

## CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD MINISTER

### Summary and Historical Background

There were two major assignments which Timothy had to fulfill in order to present himself without shame before God (2:15). First, Timothy had the assignment of propagating God's Word (2:1-13). In order to do this he needed the power of God's grace (2:1). Second, he needed to teach God's Word to faithful men who had the ability to teach others what they had learned (2:2). Paul told Timothy that his work would be demanding. He would need the single-mindedness of a soldier (2:3-4), the self-discipline of an athlete (2:5), and the steadiness of a farmer to do it (2:6). Paul gave him two examples to follow: Christ's life and his own (2:8-10). He encouraged Timothy with a faithful saying, part of which said, "if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" - 2:11-13.

Timothy also had the assignment of protecting God's Word from impurity (2:14-26). He was to have the scrupulousness of a good workman. This was to be accomplished in two ways. First, he was to limit his teaching to God's Word (2:14-19). Failure to obey this charge would result in false teaching, which in turn would destroy the church from within (2:18). Second, he was to live according to scriptural requirements (2:20-26). Paul used the analogy of vessels of honor and dishonor in a great house. The great house represented professing Christendom. The vessels of honor were true believers, while the vessels of dishonor were false teachers and unbelievers (2:20-23). He was to manifest the splendor of a valuable vessel. Timothy also was to have the submissiveness of a slave. He should teach patiently those taken captive by the devil with a desire to free them from Satan's control (2:24-26).

#### I. The Propagation of God's Word — 2:1-13

##### A. Responsibilities for Service — 2:1-2

###### 1. Strength for a Son — 2:1

2:1 — "You therefore" - Paul gives this exhortation in the light of his admonitions in 1:8, 13 and 14, regarding the failure of Phygellus and Hermogenes and the faithfulness of Onesiphorus.

"My son" — Timothy was Paul's spiritual son (child) through his preaching at Lystra.

"Be strong" — Timothy needed divine power for inward courage so that he would have human strength for outward boldness.

"Grace" — Christ is the source of spiritual power (cf. Col 2:6). Christ gives His grace to all who abide in Him (cf. Jn 15:4-5, 7).

###### 2. Steadfastness of a Teacher — 2:2

2:2 — "The things" - This refers to the doctrine that Paul had given to Timothy.

"Among many witnesses" — Timothy heard God's Word from Paul in the presence of many witnesses.

"Commit" — Entrust or deposit. Timothy was to entrust the doctrine of God's Word to qualified men that would carefully pass it on to others (cf. Jude 3).

"To faithful men" — The first qualification of the men who were entrusted with God's precious truth was faithfulness. They must be trustworthy and dependable men.

"Able to teach" — The second qualification of these men was the ability to teach. In addition to faithfulness, They had to be competent to teach God's Word to others.

"Others" — Faithful men were to teach others the doctrines that they had learned from Timothy. In this way the doctrines in God's Word would be preserved by faithful men and be multiplied by men who could teach others. Then the "others" would teach faithful men who were able to teach other men.

##### B. Requirements for Service — 2:3-7

###### 1. Single-mindedness of a soldier — 2:3-4

**a. His responsibility:** a soldier must endure the hardships of the battle field.

2:3 — "Endure hardness" - A soldier's responsibility is to endure suffering. This is speaking to a soldier on active duty. He stays on the front lines, enduring the pains of battle wounds, even to death. A good soldier of Jesus Christ will do no less.

**b. His relationships:** a soldier must work as a team with the other soldiers in the battle.

2:4 — "No man that wars" - While he is on the battlefield, he cannot be thinking about family at home.

"Entangles" — He must not let these thoughts entangle him like an insect in a spider's web.

"Affairs of this life" — He must not be distracted by thoughts of his family. Likewise, a good soldier of Jesus Christ must not be diverted by family or the affairs of this world (Mt 10:37-38; 19:29 Lk 9:57-62).

**c. His reward:** a soldier must decide what he must do to be rewarded.

"May please" - He must determine to please the officer who chose him in order to receive his reward. If he has divided interests, he will not do his best. As a result he will not please his commanding officer. So, a Christian should determine how to please Christ who chose him to serve in His army. He must seek to please Christ by denying himself with the affairs of this life that will distract him from the warfare against the devil for the lost souls in this world. This is the only way he will please Christ and be rewarded when He says, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

## 2. Strictness of an athlete — 2:5

**a. His responsibility:** an athlete knows and obeys the rules of the game to compete.

2:5 — "Strive" - The Greek noun for this verb is "*athlos*," from which we get our word for "athlete."

"Lawfully" - An athlete runner must prepare properly and run lawfully. In the national games of Greece, he was totally given to racing. Every part of his life must be strictly disciplined in order to be victorious in the race. Paul strictly disciplined himself so he would not be disqualified (2 Cor 9:26-27).

**b. His relationship:** it was not uncommon for the wealthy to keep athletes as race horses are kept today. So the athlete had to totally devote himself to his sport in order to win the race for his owner. The competition was stiff. Believers were bought by God with the blood of Jesus. They are to glorify Him in their body and in their spirit. Therefore, they are to run the race to glorify Him (Heb 12:1-3).

**c. His reward:** an athlete seeks to be crowned.

"Crowned" — The winning athlete was given a laurel wreath, which had little intrinsic value. The value was the victory it signified and the praise he received from others. The crowns of athletes in this life will fade with time and all will be left behind when they die, but believers will receive a valuable crown that will endure forever, if they run their race well (2 Cor 9:24-25; Phil 3:14).

## 3. Steadiness of a farmer — 2:6

**a. His responsibility:** he must labor steadily until the fruit is harvested.

2:6 — "Labor" - This word means to expend great energy even to the point of exhaustion. The verse could begin this way: "the hard-working farmer." Believers need to weep and work hard to bring souls to faith in Jesus Christ and to establish them in their faith (Ps 126:5-6; Gal 4:19).

**b. His relationship:** he must stay close to his plants so they are not neglected.

"Fruits" — The farmer must attend to the needs of his plants so that they will produce a good harvest. A farmer cannot dabble in any other occupation or his plants will suffer and not produce much fruit. He must give them his daily attention.

**c. His reward:** he can partake of the fruits of his plants.

"Partaker" — The farmer will be the first to eat the fruit of his harvest.

## 4. Seriousness of a ministry — 2:7

## STUDY NOTES

## 2 TIMOTHY 2

2:7 — "Consider" - Take note of the things that are true of the soldier, athlete and farmer. Whatever is true of them also is true of the servants of God. Serving the Lord is serious, because the results are eternal. As Timothy would think on these things, Paul promised that the Lord would give him understanding. Rewards will be given to those who take their responsibilities seriously.

### C. Rewards for Service — 2:8-13.

Paul gave Timothy two examples of men who were rewarded after they suffered, and he concluded with a hymn or confession which expressed the same truth.

#### 1. Suffering of Christ— 2:8

2:8 — "Remember" - The verb is in the present tense, so it can be translated, "Always keep remembering."

"Raised from the dead" — The patient suffering of Christ resulted in His glorification. He conquered death by His resurrection and ascended to Heaven.

"According to my Gospel" — The Gospel which Paul had received and preached was the death and resurrection of Jesus (cf. I Cor 15:3-4).

#### 2. Suffering of Paul — 2:9-10

2:9 — "Wherein" - This is a reference to the resurrection message in the Gospel, mentioned in v. 8.

"Suffer trouble...even unto bonds" — Paul was persecuted and imprisoned for preaching the resurrection of Christ. He was treated as an "evildoer," even as a criminal (Acts 23:6; 24:21).

"The word of God is not bound" — Even though Paul was bound in chains, the Gospel was not. It went forth through Paul's witness in prison, through his pen, and through the witness of others. This was Paul's reward for his suffering.

2:10 — Paul was willing to endure all things for the "elect," that is, those who would be saved through hearing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

#### 3. Suffering of the saints — 2:11-13

2:11 — "If we be dead with Him" - "If" has the meaning of "since." Since believers have died with Him, they will also live with Him (cf. Gal 2:20; Rom 6:1ff).

2:12 — "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" - "Suffer" is the word for "endure." Believers must endure the persecutions and the hardships of their faith. If they do, they shall reign with Christ (Rom 8:17).

"If we deny Him, He also will deny us" — Christ will not deny true believers a place in Heaven if they deny Him as Peter did, but He can deny them answered prayers, power, joy, and blessings. However, those who deny Christ, so as to reject Him, will be denied a home in Heaven (cf. Mt 10:33; Mk 8:38).

2:13 — "If we believe not" - This should be translated "unfaithful." If people are unfaithful to Him, He still remains faithful to His promises of blessing and judgment (cf. Deut 7:9). It is a warning to the careless apostates, but a promise to the sincere believer who momentarily slips into sin.

## II. The Protection of God's Word — 2:14-26

### A. Scrupulous as a Workman — 2:14-19

#### 1. Toward saints — 2:14

Timothy had a responsibility to the congregation.

2:14 — "Put them in remembrance" - Timothy was to continually remind them of these things in the previous verses (2:11-13).

"Changing them" — Warn them solemnly. Timothy was to warn the teachers and preachers in the church not to strive nor have a quarrel over words of no profit. (Contrast this with 1:13-14 where

## STUDY NOTES

## 2 TIMOTHY 2

Timothy is told to "hold fast the form of sound words" and "keep" them. Man's words are not worth quarreling over, but God's Words must be held and guarded at all costs.)

"Subverting" — The Greek word is "*katastrophe*." Instead of building up the hearers, quarrels over words would result in tearing down the hearers. It would ruin them. Paul told Timothy that his ministry was to edify or build up the saints (cf. 2 Cor 13:10).

### 2. Toward self — 2:15-19

2:15 — Positively, Timothy was to work hard to be approved by the Lord.

"Study" — Give diligence (same word is used in 4:9, 21; 1 Pet 1:10); lay everything else aside for this effort. It involves a thorough knowledge of the Bible, but it also includes the application of the Bible.

"To show" — It means to present oneself (Rom 12:1).

"Approved" — Tested by trials and approved; as metal is refined in fire until it is purified.

"Workman" — Refers to a diligent person, a worker.

"Not ... ashamed" — Not embarrassed when the Lord closely examines his work, motives and methods.

"Rightly dividing" — This word was used in cutting a road in a straight line. This is the only place it is found in Scripture and refers to a correct interpretation of God's Word, not diverted by false doctrine.

2:16-19 — Negatively, Timothy was to watch out for the pitfalls of false teachers.

"Shun" — Timothy was to make every effort to avoid godless and vain babblings. He was to leave no room for the sterile words of false teachers which are unable to produce life and godliness. Such words actually produce more ungodliness.

"Canker" — It means gangrene. Their teachings eat as a canker or gangrene; it is like a poison which spreads rapidly.

Paul gave Timothy two examples of false teachers: Hymenaeus (1 Tim 1:20) and Philetus. They had erred from the truth (missed the mark). They said that the resurrection was already past, evidently spiritualizing it, probably saying it happened when they were born again. They denied the literal, physical resurrection of the body and spiritualized this doctrine (Paul dealt with this whole subject of the literal resurrection in detail when he wrote 1 Cor 15). Many false teachers of that day believed the body was evil; therefore, it certainly would not be resurrected by a holy God. However, if they were right and the believer's body was not resurrected, then it would cause serious doubt about Christ's resurrection and our salvation. As a result their teaching overthrew the faith of some people who believed these false teachers. Modernists today overthrow the faith of some by saying Jesus did not bodily rise from the dead but only His spirit was raised. Satan wants the resurrection of Christ discredited, because that is where the power of the gospel lies (Eph 1:19-20).

"The foundation of God stands sure" — In spite of false teaching, God's church will continue to stand firm (cf. Mt 16:18; Jn 10:14, 27).

"Seal" — The foundation has a seal with two inscriptions. A seal in Bible times was a mark of ownership and security. The first inscription on this seal says that God knows those who are truly His people (Num 16:5). The second inscription says that God's people live holy lives because that is the character of true believers. They depart from rebellious people and their sins (cf. Num 16:26). Thus, those who are in the church by a "born again" experience have this seal of God's ownership and security on them.

### B. Splendor of a Valuable Vessel — 2:20-26

#### 1. As a sanctified vessel — 2:20-21

2:20 — **The analogy:** The great house is Christendom (the church on earth) and the vessels are the people in the church. In a great house there are vessels of gold and silver, which are valuable, and there are vessels of wood and earth which are thrown away when they become useless. In Christendom, there are true Christians that are vessels of honor and there are false teachers and other unsaved people that are vessels of dishonor (cf. Rom 9:21-23 for this designation of the two kinds of vessels).

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## STUDY NOTES

## 2 TIMOTHY 2

2:21 — **The application:** a Christian should completely separate himself from false teachers who are vessels of dishonor. The result is to show himself to be a true Christian.

"A vessel unto honor" — This is a true Christian that is being conformed to the image of Christ.

"Sanctified" — Set apart for special use by the Lord.

"Meet" — It is to be useful.

"Prepared unto every good work" — Made ready to serve the Master by good works.

### 2. As a sincere saint — 2:22-23

2:22 — "Flee" — Present tense means to keep on fleeing.

"Youthful lusts" — This includes all sinful desires.

"Follow" — Pursue. Present tense means to keep pursuing. The only way to conquer youthful lusts is to keep on fleeing from wrong living and pursuing right living. More things to flee are given in v. 23.

"Righteousness" — Christians need to maintain right attitudes and conduct.

"Faith" — This is confidence in God. It could also be translated "faithfulness."

"Charity" — This is divine love.

"Peace" — Harmony.

These are the marks of all true Christians.

2:23 — "Foolish and unlearned questions" - These are senseless and ignorant debates or arguments put forth by the false teachers.

"Avoid" — The verb is very strong and should be translated, "reject."

"Gender strifes" — These are debates that breed quarrels which will divide and destroy the harmony of the church.

### C. Submissiveness of a Slave — 2:24-26

2:24-25a — The slave of God should have a Christ-like attitude in teaching others.

"Not to strive" — He should not to be quarrelsome (cf. 2:14, 23).

"Gentle" — He should be kind, even as a mother cares for her child (1 Thess 2:7).

"Apt to teach" — He should have the ability to teach (1 Tim 3:2; cf. 2 Tim 2:2).

"Patient" — He should bear up under ill treatment from opponents and carry no resentment.

"Meekness" — He should be gentle, not demanding people to think or do things as you do. It is dealing with people as you would want them to deal with you.

2:25b-26 — His anticipation in teaching is expectant, hopeful.

"Instructing" — Correcting or disciplining; literally, it is child training.

"Those that oppose themselves" — It is either a middle or passive verb, but it refers to the false teachers and their followers in either case. Either they are opposing themselves or they are the ones being opposed. The servant of the Lord must instruct them in the truth, correct them from error, and discipline them in their rebellion. This takes genuine meekness.

"If God peradventure will give them repentance" — The hope is that they will respond positively to the Spirit's conviction (Jn 16:7-11) so that they desire morality and want to depart from immorality. It is not God's reluctance to give them repentance, but He requires that they are truly sorry for their sin before He grants them repentance (2 Cor 7:10). In fact, it is God who sends His servants to them to persuade them, if possible, to repent and be reconciled to Him (2 Cor 5:20).

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"To the acknowledging of the truth" — Repentance will prepare their minds and moral desires to receive the truth of God's Word . . . a full knowledge of the truth.

"Recover" — Literally it means "to return to soberness." The false teachers and their followers are stupefied by the intoxicating error of Satan by which he has trapped them to do his will. The task of the servant of the Lord is to bring them back to soberness so they will repent and escape the snare of Satan.

"Who are taken captive by him at his will" — There are three main views concerning the meaning of this verse.

(a) They may have been taken captive by Satan "to do" his will.

(b) They may have been taken captive ("saved alive") by the servant of the Lord "to do" God's will.

(c) They may have been taken captive by Satan "to do" God's will (cf. 1 Tim 1:20). In other words, God's will is done when they are given over to "Satan for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor 5:4-5).

The first view seems to be held by most conservative expositors, but there are strong advocates for the other views too.