

## Handling The Word Of God Aright

2 Tim 2:15

### Introduction:

1. **J.H. Bernard, D.D:** "The image here seems rather to be that of a man cutting the word of truth into Its right pattern, the standard provided being the Gospel. This is practically involved in the vaguer rendering given by the Revisers, handling aright the word of truth. Cambridge Gr. N.T.
2. **Macknight:** "Strive to present thyself to God, an approved, unashamed workman who rightly divideth (distributed the doctrine of the gospel) the word of truth."
3. **Dodderidge:** "Some think here is an allusion to what the Jewish priest or Levite did, in dissecting the victim, and separating the parts in a proper manner; as some were to be laid on God's altar, and others to be given to those who were to share in the sacrifice. Others think it refers to guiding a plough aright, in order to divide the clods in the most proper and effectual manner, and make straight furrows. But perhaps the metaphor may be taken from the distribution made by a steward, in delivering out, to each person under his care, such things as his office and their necessities required."
4. **S.T. Bloomfield:** "'We praise even those husbandmen, who cut their furrows straight; so also the teacher is to be commended, who follows the cannon, or rule of the Divine oracle. According to this view, 'the spiritual workman who needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.' is he who wanders not to the right or to the left, but goes forward directly in the path of truth, who at every step takes for his rule the revealed word of God,"
5. **Tyndale N.T. Commentary:** "It is one thing solemnly to charge others and quite another to take oneself in hand. The danger of self-neglect was certainly not confined to Timothy, for its symptoms are universal. Yet the value of self-discipline cannot be too highly estimated, for the most effective refutation of error is for the teacher to be the living embodiment of the truth, with God's approval upon him. But this is not easy. The word lying behind *do your best to present yourselves (spoudazo)* contains the notion of persistent 'zeal'. The AV 'study' misses the sense of persistence. The aim is to *present yourself to God as one approved (dokimos), accepted after testing'*, as contrasted with the canvassing of men's approval so evident among false teachers. It is better to leave all worldly strifes alone and to seek the approval of God whose estimate is always infallible.  
"The shame that any workman feels when the incompetence or shoddiness of his work is detected is used as a figure for the Christian ministry. A *workman who does not need to be ashamed* must therefore, be understood in the sense of a Christian teacher who can unblushingly submit his work for God's approval, like the men in the parable of the talents who had gained other talents. This unashamedness is achieved when the workman *correctly handles the word of truth*, a phrase in which the very (*orthotomeo*) is difficult to define with any precision because it occurs elsewhere only twice in the LXX (Prov. 3:6 and 11:5). In the latter instance it means 'to cut a straight road', and this has been applied in the present

case to the road of truth, which is to be made so straight that all deviations of heretics will be evident. An objection has been raised to this on the grounds that *the word of truth* cannot naturally be understood as a road. If, however, the expression is applied generally to straightforward exegesis there would be no less objection. The idea of cutting, inherent in the verb, is thought to mean the correct analysis of the word of truth, either in its separate parts or in its whole. But it is contended by many that the compound had probably lost the meaning from which it was derived and had acquired the more general sense of right handling. It was from this sense that the derived noun came later to denote orthodoxy (Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, Eccl. History, iv.3). In this context, however, the main idea seems to be that Timothy must be scrupulously straightforward in dealing with *the word of truth*, in strong contrast to the crooked methods of false teachers. The term *the word of truth* is twice used elsewhere by Paul (Eph. 1:13 and Col. 1:5) and in both cases is defined as the gospel." - Tyndale N.T. Commentary.

6. **Pulpit Commentary:** "*His one book, his one weapon, his one interest, is the Divine Word. His mind, his heart, his will, must be concentrated upon this Word. It must form the matter of his preaching, the mould of his thoughts, the inspiration of his imagination. He must be able to handle it aright, with due regard for the authority of God, He must be able to 'divide it aright,' distributing to babes in Christ and to full-grown men according to their capacities and circumstances; he must not pervert it or wrest it from its true sense; he must not keep back anything that is profitable, but declare the whole council of God. He must not wander to the right or left, but keep a straight course forward in the path of truth.*" - T.O.
7. **W. Barclay:** "Further, Timothy is urged in a famous phrase rightly to divide the word of truth. The Greek word translated to divide rightly is interesting. It is *orthotomein*, which literally means to cut rightly. It has many pictures in it. Calvin connected it with a father dividing out the food at a meal and cutting it up so that each member of the family received the right portion. Beza connected it with the cutting up of sacrificial victims so that each part was correctly apportioned to the altar or to the priest. The Greeks themselves used the word in three different connections. They used it for driving a straight road across country, for ploughing a straight furrow across a field, and for the work of a mason in cutting and squaring a stone so that it fitted into its correct place in the structure of the building. So the man who rightly divides the word of truth, drives a straight road through the truth and refuses to be lured down pleasant but irrelevant bypaths; he ploughs a straight furrow across the field of truth; he takes each section of the truth, and fits it into its correct position, as a mason does a stone, allowing no part to usurp an undue place and so knock the whole structure out of balance. "On the other hand, the false teacher engages in what Paul would call "godless chatterings." Then Paul uses a vivid phrase. The Greeks had a favourite word for making progress (*prokoptein*). It literally means to cut down in front; to remove the obstacles from a road so that straight and uninterrupted progress is possible. Paul says of these senseless

talkers that they progress further and further into ungodliness. They progress in reverse. The more they talk, the farther they get from God. Here then is the test. If at the end of our talk, we are closer to one another and to God, then all is well; but if we have erected barriers between one another and have left God more distant, then all is not well. The aim of all Christian discussion and of all Christian action is to bring a man nearer to his fellows and to God." - Daily Bible Studies

#### I. **Conclusions:**

- A. One cannot "rightly divide" or "handle aright" the word of truth and not teach the importance of knowing where to locate God's instructions to us in this day and time and show why His instructions to the Jews of olden days do not apply to us today.
- B. God's principles of acceptance or approving men have never changed Mal.\*3:6 but the plan by which men are approved in His sight has varied according to the different dispensations of time.
- C. God's Principles of approving men Vs. His plan.
  1. Fear (reverence) Faith (Obedience to His commands) and Trust (Confidence in His ability to deliver).
  2. Plan: Different requirements in different eras of time have been the test of human submission. Obedience to God's plan is the test of our fear, faith, and trust.

#### II. **God Has Spoken To Different Ages In Different Ways**

1. **Heb. 1:1-3** "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high."
2. **Macknight:** "God, who in sundry parts and in divers manners anciently revealed his will to the fathers by the prophets, hath-in these last days spoken to mankind by his son whom he constituted heir of all things; through whom also he made the worlds."
3. "Unto the fathers by the prophets"
  - a. "The fathers" Inclusive term:  
"Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the Sabbath day circumcise a man" Jno. 7:22
  - b. "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsman according to the flesh: who are Israelites ... who are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all. God blessed forever. Amen" Rom. 9:3-5
  - c. "Now I say that Jesus Christ -was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to confirm the promises made unto the fathers" Ro 15:8
  - d. "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, 4 prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you" (Acts 3:22 - Deut. 18:15-19)  
(1) "By (lit. 'in) - the prophets."

- (2) When Abimelech takes Abraham's wife, God said to him, "Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not know that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine" Gen. 20:7
- (3) A description of Moses: "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face" Deut 34:10
- (4) David spoken of as a prophet: "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us into this day. Therefore being a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne" Acts 2:29-30
- 4. The prophecy began when the worlds began: \*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been sine the world began Luke 1:69-70
  - a. And further substantiated by, "And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive unto the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began"" Acts 3:20,21
  - b. The prophecy of "ancient times<sup>4</sup> not the full revelation of salvation brought by the grace of God.
  - c. "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or in what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look Into" - 1 Peter 1:10-12
  - d. "If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward, How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages, was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the spirit\* - Eph 3:2-5
  - e. "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" - 2 Pet 2:20-21.

### III. Moses The Old Testament Prophet - Christ Of The New

- A. "In these last days spoken unto us by his son"

1. "In times past by prophets" like Moses (Vs 1)-- But now, by Christ
  2. A contrast in prophets; (Acts 3-&22-23)
  - B. A contrast of mediatorships:
  - C. Moses of the old law: "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator" - Gal 3:19
  - D. Christ of the New Law: "But now hath he (Christ) obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises" - Heb 8:6
  - E. Old Testament prophecy administered (ordained) by angels.
    1. "This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us" -Acts 7:38
    2. "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just one; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers; who have received the law by the disposition of angels\_and have not kept it" - Acts 7:52, 53
    3. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angel proved steadfast and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" Heb. 2:1-4
- IV. A consummation of their work:**
- A. "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" - John 1:17
  - B. Law of Moses limited in scope:
    1. Given to Jews only: "The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant -filth our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day. The Lord talked with you (those there at that day) face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire" - Deut 5:2-4
    2. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them saith the Lord" Jer. 31:31-32
    3. All nations sprang from Shem, Ham, and Japheth: sons of Noah.
      - a. Shem: Father of the Jews - Gen 10:30
      - b. Ham: Father of the Canaanites - Gen 10:18.19
      - c. Japheth: Father of Gentile nations - Gen 10:5

- d. Joseph's promise of deliverance to the children of Israel (Jacob) Gen 50:24-26
- 4. The deliverance brought by Christ (salvation by grace through faith Jn 1: 17; Eph 2:8) is spoken of as universal, general, "great."
  - a. The "great salvation" began to be spoken by the Lord Heb 2:3
  - b. The Lord began to speak the "great salvation" after his resurrection from the dead. Mark 16:15; Matt 28:18-20; Luke 24:47-49
  - c. God bore witness to \*those that heard Him" by signs, wonders, divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost" Heb 2:4
  - d. The ministry of Christ was performed by His Apostles.
  - e. They received the "ministry of reconciliation" by the "word of reconciliation" - 2 Cor 5:18-20
  - f. They received the "treasure" in "earthen vessels" 2 Cor. 4:6-7
- C. The Spirit of God guided them Jno 14:26; 16:13; 1 Cor 2:7-13
  - 1. Therefore, today we must heed the Apostles of Christ and heed their instructions rather than the Old Testament prophets.
  - 2. But the voice of the Apostles was not theirs alone "But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you" Matt 10:19-20
  - 3. The "apostles doctrine" (Acts 2:42) is the "doctrine of Christ" (2 Jno 9)

#### V. **The Proper Reverence And Preparation Important**

- A. The ignorance of ancient times taken out of the way by revelation Acts 17:30-31; Luke 13:3
- B. Hearing God's message for us in these "last days" through His Son, we should:
- C. Be prepared: "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" - James 1:21
  - 1. Respect the word of God as Divine: "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God which effectually worketh in you that believe" - 1 Thess 2:13
  - 2. Have a ready (open) mind and prove all things by "scripture." "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so" Ac 17:11
  - 3. The penalty of transgression of the law of Grace.
    - a. More sure than that of Moses: "For If the word spoken by angels proved steadfast and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how

shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation which began to be spoken by the Lord..." Heb 2:2-3

- b. "He that despised Moses law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" - Heb 10:28-29

**Conclusion:**

1. God's commands have changed) His laws and ordinances have changed, but the principle upon which he accepts and approves of the human race has never changed.