

GOD'S PATTERN FOR A CHRISTIAN WORKER

2 Timothy 2

INTRODUCTION:

The whole chapter in Timothy gives God's description of a Christian worker. Paul is encouraging Timothy to steadfastness in his Christian service.

On this day when we honor the Christian workers in the South Norfolk Church by way of introduction -- do you know what the true meaning of service is? The word "service" is used so lightly. We trip it off of our tongues with such ease that we get to the place where we feel that it involves any performance of any little deed. It has become a shallow and a broad word.

There are many people, for instance, who are convinced that just attending a few meetings is performing real service. We do the thing that ought to come naturally for the children of God, in the matter of worship.

Dr. Dobbins used a poem some years ago which is so true.

Mary had a little lamb  
And it was quite a sheep  
It took in all the Baptist meetings  
And died from lack of sleep.

Sometimes we attend meetings and people get an idea this is a scheme whereby we pay for our salvation, on the installment plan. But Paul says you don't work for it - you work out your salvation in your expression of everyday living.

I want you to think with me today what the true Christian worker is. What he should be. What he should do. And what he should not do.

I. WHAT THE TRUE CHRISTIAN WORKER IS (some illustrations)

First, he is a soldier - V. 3. Paul does not hesitate to use the military term here for a servant of Christ. He often did this in I Cor. 9:7, 2 Cor. 10:3, - that as a good soldier of Jesus Christ he is to take his share of the sufferings.

V. 4 - He declares that Christ's soldier will not let himself become tied up in worldly affairs. For then, ye cannot satisfy the one who has enlisted you in the Army. To be a good soldier, a man has to have a certain inner quality. The training of the soldier is not only to give him skill, in handling his weapons, but also, to give him the spirit to enter the combat, and the determination and desire to win. Christ gives his soldiers this inner quality.

A good soldier has to sever every tie and cast life itself into the balance. Young men during the time of war are shocked when they come to the moment that it means to risk their lives. Christ demands his soldiers to come into action. And to live as though nothing else mattered.

Second, athlete - V. 5. Paul says follow the Lord's rules for doing his work. Just as an athlete - either follows the rules or he is disqualified and wins no prize. So the true Christian worker is going to be as an athlete.

Third, a farmer - V. 6. As a Christian worker - work hard like a farmer. He is paid well if he raises a large crop. He is a husbandman. The tiller of the soil.

I Cor. 3:9. He is a worker of the earth. Now Timothy would understand the soldier, the athlete, and the farmer.

Fourth, a workman, - V. 15. He is going to make or cut a straight road. He is going to be like a man plowing a straight furrow in the field. He is going to be like a stone mason - cutting the stone straight. Paul was a tent maker and he knew how to cut straight rough camel hair cloth. The teacher is not to be crooked - he is called for careful cutting in a straight line. He is to be such a workman as this.

God will say to him "well done" - and he will not be ashamed when God examines his work. He will know what God's word says if he is this kind of workman.

Fifth, a vessel - V. 21. Here is an illustration of household utensils. As a pitcher, a plate, or a cup - for use in the master's house. It is useful and it is useable. In fact, Paul says the workmen are to be fit vessels. In the kitchen we have expensive dishes, for use for guests. Now we have cheap ones that we use for garbage. So he says the workmen will be like one of these vessels or dishes made of the purest of gold. He is going to be the very best in the house. He is going to be one that Christ can use and honor.

So in summary, what the true Christian worker is - he is a soldier, he is an athlete, he is a farmer, he is a workman, he's a vessel. All of these illustrations will help you to understand how they apply to you and how Christian

## II. WHAT THE CHRISTIAN WORKER SHOULD BE

First, strong. V. 1. Oh Timothy, my son, be strong with the strength Christ Jesus gives you. Keep on being empowered. Keep in touch with the power. Where is the power located. Christ is the dynamo. The Christian worker can only be strong as he is in touch with Jesus Christ.

Second, be teachable. V. 7. Consider the illustrations that the Lord may help you to understand that which may apply to your own life. Put this in your mind. It is not the command - you comprehend this. This is really a promise that calls for an application - that you will be taught of the Lord to help your understanding.

Third, dead with Christ. V. 11. This is an act of self-dedication. It speaks of our suffering with Christ. When we suffer and die for Christ - it only means that we will begin living with him in Heaven.

This is a faithful saying here.

Fourth, a servant. V. 24. He should be gentle. This means that it is not necessary for the Christian worker to fight. He is to be a gentle, patient teacher.

He should be asked to teach - that is teachable and be able to teach others.

He should be patient - the false teachers will come. The Lord knows this. And the Lord will punish these and reward them. But it takes patience for the Christian worker when the unbelieving man opposes him in his work. He must be meek

and continue to carry on his work.

### III. WHAT HE SHOULD NOT DO

First, be entangled in the affairs of life, V. 4. Here is a command that the Christian worker not be tied up with worldly affairs. These will hinder him. In other words, in his business - in the management of his life - in the way he conducts his life - in the way he pays his debts, Rom. 13:8. In the way he accumulates things - I Timothy 6:9-11. He is not to be entangled with the world.

Second, he is never to give battle with words - V. 14. Do not strive about words - a mere war of words displeases, Paul says. Such a thing upsets the hearers and is profitless in it's outcome. Paul says teach people not to argue over confusing things.

So the teacher must be careful about his speech and what he has to say.

Third, be not quarrelsome - V. 24. In fact, he indicates here that the Christian worker should (not strive) at all - he should contend for the truth. But in his spirit of meekness and gentleness. In fact, what he is saying is - God's people are not quarrelsome. They are meek, they are humble, they are courteous. V. 23 - He declares don't be involved in foolish arguments, that upset folks and that make people angry.

I heard one of our members say this week - they had returned from a trip and they were telling about the church where they visited. And in that church, that Sunday morning, they had some new members to join the congregation. And she said it was most impressive when the Pastor was welcoming the people into the church.

He said to them, something like this -- now there is one thing that we do not do in this church. Members do not talk about each other - that is one thing that we do not stand for. We do not permit one member the privilege to go out and talk about another member. We hope that you will understand our practice and our policy this morning.

Now that policy is one that ought to be in every New Testament Church. That is exactly what Paul is talking about here. And this applies to Christian workers. So many times we find this taking place. Now Paul put his finger on a very sensitive part here. Sometimes people serve because they want a little glory, or this, that, or the other. Dr. Chester Swore in his little book, "Very Truly Yours", has a story. It is really terrific. One night at a large sweetheart banquet in a great church - a Baptist Church - it was a most unusual occasion. The food, the decorations, and the program, all seemed to be in competition - and would have all taken prizes. When the end of the program came, the toastmaster complimented and showered praise and thanks on everybody. He overlooked one person - it was the woman who spent so much time preparing the food. It was not intentional. But it was regretable that he overlooked her. He said the Benediction was pronounced - and he was standing waiting for people to gather the candle sticks off the tables.

Suddenly the kitchen door burst open as though there had been an explosion in the kitchen. This over-looked sister came out into the dining room - jerked and slammed things together. As she labored, she said, from now on - so far as I'm concerned they can eat paper napkins up here at this church. To think that I came up here and labored all day long over a hot stove, and not so much as one single word of thanks.

Then she disappeared - he said, I could picture what had transpired. She had

labored in the kitchen thinking about her hour of destiny - and one glorious moment that she would spend - for she knew that the toastmaster at the end of the ceremonies would call her out from the kitchen, and heap superlatives upon her about the food and would thank her publicly for it. She would come out reluctantly to receive his praise, and then bow graciously back into the kitchen. But this did not come to pass.

We ought to be careful about our motives, and about the things that we ought not to do about Christian workers. Paul made many statements, but when he said the love of Christ constrainth us, that in all these things he might have the pre-eminence. At the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord. I must decrease in order that he might increase. Then we are getting close to what we ought to be and certainly we ought not to take part in quarrels and being entangled in this world as Paul has admonished us here.

Like the Missionary who said I have but one enthusiasm - it is He, only He. He was speaking about Jesus.

#### IV. WHAT THE CHRISTIAN WORKER SHOULD DO.

In these closing moments I want to tie together God's pattern for the Christian worker. I've tried to tell you what he is. A soldier, an athlete, a farmer, a workman, a vessel. I've tried to tell you what he should be -- strong, teachable, a servant. I've tried to point out what he should not do - to be entangled with the world and spend his time in vain language and vain talk. And now, what he should do.

First, endure hardness, V. (3). Paul tells us that the Christian worker ought to be able to suffer hardships with Christ. To share the hardships with Christ. To not hesitate in his service for Jesus. But to be willing to sacrifice something and

to endure hardness.

I think I could illustrate this with Judson - I do not believe that there was ever a man who walked this earth who endured more hardness in a selfless way than he. He was locked up in a jail in Burma - under nourished, his body was full of fever and he was in chains. The chains actually cut the flesh into the bone, about his wrists and ankles. He layed down in the filth of the prison to sleep, with rats crawling across his face. Separated from his wife who was heavy with child. The day finally came when the guard opened the cell and said, "come with me". He walked out into the outer circle - he could see his wife standing on the other side of the fence. And a guard standing between them. She had in her hands a tiny, little, bundle of skin and bones. She said, here, is the child that God has given to us. Judson begged the prison keeper for a few minutes time to go into town to beg some milk and nourishment that the child might live. This is exactly what he did. But in his state of fever, he did not know whether he dreamed a dream or had a vision. He said, I had a vision, that I died and went to Heaven and when I got to the Pearlie Gates, Jesus Christ came running out to me, and said, I am so proud of you - you were faithful until the very end. He said he saw the nail prints in the hands of Christ, and he said, Lord, was that for me. And the Lord said "yes", it was all for you. He looked at his feet and his side - and he said, Lord, was this for me. Yes, it was all for you. He looked at the brow pierced with thorns and he asked, Lord, was this for me. And Jesus said, yes, it was for you. Then he looked at his own wrists and his ankles, and he said, this is mighty small by way of comparison, for what you have done for me. But I want you to know that it was all for you.

Christian friend, what is the motive that drives and perpells you in what you do.



Second, please God, V. 4. We are to get into the service of Christ and seek to please God. And that is our aim as a Christian worker - that is what we should do.

William Booth went to the slums of East London and started a great work. When he was an old man, his eye sight had failed. He underwent an operation in hopes of having his sight restored. The operation was not a success - his sight was gone forever. The old man turned his face to the future, and gave voice to the great spirit of his soul. "I've done my best for God with eyes. Now I'll do my best for God without eyes."

I knew a man, Dr. Harold Seever, who was a pastor in Mobile. He lost his eye sight just a few years back. He was a brilliant and capable young man. And I think that they restored partial sight to one eye - but he repeated the great statement of William Booth - "I'll do my best for God without eyes if this is His will."

Doesn't that remind you of the Scripture - though I do all these other things and I have not love, it profits me nothing. Unless love for Jesus Christ becomes the moving force as a Christian - our work is truly not going to please God.

Third, depart from sin - V. 19. God's truth is firm like a rock. And the Lord knows who are really His. Now a person who calls himself a Christian is not going to do things wrong. He is going to depart from sin. He is going to turn away from sin. And he is going to be firm about it. What the Scripture means, let every Christian worker stand off - in a firm way, from sin.

Fourth, flee lust, V. 22. He is specific here about youthful lust. And this

is peculiar to youth. He says the Christian worker will flee. These evils will make steady pursuit - but he says now you are going to have to flee from this type of thing. I think this means that you are going to have to increase from childhood to adulthood. There is very little in human life that lasts. And we must come to grips here with the matter of becoming a man. Paul once said when I was a child, I spake as a child, I thought as a child, I understood as a child - but when you become an adult, and you become a Christian worker, you become a man - and it is time for you to grow up and for you to be an adult and to become a real genuine leader and increase to maturity in your outlook on life.

Fifth, Christ-like spirit, V. 25. That's where he speaks of humility. And this comes from schooling. This is not something that is going to be wished for. But it must be a change of mind. And you must fill your mind full of knowledge for Him, who gave himself for you.

Get others to work - V. 26. Paul said that Christ was the chief teacher and this was not a mere speculation - but he is testifying here as to something that is trustworthy. As you, as a Christian worker, you are going to teach others - and in turn, these others are going to teach yet others. You are going to help men turn away from the wrong ideas and believe what is true. You are going to help men come to their senses. You are going to help men that are trapped by the slavery of sin. And then, these men are going to begin doing the will of God.

So finally, in conclusion, let us remember that this is God's pattern for the Christian worker. He is a soldier, he's an athlete, he's a farmer, he's a workman, he's a vessel. He has to be strong, he must avoid being entangled in the world and being quarrelsome. And he must endure great hardness.

Anything that you do in the name of Christ and out of a heart of love for Christ - lives on. When other things have disappeared. I love that story about the Taylor family in England. There were two sons - the elder said he must make a name for the family. So he turned his face toward the Parliament and honor. Hudson Taylor, the younger, decided to give his life for the service of Christ. And he turned his face towards China. Hudson Taylor, the missionary, died and was loved and known on every continent. But if you look to see what the other son had done in the encyclopedia, you find these words - the brother of Hudson Taylor. This is lived out in modern history today. If you have lived your life on the foundation of self, it is lost. If you build it on the service of men for the glory of God, then it will abide. Beloved, what you do for Christ, in the name of Christ, and out of a heart of love for him. Do you wonder why Jesus said, the greatest of all the commandments is this. Love the Lord with all your heart, with all your mind, and soul. Love him as you love your neighbor. Some of us need to get our priorities straight and on this day make a dedication to be God's worker.

Rewards I think This Week home of

fine couple in our church

Conversation Various things

Husband - showed me, trophies - rewards of his

Sacrificial service in Marines of W.S.A.

Medals for marksmanship with Rifle - Pistol -

Affairs " Battles -

Prize Reward - A Purple Heart - spoke of Bravery - Suffering  
SEARS !!

Christian Worker - Super - Seaman -

Battle Field for the Lord -

Give the Lord your Best!

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