

Careful Cutting

Paul wrote, "*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). The subject of authority has been well-investigated through the years. The enormity of the issue demands careful scrutiny. But behind all the study of commands, examples, and inferences is the word of God itself. Before anything can be accomplished in a study of authority, everyone must be looking at the Bible the same way.

Differing perspectives and presuppositions creep in and affect the way that human beings examine the Bible. Paul admonished Timothy that he should "study" (give diligence) to "handle accurately" the word of God. "Handle" (*orthotomeo*) means to "cut straight, as in road-making." The stress is on the first part of the word (*orthos*) and it indicates that the word should be "handled strictly along the lines of its teaching." A. T. Robertson made the comment, "Since Paul was a tent-maker and knew how to cut straight the rough camel-hair cloth, why not let that be the metaphor? Certainly plenty of exegesis is crooked enough (crazy-quilt patterns) to call for careful cutting to set it straight."

The absolute basis for knowing what the will of God is study. And it cannot be just any study, but study that "cuts straight" the word of God. Many false teachers must use "crooked exegesis" to force their interpretations upon the Bible. This results in using verses out of context, plainly ignoring straightforward verses and explaining away sound Biblical teaching.

This kind of disregard for the Bible opens the door for hundreds of false doctrines. Everyone has probably seen their share of false teachers who have proposed numerous doctrines which have been invented from a mishandling of truth. This is so dangerous! All it takes is one stray "cut" and a snowball effect is born. This effect stacks false teaching upon false teaching and soon you have nothing but a complex "theological card house" which has no real truth to stand on. Calvinism is a perfect example of this type of mishandling of the Bible.

Brethren must realize the need for careful study. The only way to stop false teaching is to know the truth. Without the desire to handle the word of God accurately, studying authority accomplishes about the same result as digging a dry well. It leaves you frustrated and spiritually "thirsty." The only way to see "eye to eye" is to make sure that both sides are doing "careful cutting."

Kyle Campbell