**Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth**

*2 Timothy 2:15*

**Introduction**

1. Paul wrote 2 Timothy nearing the end of his life **(cf. 2 Timothy 4:6).**
2. After meeting, and ministering with Timothy in the gospel **(cf. Acts 16)**, a close relationship developed between the two servants of Christ **(cf. 2 Timothy 1:2).**
3. While Paul was soon to depart from this life, he thought it important to leave Timothy with some exhortation to remain faithful as a Christian, and to fight the good fight of faith as a minister of the gospel.
4. **2 Timothy 2:15** is a key principle in presenting ourselves as faithful to the Lord, and in maintaining an accurate understanding of God’s will for man.
5. Diligence to be Approved before God
6. Goal – Approval of God
   1. **2 Timothy 2:15** – the end goal in this verse is approval before God.
      1. **Approved** – *dokimos*; properly, acceptable (current after assayal), i.e. approved: — approved, tried. (Strong)
      2. “accepted, particularly of coins and metals” (Strong – comments)
      3. “In the ancient world there was no banking system as we know it today, and no paper money. All money was made from metal, heated until liquid, poured into moulds and allowed to cool. When the coins were cooled, it was necessary to smooth off the uneven edges. The coins were comparatively soft and of course many people shaved them closely. In one century, more than eighty laws were passed in Athens, to stop the practice of shaving down the coins then in circulation. **But some money changers were men of integrity, who would accept no counterfeit money. They were men of honour who put only genuine full weighted money into circulation. Such men were called ‘DOKIMOS’ or ‘approved’. Donald Barnhouse”** (Strong – comments)
      4. **Goal** – to be before God as a coin tested, and found approved, not counterfeit, thus to be rejected – **and as those men of honor and integrity who will accept nothing less than that which is genuine.**
   2. **Cf. Galatians 1:10 – We want simply to please God, therefore, will present nothing less or more than the gospel received from Him.**
7. Means – Diligence in the Word of Truth
   1. How to be approved? – ***“BE DILIGENT”***:
      1. **Diligent** – *spoudazō*; to use speed, i.e. to make effort, be prompt or earnest. (Strong)
      2. ***“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved” (ESV)***.
   2. KJV – ***“Study to shew thyself approved unto God”*** – commentary by translators. (Context implies such – effort in study of God’s word.)
      1. **2 Timothy 1:8** – don’t be ashamed of the gospel.
      2. **2 Timothy 1:13-14** – hold fast the pattern – i.e. the gospel.
      3. **2 Timothy 2:1** – be strong in the grace – that is the power in the gospel. (***v. 2 – “things that you have heard from me…”***)
      4. **2 Timothy 2:6** – hard work in the gospel – studying and benefiting personally before taking it to others.
   3. **2 Timothy 2:15** – rightly dividing:
      1. *orthotomeō* – lit., "to cut straight" (orthos, "straight," temno, "to cut"), is found in 2Ti 2:15, AV, "rightly dividing," RV, "handling aright" (the word of truth); the meaning passed from the idea of cutting or "dividing," to the more general sense of "rightly dealing with a thing." (Vine)
      2. ***“accurately handling the word of truth.” (NASB)***
      3. Opposed to – **cf. 2 Peter 3:16**
      4. Context of **2 Timothy 2:15**:
         1. **(vv. 14, 16-17)** – words spoken by men who have ***“strayed concerning the truth”*** – idle, profane words which lead to ***“ungodliness.”***
         2. **(v. 19)** – Lord knows those who are His – i.e. those who depart from iniquity – *adikia* – denotes "unrighteousness," lit., "unrightness" (*A*, negative, *DIKE*, "right"), a condition of not being right, whether with God, **according to the standard of His holiness and righteousness**, or with man. (Vine)
         3. **(vv. 20-21, 25-26)** – two types of vessels – some serve the Master, others are captive to serve the devil.
      5. **There is a way to *“accurately [handle] the word of truth,”* thus, a way to INACCURATELY handle it.**
         1. To handle it wrong is to be A WORKER ASHAMED, and one UNAPPROVED before God.
   4. “rightly dividing” and “accurately handling”
      1. While Paul is not specifically referring to the divisions we see in the Bible – like the Old and New Testaments – **a proper understanding of these differences is necessary in *“accurately handling the word of truth.”***
      2. **The Bible must not be MISUSED in any way – ULTIMATELY, THE DISTINCTIONS OF CONTEXT MUST BE MADE – I.E. PROPER EXEGESIS.**
8. Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth
9. The Two Testaments
   1. **Mishandling the truth by failing to distinguish between the two testaments:**
      1. **Instrumental music** – justifying the use of mechanical instruments in worship by appealing to the OT. Can’t find it in the new? Then go to the Old!
      2. **Binding the 10 Commandments** – General belief of many in society today who call themselves Christians. What must you do to go to heaven? Keep the 10 commandments.
   2. Attempt to be justified by the OT – **Galatians 5:1-4** – you have fallen from grace.
      1. Judaizers binding circumcision – justified by circumcision? (OT precept)
      2. **(vv. 1-2)** – OT is a yoke of bondage because of sin, and the fact that it was not meant to fix the sin problem – ***“Christ will profit you nothing”***
         1. **Galatians 3:24-25** – OT brings us to Christ so we can be justified.
         2. OT does not justify, but justification is in Christ’s blood by faith.
      3. **(v. 3)** – Must keep all law. (Just instrumental music? No. Just 10 com? No.)
      4. **(v. 4)** – Fall from grace.
   3. When Christ came – **Colossians 2:14** – nailed to cross.
   4. Purpose of the OT after Christ – **Romans 15:4** – for our learning.
      1. How do we learn? 🡪
      2. **1 Corinthians 10:6, 11** – learn by example of general behavior before God, whether good or bad.
   5. The Current Law – NT – **Hebrews 1:1-2; Galatians 6:2; Romans 2:16** – Christ speaks, His law, judged by His law.
10. The Church and the Individual Christian
    1. **Mishandling the truth by failing to realize the distinction between the church, and the individual:**
       1. **Institutionalism –** If the individual Christian can support a human institution with his money, then the church can. (Orphan/Widow Homes, Colleges, Schools, etc.)
    2. **What is the “church”?**
       1. **Church** – *ekklēsia*; a calling out. (Strong)
       2. Those who are called out of the world for salvation – **cf. 1 Corinthians 1:2, 9.**
       3. Church universal – ***“There is one body” (Ephesians 4:4)*** – ***“the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven” (Hebrews 12:23).***
       4. Local churches – **cf. Romans 16:16 – cf. 1 Corinthians 11:18, 20** – coming together as a church to take the LS (although failing to do so).
          1. **Individual Christians acting are not acting as “the church.”**
          2. **Christians act as the church when they come together “as a church.”**
          3. **Cf. Acts 20:7** – LS is something only done ***“as the church,”*** and not individually separate from assembly.
    3. **Institutionalism** – **James 1:27** – is it right to support orphans’ and widows’ homes?
       1. **Right for the individual** – **(v. 25** – “he”), (**v. 19** – “every man”), (**v. 12** – “Blessed is the man”), etc.
       2. Context speaks only of the individual. (NO EXAMPLE FOR THE CHURCH SUPPORTING ORPHANS’ AND WIDOWS’ HOMES.)
       3. In fact, the church is not even to be burdened by her own widows – **cf. 1 Timothy 5:16**
    4. **Just because the individual can do it does not mean the church can do it – such is a lazy misuse of scripture.**
11. Matters of Liberty and Sin
    1. **Mishandling the truth by failing to acknowledge conscience only justifies one participating in matters of liberty, not sin:**
       1. **Romans 14 and fellowship issue** – the idea that the content of Romans 14 allows one to have fellowship with those who teach error so long as they are in good conscience.
       2. **Logical end** – any sin can be received as long as it is done in good conscience.
    2. **Sin and conscience:**
       1. **Paul** – **Acts 23:1; 26:9; 1 Timothy 1:13** – He persecuted Jesus in good conscience, but such was still sin.
       2. **1 John 3:4** – sin is lawlessness.
       3. **Matthew 7:21-23** – Jesus does not accept lawlessness ***(“iniquity”)*** regardless of motive and sincerity.
    3. **Romans 14:**
       1. **(vv. 1-4)** – Receive him, for God has.
          1. Does God receive the sinner? NO.
          2. Why did God receive him? EATING OF MEATS IS NOT SINFUL.
       2. **(vv. 5-6)** – Be fully convinced (clean conscience) – observe and eat to the Lord.
          1. How can sin be “to the Lord?” IT CAN’T.
          2. It is “to the Lord,” because it is accepted by Him.
       3. **(v. 14)** – Regards things which are not inherently unclean – SIN IS INHERENTLY UNCLEAN.
12. **NOTE: There are several other examples that can be given. We must accurately handle the word of truth by acknowledging these distinctions, and the context of scripture.**

**Conclusion**

1. Our approach to scripture should be with the desire to be approved to God.
2. **This can only occur with an accurate handling of His word.**
3. We must give diligence in our study of scripture.