

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy Ch 2:15-18

“Approved Or Ashamed”

Vs15-18

In following the flow out of vs 14, the exhortation that capsulizes that vs is “Be focused” don’t get side tracked on all these different issues, whether it be as the church the pressure to become more “Entertainment oriented” or the persuasion to become a social service agency, or any number of things. and Though in and of themselves there’s nothing wrong with those things, but primarily as the church those things aren’t to be the things that (in and of themselves) we’re about. We’re to be focused on keeping the main thing the main thing, and the main thing is Jesus Christ and Him crucified for the sin of the World, we’re to be preaching the gospel, and teaching God’s Word in the totality of it’s council. Why, because the bible is very clear that, “*Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*” Rom 10:17 But the bible is also very clear that the useless wranglings of men, and debating over opinions and positions of man results in the ruin of the hearer, so don’t get side tracked in the opinions or agendas of *man* to the ruin of the hearer or participant. But rather keep the focus the agendas of God, and on the word of God, because as you read in vs 14 you begin to understand that what’s being said there is that the words of man and mans opinion holds no eternal value, there’s no profit in man’s word. As a matter of fact it goes one further and says to the contrary there’s detriment in getting lost in striving over various opinions of man, it results in the ruin of the hearer. So the implication there is that man’s word holds no profit, but God’s Word is in no way to the detriment of the hearer, to the contrary it’s to the benefit of the hearer. In vs 16 and 17 of ch 3 Paul says, “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*” 2 Tim 3:16-17 So as to where the opinions and conjectures of man result in striving about words to no profit, God’s word is incredibly profitable for every facet of life. So then what should be my necessary response to coming into such an understanding?

Vs15 That I would then “Be diligent” in my study of the word of God. So vs 14 “Be focused” and Then vs 15 “Be diligent” but it’s essential that I get my focus right 1<sup>st</sup> before I’m diligent about that which I’m focused on. Because if my focus is off, then that which I’m being diligent about will bring negative connotations and ramifications, have you ever read a map wrong? Now you’re focused on the direction that you’re getting and you’re pursuing it diligently, because you have a destination, but you can drive and drive and drive, but until you’ve oriented yourself to the map, and have it held in the right manner according to it’s compass, you’ll never reach your destination. Diligent though you may be, you need to get focused right first, even so in our relationship with God we need to get oriented to our map, we need to get our focus right, keeping centered on Jesus Christ and the message of the word of God. and Now that we have our focus, we have our aim, let’s diligently pursue it.

Now here in vs 15 I've made 3 primary observations, (of course there's details that form all of them), but one is a command, the other is basically a parenthetical thought, and then finally the way that we're to carry out the command. 1<sup>st</sup> of all the command, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God." Then the thought that sort of parenthetically seems to pop up in Paul's mind via the Holy Spirit, "A worker who does not need to be ashamed" and then the contextual means by which we're to carry out the command to diligently present ourselves approved to God, "Rightly dividing the word of truth."

So 1<sup>st</sup> of all "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God" now the AV says "*Study* to show thyself" the actual Greek word is "Spoudazo" and it really has nothing to do with studying at all. It actually means, "to use speed" or as we have it rendered in the NKJV "Be diligent" or "Give diligence" even "Labor" or to "make haste" so I'm not certain why it's shown as "Study" in the OKJV except to say that it's obvious that contextually, that's the inference since it's followed up with rightly dividing the word of truth.

MacArthur makes this comment; "*Spoudazoō* (to **be diligent**) carries the idea of having zealous persistence to accomplish a particular objective. The **diligent** believer—in this context, the **diligent** teacher—gives maximum effort to impart God's truth as completely, as clearly, and as unambiguously as possible. He gives unreserved commitment to excellence in examining, interpreting, explaining, and applying God's Word."

The point being that when it comes to our study of God's Word, we're not to mess around but rather we're to be quick to give meticulous, and scrupulous attention to the whole council of the word of God so as to understand it correctly, and to then teach it correctly. *Make haste* to present yourself approved to God, now this phrase, "to present yourself" carries with it the idea of standing beside, or before, so that what's in view is the bringing oneself before God in order to be inspected, that we might be as it were "approved" by God. Or to understand it another way, that we might favorably pass God's careful scrutiny thereby being counted worthy. Now right away we need to make the distinction that we're not speaking about being counted worthy for salvation, we're saved by grace, not through any effort of our own. and As we examine the context it seems fairly obvious that what's in view here is a "worthiness" to be used by God in service that is honorable to Him, that honor's Him.

Now again let's be careful to safeguard from legalism, but the fact is there are certain things that are pleasing to God, other things that aren't. Even as there are some things that your children may do that are pleasing to you and other things that they do that aren't. For instance we read in Heb 13:16, "*Do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*"

From that we can easily deduct that doing evil and being selfish is *not* well pleasing to God. Now in this context we're specifically referring to the careful study of God's Word so as to understand it correctly, then teach it correctly, and obviously then carrying out that which we've been taught.

But in this let me issue a bit of a warning as well, because this is what it's all about, that we might be approved unto God. It doesn't matter what anyone else thinks, believes, or has the impression of, what matters is, "What does God think?" Does He approve or disapprove of our lives, our demeanor, the way we handle ourselves, the knowledge and understanding that we have and are seeking after pertaining to His Word? You see the motive behind why we do what we do is absolutely critical. and It can become so easy to seek after knowledge for the approval of man, in order impress man, and have some sort of stature in the eyes of man. and We have to be so careful because the bible is clear that knowledge not balanced in love puffs up. It makes one proud, yet we read and understand that, "*God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.*" James 4:6 and It's so important that the motive behind the things that we do be that we're earnestly seeking to be pleasing to God, to be approved of God, remember Paul said to the Corinthian believers, "*We make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*" 2 Cor 5:9-10 To the Galatians he said, "*For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.*" Gal 1:10 In other words you can live your life to try and please God, or try and please man, but you can't do both, because there is a radical conflict of interests between God and man.

Everyone who teaches God's word *should* have the testimony, "*But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.*" 1 Thess 2:4

Now unfortunately not everyone who wields the word of God from behind the pulpit has been approved by God, many take the office unto themselves (and we'll mention that in a moment.) But the words that we long to hear on that day from our Lord is, "*Well done, good and faithful servant.*" Matt 25:21 Why, because they're words of approval, having past the careful inspection of our Lord and received His commendation.

Now, before we move out of this section there's one other thing that I want to point out. We've covered the fact that we need to be diligent to present ourselves approved to *God*. But the other detail that I want you to notice is that it says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God." Why do I point that out? Because we're not to worry about the speck in our brother's eye or sisters eye until we've 1<sup>st</sup> removed the log from our own eye. In other words before we can really lead others accurately down the path of righteousness, we need to be walking down it ourselves 1<sup>st</sup>. How can I lead you where I've never been, and it's not that we're not to concern ourselves with others and where they're at, but at the same time it's important that we have our priorities right. That we be careful to present ourselves to God 1<sup>st</sup>, and then we're able to minister to, and encourage others in like manner.

So be diligent to present yourself approved to God, “A worker who does not need to be ashamed” what’s the thought there? That those who aren’t handling God’s word correctly and are maybe somehow twisting it to their own gain or for the approval of man, ought to be ashamed. But isn’t it interesting how that more often than not, those who have the most reason to be ashamed are generally the most shameless. Paul told the church in Philippi, “*For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame -- who set their mind on earthly things.*” Phil 3:18-19 Paul didn’t mix words did he? He says there that those who twist and pervert the gospel to their own advantage and gain are enemies of the cross of Christ. Jude says of this type of individual, “*These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.*” Jude 12-13 and Paul is saying of such an individual that they ought to be ashamed of themselves for deceiving and taking advantage of the body of Christ, twisting God’s word for their own benefit.

But as for you child of God, diligent worker, you divide God’s word rightly. Who is the worker that need not be ashamed, the one who diligently labors in the word so as to understand it correctly, and administer it properly so that as his work is carefully inspected it will be approved by God, standing up under His thorough scrutiny.

What does it mean to “rightly divide” God’s Word? We’re speaking here about handling accurately the whole council of the word of God. From the beginning to the end, not taking apart, apart from the whole so as to stand on any one vs at the expense of another and in so doing create a doctrine that in reality has no biblical basis whatsoever.

Nor is it enough to know a bunch of bible vs and stories and you sort of sprinkle them throughout your sermon as illustrations. Our teaching of the bible is to be a “right dividing” of the Word of God, a correct teaching to the congregation, or to the class, or whatever. and If you’re going to do that, you’re going to have to know what the bible says, and what it doesn’t say. How it’s to be understood, and how it’s not to be understood, you’re going to have to be familiar with the context, understand that all of God’s Word is for you, but it’s not all about you.

So that though application can be drawn from any text, the way that one handle’s it and demonstrates it, and illustrates it, is critical. Because if you draw an application from God’s Word saying for example that the church is typified by Israel in the OT, you’re going to run into problems when the church is raptured, but Israel is still seen on the earth. and Those who like to do that claim all the material blessings of obedience promised to Israel, but they generally fail to claim the curses of disobedience.

The word that we have here that's been translated "Rightly dividing" means more literally to "Cut straight" so that a farmer plows a straight furrow, a workman builds a straight road, now Paul by trade was a tentmaker so he probably had in mind sewing a straight seam so as to piece a tent together in it's proper proportion. Metaphorically it could be used of the performing of any task carefully.

Warren Wiersbe makes this comment, "The pastor is a workman is God's Word. The Word is a treasure that the steward must guard and invest. It is the soldier's sword and the farmer's seed. But it is also the workman's tool for building, measuring, and repairing God's people. The preacher and teacher who use the Word correctly will build their church the way God wants it to be built. But a sloppy worker will handle God's Word deceitfully in order to make it say what he wants it to say."

Paul knew that, that's why he assured the Corinthians, "*But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*" 2 Cor 4:2

Unfortunately many handle the word of God deceitfully, they twist it to benefit themselves, or somehow justify sin in their lives, the workman whom God approves labors diligently to divide it properly and then willfully subjects himself to the council of the word of God in order that he might be pleasing to God. and If it involves repentance, then he repents, if it involves forgiveness than he forgives, whatever action, or reaction the word of God calls for in my life, I need to be careful to heed God's council, and the approved workman will do just that.

You see if we're to "Rightly divide" the word of truth, then that means that there's a way to "wrongly divide" it. and Again, not everyone cuts it straight, and you need to understand that Biblical truth is not just an issue left up to each individual's interpretation. There is a right way and a wrong way to understand the Bible, and it's our duty before God to labor to understand it in the balanced manner that God would have us to understand it. I mean how many times have you ran into this guy, "Well, that's just your interpretation." and They're saying that that's just how you see that particular scripture, but the way that they see it may be completely different, and someone else might interpret it different still. and So their point is, "Don't bother me with your vs because that's just how you see it, but no one can really know what it means." and They think that it doesn't matter how each person sees it as long as they're sincere about their point of view, but sincerity never justified anyone. You can sincerely believe that a bottle of poison is a container of water, but it'll kill you just the same whether you're sincere about it or not, and so we concede that it does matter what we believe, and it's important to be right about what we believe lest it cost us our lives. Well how much more when it comes to spiritual matters lest it cost us our souls?

This is an important point: The Bible *does not* just mean what anyone wants it to mean. There's a wrong way to divide it, and we can't just pick the interpretation that seems most comfortable to us, and claim it as the right one- it has to be a right division of the word of truth, and it has to be consistent with what the Bible says in the specific passage *and* with the totality of the council of God's Word.

One basic law of establishing doctrine, or interpretation of the scriptures is that anytime you've interpreted a passage of scripture correctly, it will never violate, or contradict any other passage of scripture. So that if the way you interpret something bring contradiction to the Word of God rather than consistency, the bible doesn't have errors in it, you have errors in your interpretation. and So I need to go back and think it through because I've miss understood something.

For example, a common misconception that happens in interpreting a passage of scripture happens with Matt 7:1, "*Judge not, that you be not judged.*" and The way that people generally will interpret this (especially if they're seeking to justify sin in their lives) is, "Hey, back off me, you have no right to evaluate my life, or my behavior and weigh it up against the scales of the word of God in order to determine whether or not I'm doing right or wrong." "Judge not", now if this were a correct understanding of that passage, then Jesus continually broke His own word because He was continually exhorting people regarding their behavior in the sight of God, telling them that what they were doing was wrong, it was sin. The woman caught in adultery, Jesus told her to go, "and *sin* no more." Sounds like a judgment call to me, who was He to say that what she was doing was sin, who was He to Judge her behavior like that? He was constantly rebuking the Pharisees for the hypocritical behavior and self-righteous mentality even going as far as to call them sons of the devil, (check it out for yourself sometime in John 8:44). Now if there's not a notion of judgment in a comment like that, then I don't what would be.

"Well then what's He saying?" If you keep reading, vs 2 tells you what He was saying, "*For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.*" Matt 7:2 The point simply being that we're not to hold others to a standard that we ourselves aren't willing to be held to, that's why Jesus said, "*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*" Matt 5:7 But He definitely wasn't saying that you can't call sin, "sin." If that were the case we would all be justified simply by doing what was right in our own eyes, relativism would rule, church discipline and standards of holiness would go out the window, and anarchy would abound. So the prohibition lies on setting hypocritical standards or constantly seeking to nit pick everyone in order to show yourself above them or just having a critical spirit towards everyone and everything.

Now I'm not going to presume to understand perfectly every passage of scripture, but yet at the same time we need to be careful labor diligently in that direction, there's a right way and a wrong way to divide the word of truth, and if you want to present yourself approved to God, then seek fervently to divide it right and handle it accurately.

#### Vs16

Now in vs 14 the exhortation was there not to strive about words to the ruin of the hearer, and now Paul takes it one farther. He says, "Don't just refuse to engage, but shun it all together." Seek to know God's word in it's context, but don't argue over words, and just shun, that is, avoid all together profane and idle babblings, why, because they stumble people and lead to increasing ungodliness. Jesus said, *"But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."* Matt 12:36-37

Why, because *"Those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart."* Matt 15:18 and God is always searching the heart. and There's a lot of gossip that people like to engage in that in reality should be shunned because it's nothing more than profane and idle babblings that leads to more ungodliness. Talk like, "Hey, if it's once saved always saved then lets do what we want, and then ask God for forgiveness and where sin abounds grace will abound more."

Resulting in increasing ungodliness, justification of the flesh, not taking into account that how can he who is dead to sin live any longer in it, and *"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth."* 1 John 1:6

Profane and idle babblings, unholy conversations of vanity. Be it Man's opinions, man's teachings, man's opinion polls, man's stories, man's programs, they're are all profane and vain babblings compared to God's Word. and When these things become the focus of the pulpit, or for that matter of any dialogue as opposed to the Word of God, then ultimately it will increase to ungodliness. Why, *"In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise."* Prov 10:19

#### Vs 17

Now more than likely this is the same Hymenaeus that was mentioned in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy, and of this other fellow we know nothing. But its amazing how fast rumors will spread and how much we enjoy speaking about others, but how we hesitate to talk about Jesus. Sometimes I think that if we whispered the gospel in people's ears it would spread the fastest. Because people will believe anything if it's whispered to them, but the reason that gossip and lies spread so fast is because the flesh loves to be stroked, and those things are of the flesh. If it indulges the flesh, then we're easily receptive, but if it involves crucifying the flesh then we want to repel those things.

But he says here that the message is cancerous, in other words it spreads quickly, and unless eradicated and removed it will kill the body. Thus the need for extraction of certain cancerous like individuals at times from the body lest the little leaven, leaven the whole lump. and He points these guys out by name so that there's no mistaking their identity, and then he says of them in vs 18.

Vs18

So they started out on track and then veered off the path to their own demise and he's saying stay away from these guys and their message. Which was that the resurrection had already past, and they were overthrowing people's faith, it's like, "I knew what I believed when I got here, now I don't know what to believe." Now more than likely they were teaching that the only resurrection that took place was that of a spiritual sort when you give your life to Christ. and You're "resurrected" into the newness of life, but that there's no physical resurrection. Now why would it overthrow someone's faith to believe that? Because one of the sole foundational layers of biblical Christianity is a physical resurrection at the last day, and Christ is the cornerstone upon which that foundation has been laid. (Leave 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy and we'll close in 1<sup>st</sup> Cor Ch 15) vs12-19

Vs 16-17 is the key (read)

You see as Christians we bank on the resurrection, literally, and bodily. and To distort the truth about the resurrection is to deny and distort the very heart of the gospel, and so you can see how it's not only blasphemous to deny it, but in following suit it overthrows or destroys the faith of those who buy in on it.

We need to study God's Word, find out what God says, about Himself and the way we're to live, and what we're to believe, because heaven and earth will pass away, but His Word will by no means pass away, He places His word above His name. So how do you present yourself to God? Approved, or ashamed, rightly dividing His Word, or wrongly dividing it? Let's labor to know the balance of the Word of God, and willingly subject ourselves to His council, for His glory.

If you're here and you don't know Jesus Christ then the 1<sup>st</sup> thing you need to know about God's word is that (Jhn 3:16) and if you'll just believe on Jesus Christ you'll never die, you'll just go from life to life, never being separated from God. You see we've all sinned and fall short of God's glory, we owe God a debt we can never pay, but Jesus came to earth, was tempted in every way that we're tempted and yet was with out sin. and So He paid the debt we owe, so that if we'll simply believe on Him our debt will be wiped clean and His payment will be accredited to our account.