

Workmen Approved Of God

By Mark Mayberry

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Introduction

2 Timothy 2:15 ... Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (KJV).

2 Timothy 2:15 ... Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (NKJ)

2 Timothy 2:15 ... Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth (ASV).

2 Timothy 2:15 ... Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. (NASB95)

2 Timothy 2:15 ... Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth (RSV).

2 Timothy 2:15 ... Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth. (NRSV)

2 Timothy 2: 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. (ESV)

2 Timothy 2:15 ... Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. (NIV)

“Be diligent”

Be diligent (NASB95, NKJ); Do your best (ESV, NIV, NRSV, RSV); Give diligence (ASV); Study (KJV).

Thomas defines σπουδάζω [spoudazō] (pronounced “spoo·DAD·zo”) as “to make haste, hence to give diligence” [4704]. BDAG say it means “(1) to proceed quickly, hurry, hasten; (2) to speed up a process, expedite; (3) to be especially conscientious in discharging an obligation, be zealous/eager, take pains, make every effort, be conscientious.” It describes both physical (2 Timothy 4:9, 21) and spiritual exertion (Ephesians 4:1-3; 2 Peter 1:10-11).

Serving Christ demands our utmost. Remember the truth that Cervantes spoke: “Diligence is the mother of good fortune.”¹ For faith to triumph, it must be accompanied by strenuous exertion and

sustained effort. Many are lazy and lethargic, sluggish and slothful (Proverbs 18:9; 24:30-34; 26:13-16). Let us, therefore, be diligent in the Master's service (Hebrews 4:11; 6:11-12; 2 Peter 3:14).

“To present yourself approved to God”

To present thyself approved unto God (ASV); to present yourself approved to God (NASB95, NKJ); to present yourself to God as one approved (ESV, NIV, RSV); to present yourself to God as one approved by him (NRSV); to shew thyself approved unto God (KJV).

Thomas defines δόκιμος [dokimos] (pronounced “DOK·ee·mos”) as “tested, approved” [1384]. BDAG say it pertains “(1) to being genuine on the basis of testing, approved (by test), tried and true, genuine; (2) to being considered worthy of high regard, respected, esteemed; (3) to being valuable, precious.”

Barclay says this Greek word “describes anything which has been tested and is fit for service. For instance, it describes gold or silver which has been purified of all alloy in the fire. It is therefore the word for money which is genuine, or, as we would say, sterling. It is the word used for a stone which is fit to be fitted into its place in a building. A stone with a flaw in it was marked with a capital A, standing for ADOKIMASTOS, which means ‘tested and found wanting,’ Timothy was to be tested that he might be a fit weapon for the work of Christ, and therefore a workman who had no need to be ashamed.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Men often have the wrong value system, comparing themselves by themselves (Luke 16:14-15), commending themselves accordingly (Luke 18:9-14). However, we will be judged, not by subjective human standards (2 Corinthians 10:12), but by a perfect divine standard (Psalm 19:7-9; James 1:22-25).

One day we will stand before God in judgment (2 Corinthians 5:9-11; Revelation 20:11-15). Therefore, we should be more concerned with divine rather than human approval (Galatians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

“As a workman who does not need to be ashamed”

A worker who does not need to be ashamed (NKJ); a worker who has no need to be ashamed (ESV, NRSV); a workman that needeth not to be ashamed (ASV, KJV); a workman who does not need to be ashamed (NIV); a workman who has no need to be ashamed (RSV); as a workman who does not need to be ashamed (NASB95).

A Workman

Thomas defines ἐργάτης [ergatēs] (pronounced “er·GAT·ace”) as “a workman” [2040]. BDAG say it refers to “(1) one who is engaged in work, worker, laborer; (a) of persons engaged in physical labor;(b) in transferred sense, of apostles and teachers; (2) one who effects something through work, a doer.”

There is a great need in the church for laborers, but few accept the responsibility of service (Matthew 9:35-38). Those who are unproductive will be cast out as “wicked and slothful servants” (Matthew 25:26-30). Like Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25-30), let us diligently apply ourselves in serving God (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Not Ashamed

Thomas defines ἀνεπαίσχυντος [anepaischuntos] (pronounced “an-ep-AH-ee-skhoon-tos”) as “not to be put to shame” [422]. BDAG say it pertains “to having no need to be ashamed...”

We cannot hide the quality of our service from God. He knows if we are lazy and inactive, infatuated with the world, troublemakers in the church, etc. Will we be put to shame when God tries us? (Romans 2:5-11; Galatians 6:7-9). The faithful Christian can face the judgment with confidence (1 John 2:28-29; 4:17-18).

“Accurately handling the word of truth”

Accurately handling the word of truth (NASB95); handling aright the word of truth (ASV); rightly dividing the word of truth (KJV, NKJ); rightly explaining the word of truth (NRSV); rightly handling the word of truth (ESV, RSV); who correctly handles the word of truth (NIV).

Thomas defines ὀρθοτομέω [orthotomeō] (pronounced “or-thot-om-EH-o”) as from *orthos* [straight, upright] and *temnō* [to cut], meaning “to cut straight” [3718].

BDAG say ὀρθοτομέω (ὀρθός, τέμνω) is “found elsewhere independently of the NT only Proverbs 3:6; 11:5, where it is used w. ὁδοῦς and plainly means ‘cut a path in a straight direction’ or ‘cut a road across country (that is forested or otherwise difficult to pass through) in a straight direction’, so that the traveler may go directly to his destination. Then ὀρθοτομεῖν τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας would prob. mean guide the word of truth along a straight path (like a road that goes straight to its goal), without being turned aside by wordy debates or impious talk” (2 Timothy 2:15; cf. also Isaiah 40:3-5; Luke 3:1-6)”

By handling it carefully, interpreting and applying it properly, we cut a straight path through the Word of God. Man must not add to or subtract from God’s Word (Deuteronomy 4:1-2; Proverbs 30:5-6; Revelation 22:18-19), nor turn aside to the right hand or the left (Deuteronomy 5:32-33; Joshua 1:7-8; 23:6-8). Recognizing the difference between things that are divinely bound and loosed, (Matthew 16:17-19; 18:18), let us learn not to go beyond the things that are written (1 Corinthians 4:6).

There is great value in correctly understanding the Truth (Proverbs 3:13-18). The faithful disciple does not change, or distort God’s word. He does not twist it, misapply it, take it out of context, or use it with wrong motive (2 Peter 3:14-18). He prayerfully interprets Scripture in light of Scripture, carefully and correctly applying it to his daily life (1 Timothy 4:11-16).

Comparison of Modern English Translations

Be diligent (NASB95)	to present yourself approved to God (NASB95)	as a workman who does not need to be ashamed (NASB95)	accurately handling the word of truth (NASB95)
Be diligent (NKJ)	to present yourself approved to God (NKJ)	a worker who does not need to be ashamed (NKJ)	Rightly dividing the word of truth (NKJ)
Do your best (NRSV)	to present yourself to God as one approved by him (NRSV)	a worker who has no need to be ashamed (NRSV)	rightly explaining the word of truth (NRSV)
Do your best (RSV)	to present yourself to God as one approved (RSV)	a workman who has no need to be ashamed (RSV)	rightly handling the word of truth (RSV)
Do your best (ESV)	to present yourself to God as one approved (ESV)	a worker who has no need to be ashamed (ESV)	rightly handling the word of truth (ESV)
Do your best (NIV)	to present yourself to God as one approved (NIV)	a workman who does not need to be ashamed (NIV)	and who correctly handles the word of truth (NIV)
Give diligence (ASV)	to present thyself approved unto God (ASV)	a workman that needeth not to be ashamed (ASV)	handling aright the word of truth (ASV)
Study (KJV)	to shew thyself approved unto God (KJV)	a workman that needeth not to be ashamed (KJV)	rightly dividing the word of truth (KJV)

ⁱ Miguel de Cervantes [1547-1616]. Spanish novelist and short-story writer; quoted in *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, 15th ed., (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1980), p. 170:34.

ⁱⁱ William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, Revised ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), p. 173.