

Truth For the Final Generation

Midday Message

“The Tyranny of Terms?”

Opening Hymn: 533 NH “O Word of God Incarnate”

Scripture Reading: 2 Peter 3:15-16

Introduction:

Last time (GC88 568.4, DA 21.3) we saw that it is through incorrect interpretation and teaching of the scriptures that the enemy accomplishes three distinct purposes:

1. Our loving Heavenly Father is feared and even dreaded.
2. Many are made skeptics and infidels.
3. Men are enlisted to war against God and His truth.

We also saw it was through the misrepresentation of the character of God, that is, painting God with the very attributes of satan that these are accomplished. God calls His end time people to know the truth but how?

Study the Word

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

10 For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments. Ezra 7:10

The word of God is clear that it should be studied, No mere casual reading is here stated but deep and thoughtful searching to know the truth! Paul says the person that studies is a workman. The workman is known by his work. The result of the study then means that the individual will not be

ashamed. "Rightly dividing" (ὀρθοτομοῦντα, *orthotomounta*): The word is a compound of two Greek words: *orthos* ("straight") and *temnō* ("to cut"). Its literal meaning is to "cut straight." It was used in various contexts, such as a farmer plowing a straight furrow, a stonemason cutting a straight line, or a carpenter sawing a straight board. It implies that the workman must handle the word of truth correctly in order to be approved unto God!

Ezra was such a workman. Look at what he did. He prepared his heart to seek the word of God (the law of God), and to do it and to teach Israel statutes and judgements.

What does it Mean?

Often when approaching scripture there are things hard to be understood. The language of the bible was not written in our modern 21st century English. And even so among our English language there are different variations of English. For example, American English and British etc. Lets read 2 Peter 3:15-16:

15 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; 16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. 2 Peter 3:15-16

In the scriptures there are things hard to be understood that require diligent study to shew oneself approved. Wresting the scriptures leads to wrong conclusions and misleading others. Remember: *He (satan) led them to doubt the word of God, and to distrust His goodness. DA 21.3*

When approaching a study on the character of God often there are things hard to be understood and the meaning of the verse is not entirely clear at the beginning. The bible student often sees what the statement or passage of scripture SAYS but must study and go beyond to see what the passage MEANS! The PRINCIPLE in the word of God must be applied to the STATEMENT or passage of scripture to arrive at truth.

Will Creatures Burn Forever?

10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: 11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. Revelation 14:10, 11

At the surface it appears that God takes pleasure in the suffering of the wicked. Moreover, this has been taught as a means to appease God for the awful results of rejecting Him and the stubborn choices of His creatures. But is this what the bible teaches? Let us rightly divide the word of truth!

10 For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. Psalms 37:10

1 For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. Malachi 4:1

The scriptures teach that the wicked will be no more. Both the origin (root) and results (branches) of sin will be completely destroyed. The wicked will not be burned in eternal torment but rather cease to exist.

Will it be a direct or indirect action of God?

21 Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. Psalms 34:21

36 But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death. Proverbs 8:36

Who Hardens Hearts

Let us consider the statement that God hardened Pharoah's heart. The bible says a total of 10 times that God was the one who hardened Pharoah's heart (*Ex. 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17*)

21 And the Lord said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go. Exodus 4:21

The statement implies that God is the one who prevents Pharaoh from letting Israel go because He hardened Pharaoh's heart against receiving the truth. It is implied that God directly prevented Pharaoh from receiving His word through Moses according to the statement.

What is the principle? What does it mean?

Pharaoh refused to obey God by his own free will and God is described as actively doing what Pharaoh chose to do! In fact, the bible also states that Pharaoh hardened His own heart and refused to let the Israelites go!

But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said. Exodus 8:15

In fact, in 1 Samuel 6:6 even the Philistines acknowledged that Pharaoh and the Egyptians hardened their hearts not God!

Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? when he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed? 1 Samuel 6:6

Knowing the Truth

It should be clear then that for an accurate understanding of the word of truth a person must be an approved workman. Scripture calls us to know God!

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. John 17:3

Eternal life is not just a duration of time but a knowledge of God in particular that He sent His Son!

31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; 32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. John 8:31-32

36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. John 8:36

Closing Appeal

When approaching the word of God confusion may arise because one word or statement is taken to mean one thing by one person and another by someone else while each does not know they are reading the same word but have different meanings. When approaching the study of God's word, to arrive at truth, the faithful workman must allow the Spirit of God to direct Him into all truth.

God intends that even in this life the truths of His word shall be ever unfolding to His people. There is only one way in which this knowledge can be obtained. We can attain to an understanding of God's word only through the illumination of that Spirit by which the word was given. "The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God;" "for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." 1 Corinthians 2:11, 10. And the Saviour's promise to His followers was, "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.... For He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you." John 16:13, 14. SC 109.2

God desires man to exercise his reasoning powers; and the study of the Bible will strengthen and elevate the mind as no other study can. Yet we are to beware of deifying reason, which is subject to the weakness and infirmity of humanity. If we would not have the Scriptures clouded to our understanding, so that the plainest truths shall not be comprehended, we must have the simplicity and faith of a little child, ready to learn, and beseeching the aid of the Holy Spirit. A sense of the power and wisdom of God, and of our inability to comprehend His greatness, should inspire us with humility, and we should open His word, as we would enter His presence, with holy awe. When we come to the Bible, reason must acknowledge an authority superior to itself, and heart and intellect must bow to the great I AM. SC 109.3

There are many things apparently difficult or obscure, which God will make plain and simple to those who thus seek an understanding of them. But without the guidance of the Holy Spirit we shall be continually liable to wrest the Scriptures or to misinterpret them. There is much reading of the Bible that is without profit and in many cases a positive injury. When the word of God is opened without reverence and without prayer; when the thoughts and affections are not fixed upon God, or in harmony with His will, the mind is clouded with doubts; and in the very study of the Bible, skepticism strengthens. The enemy takes control of the thoughts, and he suggests interpretations that are not correct. Whenever men are not in word and deed seeking to be in harmony with God, then, however learned they may be, they are liable to err in their understanding of Scripture, and

it is not safe to trust to their explanations. Those who look to the Scriptures to find discrepancies, have not spiritual insight. With distorted vision they will see many causes for doubt and unbelief in things that are really plain and simple. SC 110.1

Disguise it as they may, the real cause of doubt and skepticism, in most cases, is the love of sin. The teachings and restrictions of God's word are not welcome to the proud, sin-loving heart, and those who are unwilling to obey its requirements are ready to doubt its authority. In order to arrive at truth, we must have a sincere desire to know the truth and a willingness of heart to obey it. And all who come in this spirit to the study of the Bible will find abundant evidence that it is God's word, and they may gain an understanding of its truths that will make them wise unto salvation. SC 111.1

Closing Hymn: NH 285 "Jesus Calls us

Yours in Our Master's Service

Elder Ryan Griffith

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