**APPROVED OF MEN, OR OF GOD?**

**SCRIPTURE READING….**
**2 Timothy 2:15-16, …15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**

Introduction
As we go through life, we want to be accepted by others. We seek the approval of those around us.
No one likes to be rejected and quite often we will take steps to avoid such. There are some who will go to great lengths to find approval. Some will even compromise their beliefs, while others will engage in bad conduct simply because of their craving for the approval of others.

Let us first consider…**The Approval Of Others**…
To seek the approval of others is not necessarily wrong or a bad thing. In fact, it can be a good thing, PROVIDED we are seeking approval based upon what is RIGHT.
***Romans 14:18 says, 8For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men.***

***What things??***

The things he did which were acceptable to God were , righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost and considerate of his brethren.
Sometimes our desire to be approved of others results in us doing the right thing.
For example, a child who seeks the approval of his/her parents might be encouraged to do the right thing.
It could be that their love for their parents keeps them on the right path.
IF we care about our brethren, we will seek their approval in our actions, even if it means sacrificing our liberties for the good of the body (without compromise of course). Paul dealt with this as he wrote to the Corinthians.
Having said all this, the approval of man is not the most important thing. !!!!
There is one Person’s approval who ought to mean more to us than any other.
We ought to be seeking God’s approval. !!!!
In our text (2 Tim. 2:15) we find that such ought to be our goal.
With that in mind, let us make application of this text as it applies to seeking God’s approval.

First of all brethren, **Approval Is Not By…Sinless perfection –**

Romans 3:9,***What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;*** Romans 3:23 ***3For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God***; *this tells us* that we are all guilty of sin.
***1 John 1:8-10*** ***If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.9If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.10If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.***

This verse says that if one says he has not sinned he is a liar.
What we need to understand is that we CAN be forgiven.
It matters not what sins we have committed.
If we truly repent we can be forgiven.

**Approval Is Not By…One who commends himself –**
We are frequently reminded in this society of those who think too highly of themselves.
***2 Corinthians 10:18, 18For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.*** Paul here reminded these brethren that it is not about what you think about yourself but what God thinks.
It is the one whom He commends that will be saved.
IF we want God’s approval, we cannot set our own standards. In fact when a Christian commends himself or herself they are actually condemning themselves!!!

**Approval Is Not By…Simply one getting approved of others.**
Beloved, God’s approval does not depend on whether others are pleased with us.
It’s mentioned in the introduction that seeking one’s approval is not necessarily bad, BUT there are those who in order to achieve approval will compromise God’s word. *This is Bad!!*
Ever wonder how much time does an individual spend seeking the approval of others?
They try to put up good Looks, false actions, they put on a false front, they go to psychologists to be informed in order to simply get others to approve of them. Beloved this is not what will please or get God’s approval!!!

**Approval Is Not By…Seeking the approval of men who are held in high esteem by others!**The Bible gives us examples of those who were seeking the approval of men:
1 Samuel 16:17 – because God had rejected King Saul, we read that a distressing spirit troubled him.
So in order to relieve himself of all his troubles, Saul said, “Provide me a man who can play well, and bring him to me.”
Notice how King Saul’s concern was NOT to find one who would help him find God’s approval.
His approval was based upon outward appearance.

**Approval Is Not By…Seeking the approval of men.**1 Samuel 16:7, when God told Samuel to find a replacement for King Saul among the sons of Jesse.
IT was observed by looking at his older sons, then back in verse is says…# 6“surely the Lord’s anointed is before Him.”
***Vs. 7 says, “But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."***
***John 12:42-43, “Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”
Matthew 23:5-7 Jesus said of the scribes and Pharisees, ”**5But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,6And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues,7And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.***

 ***Matthew 23:27-28 – Jesus in rebuking the Pharisees and scribes noted that their outward appearances were deceitful. “27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.***

 ***Luke 16:15 – “And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.”***

**To Be Approved By God…**
**One Must Be Diligent -**A word that means to hasten to do a thing. IT involves putting forth sincere effort. This is not one that flippantly deals with circumstances. The word also suggests a degree of urgency. Like one bitten by a poisonous snake takes quick action to save himself, so one realizes that pleasing God is not something that can be put off until later.

**To Be Approved By God…**
Abraham, “the friend of God” (James 2:23), by faith offered up Isaac (Hebrews 11:17-19). If you go back to the original text, you will notice that after the Lord told him to offer his son…***Genesis 22:3And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him***The KJV uses the word **“study”** which we have noted on numerous occasions cannot be fully realized without diligence.
But the word is also found in other texts that we ought to consider:
Ephesians 4:3, “Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

To Be Approved By God…
***Hebrews 4:11, “Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.”***
***2 Peter 1:10, “Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble.”
2 Peter 3:14-15, “Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless;”***IF we fail to put forth diligent effort, we will not receive God’s approval.

**To Be Approved By God…One Must Be A Worker –**
This goes hand in hand with the diligence we just saw in the scriptures.
The term is found 10 times in the teachings of Jesus (Matthew & Luke) and is usually translated laborer.
It indicates one who puts forth the necessary effort required to accomplish his job.

**To Be Approved By God…**IF we are to be approved of God, we **HAVE TO WORK!**
***Philippians 2:12 says, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”
2 Corinthians 5:9, “Therefore, we make it our aim, whether pleasant or absent to be well pleasing to Him.”
1 Corinthians 15:58, we ought to be “always abounding in the work of the Lord.”

To Be Approved By God…One Must Not Be Ashamed –
Matthew 10:32, 33 – Jesus said of confession, what we do will determine what He does for us when we stand before the Father seeking approval.**“32Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. 33But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.
Mark 8:38 says, “whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man will also be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”
Romans 1:16, Paul was not ashamed of the gospel
Paul would encourage Timothy, “Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner…”(2 Timothy 1:8).
In vs. 12 Paul said, “For this reason I suffer these things, nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that day.”***
**To Be Approved By God…**
Do we truly let our light shine?
Do we put it on a lampstand for all to see?
Or do we serve Him quietly and fail to defend Him when we ought to?
If you are ashamed of God, HOW can you expect Him to approve of you?

**To Be Approved By God…**One Must Rightly Divide The Word Of Truth
Here is the specific example in our text.
He applies God’s word accurately.
That means He doesn’t use gimmicks to reach a conclusion that is inaccurate.
The NASU says that he is “accurately handling the word of truth.”
We MUST take the word of God seriously!
IT is not a toy to be manipulated.

**To Be Approved By God…**It is the word of God (Hebrews 4:12), the “oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11), it is “inspired” and “profitable for…” (2 Timothy 3:16,17), it contains, “all things that pertain to life and godliness.” (2 Peter 1:3)
Rightly dividing the word of God means we accept **ALL** of it.
**NOT just the parts we like. !!!**

**The preacher preaches “in season and out of season”** ***2 Timothy 4:2 2Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.***

**He preaches “without partiality”,** ***1 Timothy 5:211I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.*Philippians 1:10 says one needs to** ***“approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense in the day of Christ.”***
**To Be Approved By God…**Sadly, the word of God is not always rightly divided:

**Some twist it to their own destruction –** ***(2 Peter 3:16) 6As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.***

**Some pervert it** (***Galatians 1:6-9)**6I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:7Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.8But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.9As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.***

**Some take it out of context, approach it with wrong motives,** etc.
Rightly dividing the word of truth is more than reading and studying.
It is also **APPLYING** it to our own lives

Here’s some food for thought out of the word of God!
***James 1:21, 1Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.*** **If with meekness we will receive it!**
***James 1:25 – 25But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.*** **It comes By being doers and not hearers only.**

**Here’s the bottom line to it all….Listen!!!!
Luke 6:46, Jesus said,** ***“Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord’ and do not do the things which I say?”***Conclusion
Truly, we MUST seek God’s approval.
A failure to do so will have eternal consequences.
And it will make this life more unbearable.
No one can seek His approval without approving of those things He approves of.
Will we accept His church, His conditions of pardon, His work and worship?
Let us therefore, study His word regularly and apply it completely to our lives.