

The Bible
Rightly Dividing The Word of Truth
by Hendrik Joubert

In the second letter which the apostle Paul wrote ¹*according to the wisdom given to him*, or ²*by inspiration of God*, to the younger man Timothy, he exhorts him to ***Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*** **2 Timothy 2:15** (NKJV) (¹**2Peter 3:15-16;** ²**2Timothy 3:16-17**)

This statement brings up two interesting questions; one may serve as an illustration of the principle taught by the other. Does it not seem out of the ordinary for Paul to instruct Timothy to be *diligent*, or as the King James version reads, *study* to show himself ***approved to God*** when one considers the fact that Timothy had one or more gifts of the Spirit bestowed upon him by the laying on of apostle's hands? (**2Timothy 1:6; 1Timothy 4:14; Acts 8:14-18**)

Contemporary wisdom would suggest that the young man is confirmed as *spiritual* by the mere presence of the gifts, and would not need to *study* the Scriptures in order to properly handle it – God was guiding him directly. Some may even argue that he does not even need the Bible. However that the gifts of the Spirit were **not** a sign of maturity, or that the person was spiritually minded, may be established from what Paul wrote to the Corinthians, a church who had some among their number who exercised the gifts: ***And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.*** **1 Corinthians 3:1** (NKJV)

The apostle had to teach them about the gifts so they would not ***be ignorant.*** **1Corinthians 12:1.** Paul had to explain how to properly use these gifts: ***...in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.*** (**1Corinthians 14:19**) In **1Corinthians 13:8-10** he explained to them that these gifts were a temporary measure by which the New Covenant was being revealed *in part*, however once all the parts combine to form the *complete*, the gifts would be done away. (**Ephesians 3:1-7; Hebrews 8:6-13; 9:7-18; Jude 1:3**) This explanation is helpful to us who now have the complete revelation in written form; the New Testament of Jesus Christ.

People, zealous for God, claim to speak in tongues to this very day and would consider it arrogant and offensive for anyone to suggest that they are not able to do so – *it is in the Bible*. They are not able to speak in the tongues of the people they desire to teach. (**Acts 2:7-12**) Some declare the tongues they speak in *a secret language between themselves and God which the devil cannot understand*. When asked if they have an interpreter present to interpret for the people the answer is “Yes.” (**1Corinthians 14:16**) That would mean that not only the people are able to understand the very moment the message is being delivered, but also the devil, effectively defeating the stated purpose. The Bible *specifically* says the purpose of tongues is (to preach the gospel in the language of the people as) a ¹***sign to unbelievers*** as illustrated in **Acts 2:7-13.** (¹**1Corinthians 14:22**)

Would the following question be *ungodly* to ask; why do all these churches teach different doctrines while they all claim to follow the Bible only, or that they are guided by the Holy Spirit of God? (**1Corinthians 1:10-13**) How *blessed* is the *choice* in what we want to believe and practice in light of the prophecy following given through Paul: ***For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;...?*** **2Timothy 4:3** (NKJV)

Why did the apostle accuse the Corinthians of being *carnal*, or *fleshly*? ***For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?*** **1Corinthians 3:4.** They were identifying with those who brought them to faith, rather than simply with the Lord who was crucified for them. In our society the names of men are replaced by the names of organizations, and suggesting that it is wrong to identify with these organizations would be considered absolutely ridiculous. In this way they continue their attempts to ***divide*** the body of Christ among men who were neither ***crucified*** for them, nor are they supposed to be ***baptized*** by their authority; if they are to receive the benefit of forgiveness through the blood of Christ. (**1Corinthians 1:10-13; 1Peter 3:21**)

The confusion demonstrated by the variety of doctrines devised by men is the result of not ***rightly dividing the word of truth.*** The most basic way to do so is to ignore the context of a statement. Another is to reach a conclusion before they have considered all the Bible has to say concerning a specific subject. When they encounter passages which contradict their conclusions, they consider it as contradictions *in the Bible*. Many who have considered passages out of context, or who have not allowed other passages on the subject to complete their understanding, have devised doctrines which contradicts what is taught in the Bible.

Faith is the motivating power behind a *diligent search* for God's *approval*. (**Hebrews 11:1-6**) **Hebrews 11** contains a list of men and women who were motivated by it to do as God asked them to, and so demonstrate their faith in Him in order to gain His approval. Not unlike Timothy, all who desire to please God should be ***diligent*** in their study of His word, the complete source for learning how to gain His approval. (**2Timothy 3:16-17; Acts 17:11**) Failing to do so will cause us to incorrectly apply the Scriptures and allow others to lead us onto the broad way. (**Matthew 7:12-23**)