

## 2 Timothy Ch 2:19

“The Seal Of Approval”

As we continue to follow the flow of this ch we've seen the need to be focused, and then once we have our focus, once we have our aim, we're to be diligent to pursue that direction, we're to be diligent to present ourselves approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Not only are we to rightly divide God's Word, but we're to allow God's word (rightly) to divide us. To (as it were) *pierce* us even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, to allow it to discern the thoughts and intents of our hearts, or to understand it another way, not only are we to be getting into God's Word, but we do well to allow God's Word to get into *us*. To “divide” us, to “discern” us, the motives and intentions of our hearts, that we might see ourselves reflected in the mirror of the word of God and as those things are reflected back to us that aren't in order, that need to be washed and cleansed from our hearts, and our minds, that we would be quick to repent of those things that we might be vessels of honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work (which brings us to our text today).

Now we take these ch's and break them up into smaller bite sized chunks that we might sort of chew on them, and savor them, ingesting them slowly that we might get all the nutrients that God would have us to out of them. But if you read through this portion in it's entirety in one sitting you can see that Paul is developing a very practical flow of thought whereby he's seeking to illustrate, the need for integrity, and doctrinal purity, the importance of keeping ourselves in that place of usability by God and how it is that we do that.

In Vs 15 he introduces the believer (and more specifically the teacher of God's Word) as a “Worker.” and He begins to expound on the need to be a *diligent* worker, one who labors in the Word of God so as to understand it, administer it, and apply it properly in the manner of which God has intended it to be understood, administered, and applied. Having established the focus and the aim, the diligent pursuit of that direction begins, in vs 16-18 the results of losing your focus are laid out, you begin to stray concerning the truth, remember you can only follow the map as long as you're reading it correctly in order reach your intended destination. You lose your focus, and you'll begin to stray from the path that you need to be on, and so the importance of laboring to understand the balance of the totality of the Word of God lest we find ourselves in the dark somewhere getting lost along the way, beginning to stray from the path. What did David say? “*Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.*” Ps 119:105 So again the emphasis on the need to be diligent workers in the Word of God, study your bibles, let God minister to you, lead you, speak direction into your life via His Word. Because His Word will light your way, or to understand it another way, God's Word makes things real clear, it exposes things for what they are lest we be deceived, it alerts you as to the tendencies of the flesh, reveals to you the manner of the Spirit, and so it guides us along our journey in life, it's our map.

Don't trust the way you feel about something if it doesn't correlate with God's Word. I've had people say things to me like, "How could something that feels so right, be so wrong." I'll tell you why, or rather let's allow God's Word to shine some light on why. Jer 17:9 because, "*The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?*" The implication being that you sure can't, your heart can easily deceive you, and the next vs tells you that only God knows the heart, that's why we need his Word shining in on it. Prov 28:26, "*He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, But whoever walks wisely will be delivered.*" and Of course we understand that wisdom is found in the Word of God.

Prov 21:30 "*There is no wisdom or understanding Or counsel against the LORD.*" and So we need to be diligent laborers, or workers in God's Word. and This is the premise that he lays out here in vs 15 and then he builds on that throughout the remainder of the ch. In vs 19 having established the fact that we're to be workers, he speaks of the solid foundation that stands, next time in vs 20 we'll see how he brings up the house that stands on that foundation, and then he begins to speak of the individual vessels that abide in the house, what it means to be a vessel of honor, and dishonor, and how we should strive to be vessels of honor. But prior to the house let's focus upon the foundation. Notice vs 19.

#### Vs19

As we noted last week, there are those who will do damage to the body of Christ, they'll overthrow the faith of some, tear down some of the "living stones" (in regards to the people who comprise God's church) in their self-centered agendas, and/or twisting of God's Word. and We see here that Paul is not ignorant to the fact that there's going to be problems, and people who create problems, bring in confusion, and do damage to God's people. But he's also confident that even though things of that nature will occur, "Nevertheless, the solid foundation of God stands." Maybe your bible speaks of the foundation which is sure, a sure foundation, or a solid and firm foundation, that God lays, though men may come and go, the solid foundation that God has laid will remain.

Now what is the solid foundation of God? The Word rightly divided; Paul told the Ephesian believers that we as the church are members of the house of God, "*Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.*" Eph 2:20 The balanced doctrines of the Word of God is the solid foundation of God upon which He establishes His church. and I'm glad that the Holy Spirit included this word, "Solid", it's a sure foundation, a firm foundation, a solid foundation, what's the implication there? That things purported other than truth rightly divided (as in the message that Hymenaeus and Philetus were spreading) are weak, and won't stand up under pressure, or hold up under weight when tested by the veracity (or authenticity) of the Word of God.

But the “solid” foundation of God stands, holds up under scrutiny, because it’s infallible and inerrant, there’s nothing questionable about it because it’s absolute truth, and it will stand, again heaven and earth will pass away but God’s Word will never pass away. It remains constant, it “stands”, and it will come to pass, God has a plan and it will come into full fruition no matter what happens, no matter who falls away, or who rejects the truth and follows after vain and profane babblings, *nevertheless* the solid foundation of God stands, “having (notice) this seal.”

What is a seal? (Well it’s a little oceanic critter that eats fish and are awful cute to watch, unless they’re being thrashed by whales or sharks in which case, that’s a real drag). But be that as it may, the foundation of God stands having this seal. The seal is a mark, or a stamp of authenticity, it distinguishes the counterfeit from the genuine article, it’s that signet that would be pressed into the melted wax thereby verifying the legitimacy of the product, or the letter, certifying who it was from or to whom it belonged.

The seal that stamps God’s foundation has 2 inscriptions, one Godward, and the other manward. The 1<sup>st</sup> of which is Godward, it’s from God’s perspective, and it reads, “The Lord knows those who are His.” The Lord knows those who are His, what does that mean? It means that I might *not* know who are His, but the Lord knows those who are His. People might deceive me; I might be led to think (by the close they wear, or the title they wield) that they belong to God.

But God knows those who are His, and wearing a collar turned around backwards, or some liturgical garment, or even using spiritual jargon and standing behind a pulpit doesn’t make anyone God’s. Jesus said, *“Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven.”* Matt 7:21

Then He went on to elaborate on the credentials people will try to flash before Him speaking of all the great works they did in His name, but unfortunately works don’t get anyone into Heaven no matter whose name you do them in. Which kinda sends a round of buckshot through the “good ol’ boy” mentality figuring if you just do right (morally speaking) by people that you figure God will understand that and let you in. How insulting that is to the heart of God, as if to say there’s a way that this can happen other than allowing My Son to die, but I’d rather see Him die. That’s where that mentality leads, as if to say, “Well, God there’s no need to let your Son die and shed His blood for my sin. I’ll just be pretty good for the most part, and you can kinda look the other way when I step up, and I’ll slide right on in, (wink, wink).” As if God’s going to say, “Well we could do that, but I just want My Son to die so lets go this route instead.” and By the way, you’ll be pretty good compared to who? Mother Theresa, or Charles Manson? You see we err when we compare ourselves amongst ourselves because I can always find someone whom I see as morally more base than myself so that I look real good, but then on the other hand, someone out there can use me as their measuring stick whereby I make *them* look real good.

The only one we're to measure ourselves up against is Jesus Christ and when we do that we all fall radically short, we're all sinners in need of a Savior, and God says, "I know that, I'm glad you finally realized that, but I knew it from before the beginning." That's why, "*God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*" Rom 5:8

Well to get back to the point when people begin to flash their credentials before the Lord and speak of all the glorious things they've done in His name, His response will be what? "*I never knew you; depart from Me.*" Matt 7:23 You see the Lord knows those who are His. In John 10:27 He said, "*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.*" Listen, "*The very hairs of your head are all numbered.*" Matt 10:30 Or the lack thereof be that the case, the point being if you're the Lord's, He knows you intimately, Ps 40:5 says of God, "*Your thoughts toward us Cannot be recounted to You in order; If I would declare and speak of them, They are more than can be numbered.*" and Again, "*How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand.*" Ps 139:17-18

Some see in this the electing work of God in that, "*Known to God from eternity are all His works.*" Acts 15:18 So that God knows those who are His, He knows whom He's elected, and whom He has not, and that's fine if that's the slant you take on this. God knows those who are His, this is the "Godward" side of the seal, but what about me? Now obviously we know whether or not we're His, by a couple of different ways, #1 by the witness of the Spirit, "*The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.*" Rom 8:16 Also if you belong to Him, you're going to have love for the brethren, 1 John 3:14 "*We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.*" John also informs us that obedience to the word of God is a witness that we're His, "*Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*" 1 John 2:3-4 That seems pretty clear.

So God has it covered on His end, and we have it covered in our own hearts as to whether or not we're his, you know if you know the Lord or you don't. But how am I to know if *you* are His, that's where the 2<sup>nd</sup> inscription comes in, let's look at it together. "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

You see as we mentioned earlier, God and God alone searches the heart, God knows your heart, now that can be good, or that can be bad depending upon the position and intention of your heart.

But no man can no another man's heart, we're left to try and discern the position of an individual by the way the lead their lives outwardly. Remember this vs, "*The LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.*" 1 Sam 16:7 So yes the Lord knows your heart, but I don't, so how do I seek to discern you, by the way you conduct yourself in my sight and before others. and The call here is to blamelessness, and integrity, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." Notice that word "Everyone" this isn't a call to simply the Pastor, or the spiritual Special Forces, the elite few that God has special plans for, this is an imperative for all who name the name of the Lord, we're to depart from iniquity.

What does it mean to name the name of the Lord? It means you've taken His name upon yourself, you go by the label of Christian, "little Christ" and if you've named His name, you're to depart from iniquity, the bible is very clear, "*You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.*" Ex 20:7 "Hey, wait a minute, I thought that meant like, cussing and stuff, saying His name in disrespectful manner." Sure it includes that, but I'm persuaded that that's not the primary application that was intended by God when He gave that command, He was speaking to a people that He was calling out of the world to be His own, to reflect Him and represent Him to the dying world around them. and They were to reflect Him accurately, and to be set apart from the world and unto Him, they weren't to take His name upon themselves in vain, because God will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

Brothers and sisters that's heavy! Especially in modern day U.S.A. where everyone is a Christian simply by rite of being born in America, and even as a nation I fear that we bear His name in vain. Sure He has His remnant who haven't bowed the knee to Baal, but by and large as a nation we've taken His name in vain. Like those who Paul warns Titus about, "*They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.*" Titus 1:16 (Maybe that should be the inscription on our currency, instead of "In God we trust"?) But you see *God's seal* of genuine authenticity bears this inscription, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." You can know those who belong to God by the way they lead their lives, by the fruit of their doings, His seal is on them and they've departed from iniquity.

Not doing this or that in order to be righteous, but leading their lives in a manner that reflects the righteousness of Christ that's already in them. We spoke briefly Wednesday evening about the fact that we're sinners therefore we sin, we don't sin and then become sinners, we simply prove out the fact that sin is innate with in us the moment we 1<sup>st</sup> sinned.

But on the flipside of that when we're in Christ it's not because we do what's right that we're us righteous, but rather because of the fact that we are righteous we do what's right, (Does that make sense?) In other words when I name the name of the Lord, when I invite Jesus Christ into my life, I die to self, it's no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me, so then the righteous works that spill out of my life aren't what makes me righteous, they simply testify to the righteousness that's been provided for me in Christ. The bible is full of exposition on this very statement, this is just sort of a capsulized statement, but it's laid out in further detail all over the place. Let's look at a few, turn to the book of Eph Ch 4 (vs14-22).

Look at Ch 5 (Vs1-17), Turn to Col Ch 3:5-8,

On and on we could go regarding the need to lead lives of righteous if in fact we name the name of the Lord. Ps 34:14 *"Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it."* and The NT counterpart. *"Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good."* Rom 12:9 So as far as God as concerned, He knows those who are His; there's no questions in His mind. But as far as man is concerned we're able to see fruit of the fact that someone belongs to God because they have departed from iniquity. There's been a change in their lives, you see as John put it, *"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."* 1 John 1:6-7

It's not to say that we have no sin, or that the sin nature has been eradicated from us, but that we don't make a willful habit and pattern of sin in our lives whereby we no what's right and we purpose to do what's wrong in a habitual way. But rather we're quick to want to repent, and forsake the way of error, and lead our lives in a manner that shuns iniquity. Because *"He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy."* Prov 28:13 The exhortation here is to sanctification, and purity, to the Corinthians Paul said, *"Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."* 1 Cor 6:19-20

Again we understand that we're not going to reach a position on this side of Heaven whereby sin is simply absent from our being and we're perfected before God in a practical way. Although you're already perfect before God in a positional way, perfection is the robe that Jesus covered you with before God when you gave your heart to Him, His own robe of righteousness. But sanctification is an ongoing process on *this* side of Heaven of which the bible tells us is by the Spirit and belief in the truth. 2 Thess 2:13 It's about surrender, not only getting into God's Word, but letting God's Word get into me, letting the Holy Spirit change me, because if you've given your life to Christ, the process of practical sanctification has begun.

I am confident of this very thing, that, *“He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.”* Phil 1:6

So it’s a single seal with a 2-fold inscription, and if we know the Lord, or rather are known by the Lord then the consistent mark that will be upon the life of every believer, the foundation that will stand will bear this fruit. Those who have named the name of the Lord will depart from iniquity. You see if you have no real desire to depart from iniquity, then you do well to question whether or not you belong to the Lord, and if someone names the name of Christ and refuses to depart from iniquity, then they’re just deceiving themselves and the truth isn’t in them. Because God’s Seal of approval is constant, its foundation is solid, it remains consistent in every person throughout every age, in every culture and it’s this. *“Let everyone who names the name of the Lord Depart from Iniquity.”*

Don’t be confused by this phrase *“Depart from iniquity”* as if to think that it’s only pertaining to some type of gross, or illicit sin. Sometimes it’s not so much what you’re doing as it is being behind and condoning that which someone else is doing. Being in approval of sin or rebellion in someone else’s life, either by partaking in it at the theatre, or by getting behind their rebellious actions in the body of Christ. That’s the specific thought that Paul is drawing from here as he’s mentioned these guys who are in rebellion, coming against Timothy’s leadership, and the warning is to stay away from people who cause problems in the body.

He’s pulling specifically from Num 16 when Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rebelled against Moses, and they became the ringleaders of a rebellion.

They coerced about 250 of the leaders to get behind them, see their perspective, how Moses seemed to have a monopoly on this whole *“Leadership”* thing and they were just as qualified to make decisions and hear from the Lord as he was. and So they approached Moses and after going behind his back and getting all these people on their side they said, *“You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?”* Num 16:3

What’s happening here? They were creating a riff in the body, they’re splitting the church, causing people to take sides and come against their God ordained overseer and leader, they’re sowing discord in the body. and Let me just tell you God hates discord among the brethren, and woe to the one who’s responsible for sowing it. Because as Jesus said, *“It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come!”* Luke 17:1

Well, Moses was grieved over the whole thing, and we read on down there where he said to them, *“Tomorrow morning the LORD will show who is His and who is holy, and will cause him to come near to Him. That one whom He chooses He will cause to come near to Him.”* Num 16:5

Or as Paul's NT paraphrase puts it, "The Lord knows those who are His." and Moses told Korah that God would make it real clear to everyone else in due season, for them even as soon as tomorrow.

You know the story, they came out the next morning and they all put fire in their censers and presented their offering before the Lord, and the glory of the Lord came down and prepared to vindicate Moses as God said to Moses and Aaron, "*Separate yourselves from the congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.*" Num 16:21 and So Moses and Aaron fell on their faces and began to intercede for the congregation asking that the Lord wouldn't bring the sins of the few upon the many even though the few stood to represent the many. "*So the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the congregation, saying, 'Get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.' Then Moses rose and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him. And he spoke to the congregation, saying, 'Depart now from the tents of these wicked men! Touch nothing of theirs, lest you be consumed in all their sins.'*" Num 16:23-26 Or as Paul's NT Paraphrase puts it, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

Don't associate with those who are inciting rebellion and sowing discord in the body, just stay away from it. You know what happened the earth opened up and Korah and his 2 buddies were swallowed up and taken alive down into the pit, and fire went out from the Lord and consumed all of their associates, and all those who were behind them, and the whole thing was a real "pity."

It truly was; it's not worth it to be in the limelight for a month, or a year, or 3, to be associated with those who are leading you into rebellion, or against the leadership of the body of Christ. Build your life on the solid foundation of God which will stand having this seal, "*The Lord knows those who are His,*" and, "*Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*"

If you're here today, and you don't know Jesus Christ and you're not known by Him, I'd love to introduce you to Him today. The bible says that today is the day of salvation. and So if God is tugging on your heart, saying come out from among them, out from among the world to be separate, take My name and depart from iniquity. Then listen, respond God's voice today, your sin may be as scarlet but He'll wash you white like snow and cover you in the robe of His righteousness. But He won't force you into submission, you have to be willing, if you're willing, He can make you clean, Jesus said the one who comes to Me, I will by no means cast out, will you come to Him today?

