

Three Metaphors, Two Kinds of Influencers

1. Quality Approved Workman (Competence)

¹⁵ *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.*

- Like a Master Craftsman, has competence from training from another Master, experience and a desire to do quality approved work.
- "Rightly handling" - to cut straight. (Paul the tent-maker knew this)
- His Work? Presenting the word of truth; cutting it straight.
- Action Step: Do your best to present yourself to God.
- **Example of Unapproved / Ashamed Workers:** Hymaenaeus / Philetus
- "Swerved from the truth - denying core truths of the Christian Faith.
- Their fruit: 2:16-18 Leading people into ungodliness, upsetting faith

2. Foundation Seal of God's House (Authenticity)

¹⁹ *But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."*

- Approved Influencer: Known by God, called, gifted and placed. Has named the name of the Lord as his Lord. Departing from sin and error. Seeking to please the One.
- Disapproved Influencer: Not positively known by God. Not placed by God because he/she is falsely naming the Lord his Lord - not genuine. Refusing to depart from iniquity. In the church but do not represent God's seal. God sees.

3. Household Vessels (Usefulness)

²⁰ *Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable.*

²¹ *Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.*

- Purposed and positioned by the Master for use, honorable and not.
- Set apart as holy by God. Cleansed for His use.
- Ready to be used for doing good work of the Master's desire.
- **Un-useful vessels:** (the Master cannot use them)
- They are dishonorable; not cleansed or set apart.
- Call to action: "if anyone cleanses himself..."



**2Timothy
2:14-21 ESV**

Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. ¹⁵ Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

Remind them: Repetition is an essential part of sound teaching method. 'These things' refers to the spiritual assurances and warnings in verses 11-13. (If we have died with him, we will also live with him; 12 if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; 13 if we are faithless, he remains faithful [to his warning] – for he cannot deny himself.)

charge them...not to quarrel about words: "Paul will repeat this warning in verses 16 and 23. Timothy must solemnly forewarn those who are attracted by the impressive-sounding words of the false gospel teachers that their jargon only leads into conflict situations that eventually destroy people's faith. Words become an end in themselves, and they alienate parties. Technicalities get in the way of truth, and core issues like righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come are never addressed." [Milne, pg 152.] Note the overall context, this charge is not only about jargon and ways of understanding, it's about truth and untruth. A false teacher is influencing people in the church toward untruth.

a worker who has not need to be ashamed: Paul presents a picture of a craftsman, one who has perfected his trade. "Rightly handling" means to cut straight. Timothy and all church Pastor/Teachers need to be craftsmen of the Word, cutting the truth straight. This is a vivid picture. Paul was a professional tent-maker and had craftsman's skills/experience to cut straight through the rough camel-hair and sew together seams with "approved" work. Work we might do that is shame worthy - poor cuts, swerving lines, the work of a new

¹⁶*But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness,*

¹⁷*and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, ¹⁸ who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some.*

¹⁹*But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."*

²⁰*Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. ²¹ Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.*

apprentice must not characterize the ministry work of Timothy. Instead, Timothy needs to focus on being diligent to perfect his "trade". What is the trade? It is correctly and accurately handling the Word of Truth and presenting it. For Timothy the presentation is to God; his work is done before Him to be approved or disapproved.

avoid irreverent babble: Paul has already told Timothy to charge the congregation not to enter into quarrels about words. Here Paul says, the wise response when dealing with religious novelty and speculation (irreverent babble) is to have nothing to do with it, to avoid it, to shun it. Our responsibility is not to engage in some kind of a conversation with the devil, liars or false teachers to find some common ground with them. Our responsibility is to be diligent so as to have become confident craftsmen of the Word of God and correctly handle the truth. Just as gangrene poison eventually will infect the whole human body, false theology, once admitted to the church, spreads throughout the Christian community producing division, spiritual decline and finally a sepsis death of the church.

Hymenaeus and Philetus who have swerved from the truth: Hymenaeus had already been put out of the church for his rejection of Christian morality (1 Tim. 1:20), here he with Philetus is putting false interpretations on the Christian doctrine of the resurrection). By their behavior and teaching these two men show that they have wandered (swerved) away from the truth. The same expression is used in 1 Timothy 1:6 and 6:21, and describes people who have literally 'missed the mark', or turned aside from the straight path of truth and righteousness.

saying that the resurrection has already happened: These men were guilty of denying the fundamental doctrine of the resurrection (and by implication the significance or finality of Christ's death). They may have argued that the resurrection was spiritual not physical, or that Christ only rose in the spirit realm and not in the body, following the dualistic lines of pagan Greek thought. In either case the Christian hope of a material resurrection is seriously undermined, with equally serious consequences for Christian morality (1 Cor. 15:1-19). The Christian's experience of resurrection follows the pattern of Christ's own resurrection, which was both spiritual and material (1 Cor. 15:20ff.). The destructive tendency of this heresy is clear—and they destroy the faith of some.

God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: In ancient times a seal was sometimes engraved on the foundation stone of an important building. The church is God's building (1 Cor. 3:9ff., 16), and on its foundation stone are inscribed the words 'The Lord knows those who are his' (the words of the motto are taken directly from the Greek translation of Numbers 16:5). Those members of the church who have fallen away from the truth show that they were never part of God's building or included in its foundation. The second imaginary motto engraved on the church's foundation stone reads 'Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity'. This command, if obeyed, will guarantee the integrity of the true church of God in the world against the seductive teachings of false teachers.

vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful: Paul is still referring to the two sets of teachers he has contrasted in the previous paragraph, the authentic like Timothy and the bogus like Hymenaeus and Philetus. The only difference is that he changes the metaphor from good and bad workmen to noble and ignoble vessels. The noble vessel (teacher) is then described by three further expressions: 'consecrated' (permanently set apart), 'useful (or 'serviceable') to the master of the house' and 'ready for any good work'. No higher honor could be imagined than to be an instrument in the hand of Jesus Christ, to be at his disposal for the furtherance of his purposes, to be available whenever wanted for his service.

if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use: The master of the house lays down only one condition for using the vessels of his house. The vessels which he uses must be clean. It is evident at once that some kind of self-purification is the indispensable condition of usefulness to Christ, but exactly what is it? What we are to avoid is not so much contact with false teachers like the two named, as shun their error and their evil. To purify ourselves 'from these' is essentially to purge their falsehood from our minds and their wickedness from our hearts and lives. Purity of doctrine and purity of life—is the essential condition of being honorable, serviceable and useful to Christ. (see Stott)

Resources used or adapted for this outline: Stott, J. R. W. (1973). Guard the Gospel the message of 2 Timothy. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.. Milne, D. J. W. (1996). 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus. Scotland; Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications. Dr. Derek W. H. Thomas (2005) Sermon: "Avoid Tiresome Nitpickers!" First Presbyterian Church. Jackson, Mississippi. Robertson, A. T. (1933). Word Pictures in the New Testament (2 Ti 2:15). Nashville, TN: Broadman Press.