



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Weekly

Presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume 23
Issue 551

Right Division

(AN OVERVIEW OF DISPENSATIONAL TRUTH)

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Part 1

The Basis of Right Division

Why “Dispensational Truth” is Important

Study to show yourself approved to God, a workman who needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth (II Timothy 2:15).

The basis of “Dispensational Truth”¹ is Paul’s injunction to Timothy for him to “rightly divide the Word of Truth” (II Timothy 2:15). The key is to understand that revelation made known through the Scriptures is progressive,² and that God has administered different economies (“dispensations”) with different people at different times. It is a matter of taking contexts *literally*. Everyone divides the Scripture to some degree. Not eating certain meats and making animal sacrifice are two examples of things taught in Scripture that many reject due to *later* revelation.



God” (Colossians 1:25).⁴ The rest of Scripture must be read in light of what Paul wrote. While all Scripture is certainly for us, it is not all written to us or *about* us.

“RIGHTLY DIVIDING”

The phrase “rightly dividing” found in II Timothy 2:15 is the translation of one single Greek word: ὀρθοτομέω (*orthotomeō*). It is used only this once in Scripture. It is a compound word: *ortho* and *tomeo*.

Ortho (from which we get our word “orthodontics”) means “right, correct, or straight.”

Tomeo means “to cut.”

Tomeo is also used in other compound words translated as: “circumcise” (*to cut* around), and “sharper” (Hebrews 4:12; *to cut* more decisively).

Naturally, *orthotomeō* is then defined as: ▶

pe!” The Apostle Paul received a revelation that is a *distinctive* advance on truth. – Homoki (*ibid.*).

4. The simple fact of the matter is that God ordained Paul as the *completer* or finisher of His Word. Paul filled-full (“fulfilled”) the Word of God.

Strong defines *plēroō*, the word translated “fulfilled” in the *King James Version*, as “crammed.” The same word is translated in Colossians 2:10 as “complete.” This is the word that the *Concordant Literal Translation* uses in our text – “to **complete** the word of God.”

Paul was given the ultimate and final revelation from the risen,³ exalted Lord Jesus Christ “to complete the Word of

1. This is a term used that has come to describe how the Scriptures are to be understood in their literal context.

“The Bible clearly states that there are divisions in Scripture which must be observed if we are ever going to acquire a proper interpretation of Scripture and if we are going to be unashamed workmen.” - S. Lee. Homoki, **Paul’s Distinctive Revelation: Pinnacle of Progressive Revelation** (*Bible Student’s Notebook*, #180).

2. The fact that there are divisions in Scripture points to the reality of *progressive revelation*. Progressive revelation is the progressive unfolding of divine truth. Progressive revelation means that God added more and more meaning and grew new light and concepts of His plan and purpose as the ages of time advance, in some cases superseding previously given revelation as a primary source of information. ... Paul’s gospel makes **many** new advances on truth which **cannot** be found anywhere else in the Bible. – Homoki (*ibid.*)

3. An often-overlooked division of Scripture and advance on truth is the *Pauline Revelation*, which the Apostle Paul called “my gos-



- to cut straight, to divide right;⁵
- to cut straight;⁶
- to make a straight cut, that is, (figuratively) to dissect.⁷

Thus the literal meaning of the word *orthotomeō* is to “cut right, to cut correct, or to cut straight,” as can be further seen in the way some other literal versions⁸ translate it:

correctly cutting (Concordant, 6th Edition);
correctly partitioning (Concordant, 2nd Edition);
cutting straight (Diaglott).

THE IMPORTANCE OF “DISPENSATIONAL TRUTH”

In Paul’s final epistle he writes to Timothy concerning vital truths. One such truth was the importance of *right division*.

5. *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament* (E.W. Bullinger)
6. *Greek Lexicon* (Abbott & Smith); *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Thayer)
7. *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance* (James Strong)
8. It is crucial that extensive use of *literal* translations be used rather than merely relying on “dynamic equivalence” ones. It is essential to know what texts actually say, not what someone thinks they mean. We reserve the divine right to study the Scriptures for ourselves, then determine what it *means*.

Note the common fault made by dynamic equivalent translators, when instead of literally translating *orthotomeō*, they sadly attempt to interpret it:

- “correctly teaching the word of truth” (Holman);
- “correctly handles the word of truth” (NIV);
- “laying out the truth plain and simple” (Message);
- “straightforward dealing with the word of truth” (Weymouth);
- “properly presents the message of truth” (Williams);
- “preaches straightforwardly the word of truth” (Lamsa);
- “accurate in delivering the Message of the Truth” (20th Century);
- “giving the true word in the right way” (BBE);
- “teach the word of truth correctly” (GW).

Granted, all of these things are indeed true of one who actually *rightly divides* or *correctly cuts* God’s Word, but they are clearly the end result, not the cause. Dynamic equivalent versions might at times make good *commentaries*, but they make poor *translations*.

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

Timothy Was Charged with Divine Diligence in Regard to God’s Word.

The Greek word translated “study” here in II Timothy 2:15 (σπουδάζω, *spoudazō*) is not the normal word for study; it is much broader than that. Its definition is:

What all of these versions fail to do is to translate properly the *tomeo* part of the compound word *orthotomeō*. Some of them may have the first part, *ortho*, translated “correctly,” however, they fail to translate the second part *tomeo* at all, which without question means “cut.”

All of these versions inserted an interpretation of *tomeo*, rather than a translation. They are all simply making stuff up, at least when it comes to *translation*. They are all *interpretations* rather than *translations*. Frankly, students of Scripture are far less interested in someone’s interpretation of Scripture than they are in what the Scriptures actually say.

Even in the Septuagint *orthotomeō* is used numerous times to translate the Hebrew word פָּרַחַ (nathach), meaning “cut in pieces,” into Greek. Here are two examples:

You shalt divide [orthotomeō] the ram by his several limbs, and you shall wash the inward parts and the feet with water, and you shall put them on the divided [orthotomeō] parts with the head (Exodus 29:17)

And having flayed the whole burnt-offering, they shall divide [orthotomeō] it by its limbs (Leviticus 1:6).

A.E. Knoch makes the following application regarding this:

The point to learn is this: the sacrifice was not slashed into hunks but carefully dismembered into its pieces. And is not the sacrificial victim a marvelous figure of God’s truth? It, too, is a living, organized unity. The body of the animal, though one, had many organs, many members, by means of which the various economies necessary for life’s functions were carried on. These were distinct, though vitally connected by the soul-conveying blood.

Throughout the ages, God has many objects to attain, many economies (or administrations) to carry out each particular task. These are quite as distinct as the various bodily organs; and the task assigned to each is no less distinct.

To stand qualified before God in our work we must first treat His truth in the same careful way [as the sacrifices]. This is God’s figure, and it cannot be improved upon. But animal sacrifice is not known in these days, so that the figure must lose some of its force with us. (An Unashamed Worker, *Unsearchable Riches*, Volume 76).



48 pp., BK

The Church Which Is His Body, and The Bride the Lamb’s Wife

We have reprinted a grand work on the subject of “the Body” in contrast to “the Bride” by the late J.H. Kessler.

“In Scripture the church of this dispensation is symbolized as ‘the Body of Christ,’ never as ‘the Bride.’” — Sir Robert Anderson, *The Coming Prince*

See order form.

- use speed, that is, to make effort, be prompt or earnest (*Strong*);⁹
- to hasten, make haste, to exert one’s self, endeavor, give diligence (*Thayer*);¹⁰
- to speed, make haste (as manifested in diligence, earnestness, zeal, etc.) (*Bullinger*);¹¹
- BE-DILIGENT (*Knoch*).¹²

Therefore this word for “study” speaks of great diligence, earnestness, zeal, effort and exertion with a priority as to the essence of time. Timothy was called to a *consuming labor* in the Scriptures.

Here is how literal versions translate σπουδάζω (*spoudazō*) in II Timothy 2:15.

Endeavor (CV);
Be diligent (Young; Dabhar);
Give diligence (Rotherham).

To What End Was Timothy Instructed to Exercise Such a Divine Diligence?

Paul gave such an instruction of divine diligence so that Timothy could present himself approved to God.

... To **show yourself approved to God**, a workman who needs not to be ashamed (II Timothy 2:15).

Due diligence in the Word of God was the only way that Timothy could be an unashamed workman (skilled craftsman) whom God could approve. Timothy was not to seek his approval in organizations, institutions, boards, denominations, churches or religious leaders, but with GOD Himself.

Timothy’s dedication to “*the Word of Truth*” was an act that he was to do for *an audience of One* – God! If he sought to find his *approval* before men, he would find his own *shame* before God. Conversely, if he was *approved* to God, he would find himself *shamed* before the world. Timothy had a personal accountability to God for this divine charge committed to him.

Just How Was Timothy to Accomplish Such a Lofty Goal?

Paul left no doubt as to how Timothy would accomplish his task: by,

... *Rightly dividing the Word of Truth* (II Timothy 2:15).

Paul instructed Timothy that there was a singularly ordained approach to God’s Word. He declared that the Scriptures *MUST* be *rightly divided*; not *just* divided, but *rightly* divided. This would take great carefulness on Timothy’s part. That is, he was to labor very meticulously in the Scriptures, looking for the many dividing marks *that God Himself* had placed in the Scriptures. After all, knowing that there is no Scripture that is of “*any private interpretation*” (II Peter 1:20), he must to learn to recognize a difference only where God Himself had made a difference!

What Was to Be Timothy’s Source for this Right Division?

There was clearly only one source of due diligence provided to Timothy:

... *The Word of Truth* (II Timothy 2:15).

Plainly, God’s Word *is the Truth*.

... *Thy Word is Truth* (John 17:17).

Webster defines truth as “conformity to fact.”

By way of example, the government has a record of your birth. Your birth is a matter of *fact*. Now, if you should state your age, place of birth, or parentage inconsistently with the record, *i.e.*, without *conformity* to the facts, it would *not be truth*, even if you sincerely believed it to be so. It has been said that facts are stubborn things. It must also be realized that truth simply is conformity to those facts.

Likewise, although the facts on your birth certificate are truth regarding *you*, they are not, however, truth regarding *me*. I may hold *your* birth certificate in my hands and claim it as my own; but it doesn’t change the truth of who I really am. I may claim *your* name, *your* date of birth, and *your* parents as my own, but this does not conform to the facts. In such a way, many in our day wrongfully lay claim to what is not theirs from Scripture. They are thus guilty of Scripture larceny: pilfering what does not rightfully belong to them.

The source of truth is God’s Word. God’s Truth is established by the *facts* of His Word (Isaiah 8:20).¹³ God’s Word is often called “*the Word of Truth*”¹⁴ and in II Timothy 2:15 Paul tells Timothy that he must diligently discover the ►

9. *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Greek Dictionary.

10. *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*.

11. *Critical Lexicon*.

12. *Concordant Keyword Concordance*.

13. “... if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”

14. Psalm 119:43; II Corinthians 6:7; Ephesians 1:13; James 1:18

facts of Scripture. His commission was to be a man of *The Book*, and make sure that he understood it *rightly divided*.

Thus, Timothy Was in Search of “Present Truth.”

God does not always present the *same* facts for every age, dispensation or administration. Thinking again of birth records, the facts of your birth are to be *rightly divided* from the records of my birth. We must appropriate the facts that correctly belong to us.

The facts of God's Word change from age to age, from dispensation or administration to administration. Much the way things that are “true” (facts) about summer are not necessarily “true” (facts) about winter. This is why Peter spoke of “*present truth*” (II Peter 1:12) in contrast to facts that are “past” or yet “future.” The simple fact is that God's Word is “*the Word of Truth*” AND it must be “*rightly divided*.”

Why Must Timothy Rightly Divide the Word of Truth for Divine Approval?

It was important for Timothy to rightly divide the Scriptures for divine approval, because God's desire is truth (conformity to the *facts*) in the inward part of man.

... *You desire truth in the inward parts* (Psalm 51:6).

The issue with God is truth. It is what God is looking for in man. In Jeremiah 5:1¹⁵ Judah faces invasion, and *one* man who sought truth would have been sufficient for God to have pardoned and preserved the entire nation. We thus see the importance of *one man* seeking truth (Ezekiel 22:30).¹⁶ There is therefore freedom in truth.

15. “Run back and forth through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if you can find a man, if there be any that executes judgment, that seeks the truth; and I will pardon it.”

16. “And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should

... *you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free* (John 8:32).

Truth liberates, while error enslaves; and the bondage that comes from error is far more binding than that of a physical prison. The entire world around us lies in the deep bondage of error. They are,

ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth (II Timothy 3:7).

Truth (conformity to the facts) has never been popular. The masses have never possessed it and its freedom. One of Israel's sins was that truth had fallen in the streets (Isaiah 59:14). Oh, that we may pray with David of years ago,

Show me Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your Truth, and teach me (Psalm 25:4-5).

THE ADDRESS ON THE ENVELOPE

The Golden Rule of Bible Study

God has designed a certain *way* by which Scriptures are to be understood. They must be *rightly divided*. This is the divinely approved approach to His Word.

The Golden Rules of Bible Study

Miles Coverdale (1488-1569) articulated well the important principles of right division in the introduction to his 1535 English version of the Bible:

It shall greatly help ye to understand Scripture if thou mark not only what is spoken or written, but of whom, with what words, at what time, where, to what intent, with what circumstances, considering what goes before and what follows after. — *Prologue to the Reader*

not destroy it: but I found none.”



The Witness of the Stars

by — E.W. Bullinger

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Honesty is essential in approaching the Scriptures. Accurate investigation of the Divine Record must ask some basic questions:

- Who** is doing the speaking?
- To whom** is it being spoken?
- About what** is being spoken?
- When** was it spoken?
- What** is the context in which it was spoken?

Not All of the Promises of the Scriptures Are Ours.

Some proclaim, “All of the promises in the Book are mine!” This certainly is not true.

For instance, God promised a child to Abraham and Sarah in their old age. This was a specific promise, made to a specific couple, at a specific point in history. Others simply can't claim this promise for themselves: context means everything.

Many are very careless in their approach to and use of the Scriptures. They just open up their Bibles anywhere and expect what they read to be directed toward them – that God will speak specifically to them there.

Maybe you have heard the tale of the man who made the habit of randomly opening the Bible to a couple of passages each morning for some insight and direction for his day. He would just let the Bible fall open where it would and aimlessly place his finger on a line of text. This particular day his finger fell on the line “[He] departed, and went and hanged himself” (Matthew 27:5). He then flipped elsewhere in the Bible and placed his finger on another line which read “Go, and do thou likewise” (Luke 10:37).

Remember that, while certainly *all* of the Bible was written *for* us, it was just as certainly not *all* written *to* us, nor was it *all* written *about* us. Thus, the Bible *must* be

divided; and not *just* divided, but *RIGHTLY* divided. That is, the many dividing marks (or distinctions) that *God Himself has placed* within Scripture must be sought out. We must learn to recognize a difference where God has made a difference!

THE DISPENSATIONS (or Administrations)

If you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward (Ephesians 3:2).

The word used to translate “dispensation” is *oikonomia* (oy-kon-om-ee'-ah). Paul uses this Greek word six times¹⁷ in his epistles. Surprisingly, many believers are completely unaware of its meaning, importance and usage. It has been a long-neglected subject by the majority of Christianity. Just what is a “dispensation”?

The Meaning of the Word “Dispensation.”

The Greek word *oikonomia* is defined as,

- administration (of a household or estate);¹⁸
- a mode of dealing, an arrangement, or administration of affairs;¹⁹
- the management of a household or of household affairs;
 - a) specifically, the management, oversight, administration, of other's property;
 - b) the office of a manager or overseer, stewardship;
 - c) administration, dispensation.²⁰

The word *dispensation* has to do with the act of distribution, or dealing out; it is a divine *administration, economy or stewardship*.²¹ Our English word *dispensation* comes from the word *dispense*. It can be seen in the word *dispensary*.

How Do Dispensations Affect Me?

Throughout the Scriptures God has had different administrations (or dispensations). In God's dispensations, as with that of the farmer, it is very important to do the work of the present season. For example, there are truths that belong to Israel that *do NOT* belong to the Body of Christ today. Many try to follow the dispensations of the *Hebrew*

17. I Corinthians 9:17; Ephesians 1:10, 3:2, 9; Colossians 1:25; I Timothy 1:4.

18. *Strong's Concordance* (G3622).

19. *Vine's Expository Dictionary*.

20. *Thayer's Lexicon*.

21. Some versions also thus translate *oikonomia* as “administration” (*Darby, Concordant Literal, Rotherham*) and “stewardship” (*King James Version, Rotherham, Diaglott*).

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Scriptures (Romans 15:4)²² or of Christ's earthly ministry (Romans 15:8);²³ but Paul was given the current dispensation *for us* (Colossians 1:25-26;²⁴ Ephesians 3:2-3²⁵).

What Does this Present Dispensation “Dispense”?

Paul, recording *present truth* to the members of the nations (Gentiles), writes about what God is currently dispensing to us:

... *The dispensation of the grace of God ...* (Ephesians 3:2).

The dispensation given to Paul for us today was one of God's grace.

Dispensations are a key part of God's progressive revelation regarding Himself and His grand plan of the ages. It is so important that this crucial truth be recognized. God's present and pinnacle purpose is one of *grace*. He currently is dispensing, or dealing out His grace. We live

22. “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”
23. “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.*”
24. “Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God; *even the mystery which has been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints.*”
25. “If you 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.*”

in God's *grace dispensary*. Today, our Father's sole mode of dealing is in grace – *pure grace*.

What Is the Importance of Understanding the Dispensations?

If anyone competes as an athlete, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules (II Timothy 2:5).²⁶

A participant in any race must follow the rules for *THAT* game or they will not win the prize, even if they come in “First.” How sad it is that many, even though they are truly sincere, won't be “*approved unto God*” regarding their service and conduct of life because they didn't live in accord with the *truth for today*. They have not become part of God's *present* purpose – of being a dispensary of the Father's grace. They neither live in grace themselves, nor with others. We are to be receptors *and* channels of “*the riches of His grace*” (Ephesians 1:7; 2:7).

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ (Ephesians 3:8).

(to be continued)

(An accompanying video series is available for these lessons at: www.studyshelf.com/videos/rightdivision)

26. Holman Christian Standard Version.



100 pp., PB

See order form.

Suffering: God's Forgotten Gift

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Two gifts given to the believer are mentioned by Paul in Philippians 1:29. The first is “to believe on Him.” This is a glorious gift. Every believer has been given this gift from God. Those who possess it may not even fully recognize it as a gift from Him, but indeed faith is God's wonderful gift to us. Faith is a rich gift from God, but there is also another gift from God to the believer, mentioned by Paul in Philippians 1:29, that is equally as glorious. The second gift is “also to suffer for His sake.” This, too, is a glorious gift. Every believer has been given this gift from God as well, but those who possess it often do not fully recognize it for what it is. Indeed, suffering for His sake similarly is God's wonderful gift to us. Paul teaches us to embrace this second gift as well as we do the first!

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Bible Student's Notebook™ Weekly

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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This free weekly electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
 - union in His death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6);
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

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ABBREVIATION KEY

<u>Scripture Version</u>	Concordance (Knoch)
(Unless otherwise noted all Scripture quotations are taken from the <i>Bible Student's Version</i>).	CL: A Critical Lexicon and Concordance (Bullinger)
CV: Concordant Literal Version	CWS: Complete Word Study Dictionary (Zodhiates)
DAR: Darby Translation	FoS: Figures of Speech (Bullinger)
DT: Dabhar Translation	SEC: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance
FF: Ferrar Fenton Bible	TGL: Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon
KJV: King James Version	UR: Unsearchable Riches
RE: Rotterdam's Emphasized Bible	VED: Vine's Expository Dictionary
WT: Weymouth Translation	YAC: Young's Analytical Concordance
YLT: Young's Literal Translation	
<u>Reference Sources</u>	<u>Reference Notations</u>
AA: Analytical Analysis (Welch)	cf. – compare
BDB: Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon	e.g. – for example
CB: Companion Bible Notes & Appendixes (Bullinger)	et al. – and others
CC: Concordant Commentary (Knoch)	etc. – et cetera (and so on)
CKC: Concordant Keyword	ff. – and the following
	i.e., – that is

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