

RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF GOD

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.

OPENING PRAYER

PREFACE

- Truth is under attack on two distinct fronts: 1) God is under attack by secularism 2) The Bible is under attack within the four walls of the church.
- Unfortunately there is an extremely diverse spectrum of what represents Christianity, and it is a spectrum that is incompatible with itself.
- The chief concern within the church today is deviation from correct biblical truth.
- When we consider the constant theme threaded throughout the Bible— in particular, the New Testament— we should be warned and exhorted to contend aggressively for biblical truth.
- With various forms of false Christianity and false doctrines in the world today, we must recognize that faulty beliefs stem from inaccurate interpretations of the Bible.
- Examples: The New Apostolic Reformation, Hyper-Pentecostalism, Hyper-Charismatic, etc.
- Ironically, while churches remain discordant with one another, they remain unified in their stance on Biblical inerrancy.
- How the Bible is read and what the Bible means is not always the same thing.

Heresy is arriving at an incorrect conclusion of God's Word. In the Old Testament, God spoke through His prophets, and in the Church Age, He speaks through the Bible.

Throughout history there has always been, and continues to be an insurgence against God's Word.

Where do these wrong conclusions come from?

INTRODUCTION

This aberration traces all the way back to Genesis.

GENESIS 3:1

1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"

Is that what God said? If we go back to the previous chapter:

GENESIS 2:16-17

16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat,

Satan and Eve both agreed on what God said, but had a very different idea as to what it means.

God said: "You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die."

Satan said: "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil".

How things read and what they mean are not always the same thing.

EXAMPLE: FOR THERE IS NO CONDEMNATION FOR THOSE WHO ARE CHRIST JESUS.

ILLUSTRATION: DRIVING 105 MILES PER HOUR

According to the *Guinness World Records*, the Bible is the most printed book in history, with an estimated five billion-plus copies in print. It has been translated in its complete form in at least 349 languages; however, as a culture and generation, we are almost illiterate in this text.

PROOF TEXT

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.

Diligent: Strive hard, zealous

Approved: Satisfactory, pleasing, authentic, forged accurately

Worker: Laborer

Ashamed: To have the properties of disfigurement

Rightly divide: **Orthotomeō**. Cut straight, to a correct pattern, orthodoxy

When we consider the situation from which Paul is writing to Timothy, we are obliged to emphasize the gravity of these words.

- Paul is in prison
- Written about 67 AD
- He is writing to Timothy, who is the pastor in Ephesus
- Paul is on the heels of his death ([chapter 4:6](#)). Killed under Nero (68 AD) [Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, 2.22; Jerome, On Illustrious Men]
- Death bed letter
- [2 Timothy](#) begins with an address regarding the afflictions of the Church
- A warning of heresy and false doctrine

God's disapproval awaits those who mishandle His Word.

The apostle Peter emphasizes this conundrum when referencing the apostle Paul's writings.

2 PETER 3:15-16

As also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, 16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO BELIEVERS?

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 PETER 1:3

As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue.

1) COMMAND & PROHIBITION

- The Bible has two primary functions to the believer: 1) To display God's righteousness, love and grace. 2) To convict of sin.

- The Law seeks to awaken in the heart of man contrition on account of sin, while the Gospel awakens men to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

2) SANCTIFICATION & BLESSING

1 THESSALONIANS 4:3(A)

For this is the will of God, your sanctification.

Sanctification means to be holy, holiness is to throw off sin, throwing of sin is dying to self, and become a living sacrifice.

How are we sanctified? We are sanctified by the washing of His Word.

EPHESIANS 5:26

That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word.

JOHN 15:3

You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

JOHN 17:17-19

17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. 18 As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.

THE UNKNOWN GOD

In the way of illustration, I want to direct your focus to a story you are all familiar with:

EXODUS 32:1-6

1 Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." 2 And Aaron said to them, "Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." 3 So all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. 4 And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!" 5 So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and

said, "Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord." 6 Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

- The Israelites believed this was God ([verses 4 and 5](#)).
- Aaron claimed that he just threw the gold into the fire, and that the calf just came out ([verse 24](#)).
- The Israelites had erected a caricature of God.
- This calf was a counterfeit representation of Yahweh.
- This calf did not represent the true image of God.
- At some point, surely someone would have realized that the calf would not do anything.
- Was this god ever going to part the Jordan River? [Joshua 4:23](#)
- Was this god ever going to provide manna as He had done before? [Exodus 16](#)
- In [Exodus 13](#), God provided a pillar of cloud by night and a pillar of fire by night to lead the Israelites through the desert.
- Unfortunately, having a genuine commitment and passion for an idea of who God is, doesn't translate into an authentic experience with Him.

ACTS 17:22-23

22 Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; 23 for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you.

When we consider that God's desire to sanctify, bless, command and prohibit the believer unto righteousness, and that this is fulfilled through the understanding of His Word. Then we must not be immune to the difficult question— *Do I truly know the God as revealed in Scripture?*

- Do you ever feel that your faith is stronger than your understanding?
- Do you ever feel that your walk with God lacks some reality?

Here is the divine injunction—God speaks His truth through the Word. With diligence and with care, we are to rightly divide what He has said, then we are to walk in obedience to it (revelation and response).

Our lives will begin to be supernaturally transformed ([Romans 12:2](#)).

Is what we are discussing tonight not true? Is there an alternative method to discovering Spiritual Truth?

What does this look like practically?

INTERPRETATION

- Create a study kit: The Bible, a Bible commentary, a systematic theology book.
- Prioritize the time to be in the Word.
- Have a reading plan.
- The answers you discover are often a result of the questions you ask.
- Preserve authorial intent:
 - Scriptural Zodiacs
 - Personal replacement theology
 - Fortune cookie scriptures
 - Culture and tradition
 - Prescription vs. description
- Five principles in understanding the Bible:
 - Literal Principle
 - Historical Principle
 - Grammatical Principle
 - Synthesis Principle
 - Application Principle

EXAMPLE OF THE FIVE PRINCIPLES IN EVERYDAY LITERARY ANALYSIS

EXAMPLE: ANAHEIM ANGELS, FANTASY BASEBALL

CONCLUSION

- There is a right and a wrong way to understand the Bible; it is no small thing to get it wrong.
- We have a responsibility to work hard and divide God's Word correctly.
- Whether you are uninformed or misinformed, the net result is the same— it is a deviation from the truth.
- God is revealed in Scripture; we see the person and image of God through His Word. There is no greater oversight in the believers life than to remain eclipsed by ignorance from His goodness.

- We must understand that the Bible is the highest authority, and we are to be slaves to righteousness.
- The spiritual condition and wellbeing in life finds its hope and clarity in His Word.

CLOSING PRAYER