**What It Means To Rightly Divide the Scriptures**

(2 Timothy 2:15 KJV) Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

The Apostle Paul tells us to study God’s word with a view to rightly dividing the word of truth. It is interesting that when people talk about how to study the Bible there is all kinds of different methods that people use: historical, literal, allegorical. There are all these different methods people use but you can see right here in the word of God that God’s method, through the pen of the Apostle Paul to Timothy and to us, is to rightly divide the word of truth.

When the Apostle Paul thought about the concept of rightly dividing the word of truth, he thought of God’s Word in terms of its right division, that is, times past, but now and ages to come. (Ephesians 2:11,13,7) Very simply, as the Apostle Paul thought about God’s Word, he thought in terms of what God was doing in the past, what God is doing now, and what God is going to be doing in the future.

We should study the Bible from the dispensational perspective, that is, we should want to understand what God says to us living in the time period we are living in. When we approach the Bible we need to understand who we are and where we fit in the Bible. Simply, we are not the nation Israel wandering through the wilderness led by Moses. We all understand that is not who we are. So, we know when the Old Testament that talks about that it has nothing to do with us today in the dispensation of grace. We are not the nation of Israel wandering through the wilderness led by the hand of Moses. But we are somewhere in God’s word.

The basic reason we have to rightly divide the word of truth is to understand where we are in history. Obviously, we live after the cross. But where after the cross? Christ died sometime in the past. Where are we in relationship to that? Christ has not yet come back to the earth yet. Where are we in relationship to that? Right division gives us the ability, when approaching the Word of God, to understand where we fit are in history, in relationship to God’s eternal purpose, that is, where we fit in the word of God in relationship to what God is doing in time.

It is interesting that every single Bible believer and Bible writer understood that principle. Moses understood that the coming of the Messiah was future from his day. Moses understood that the entrance into the land was future to his day. He taught the word of God and what he wrote was in relationship to where he fit in the word of God.

The prophets all taught the word of God and prophesied about from the standpoint of where they fit in the word of God . It is the same with the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. When John the Baptist showed up, he preached the message in relationship to where he was in the fulfilling of God’s word. For example, he said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." John could not have said that back here in Moses’ day because the kingdom was not at hand back in that day. John could not have showed up in the day of Isaiah and said, "Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand." Because it was not at hand back then in that day. Just like today it would be wrong to go out and preach John’s message, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Because it is not at hand today. So, John preached his message in relationship to where he and that nation Israel fit in the overall plan of God.

So too, when we come to the "but now", the time period in which now live (the dispensation of grace), we have to understand where we are in relationship to the fulfillment of God’s word if we are going to understand what God is doing in our day and time.

When we approach the word of God, it is absolutely necessary and critical that we do it God’s way, that is, to rightly divide it, so we understand where we are in relationship to what God Almighty is doing.

Faith is understanding what God’s word says to us and where we fit in God’s plan and purpose. If we think we are Israel, for example, back in Old Testament and claim promises that have nothing to do with us today, that is not faith; it is presumption. Actually, it is unbelief. It is coming back to a portion of scriptures that says nothing to us yet we say, "God says this to us". However, He never said that to us. So, to go back there in the Old Testament (Genesis - Malachi) and say we are operating by faith by claiming those things is actually unbelief.

So, too, it is if we go to the books that have to do with the future generation going through the tribulation period (Hebrews - Revelation) and claim those promises for us that also represents unbelief; it is not faith. Rather, when we understand where we are in the word of God, where we fit in the word of God, we understand that we live in a time period the Bible calls the dispensation of grace and that dispensation of grace was committed first to the Apostle Paul and through his writings to us (Romans - Philemon).

In order to approach God in faith today, we approach him by believing the specific instructions we find contained in our Bible in the books Romans through Philemon. We can try to approach God on the basis of the book of Leviticus but God will not accept us today on the basis of Leviticus. The book of Leviticus is the Law and the sacrifices, but God will absolutely never accept any individual today on the basis of Leviticus. Even if we attempt to obey every single verse in Leviticus God will absolutely not accept us on the basis of that book because that is not what God is doing today. Rather, what God is doing today is found specifically to us in the books of Romans through Philemon, the writings of the Apostle Paul, the apostle God sent to us Gentiles in the dispensation of grace.

The word dispensation simply means a set of revealed commands or instructions regulating human affairs. As far as God is concerned, the revealed commands or instructions regulating human affairs for the time period in which we live was committed to Paul. He calls it the dispensation of grace. The set of instructions that are to regulate human affairs today can be categorized by the word "grace". That is why salvation is by grace, we live by grace, our security is by grace, we stand in grace and we deal with each other based on grace. It is because that is all God is dispensing today: Grace! But there is a time coming afterwards when God will dispense wrath. Praise God He is not dispensing that today.

