

AS A DILIGENT WORKMAN

Intro: (A) Continue series on refreshing and stirring up the gift of God in our lives. Last week we focused on a familiar verse—*I know whom I have believed and convinced that He is able to keep that which I've committed*. Assurance in God's calling and work in us, gives us fresh confidence to live for Him. Today we focus on 2:15, *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth*. The second gift God has given us to kindle afresh our spiritual energy is work. Work?! It is easy to see how a firm assurance can boost our spiritual vigor, but how can work actually sharpen and stimulate us spiritually? (B) Effort is invigorating. Yes, work can be tiresome toil, but it can also be delight—delight in being what we were created to do. God created us for work. There is joy in serving, in fulfilling God's purposes for our lives. (C) Paul is writing Timothy to remind him, not only of the confident assurance in Christ that upholds him, but also of the God-honoring and empowering work God has given him. Now he exhorts, "be diligent to present yourself to God as a workman." As we examine our own lives, attempting to kindle afresh the gift of God in us, how can we express our diligence in serving God? Note with me 5 characteristics of the diligent workman.

1. The diligent workman relies upon grace (1).

- a. *Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus*. Previously, ...*called with a holy calling—not by works*.
- b. The workman who relies on God, His grace, His presence is Holy Spirit-empowered.
- c. Though Timothy a minister, the principle applies to all.
 - i. All we can do is nothing unless the Lord blesses, enables, guides, directs.
 - ii. All the hats you wear as a Christ-follower are Spirit-empowered: personal, family, work, etc.
 - iii. Motivation + Empowerment + Opportunity—from God!
- d. Illust: College friend lying on bed unmotivated. A diligent student digs and in the process gets going.

2. The diligent workman entrusts the mission to others (2).

- a. *The things you have heard*—the gospel, including the whole life package of truth and action.
- b. Diligence is not the same as "ball-hogging," but constantly involves sharing with others...
 - i. Note *faithful men*—in Tim's case, developing disciples and fellow-missionaries.
 - ii. What about one who is not a pastor? The same! Even in so-called secular settings, we are living advertisements or messages of the truth and power of God.

3. The diligent workman expends effort in his work (3-9).

- a. Soldier: focus on the mission, obedience to leadership, not self-gratifying + risk, danger, hardship
- b. Athlete: competition, according to the rules, striving for the prize.
- c. Farmer: hard-working, *ought* to be first to eat the fruit suggests he has to wait and others profit.
- d. Common denominators: suffering, effort, drive, passion, obedience, goal-orientation.
- e. Encouragement: *Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead for which I suffer as a criminal...*
- f. Diligent work is more than due-diligence, which settles for a minimum level of compliance. Due-diligence Christianity asks, "What's the least I can do to be sure of heaven when I die?"

4. The diligent workman endures opposition (10-13).

- a. An early hymn assures us that *if we die with Him, we shall also live with Him*.
- b. The reality of the cross and the resurrection calls us to endure.
- c. But what if we are faithless? *He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself*.

5. The diligent workman is about pleasing God (14-15).

- a. KJV: *Study to show yourself approved unto God...* Better: *Be diligent...*
- b. His approval already given in Christ. Now, created to good works—every work that pleases Him.
- c. His will expressed in His Word, calling us to handle His Word appropriately.

Conclusion: If you are longing for greater vitality in your service of Christ, this should all be encouraging news. A Brazilian chorus: *Get up and get to work. Jesus is with you!* The work He gives you, as you do it for Him, will invigorate and kindle afresh the work of God in you. On the other hand if you are content with mere due-diligence service—a minimum level of obedience—the flame is already going dim in you. Will you simply bemoan your spiritual dullness, or will you cry out to God to set your heart afire for Him?