

WHOSE APPROVAL ARE YOU SEEKING?

(2 Tim 2:15)

Introduction

1. Why do you say what you say? Why do you do what you do? Why do you wear what you wear? Why do you go where you go? Who are you trying to please?
2. Everybody is trying to please somebody. It might be our school friends or parents or husbands or wives or our fellow employees or employers or possibly society. It might even be ourselves - we have set certain standards or accepted particular principles and we derive an inward pleasure as we conform to them.
3. The Christian seeks first and foremost the approval of God (2 Tim 2:15). He will only say those things which he knows God will approve etc.
4. This leads to a consistent lifestyle. He will say the same things whether other people will hear him or won't hear him etc.

I. How Do We Obtain God's approval?

A. "Be diligent (spoudazo; 4704)":

1. This approval does not just happen:
 - a. It does not come about by accident.
 - b. It takes effort.
2. Synonyms: Give careful attention; apply great effort; deliberate thought.
3. The meaning of the word as illustrated in the scriptures:
 - a. The adding of the 8 "graces". Is to be achieved by "giving all diligence" (2 Pe 1:5-7).
 - b. We need to give "the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard" because of their sake (Heb 2:1-4).
 - c. "If we call on the father" then "we must pass the time of our sojourning in fear" (1Pe 1:17-18).

B. God is not a grandfather figure:

1. Fallacies circulating, in the religious community:
 - a. God is some sort of grandfather or Father Christmas figure who will smile on just about anything the children will do.
 - b. It is sometimes said that Christians have liberty or that they are free or that God is a God of love and surely, He will never punish.
2. The reality:
 - a. We are warned not to be deceived by empty words (Eph 5:6).
 - b. Liberty but not libertines (Gal 5:13).
 - c. Freedom but not a cloak of maliciousness (1 Pet 2:16).
 - d. Consider the goodness and severity of God (Rom 11:22).

C. We must learn from the conduct of the politicians at election time:

1. If we are going to please God we will have to think about it, make plans for it, even make sacrifices for it.
2. Illustration:
 - a. The politician will gauge the mood, opinions and wants of the electorate so that he can

gain their approval on election day. The successful politician is the one who so conducts his life, who so manages his affairs that he gains the approval of the voting public.

- b. The successful Christian is the one who gives that sort of attention, and even more so, in order to gain the approval of God.
3. The faithful Christian will learn what God wants and then do all that he can to comply with it whether it is:
 - a. The clothing worn!
 - b. What events I should go to!
 - c. What sort of career I should map out for myself...!
 - d. How I behave!
4. In the words of the song, "have thine own way Lord, have thine own way; Thou art the potter I am the clay" (Developed from Isa 18).

D. We **can** obtain God's approval:

1. As we consider the implications of this, we might feel it is not possible to live our lives so as to gain God's approval.
2. It is possible!:
 - a. Jesus did (Mt 3:17).
 - b. Enoch did (Heb 11:5).
 - c. God testified that David "was a man after mine own heart" (Ac 13:22).
 - d. God also commended Job to Satan (Job 1:8).
 - e. When we do good and share, God is well pleased (Heb 13:15-16).
 - f. God's answer to prayer is dependent upon keeping His will (1 Jn 3:22).

II. What Will Be The Result Of Such Diligence?

A. "A worker who does not need to be ashamed".

B. What's involved in the work?:

1. The kingdom is not to be thought of as a hotel or a sea resort - it is likened to a vineyard (Mt 20:1-16). We are expected to work.
2. What would cause workmen to be ashamed - work which is lacking in quality or quantity!

III. What Is A Central Responsibility Of Workers Within The Kingdom?

A. To rightly divide the word of God:

1. There have been various suggestions as to exactly what this phrase means. It may mean:
 - a. To divide accurately between the Old and New Testaments.
 - b. To divide or share the word properly bringing out "things new and old" (Mt 13:52).
2. We probably come nearer to the truth by looking at the original Greek word:
 - a. "Rightly dividing (3718)" (orthotomeo) means literally "to cut straight" (Vine).
 - b. Hence to cut straight through the word without making any allowances for the rich or the poor, for the weak or the strong, for those in high positions or those in lowly positions, for friend or brother or relation.
 - c. Alternatively, to teach truth cutting it straight:

- 1) If things are to fit together, they must first be cut straight.
- 2) Part of the skill of tailoring is cutting the material properly. If it's not cut as it should be, it can't be sewn together properly and the garment won't look as it should.
- 3) If something doesn't fit within the jigsaw of God's word then we have not cut it straight. It is not true.

B. Four ways in which we might be shamed in the handling of God's word:

1. By not handling it at all.
2. By not studying sufficiently so that when we do handle it, we don't handle it well. This is part of what is involved in the instruction "be diligent".
3. By wresting the Scriptures (2 Pet 3:16).
4. By not living what we teach. We cannot allow somebody to point the finger at us so that when we...
 - a. Teach the need for pure speech, they can cite foul language that we have uttered or blasphemy that we have spoken.
 - b. Point out the lewdness of a film they can say that you watched... and that is just as bad.

C. Summary:

This is what is involved in being a worker who does not need to be ashamed. It means to work diligently to please God, making sure that we live the word that we teach. And that we teach it effectively, giving as careful attention as we can to the study and dispensation of it.

Conclusion:

Why do you say what you say? Why do you do what you do? Why do you wear what you wear? Why do you go where you go? Who are you trying to please?