

“RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH”

Perhaps you have heard or spoken the phrase, “cut straight with me.” The intended meaning being, “tell me the truth, no matter what.” Regarding the word of truth, the Bible, we should be just as insistent that preachers and teachers, “cut straight with us.” In return, we must be just as honest with the Scripture. The Bible warns of individuals who “will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears” (2 Tim. 4:3). When Jehoshaphat asked for a prophet of God, Ahab replied, “there is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the LORD: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil” (1 Kin. 22:8). Since Micaiah was preaching the word of God, it was God whom Ahab hated. Ahab wanted a “prophet” to scratch his ears; not give him “straight talk.”

The “word of truth” has other nomenclatures, but one which seems very closely related, in regards to being “rightly divided,” is “bread of life.” Jesus says, “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst” (John 6:35). The only way one can come to Jesus and believe on Him is by means of the word of God. Paul writes, “so then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). In the beginning, Jesus, the “bread of life,” was known as “the Word” (John 1:1, 14). Without the “bread of life,” man cannot be saved, “for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). It is important then to “rightly divide” the bread as we distribute it to feed the souls of men. While some “hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Mat. 5:6), many simply eat what they’re being spoon-fed. Their bellies are filled, but they are starving to death spiritually. Paul proclaimed, “I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). Many preachers today make the same claim. Perhaps, if you look at their whole body of work, they have preached on every subject and every sin. However, if a congregation is malnourished in a particular area, and a preacher fails to deliver the necessary bread which they need, has that preacher declared the whole counsel of God? Has this preacher “rightly divided” the bread of life among those who were in need? If a preacher is invited to a congregation knowing that it has been split because of rebellion and public sin that has not been repented of, but preaches on the sin of denominationalism instead, has this preacher “rightly divided the word of truth?” If a preacher visits a congregation that is a safe-haven for impenitent adulterers, and fails to divide the proper bread that they are so desperately in need of, has this preacher “rightly divided the word of truth?” If a preacher preaches the truth regarding the existence of God and the false doctrine of evolution, but presents a congregation with no spiritual bread to address their slide into liberalism, has this preacher “rightly divided the word of truth?” I contend that the answer to all of the above is “No.” A preacher who knows what bread is needed to remedy an unhealthy diet, and fails to do so, has not “rightly divided the word of truth.” He has satisfied the appetite of those around the table and has scratched some ears, but he has left them as nutritionally deprived as he found them, if not worse. Many men have allowed their reputations to harden the hearts of the erring because they visited and shared fellowship without saying a thing about the specific sin that separated the erring from God (cf. Isa. 59:1-2). “Rightly dividing the word of truth” is much more than just preaching that which is authorized by God. We must preach what needs preaching. The bread of life must be distributed as needed. Adulterers need to hear sermons about adultery (Mat. 14:3-4; 1 Cor. 5:1). Those who rebel and cause division in a congregation need to hear sermons about Korah (Num. 16). Those who

practice things without Biblical authorization need to hear sermons about Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-2). “Rightly dividing the word of truth” means that we are being fair and honest, following proper rules and guidelines for interpretation, with every verse in the Bible. But it also means that we distribute the bread of life to where it is needed. What a wonderful opportunity it would be for a faithful Gospel preacher to be invited to preach at the largest denomination in town. But could you imagine the feeling of despair if you found out that he preached the truth about ... attendance? Sermons on attendance are needed and Scriptural, but it is not the right bread to be offering those in denominational error. Though this example may be exaggerated, it explains the problem clearly. We need more men to use their knowledge of the Bible in helping those in need rather than their own self interests. We need more men to break the bread and disperse it as needed rather than doing so when it is convenient (or financially advantageous).

- *Brad Green*