

A workman approved unto God... Labourers

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[0:00] Word of God. 2 Timothy verse 15 says, Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

! Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for this word of truth, for our time just now. Dear God, be glorified in everything that is done and said, that you might edify, build up your people.

Give us something to take heart in and to take action upon. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Talking about workers approved unto God.

Talking about that fallen word, work. I read in the paper not long ago that they're having trouble getting apprentices. People are shying away from hard work.

It's hard work being a tradesperson, isn't it? And employers are saying they're struggling to get people to apply to be an apprentice. Because who wants to answer the trades?

[1:04] You'd rather get a desk job. Something that's a bit easier. The Bible talks about work, work. W-O-R-K. And it tells about workers approved unto God.

Approved unto God. Now approved here, it means tested. Mental gets tested. It gets tried. It gets through the fire. And the metals that pass through the fire are approved.

They are, they've been through that trying process. And that happens for you and me, doesn't it? As God's people, as workers before God, there's a passing through the fire.

And notice here it says, approved unto God. Unto God. It's important.

Whose approval are we wanting? Now, I'd like to think that my boss likes me at work and that he, that I'm doing a good job and I get his approval.

[2:03] But much more than any earthly boss, any earthly connection we might have, any person we might want to please.

And as young people we want to please our parents, that's a good and healthy wanting to get their approval. But above all of that, and above our earthly boss, which we naturally want to do a good job, approved unto God.

Unto God. Unto God. It's God's approval we seek first and foremost above all. Our object is not to impress people. In fact, you might get yourself some enemies.

Paul said, am I your enemy because I'm telling you the truth? Our object is not to impress people or give them their praise. Certainly as a preacher, I might upset a whole lot of you this morning.

And glory to God. Our aim is to be approved unto God, isn't it? That's what we seek. That's what all of us want. To please God. That must be our ultimate and absolute aim.

[3:06] There was a young man once who studied violin under some world-renowned master. And when his time for his first recital came, he was there with this big audience, with a crowd, and they were cheering.

After each number that he performed, as this young performer played his violin, yet he seemed dissatisfied. After each final number, the crowd was roaring and applauding, yet he seemed unhappy.

As he took his bows, he was watching an elderly man in the balcony, and the older man smiled and nodded his approval. And immediately the young man beamed with joy.

He was not looking to the crowd. He was looking for the master. He was looking for the approval of his teacher. The approval of the master. And likewise we, as believers, as workmen before God, that which matters is unto God.

With the work that we do, that we're workmen before God, most of all seeking not the praise of a crowd or of others, as much as we might be encouraged by that, and as much as we will bless others with what we say and do, our ultimate want is our master's approval.

[4:17] That counts first and foremost above all. This is our motive. Unto. Unto God. Unto God. Unto God. It's been truly said that it is only as God works for me and in me that I can work for him.

The Jew and the Gentile and the church of God. There's different dealings of God with those different ones. Jew, Gentile, church of God. We see the difference between God's dealings with mankind.

Over time. Dispensations. There are different dealings. There's different ways God dealt with different ones. There's differences between law and grace. There's differences between the believer's standing and state.

There's difference between salvation and rewards. There's difference between believers and those who are just professors. Those who just profess to believe. Are we a worker approved unto God? Now the Bible speaks much about works. Work. The work of God. Working. Labor. It's possible to be a deceitful worker.

[5:25] There's some called deceitful workers. There's some called evil doers. We can work hard at being evil. We can do evil. Or we can do good works.

Now the word of God commands us to good works. We see that, for example, our Lord says, let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven unto God.

They will see your good works. They will see your good works. They will glorify God in heaven. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Then we see Paul explain of good works. He says, For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them. He's ordained, we should walk in them.

[6:27] He has planned, he's established, he's purposed, that we walk in good works. And notice there, we're not saved by the works. For by grace are you saved through faith, that not of yourselves.

It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. So, let me preface what I'm saying here by saying you can be the most hard working of people.

Doing good works after good works after good works. You might have your name on the most, you might win the Nobel Peace Prize.

You might be acknowledged and given medals and praises and certificates and plaudits and be recognised in the media by everyone as, oh, they're a good person.

And you might still be lost. Damned as hell. And cast away from God into hell.

[7:30] If you've not put your trust in Christ, put your trust in Christ. Don't trust in your good works. Don't trust in your trying. Trust in the trusting. Not in your doing, but the done.

It is finished. Put your trust in him. Him alone. In his grace alone. And you'll be saved by grace through faith. Yet we're called to his workmanship.

To be his workmanship. God does a saving work in souls by his spirit. By grace through faith. And as believers, we know our works will be tested.

Everything will be evaluated. Our works will be rewarded. Some works will be burnt up.

And we'll be left with a pile of ashes in our hands. In 1 Corinthians 3, it talks about gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stone. Our works will be tested of what they are.

[8:43] And some will suffer loss. Now that's talking about believers. They're still saved. It's just they haven't had the good works that they could have had. They're saved by grace, by God's grace and mercy.

They enter heaven's gates, but they're left with a pile of ashes in their hands. Word, hay, stone. Just ashes. That would be a loss.

They didn't lose their salvation, but they lost what rewards they could have received. Let's not make that mistake. How can we be a workman that is not ashamed?

We're not ashamed. Now as a Christian, there are some things we should not be ashamed of. We should not be ashamed of. Paul says, I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God

unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and to the Greek.

I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. I'm not ashamed of the good news, the gospel. I'm glad of that. I'm not ashamed of it. We can all have things we are ashamed of. There's things we've done we regret.

[9:57] Things we haven't done that we regret we haven't done. And yet God can forgive and cleanse. We might have those memories, those losses of those foolish things that we're ashamed of.

God can forgive and heal and cleanse us. Make it your aim now, as workers unto God. Make it your aim to abide in him.

John writes, And now little children, abide in him. 1 John 2, 28. That when he shall appear we may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

A workman that needeth not be ashamed. How can we be such a workman? How can we be such a worker? There are many scriptures about working for God.

We're just going to touch on some, just quickly through. Just a bit of a broad, topical overview of work, of labour, of being a workman, of being a labourer.

[11:01] Our Lord wants us to respond to him. He sends out a call for workers. We see that in that familiar one of Matthew 9, 37. And this is saying that the worker is sent by the Lord.

By God. By the Lord. Matthew 9, 37. Then say the disciples. And he's looking out, as it were, at these folk on the hill.

And they're kind of wandering and looking a bit aimless. And he's saying this is a harvest field that we're in. And he's telling his disciples, he says unto them, The harvest truly is plenteous.

There's lots of it. But there's a problem. The labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

That he will send workers. That he will send labourers into his harvest. It's saying that the workers are sent by the Master.

[12:09] They are sent by the Lord of the harvest. Notice it is his harvest. It is his harvest. And we are called to the harvest fields. Brothers, sisters, we are called to be those ones who will go out into the harvest fields.

Yet few labourers are willing. We must hear his voice. He's calling workers. He's wanting to send forth labourers who will go at his bidding and do his work.

And go where he sends us to go. So, we want to be doing it unto God. We're sent by God. Sent for God. Sent by God. And his bidding.

As we respond. And then it says also, we're together with God. With him. The work that we do is with God.

We are workers together with God. It tells us that in 1 Corinthians 3. Verses 6 through 9. As Paul writes to the Corinthians, he says, I have planted.

[13:15] Apollos watered. But God gave the increase. God gave the increase. So that neither is he that planteth.

Oh, sorry. I'm getting lost that one. Verse 7. So, then neither is he that planteth anything. Neither he that watereth.

But God that giveth the increase. Verse 8. Now, he that planteth. And he that watereth. Are one. And every man shall receive. Of his own reward.

According to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God. Ye are God's husbandry. Ye are God's building. So, just to go back then.

Paul says, I've planted. Apollos watered. He's talking about. A picture here of like a field. And he's saying that. The people, the churches.

[14:18] Are planted. And then he says. Apollos comes. And he waters. So, he's talking about working together. With Apollos as his co-worker. It's showing here.

That we are working. With other Christians. We've got the honour. Of working together with God. And working with other Christians. So, we've got different roles. And ministries.

And we must faithfully serve. And leave the results with God. Because it's God who gives the increase. Now, I was at a nursery yesterday. To buy some plants.

And I asked for some tips. You know. Does this plant. Is it better in the shade. Or in the sun. Does it need a lot of water. Or what sort of soil does it need. And this.

Experienced man. At the plant nursery. He explained. That he had such a plant. And he did. What it seemed to be.

[15:17] All the right things. And it died. And he said. We don't always know why. It's like that with ministry. Isn't it? We plant. We water.

It's God who gives the increase. Sometimes we think. Oh. God helping me. I think I'm doing everything. How I'm meant to. But. I don't see the results. You might see that with ones.

That you're witness to. Yeah. You give your heart. You give the. The deepest. And most well thought out. Witness to that one. You're trying to reach your husband.

Your wife. Encourage them in the Lord. You see that. It's a bit slow. Things aren't. Quite how you'd like them to be. And it's like that. In church. As I say.

That you. Hope that there'd be more results. To show for your labour. But. It's God who gives the increase. That's what counts. That it is God who gives the increase. We just faithfully serve.

[16:15] And we leave the results with him. We plant. We water. We labour. With human souls. And some will respond. Some will fizzle out. Just like that plant.

That it seemed like we were doing everything right for. As the man said. But. We must trust God. With what we do. Leave it in God's hands. Brothers.

Sisters. Just be faithful. Labouring where you can. Serving where you can. Leaning on his strength. Because we work as with God. With God. Put your heart. Into it.

And know that God is with you in it. All of us. All of us have a work to do. God has given us a job to do. A work to fulfil.

A God given responsibility. Now you might say. Preacher. I just don't know what God has called me to do. I just don't know. I don't have the foggiest. I don't know really what it is.

[17:08] That he's calling me to do. There was a man who said this. Have thy tools ready. God will find thee work. Have thy tools ready. God will find thee work.

Get prepared. Do what you can to prepare. Get to Bible study. Get into the word. Search the word. Get some personal Bible study time. Search and learn.

And gather. And cram yourself with as much as you can know about the Lord. And about who he is. And about the things of God. About sound doctrine. Have your tools ready.

And God will give you work. You might say. I'm not sure what God wants me to do. Someone said. Life is too short for us to do everything we want to do. But it is long enough for us to do everything God wants us to do.

It's what does God want for you. For you. For you. For you. And some of us get saved later in life. As my dad shared. Life is long enough for you to do everything that God wants you to do.

[18:13] And that's our privilege isn't it? To be workers with him. And notice it says. Neither here that watereth. Is anything.

Not here that plants anything. But it's God who gives the increase. It's not about the human vessel. You know. Even if God blesses you with some amazing results.

Some amazing ministry. Blessings. Don't big note yourself. Because that's. Even worse isn't it? That you take any credit.

You start to think. Oh. I'm such a good pastor. I just know how to do it all. And I've arrived. I'm so good. Big note themselves.

And then they get in trouble. Because. We don't. We're not to get puffed up. Got to keep humble. When we see God do a good work.

[19:12] Through us. Then give the glory unto. Unto him. Unto God. Unto God. He gives the increase. It's God's work. And we leave the results with him.

And notice he is right. There with us. As we are working. Whatever your work might be. Whatever God has put in your. Hand to do. Notice that. It is he.

Who is right there with you. Right there. All the time. I love. As that. Familiar one goes. In Matthew 11. 28. It says. Come unto me. All ye that.

Labor. And are heavy laden. And I will give you rest. Sometimes. We can labor and labor. But he actually wants us to rest. To rest. To trust in him.

He says this. He says. Take my yoke upon you. And learn of me. For I am meek and lowly in heart. And you shall find rest. Unto your souls.

[20:08] For my yoke is easy. And my burden. Is light. Notice. Labor with God. With God. His yoke is easy. He wants his yoke on your neck.

We team up. Together with God. We labor with God. Take his yoke upon you. He'll carry the heavy end. Learn of him. Follow his leading.

The word says. God works in us. Both to will. And to do. Of his good pleasure. Work with God. In partnership with his leading. Our labor.

If it is in the Lord. Is not in vain. We can take comfort in that. Notice. Again. Another one really. Is in. The work that we do. Is in the Lord.

It's in the Lord. 1 Corinthians 15. 58. Therefore my beloved. Brethren. Be steadfast. Unmovable. Always abounding.

[21:01] In the work of the Lord. For as much as you know that. Your labor is not in vain. In the Lord. How is the quality of our service. Is it done in the Lord. Is it in Christ.

Is it in that. Spiritual vein. Is it. In the spirit. Is it. To his standard. To his. Excellence. What is our labor.

Our labor is. In the Lord. And it's also. In the gospel. In the gospel. As we see. In this next. 4 verse 3. Our labor is in the gospel.

And it's done in teamwork. Not in isolation. Philippians 4 verse 3. Paul commends. Men and women. Who labored. Men and women. Who labored.

Laboring for God. Ministry for God. It's not. Isolated to a man. Or a woman. Men and women. Have many ministries. Many ministries. That are relevant. And. Needful for us.

[21:58] To take. Take up. Notice. The work is laboring. In the gospel. He says this. I. Intrigued the. Yoke fellow. So that. That picture again.

Of being a yoke. Of being yoked together. As the yokes. Around oxen's. Shoulders. Would. Hold them. And harness them together. We have to be. Harnessed together. Yoked together.

With God. He says. Help those women. Which labored with me. In the gospel. In the gospel. With Clement also. And with other. My fellow. For us. Whose names are in. The book of life.

In the gospel. Notice the work is laboring. In the gospel. And it's great to have. Fellow workers. We don't operate. In isolation. We've got fellow believers. You know. Iron sharpens iron.

We help one another. We might stir one another. In a good way. Of provoking one another. Unto good works. And every believer. Has a part to play. In the church of God. We see that in Ephesians 4.

[22:52] Verse 15 through 16. Paul's telling about the church. He says. God's purpose. Is for the church. That we may grow up. In Christ. Grow up in all things. Into him. Which is the head.

Even Christ. From whom the body. All the body. Fitly framed together. And knit together. Through that which every joint. Together. Supplier. According to the working. In due measure.

Of every part. Make it the increase. Of the body. Unto the building. Up of itself. In love. Notice it says. Fitly framed together. Knit together.

Supplied. According to working. Together. There's an increase together. We are working in a body. In unity. And in interdependence with others. Now here's a good little acronym. That I saw now. I've heard it put like this. I've got to think what it is.

[23:46] Someone said. It's a bit of an acronym.

F-A-T. We need to be F-A-T. Faithful. Available. Teachable. As Christians. As workers. We should be. Available.

Teachable. I saw someone else change that acronym like this. It had an I in it. Interdependent. And holy.

That's a good way of thinking about it, isn't it? What we should be for God. It's a good acronym. So I reflect on it. Am I faithful as a servant? Available. Yes.

Pick me. Interdependent. That we're not working in isolation. We're in a body. We've got brothers and sisters around us. We're a family of God. We've got brothers and sisters that can lift us up and

we can bless them too.

[24:46] Now I love coming to church when someone actually gives me something. You know? Sometimes we come to church and it's all gimme, gimme, gimme. What am I going to get out of it? Rather than what am I going to put into it?

What am I going to come? When I come to church, I may not be on the receiving end so much today. I might be here because someone needs me. After the service. Not to shoot through the door and scarper.

So you can actually spend a moment. Oh, how are you today? How's things? How's such and such a situation? Can I pray for you? Can I give you some encouraging scripture?

Here's a word that might lift you up today. A little scripture. You might come to church to actually give. Wouldn't that be good? I'd love everyone to come to church with something to give.

Something to give. A blessing to share. His designers have fit us together for this. It says, Of our Lord, he gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself.

[25:50] And peculiarly people, zealous of good works. Be zealous of good works. You know, sometimes I think some of our number are a little bit kind of hyperactive.

I won't name any names, but they're kind of zealous. It's like, if you want something done, you know who to pick. Who to ask. They're not going to say, Oh, no, I can't fit that in.

They're zealous of good works. They say, Yes, I'm ready. I'm available. The work we do for God is a long haul, isn't it? It's a lifelong work. Purify unto himself a peculiar people.

Zealous of good works. We call to press on with this work, with zeal. And let him be weary in well-doing. For in due season we shall reign, if we faint not. We can easily get weary, can't we?

When we seek to serve God, there's times of weariness. We're all human and frail. Our Lord says, there's a time limit. He says, Occupy till I come.

[26:52] That's Luke 19, 13. One day it's clock off time. When he comes, that's clock off time. We don't retire. There's no retirement plan.

Occupy till I come. Luke 19, 13. What is it that occupies us? What are we occupied with? What is it that consumes our energy, our interest?

Make this your occupation. To not be weary in well-doing. To live, to serve with all your heart. Do it heartily. Diligently.

Generously. Unsparring. Be a wholehearted Christian. Not a miser, but overflowing. Be overflowing. Giving out. We're blessed to be a blessing.

The Lord himself said, I must be about my father's business. It's an imperative. And our labour is a labour of love. Not out of irksome duty. Not because the pastor puts the heavy on you.

[27:55] Not because you feel an obligation because you want to perform and show that you're doing the right thing. But your labour is a labour of love. And God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love.

The labour we call to is by his working. It's with God. It's by God. It's unto God. And it's in God. I labour according to his working, which worketh in me mightily, Paul says.

It's his work in us. The work is to present Christ. It says of this, Paul says, it's Christ that we preach. Warning every man, teaching every man, that we may present every man.

Perfect in Christ Jesus. This is what our labour to do, he says. Striving according to his working. His working in me, which worketh in me mightily.

Also it's saying, our labour is according to the working of his mighty power. Or, you might say, preacher, I'm just a, I'm still a baby Christian.

[29:04] I'm still learning. I really don't know much about being a Christian. If he is in you, you can do things for God by his mighty power.

Amen. It's not you. You're just a vessel. You're just a container. He works in us mightily. And it's wonderful to know that God's strength works in our weakness, isn't it?

When we are weak, he is strong. Then he can use the frail, the weak, the failing, the unworthy. He doesn't rise us off when we fall. He picks us up and shows us grace.

More grace. He gives us his patience, his kindness, his love, his forgiveness. And he makes all grace abound towards us, it says, in 2 Corinthians 9, verse 8.

God is able to make all grace abound unto you, that ye may abound unto every good work. Don't you love this picture here, that the grace, the grace of God, God's grace abounds.

[30:16] And he is able to make all grace abound unto you, that ye may abound unto every good work. Notice they're connected. It's like abounding grace is the rocket fuel for abounding work.

The more we love him, the more we know his grace, the more we know we're unworthy of it, that we can abound unto every good work. When we get things in that perspective, when we realise God's abounding grace is so precious to me.

Now there is a cost, as it were. This abounding grace will cost you. 2 Samuel 24, 24, David said, I will not offer unto the Lord that which cost me gain.

And the context there was where something was kind of given for him to sacrifice. He said, no, I want to offer something that's going to cost me. And as a servant, we come with open hands to give and keep on giving.

In however ways that we can. To abound unto every good work. Let's be abounding Christians. Open-handed. Flowing.

[31:30] That God flows into us, we want to flow out to others. Sometimes we can be F-A-T Christians. As in fat, self-satisfied, smug, and just selfish.

We know the Bible, but we just keep it all to ourselves. We're like a river with no outlet. God wants us to abound unto every good work. He's abounded to us so he can flow and do his work through us.

So let's have that willingness to sacrifice, of surrender. God is calling for service. The Lord of the harvest is looking still. He's asking us to pray, to send workers.

Workers who will hear his voice. Workers who will seek to please him. Who will fear God and love righteousness and truth. Who will have victory in thought and attitude. Who will daily take up their cross and follow him.

Who will daily work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. Workers filled with the Spirit of God. Workers with hearts humble and ready to serve. In the quiet, unknown corners.

[32:33] People who will tremble at his word. Who are diligent and faithful. Who are not afraid of hardships and affliction and tribulation and opposition. They will not stop you.

Because you're unstoppable. You're always abounding. Workers who have entered into God's rest. Knowing that it's not you. You're just a vessel. Faithful.

Available. Interdependent. Teachable. Holy. A vessel he can fill and use by his Spirit. Workers who will be servants of all. You'll take the lowest place.

You'll have a heart to give glory unto God. And you'll make it your priority to do his will. To find it and to do it. Give a good testimony.

God helping you. That one day. One day. We're going to enter into his rest. Revelation 14. It tells of how they will rest from their labours. It says Revelation 14.

[33:32] They will rest from their labours. And their works do follow them. The context there is of those in heaven. That have passed ahead. Our works will follow us. People will remember what you've done.

What you've done. And in the heavenly. There will be something left. To show. For what we've done in the earthly. But yet.

They will be arresting from our labours. Although it still says his servants will serve him. We're not going to be strumming harps. Sitting on clouds. Just idling away. Eternity.

No. His servants will serve him. There's work still ahead. But the king who he served. His is an unshakable kingdom. Isn't it? And the purposes that motivate us.

Drive that. That enthuse us. That enliven us. Are eternal. Beyond this space and time. Divine purposes. And he's empowering us by his divine energy.

[34:30] He's working in us. Both to will and to do. Of his good pleasure. And so just to wrap up. A couple more references. Philippians 2. Paul says.

My beloved. As you have always obeyed. Not as in my presence only. But now much more in my absence. He says. Work out your own salvation. With fear and trembling.
For it is God which worketh in you. Both to will and to do. Of his good pleasure. You are significant. For the cause of Christ. Will we be looking at the purpose of the parable of Matthew 21.
Who are told. Son. Go work today. In my vineyard. Do we hear the voice of the master. As he says. Son. Daughter. Go.
Work today. In my vineyard. Do we hear that call. Brothers and sisters today. Let's take.
[35:26] An encouragement from the word of God. We are urged to study. Get the word. The word of truth. Rightly divided. Let it.
Be that you search the scriptures. That the scriptures. Inform you. And transform you.
That you will study the word of God. And you will study to show yourself approved unto God. Unto God. A workman that needeth not. To be ashamed.
Rightly divided in the word of truth. You will be unto God. You will work by God. You will hear his voice. As he is calling us to harvest. You will go into the harvest.
You will work with God. As laborers together with God. And with co-laborers. Fellow laborers. Get amongst some Christians. Who are workers. And let it rub off on you.
[36:22] And maybe you can rub off on some other people too. Not rub them up the wrong way. But rub off on them. In a good way. Amen. That's what we want. To be Christians who sharpen one another. Provoke one another.
To love and to good works. And as a result. We'll see the increase. Where will it come from? Not from you. Not from me. Not from any of us. But from him. From God.
By God. By his spirit. Amen. Not here to plants or waters as anything. But God who gives the increase. And he will.
He will abound. He'll make you abound. Unto every good work. Now friends. Just. Let me close with this one final challenge. I'm talking to Christians here today.
And. As has already been covered really. But. Your works cannot save you. Cannot. None of your works can save you. There's some churches that will make you think that.
[37:22] Oh. You say this confession. Go to this confirmation. Go to this baptism. Do this. Do this. Do that.
Do this. Do that. Do. Do. Do. No. It's none of that. It's trust. It's. It's done. Salvation's done. You've got to trust him.