselves*, all of our *study*, *preparation*, and *knowledge* in and of the word become *useless* rather than *useful* to the Master. Thus, *personal spiritual hygiene* is just as vital as *diligent preparation* to usefulness. With these things in mind, let's look again, and perhaps a little bit more inclusively at the context rather than just v.15, at this great text of 2Tim.2:1-26. (We'll not attempt to cover all of the verses individually, but will hopefully provide enough of a contextual framework for them to be accurately interpreted.)

The Preparation of v.15 (positive admonitions)

V.15 stresses both *diligence* (*spoudazo*- to *hasten* or *make haste*; to *exert* one's self) and *accuracy* (*orthotomeo*- to *cut straight*, hold a *straight course*; to *do right*), but there are other admonitions given in the context that specify some essential details in these matters:

- v.1, *strong in grace*- not just *strong in the word*, but strong in the *graceful application* of it, cf. John 1:14,17;
- v.3, willingness to *suffer hardship*- it is not easy being a *good soldier*, but we must remember the ultimate goal, cf. vv.7-10;
- vv.5-6, *compete according to the rules*- cf. 1Cor.9:24-27; 2Cor.10:3-7;
- vv.8-13, *remember Jesus Christ*, His *purposes*, and the *rewards* He offers;
- v.14a, *remind them* (and *yourself!*) of these things;
- v.15, give *diligence* to your *preparation in and with the word* that you may be able to *handle accurately* its power, Rom.1:16-17;

- v.22b, *pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with other pure hearts*, cf. 1Tim.1:5;
- v.24, *kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged*; and,
- vv.25-26, *correct with gentleness, always with the ultimate goal in mind*, Eph.4:29.

The *Cleaning* of v.21 (*negative admonitions*)

V.21 predicates *usefulness* on both the *preparations* as covered above and *cleansing one's self* of "*these things*" without specifying *which* things. However, if we note the negative admonitions of the verses previous and post, *from what* we are to *cleanse ourselves* in order to become truly *useful to the Master* becomes clear:

- v.4, *the affairs of everyday life*- to become so *entangled* (*empeleko-* to *inweave; entangle, involve in*) that we cannot *please* or be *useful* to the Master, cf. Matt.13:22;
- v.14b, *word wrangling*- this not seeking to understand what words *mean* that we may *handle accurately the word of truth*, but rather seeking to *redefine* words to *twist* or *distort* the truth to our own liking, cp. Titus 3:9; Acts 18:15;
- vv.16-19, *worldly and empty chatter*- these are in opposed to the truth in *content purpose*, and *result*, cp. 1Tim.1:5,6-7; 1Tim.5:13;
- v.19, *abstain from wickedness*- in addition to the *specific* negative admonitions previously mentioned, and lest anything be overlooked in the same vein, this *general negative admonition* is included, much like in Gal.5:19-21 ("*and things like these*");
- v.22a, *flee youthful lusts* includes but is not limited to the *sexual passions*; cp. 1Tim.6:9-11 and Luke 15:11ff; it seems to refer to the *desires of immaturity* whatever form they take; and,
- v.23, *foolish and ignorant speculations*, cf. 1Tim.1:3-4; 6:4.

Conclusion

To be *useful to the Master*, we must be:

1. *Prepared*, v.15;
2. *Cleansed*, v.21; and,
3. *Active*, vv.2,24-26.

Any one or even two, without the other, renders us a *wooden* or *silver vessel* (*instrument*) rather than a *gold* one, v.20!