

**The Word of Truth Ministry Presents  
Special Full Length Studies  
#SS06**

**FIVE RADIO MESSAGES**

These messages were originally given as the first five in a series of radio broadcasts over Radio Station WAIT, Chicago, Illinois. They were printed in *The Word of Truth*, and the demand for the issues in which they appeared was such that all available copies were soon exhausted. In view of the continued demand for them, they are now issued in pamphlet form. It is the writer's earnest prayer that they shall receive the widest possible distribution, and that they shall be used by the Holy Spirit to quicken many to the importance of the Word of God.

Otis Q. Sellers.

**November 1, 1943.**

The messages contained herein are entitled:

- **GOD Has Spoken**
- **Purpose in Bible Study**
- **Divine Importance of the Word**
- **Principles of Bible Study**
- **Dispensational Truth**

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***GOD HAS SPOKEN***

I consider it a privilege to have the opportunity of bringing you studies in the Word of God by means of radio. I shall ever regard this ministry as being, under God, a sacred trust, and shall strive to be faithful in this work which, I believe, He has given me to do. It is my conviction that in all our witness for God, faithfulness is the one thing He requires. It is not demanded of God's stewards that they be successful, neither does He demand certain results. But He does demand that we be faithful.

It is my hope that I will have the joy of visiting you many, many times by means of your loudspeaker. I trust that the time will come when you feel that you know me personally, that you will come to regard these radio visits as the coming of one who speaks about the Word of God, and that you will come to have confidence in my honesty and sincerity as a student and teacher of the sacred Scriptures. You may not agree with all that I will have to say, or you may take exception to some things that I may teach, nevertheless, I trust that even though we may not see eye-to-eye on all matters, you will come to regard me as one who loves the Bible and who is honest and sincere in his labors to try to uncover and recover the truth that God has placed in His Word.

Therefore in hope of a good understanding between us, it seems only fitting that in this initial broadcast I should declare the purposes of this radio ministry, and also set forth some of the principles which will guide and control this effort. In order to do this I will be forced to speak some of myself and will have to make frequent use of the personal pronoun "I." However, I am sure my listeners will be charitable and overlook this in this initial broadcast.

**It is my conviction that the greatest fact in the universe is the fact that God has spoken.** No other fact approaches this in magnitude or importance. God has spoken to us through the medium of a written message, and this message is the book we call the Bible. This is a fact that none can deny, and one which all men must face.

We hear much about "facing the facts." Men often boast that they are willing to face the facts. If they really mean this then they must face the greatest fact in the universe, the fact that God has spoken. Those who face this fact will act upon it, and none have faced it who have failed to give heed to all that God has said. If God has spoken it becomes the duty of every man to know what He has said. Of what value is the confession that "God has spoken" if we are forced to follow this with the confession that we do not know what He has said.

In my own life and experience, I have faced this great fact, and as best as I can, I have acted upon it. The past twenty-three years of my life have been devoted to the task of becoming genuinely familiar with every word that God has spoken. I have always considered this task to be supreme in importance. It is my first duty toward God. I refuse to admit that any task can be more important than this, or take precedence over it as being the will of God for me. Every other service must be subordinate to the task of knowing what God has said.

My studies in the Word of God have always been primarily for my own personal

benefit. I have studied because I needed to be familiar with all that God has said, because I wanted to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not study the Bible in order to get material for messages. I study it because of the needs of my own life. This is in complete harmony with Paul's statement in **2 Timothy 2 :6**, which literally translated says:

**"The farmer who is toiling must be first to partake of the fruits."**

No farmer could do anything toward producing food for others if he did not first of all produce food for himself.

However, in studying to know the Word for my own benefit, to get truth for myself, to find answers to my own questions and to clear away my own difficulties, I have been enabled to offer help to others who may desire to know the truth. I believe that I can help *you*, and I would like to help *you*. Therefore, I trust that *you* will determine to "make it a habit" to be tuned in to this program each time it is on the air.

I fully realize that when a man is heard for the first time, his hearers will naturally ask such questions as, "Just who are *you*?" "To what denomination or sect do *you* belong?" "Whom do *you* represent?" and "What are *your* purposes or aims in securing this radio time and giving *your* messages over the air" It seems only right that these questions should be answered.

The first question as to who I really am puts me on the spot. It would not be so embarrassing if I were somebody, but being nobody makes it difficult to answer. However, in answer, all I can say is that I am Otis Q. Sellers, an individual who believes in God the Father, in His Son Jesus Christ whom I acknowledge as my Lord, and in the verbal inspiration of the Word that He has given. I am an independent student and teacher of the Word of God, and a writer upon Biblical subjects. I conduct regular Bible classes in four different cities, and write and publish the Bible study magazine *The Word of Truth*. Sample copies of this magazine are available without cost to any who may desire them (Ed. Note: still true in 2005; also, all 17 Volumes available on a single CD).

In regard to my denominational or church affiliations, I desire to state emphatically that I am a member of no denomination, church, sect or movement. It may be that some will be inclined to doubt this, feeling that I may be hesitant to declare my affiliations. But I assure them that this is the exact truth. The time will *not* come in the future when you will discover that I *do* represent some denomination which I hesitated to acknowledge in the beginning. I state this because it has been the practice of some men to keep their connections hidden up to a certain point, then reveal that their true

purpose was not to lead the people into truth, but into identification with some sect or denomination.

Many people will think it strange that I am not affiliated with some denomination, church or undenominational movement. It will be difficult for them to believe that a man can love God, serve Him and minister His Word without belonging to some organization. However, I am able to testify that thousands of people all over the world are doing this very thing. Many people have never learned that a man can do this as an individual. They believe that the only way one can be affiliated with God and Christ is to be affiliated with some church. They cannot conceive of any relationship to God apart from relationship to the church. This is an error, and a denial of the one mediator between God and man - the Lord Jesus Christ.

One of my chief purposes in these radio broadcasts will be to inspire you, as an individual, to believe in God and walk in the fear of Him, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and have confidence in Him as your Savior, to do right by His Word and to study it as an individual. I shall never be guilty of even suggesting that you abandon your present affiliations or sever any of your connections. Neither shall I ever suggest that you take on any new ones.

In this ministry, I do not represent anyone. I have hundreds of friends who are living for God as individuals, and these friends are standing behind me in this ministry. But I do not represent them, and they exercise no control over me. I believe and proclaim these messages as an individual, and not as the representative or spokesman of some group.

A number of years ago I became convinced that all of God's dealings in this dispensation are with the individual. He does not deal with him as a part of some church, neither does He deal with him through a church. Furthermore, it became my conviction that in spite of the apostasy, ruin, confusion and unfaithfulness that prevails in Christendom, that an individual could walk in separation from all of this and live a life of devotedness and faithfulness to God, the Son of God, and the Word of God. I determined that in spite of the hopeless failure of the professing church as a responsible witness for Christ, it could be my privilege to be faithful in a day of unfaithfulness and to be loyal in a day of disloyalty. I now seek to get others as individuals to do the same.

Therefore, one of my purposes in this radio ministry will be to stress the great truth of Christian individualism. When I speak of worship it will not have any connection with your attendance at something called "the morning worship." It will have to do with that real heartfelt adoration for God which *you* as an individual should have toward Him twenty-four hours each day. When I speak of prayer it will have no relationship to your attendance at something called a "prayer meeting." It will mean that true spirit of prayer which causes one to be ever looking to God and to be continually drawing upon Him for every need. When I speak of Bible study, it will have no connection with some Bible class even though such attendance is good; neither will it mean going to hear a sermon on some Biblical text. The only real Bible study is that which *you* do as an individual, when *you* open the book in order to become familiar with every word that God has spoken. I would encourage *you* to live for God as an individual, to have individual and personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe that individualism is the exact opposite of denominationalism, therefore, I do not seek to build any church or any denomination. I seek to build up men in the most holy faith, and this work begins and ends with the individual. My one great purpose will always be to turn the individual to the God of the Word, and to the Word of God.

In these radio messages I will emphasize the testimony that the Bible gives to the transcendent grace of God, which He is manifesting to the undeserving in this dispensation. I will emphasize its testimony in regard to the nature of man, and also to the destiny of man. I will also exalt its testimony in regard to dispensational truth, that is, the importance of rightly dividing the word of truth. I will be happy to have any listeners to correspond with me at any time, and I will be glad to help *you* in *your* personal problems related to the study of the Word of God.

We often hear men say, "I do not know very much about the Bible." This is a common confession which men often make, and they make it in such a way that it appears to be their idea that no ordinary man can know, or should know very much about the sacred Scriptures. If men are ignorant of God's Word, then there must be some cause for this ignorance. Therefore, when anyone says that he does not know very much about the Bible, we have the right to ask, "Why?" And if a truthful answer is given it will be, "Just because I have never studied it." Too many people live in the false hope that some day a miracle is going to take place which will give them a complete and accurate knowledge of the Bible. But this will never happen. The only way we can ever know the Scriptures is to follow the example of "the blessed man" in the first Psalm, whose "delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night."

No man can be classed as a God-fearing man if he remains in total ignorance of the words that God has spoken. No man can be truly wise until he has entered into that wisdom which God has enshrined in His Word. Therefore, to the task of helping men to become familiar with every word that God has spoken, this radio ministry is dedicated.

## **PURPOSE IN BIBLE STUDY**

In my previous broadcast I emphasized the fact that God has spoken, and that this demanded that we should make a serious effort to know what He has said. It is true that most men, at some time or other in their lives, have felt the urgent need of becoming familiar with the Word of God. Even the non-believer in its authority has felt that it is unintelligent to remain in almost total ignorance of the most famous and ancient of books. The sincere believer readily admits that it is his duty to know the Bible. The majority of believers have at some time in their experience begun the study of it, but most of them have soon given up any serious effort to master its contents. This is the book which seems to provoke study, then having provoked it, it seems to baffle it, and defy all attempts to learn the truth God has placed within its pages.

The great majority of people who accept the authority of the Word of God, and who admit that God would have them to know what He has said, will live and die in practically total ignorance of this Book. This makes it evident that there are forces which diligently labor to defeat every attempt that is made to become familiar with what God has said. These forces are Satanic, and they work in many ways that are too numerous to mention, yet it must be kept in mind that there is no such thing as real victory in Christian life and experience until we have fought with and emerged victorious over those forces which would keep us from knowing what God has said in His Word.

One of the most successful means used by the enemy to defeat the one who would study the Word of God is to create a false conception in the minds of men so that they do not know what they want when they open the Book. They have no true understanding of just what to expect when they go to the Word, or else the purpose for which they go is so wrong that they can experience nothing but defeat. The Bible is often condemned because it does not accomplish some purpose for which God never intended it. We can never know the Scriptures apart from the help of the Spirit of God, and He is grieved when one persists in reading the Bible with some purpose in mind that is foreign to the purpose for which God gave this Book.

When the dictionary is opened, it is usually opened in order to get the meaning of a word, or if the meaning is known, in order to get the spelling or pronunciation. This is right, since it is for these very purposes that dictionaries are compiled and published. If anybody turned to the dictionary with the thought in mind of spending an hour in pleasant and entertaining reading, he would soon cast it aside in disgust, and berate the writers who had prepared such an utterly nonsensical book. This very thing happens many times in connection with that book we call the Bible.

The vast majority of people believe that the Bible is a book of ethics, that is, a book of morals; a book given solely for the purpose of telling man what is right and what is wrong, what to do and what not to do. They have an idea that this moral teaching is set forth by example, precept and direct commands. Therefore, they open the Word of God, fully expecting to find these examples and precepts. But they do not read very far until they discover detailed records of some of the most immoral acts and some of the most unethical practices. I refer to such records as the drunkenness of Noah, the deception practiced by Abraham, the incest committed by the daughters of Lot, and the lying deceit practiced by Jacob upon his aged father. This causes them to be disappointed in the Bible. It did not say what they expected it to say. They cannot understand why such things should be recorded. Therefore, they lay the sacred volume aside in disgust, and sometimes they berate all who continue to maintain that this book is a revelation from God.

This whole difficulty arises from a preconceived notion which many people have as to what the Bible teaches, also a complete misunderstanding of the purpose for which the Word of God was given. It was not given to teach man morals. It was not given to tell man what to do and what not to do. This is the function of another gift that God has given to man - the conscience. Just as God has given man eyes to discern shapes and colors, just as He has given him an ear to distinguish sounds, even so has He given him a conscience to tell him what is right and what is wrong. Man had been upon the earth for 2500 years before the first word of the Bible was ever written. It is unthinkable that man had no moral code before that time, unthinkable that man did not know right from wrong.

Another belief commonly held is that the Bible was written by God so that in all problems of life it could be opened in order to secure definite instruction and guidance in regard to what one should do. When people open the book with this idea in mind, they are usually disappointed, for they find it to be a record of people whose life was entirely foreign to the one they live, and who never had to face the manifold complexities of life that prevail in this modern civilization.

Some have insisted that they turned to the Bible to find light upon some specific problem of life, only to find a list of names telling that so-and-so begat so-and-so, how many years he lived and when he died. This experience disillusioned them, so they laid aside the book in disappointment, to join the ranks of those who were baffled when they opened the Word of God. All such spiritual defeats as these can be traced to a complete misconception in regard to the purpose for which this Book was given. Any spiritual profit in Bible study is certainly dependent upon a true conception as to why the Bible was given. Therefore, I shall try to set forth in as simple a manner as possible what I believe to be the purpose for which the Word of God was delivered to mankind.

An omniscient God who loves His creatures has determined that they should not be left without a revelation from Him that would set forth Himself, also His works and ways with the children of men. His wisdom has caused Him to determine that there are certain things that we should know, and need to know, and these things have been recorded in His Word. This book does not tell us what we want to know, neither does it tell us what we would like to know. But it does reveal to us the things that God would have us to know and consider. It will not serve as a "ready reference book" to which we can refer in times of need. But it does provide a perfect compendium of knowledge for all *who* determine that they want to know the things God would have them to know. Many would like to enter into the secret things that belong only to the Lord, but the true man of God desires to enter into a knowledge of the things that are revealed.

Many *who* read the Bible will ask the question that is common to every schoolboy. They complainingly inquire, "Why do I have to study this?" or "Why do I need to know this?" The schoolmaster can ignore all such queries, and require the boy to learn, but God does not force His wisdom upon anyone. He has given a revelation of the things He would have us to know, and has recorded them in His imperishable Word. Some men choose not to know these things, some men choose to know them, but most men *choose* to know a few small parts which appeal to them or serves their purposes. The man of faith determines to know it all. Every part is important to him. Since God has revealed "who begat *who*," since He has recorded such things as the numbering of the children of Israel, these become more than a recitation of unimportant details. They are now the things that God has enshrined in His Word for the instruction of His people.

When the man of God has made "all scripture" his study; he has been taught by it; when he has accepted its reproof, its correction and its discipline in righteousness, then, and not before; is he mature and ready for every good work.



# Scripture and the Will of God

Over and over I am asked how can one know the will of God . I am sure that this question comes to me more than any other. Some day I think that I shall be very bold and answer with this curt reply, "It is impossible that *YOU* should know the will of God." I shall do this in kindness in order to awaken the one who has asked the question. And when my surprised questioner asks "Why?" I shall say, "Because you do not know enough about the Word of God to be able to determine the will of God. You are not in possession of the things He revealed to make one wise, therefore, you have no wisdom to guide you when the time comes that paths must be selected and decisions must be made."

The only way that one can determine the will of God in any matter - save in those things in which God has spoken specifically for this administration - is to act upon the light that he has. There is no source of light except the Word of God. It is indeed a "lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path." The more we possess of this light, the better equipped We will be to determine the will of God. This is Paul's exhortation in **Ephesians 5 :17:**

**"Wherefore, be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."**

There are times in one's experience when major decisions must be made which are going to have their bearing upon one's life for the rest of his days. Too many people want to open up the Bible at a time like this and have it tell them just what to do or what path to take. They want to know the will of God at certain times, but remain free to do their own will the rest of the time. They want light for the moment, after which they would like to plunge back into the darkness and choose their own ways. This is not the way that God gives light or reveals His will.

Let us take for example the physician, in his work with the human body. Every day he is called upon to make certain decisions, and to do certain things upon which may depend the life and health of an individual. When he is forced to decide or to act, he draws upon his store of knowledge which he has gained by study, training and experience. His knowledge of the human body, of the diseases that lay hold upon it and of the curative powers of certain means, guides him in the hour when he comes face to face with a problem which may be different than he has ever faced before. Think what an embarrassing position the surgeon would be in if he waited until some problem demanded an immediate solution, then hope that some miracle would occur which would bring him immediately a knowledge of physiology, so that he would know what to do.

We may just as well face the facts. No one can be wise in determining- the will of the Lord until he is in possession of the wisdom that God has placed in His Word. Let us consider the Biblical testimony in regard to this.

In **Proverbs 2 :10-12** we read:

**"When wisdom enters into your heart. and knowledge is pleasant to your soul; Discretion shall preserve you, understanding shall keep you."**

There can be no mistake about this. When the Word is enshrined in our hearts, when the knowledge of it becomes our greatest desire, when the attainment of knowledge becomes our most pleasant experience, we can rest assured that discretion and understanding will preserve and keep us in all our ways.

## **DIVINE IMPORTANCE OF THE WORD**

My regular listeners will remember that in a previous message I dealt with the great fact that God has spoken and made Himself accurately known to man, then of the imperative need of having a true purpose in mind when we open the Word of God. In this message I desire by the use of the Bible to impress upon your minds the importance which God Himself has attached to knowing His Word. I am sure that it can be demonstrated that there is nothing in relationship to God, nothing in Christian life and experience that is more important than knowing the sacred Scriptures.

The Lord Jesus said, **"Thy Word is truth."** **John 17 :17**. The Word we know is the truth we know, the Word we possess is the truth we possess, the Word we can give to others is the truth we can give. He who does not have the truth can only conform to this world. He who enters into the truth will be transformed by the renewing of His mind.

There is a genuine difference between knowing the Bible and understanding the Bible. When I speak to you of knowing God's Word, I do not mean understanding God's Word. We can know things which we do not understand, but we cannot understand things which we do not know. The divine order would be, first, knowledge, then understanding. It is possible for anyone to know the Word of God. Diligence in reading, close attention to what is said, patient study and continual meditation is sure to bring a knowledge of what God has said. But an understanding of the things God has said comes to us through the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of

God can and does give an understanding of the Word that is known, but he does not give knowledge to those who are too lazy to apply themselves.

**It is our part to get the knowledge, it is God's part to give the understanding.** Too many people open the Bible and want to know the meaning or to have an understanding of every word they read just as they read it. They want the joys of understanding apart from the drudgery of first getting knowledge. They can see no reason why they should be not be able to understand things which they do not even know.

Have you ever had someone approach you with a paper or book in hand and ask the question, "What does this mean?" You automatically ask "What does it say?" This is a confession that you cannot tell what a thing means until you know what is said, You even may not know after you know what is said, but, of this you are sure - you can never know what a thing means apart from what is said.

The divine process by which we come into possession of the truth is to know what God has said, and then to discover what He meant by what He said. It is utter folly to seek the meaning of any passage of Scripture when we have no accurate knowledge of what is said in that portion.

There are many passages of Scripture with which I am completely familiar, but which I do not now understand. I seek to increase and maintain my familiarity with these, in the complete confidence that when the understanding becomes important in relation to my life and service, it will be given. GOD does not reveal His truth to those who are merely curious. He does reveal it to those who would be governed by it and walk in it.

The great principle of knowledge first and understanding second is set forth in **Proverbs 4 :7. "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding."**

An outstanding witness to the importance which God attaches to His Word and to knowing His Word is the testimony of the 119th Psalm. This is the longest Psalm in the book of Psalms, and the longest chapter in the Word of God. It contains 176 verses and exalts the Word of God under ten different names. These are *way, testimonies, precepts, commandments, saying, law, judgment, righteousness, statue and word.* In

the Hebrew the equivalent of one of these words appears in every verse except verse 122, and this one exalts the living Word, the surety of God's people. Therefore, this whole Psalm, the longest in the book of Psalms, speaks of one thing, exalts one thing, magnifies one thing, and glorifies one thing - the Word of the living God.

The student should make a close personal examination of each statement made in this Psalm, but, to emphasize the importance God has attached to His Word, let us examine a few verses together.

In the first two verses the Psalmist speaks of the happiness (blessedness) of those who walk in the way of the Lord and who keep His testimonies. How can one walk in His way and keep His testimonies if they are not fully and accurately known? Imagine the contradiction in the life of those who are fully assured that they are walking in the way and keeping His precepts, yet at the same time they confess they know very little about the Word of God.

In the fourth verse he states, **"Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently."** Can His precepts be kept if they are not known? Many people believe that if they were not walking in His precepts, God would be severely punishing them. Therefore, they reason, that since their lives are more or less serene, they must be walking in and keeping His precepts. They fail to realize that God's present administration is one of grace and not one of judgment.

In verse seven the Psalmist says, **"I will praise Thee with uprightness of heart when I shall have learned Thy righteous judgments."** Many people believe they are praising God just because now and then they shout out "Praise God" or "Praise the Lord." Such ejaculations often are not praise at all. Sometimes they are simply a meaningless use of the name of the Lord in vain. The only praise that is acceptable to God is that which comes from an upright heart. This praise is impossible apart from learning the righteous judgments of God. These righteous judgments are the very Word of God.

Volumes could not exhaust this Psalm, as the student will quickly discover if he meditates upon each verse of it. He will realize that no matter how much importance we may place upon the Word, God has already attached an importance to it which we can never equal. Take, for example, this matchless portion:

**"O how love I Thy law, it is my meditation all the day**

**Thou through Thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies, for they are ever with me.**

**I have more understanding than all my teachers: for Thy testimonies are my**

## **meditation.**

**I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Thy precepts.**

**I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep Thy Word.**

**I have not departed from Thy judgments: for Thou hast taught me.**

**How sweet are Thy words unto my taste Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth**

**Through Thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.**

**Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."**

**Psalm 119:97-105.**

The importance of knowing the Word of God receives its greatest emphasis in the book of Proverbs. In order to fully appreciate its testimony, let every reader consider that maybe, tomorrow, or next year, or in ten years a situation will arise in which he will realize the imperative need of a wisdom that is higher than his own. He cannot lean upon "would-be" advisers because of their conflicting voices, and he will long for a wisdom that far exceeds anything possessed by mortal men. The hour of need is positively too late to secure such wisdom, and if we would be ready to face the problems of life, we must secure our wisdom in advance. But, someone will ask how wisdom can be obtained in advance to meet a problem which is unknown in advance? Is there a general wisdom that will make a man wise in every situation? The answer is, "Yes." There is a wisdom that never fails. That wisdom is a knowledge of the Word of God.

In the first chapter of Proverbs wisdom is personified and appears as a herald. She cries outside our dwellings, and her voice is heard in the busy thoroughfares. In the busy marts of trade, wherever men gather, her voice is lifted up above the noise. She seeks the attention of those who are engaged in seeking gold, gain or success. She asks a direct and challenging question:

**"How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?" Prov. 1:22.**

Since wisdom still utters her cry, this question today can only be applicable to those who feel that it is ideal to be in possession of the barest minimum of truth. They take pride in confessing that all they want to hear or know is what they call "the simple gospel" In this passage wisdom places these simple ones who love simplicity in the same class with the scorners who delight in scorning and the fools who hate knowledge. These words are spoken in reproof, and are intended to make men turn. If they turn from their love of ignorance and their hatred of every advance in knowledge, they will enter into possession of the spirit of wisdom and be in possession of the words of wisdom. Man's failure to do this brings the following judgment. Wisdom says:

**"Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught my counsel, and would none of my**

**reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord." Proverbs 1 :24-29.**

These verses are often quoted in connection with the gospel and are presented as God's call to sinners to come to Christ, and a threat of dire consequences if men refuse. But in fact they are wisdom's call to those who love simplicity and to the fools who hate knowledge. If they fail to heed now, wisdom will laugh at them when they call in the day of distress and anguish.

I claim no power to see into the future, and I would not be guilty of painting dark pictures of the years to come. Yet, I know that the problems that the post-war world must face will be as great as those imposed by the war. Victory will bring its day or week of celebration, and after that comes such things as untold millions of defeated soldiers fleeing back to their countries in disorder, imported foreign workers and prisoners of war abandoning the countries of their captivity and returning to what was once their homes, the people who were forced to migrate returning to their war ravaged lands. In Russia alone fifty million Soviet citizens will return to the wasted territory of western Russia. Starvation, disease, disorder and chaos is almost sure to have its reign. Our own country may remain untouched by the ravages of war, yet we will not be isolated from the problems of the post-war world. These problems in our own country may be so great that all the combined wisdom of men may not be equal to them. These years are just ahead for us, nevertheless, we can face them with assurance and confidence if we know the personal and the written Word of God.

We cannot imagine the problems we may have to face, but we do know that a knowledge of the Word of God will make us wise in that day. In the days that may intervene before these days are upon us, let us diligently seek to greatly increase our store of divine wisdom.

**"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." Proverbs 3 :5-6.**

# PRINCIPLES OF BIBLE STUDY

My first three messages in this radio series have been *about* the Word of God. It is necessary that this one be *about* the Bible also. Some unfaithful servants are always talking about the Bible, but never come to the place where they actually proclaim the Word of God. However, it is essential at times to speak about the Bible, so this message will be of the same nature as the three that have preceded it. In my next message, I will not speak about the Word of God, but will begin the work of expounding the Scriptures, the task to which this radio ministry is dedicated. One more message is needed to clear the ground for these expositions, therefore, in to day's broadcast I plan to deal with some of the barriers that stand in the way of an honest and fair consideration of the Word of God, also some of the principles or rules that must be observed if we are to find pleasure and profit in Bible study. There are certain cardinal principles which should guide and govern everyone who seeks for truth in the divine Word. If these principles are ignored the student will reap only confusion for his labors. If these principles are adhered to, the efforts of the student will result in truth.

First of all, let every man who studies the Word of God be fully convinced in his own mind concerning just what he wants and just what he expects from this Book. Does he approach it with the earnest desire that it will fulfill in his life the exact purpose for which God gave it? Let every man who would open this book search his own heart and life and determine if it is the truth that he wants.

Some claim to be seeking the truth when they really do not want it. Their only desire is for some pleasant belief or comfortable conviction. Many hold the idea that the one thing above all others to be desired and sought for is *comfort*. They read the Bible for *comfort*. They desire the one who proclaims the Word to speak some word of *comfort*. They reject the plainest of truths because there is no *comfort* in them, and greedily accept some error just because they find some *comfort* in it.

It must be recognized that truth is not always pleasant, neither does it always bring comfort. By its very nature it should exercise us, and the one who is exercised is sure to be disturbed.

Many who claim to be searching the Word of God in order to find the truth, are searching it for the purpose of ratifying some belief already held, or to find something in support of some creed or tradition. All such have deceived themselves into

believing that they really want the truth and are seeking for it. Yet they are determined to accept or believe nothing that conflicts with what they already hold to be the truth.

**The question "What is true?" must always be the first principle that guides us when we open the Book.** As stated before, truth may not always be pleasant, it may at times be very disagreeable to our cherished opinions, it may be very disturbing, it may exercise us greatly, it may prove something to be erroneous that we desire to prove to be true, it may brand the so-called orthodox view as gross error, and witness that the so-called heretical view is the truth. Nevertheless, we must accept its statements, just because they are the truth. Truth may bring an end to what we call "our service," and ruin what we call "our testimony" or "our influence."

In the book of Proverbs we are exhorted to **"Buy the truth, and sell it not" (Prov. 23 :33)**. This is sufficient to teach us that truth is costly. Those who pursue it must ever be ready to pay the price. We must stand prepared to renounce many things for the truth, and, above all, we must not expect from it any temporal advantages or material gains. No man possesses the whole truth, but some men have received and do possess "the love of the truth." These follow it, as Ruth did Naomi, wherever it may lead. They do not ask where it will lead them. They do not demand to know the end at the beginning. They can say of the TRUTH:

**"Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."**

Such words as these can be spoken of the truth by all who possess "the love of the truth." They will receive the truth and embrace it. They will not be deterred by the changes that truth will demand in their social or ecclesiastical positions.

Many Christians do not realize it, but it has become a settled principle with them to reject everything that claims to be the truth unless it is ministered to them in a certain conventional manner, that is, by their own preachers in their own churches. There are those who demand that every truth shall have the support of certain great and famous names, otherwise it cannot be received as truth. Such attitudes as these set aside completely the message and authority of the Word of God, and they will always prove to be an effective barrier against the entrance of the truth.

God speaks plainly, distinctly and in no uncertain manner in regard to the purpose for which He gave His Word and the ministry which He intended the Word to perform. This declaration is found in **2 Timothy 3 :16**, which we will examine statement by statement.



## **All scripture is given by inspiration of God.**

Literally this means that all Scripture is God breathed. Therefore, there can be no possibility of error. This passage does not teach that the men who wrote the Bible were inspired. It is not a book written by inspired men in their own words. This verse teaches that the very words they wrote were inspired. The Bible is the inspired Word of God.

**It is profitable for teaching.** It was given for this purpose. If we do not intend to be taught by it, we may just as well leave it alone. Strange indeed is the idea that prevails among God's people that they have reached perfection and finality of truth. This erects a barrier against all growth in knowledge. And, stranger still, is the idea held by so many that they are in possession of the truth before they even begin to study. These people turn to the Bible to find support for their beliefs, but their beliefs are fixed and they need no teaching. It would be well indeed if every professing Christian would ask himself this question - "Have I been taught by the Word of God?"

**It is profitable for reproof.** The Greek word which is here translated *reproof* means exposure. This does not mean that the Scriptures were given to us to expose others. It is intended by God that Scripture will expose us, lay bare our thoughts, our beliefs, our deeds and our practices, and submit them all to the merciless glare of the light and the truth. The Lord Jesus said that those who do evil do not come to the light lest their deeds should be exposed.

**It is profitable for correction.** Most people will readily admit that Scripture can correct their lives. They readily confess that "they are not perfect." But they will not admit for one moment that the Word can correct their beliefs. What they hold as truth is considered by them to be so perfect that any correction is, to them, unthinkable and impossible.

**It is profitable for instruction and righteousness.** This literally means discipline in righteousness. It is by discipline that the fingers of the musician learn to bring music from the keyboard. If we permit it to perform its work, the sacred Scriptures will lead us to dedicate every faculty to God in our search for the truth. It will lead us to give ourselves entirely to the attainment of the truth.

The four statements taken together reveal the divine purpose God would have His Word to perform in our lives. It is profitable for teaching, for exposure, for correction, and for discipline in righteousness. God's truth was given to mold the life of the individual. The more clearly we comprehend the truth, the more powerful will be the influence it exerts upon our lives. We can only practice what we know. Those who know the truth are the only ones who can practice it.

A constant barrier to the truth is the idea that it is a brittle and fragile thing that will fall to pieces the moment it is handled. Truth is of such strength that Paul did not hesitate to declare:

**"For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth." 2 Cor. 13:18.**

Truth invites inspection and submits to the most searching analysis. It recognizes no authority but the Lord *Jesus* Christ. It settles all questions by the words God has spoken. Nothing else can influence it in any manner.

The years I have spent as a student of the Scriptures have brought about the intense conviction that the greatest barrier that exists between the man of God and the truth is his failure to obey the divine principle set forth in **2 Timothy 2 :15.**

**"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."**

In fact, there are two important principles set forth in this verse. In all our labors in the Word, we must seek only God's approval. Men will weigh our efforts in their own unjust balances and often speak disapprovingly of them. However, this is a very small thing in the eyes of the true workman. He did not seek their approval in the first place, and he has a divine contempt for their scorn as well as for their praise. Since their approval would mean nothing, their disapproval, if possible, would mean still less.

If we endeavor to present ourselves before God as qualified and unashamed workmen we will need to give earnest heed to the great principle set forth in the words "rightly dividing the word *of* truth." The truth has its divisions and it is our duty to discover these and abide by them. This is an exceedingly simple matter if we approach it through the wide open door and not try to enter in by some back window. The matter becomes highly confused when everyone lays hold of some verse and begins to cry that it has a place under God's present administration.

For example, when the follower of the Lord *Jesus* Christ reads His words, he often comes face to face with certain direct and positive commandments that are impossible for him to obey.

**"Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." Matt. 5:42.**

**"Therefore take no thought saying, What shall we eat? or What shall we drink? or Wherewithal shall be clothed?" Matt. 6:31.**

**"Fear not little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms." Luke 12 :32.33.**

These, all must admit, are the words *of* the Lord *Jesus*. They are His commands. What, then, are we to do about them? Restrict their force, until they no longer mean what they say? Make some superficial attempt at obedience? Better still, to rightly divide the word of truth and leave these commands in all their force in the administration where God placed them.

What God meant by the words "rightly dividing the word of truth" is clear from the illustration which immediately follows it. Hymeneus and Philetus did not deny the resurrection. They misplaced it. They put it in the *past* when it was *future*. Every truth has its place, and when it is taken out of its place, the truth is wrested and becomes error.

We must not take what is written concerning the future and apply it to the present. We must not take truth belonging to the past and carry it into the present or future. The truth that concerns Israel, and that which concerns us should not be mixed. The only way we can have the truth is to leave it in the administration where God has placed it.

## DISPENSATIONAL TRUTH

The word *dispensation* is an eminently Scriptural term. Those who object to it must remember that they are objecting to something that has a positive place in the Word of God. It never appears in the creeds of the professing church, but it does appear in the Bible. There are those who object to it because they are ignorant of its meaning. When such objections are made it becomes our duty to instruct the objector in the great facts revealed in Scripture in regard to dispensational truth. When the objection is willful, made in spite of knowledge and light, it may become our duty to expose such objectors for their unfaithful handling of the Word of God.

**In Ephesians 3:2 we read: "If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given me to you-ward."**

One does not need to be a profound scholar in order to learn from this that there is such a thing as *the dispensation of the grace of God*. This verse alone establishes the fact of dispensational truth. The man of faith who reads this passage will take God at His Word and act upon it by walking in the light of this truth.

Because it has been condemned by men whose only desire is to protect some established creed or cherished belief, many professing Christians are very shy of

dispensational truth. Yet if they realized it, they are really dispensationalists themselves.

Any person is a dispensationalist who trusts in the blood of Christ for his redemption rather than bringing an animal sacrifice. Anybody who says that certain practices were God's will at one time, but are not the will of God now, is a dispensationalist. Therefore, to a certain degree, every Christian is a dispensationalist.

Most Christians never read the Bible. But if they do read it through, they cannot fail to come to the conclusion that God's will is not the same for all times, therefore, it becomes our solemn and imperative duty to know God's will for the present time. They will also see that God's revealed will and purpose for one body of people may not be His will and purpose for another body of people.

Common sense tells us immediately that the two truths set forth in the following passages are contradictory:

**"Every man child among you shall be circumcised." Gen. 17:10.**

**"If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing." Gal. 5 :2.**

Some, apart from any thought, would say at once that the first of these commandments was for the Jews, while the second is for the Gentiles. However, they fail to see that the man Abram, to whom the command of circumcision was given, was not a Jew in the sense of any meaning that can be attached to that term. He was the same kind of a man as the Galatians, to whom Paul spoke so strongly against this ancient rite.

The one who has made "all Scripture" his study, knows very well that all of God's commandments are not for us, and he also knows that God's commandments to one people may not be binding upon another people.

If I am to know and do the will of God, it becomes necessary for me to settle once and for all just who and what I am in the sight of God. And I must settle this matter by the word of God in such a way that it will leave no doubts to continually arise and harass me in my walk and service.

If, in the sight of God, my faith in the Lord Jesus has made me an Israelite, then certain things are binding upon me, certain commandments must be kept by me, and certain statements in the Word are true of me. Beyond all question, God has revealed His will for those who before Him are Israelites.

If, before God, my faith in the Lord Jesus has made me a member of that out-calling (church) of God which is so prominent in the Acts and in the epistles written during the Acts period, then God's will for me is clear and His commandments to me are very definite. For example, if I have been called into the Church of God as a Jew, I must remain one in all things, and if I have been called into it as a Gentile, then I must abide in that calling. See I Cor. 7:17 to 22.

If God has called me to be a Baptist, a Catholic or a Methodist, then my duty is exceedingly clear. I must do what Baptists are expected to do, or what the Catholic church expects of its members, or, just be a good Methodist.

However, if God has called me into "the Church which is His body" of which *Jesus* Christ is the Head, if I have answered that call by faith and now can truly confess that I am a member of that high calling, then God's will for me is clear and my course is plain. I will not need to be hopelessly confused when self - appointed lords over God's heritage try to place me under compulsion to obey some specific command that God gave to Israel or to the Church of God of the Acts period. I will be able to resist the attempts of all ecclesiastics who would try to have me walk according to the rules of their church. I can take my place as a member of the Church which is His body, and insist that my one duty is to walk worthily of the calling wherewith I am called.

When one seeks to learn his true position before God, out of all the positions revealed in the Word, he is a student of dispensational truth. Dispensational truth makes an honest and serious attempt to distinguish between positions that differ. We cannot be everything before God, therefore, we must be one thing.

When one seeks to know God's will for the present time, and God's commandments for the present time, it makes one a student of dispensational truth. Such study is fundamental to any clear understanding of the whole of God's Word. Apart from it the Bible will always be a confused book, filled with contradictory statements and commands.

In **Acts 15** we have the record of certain men who came from Judea and worked havoc among the Gentile believers by insisting, "**Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.**" When these men were challenged they could point to "chapter and verse" in support of their teaching. One can easily visualize the calm assurance of these Judaizing teachers as they unrolled the sacred scroll of the Book of **Genesis** and pointed triumphantly to the place where it said, "**Every man**

**child among you shall be circumcised."** They could also point to the example of Christ, who was circumcised on the eighth day (Luke 2 :1), and use this to argue that all who follow Him should do likewise. And the only answer to them would have been to "rightly divide" the Word of Truth. Their arguments were true in regard to the *Jews*, but they had no bearing upon the Gentile believers who stood as a separate group before God.

If the words of Scripture are not divided in regard to the times in which they apply and to the people to whom they apply, that which was given to lead us into truth will only lead us into confusion. Every male child must be circumcised (Gen. 17:14), but if he is circumcised then Christ will profit him nothing (Gal. 5 :2).

That which is declared to be profitable (Rom. 3 :1-2), is also declared to be of no profit (Gal. 5 :2). We must keep the feasts three times each year (Ex. 23 :14), but we must not be subject to ordinances (Co1. 2:20). We must sell what we have and give alms (Luke 12:33), but we must also provide for our own (I Tim. 5:8). We must beat our plowshares into swords and our pruning hooks into spears (Joel 3 :10), at the same time we are beating our swords into plowshares and our spears into pruning hooks (Isa. 2:4). The widow will discover that she is advised to remain in that state (I Cor. 7 :8), while she is also advised to marry (I Tim. 5 :14). Thus it is that God's Word becomes contradictory and confusing when we fail to give due heed to the great principle set forth in 2 Timothy 2 :15:

**"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."**

The first duty of the child of God is to become familiar with the Word of God. The majority want interpretation and understanding, and despise the efforts by which familiarity is gained. The right to interpret any part of the Word belongs only to those who are familiar with the whole of it, and God's gift of understanding is only for those who have gained this familiarity.

When one knows what God has said in His Word, when he has attained to some measure of familiarity with the whole of God's revelation, the matter of right division becomes exceedingly simple when the task is honestly and sincerely approached without bias and prejudice.

As the record of God's ways with the human race begins to unfold in the Word of God, it can be seen that God is dealing with mankind as a whole upon a certain basis. Man has an inherent knowledge of right and wrong. Therefore it was his duty to "fear God 'and work righteousness."

At the call of Abraham God began to deal with the descendants of Abraham in a special and peculiar way, while His basis of dealing with the rest of mankind remained unaltered and unchanged. The record of God's peculiar dealings with one branch of the human race, the people of Israel, is the theme that dominates the Word of God from Genesis 12 to Acts 28 :28. Even God's dealings with the Gentiles in the Acts period was for the purpose of provoking Israel to jealousy and emulation.

At the close of the book of Acts we discover that "the salvation of God was sent to the Gentiles." This provided a new basis in which God deals with the world in view of the fact that He has given His Son and this Son has died for mankind.

Today, we are forced to divide the human race into three groups. Those who have never heard of Christ, but who do have the inherent knowledge of God and of right and wrong. They are responsible to act upon this light. Those who have heard the gospel of Christ and have put their faith in Him. This group makes up the many who are called, and their hope is glorious. Then we have a smaller group who have been both called and out-called. These now form the out-calling which is His body.

When these great truths are understood and believed, they will convince us of the utter futility of expecting men who insist that they are Baptists, Methodists or Presbyterians to walk as members of the Church which is His body. Even the *called* cannot be expected to walk as the *out-called*. The one who by faith knows that he is a member of the Church which is His body will have no difficulty in determining what God expects of him as the worthy walk of His calling. The conflict and confusion comes from trying to be one thing before God and another thing before men.

Our Lord said, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon," but most men believe they have discovered a way of doing this. They deceive themselves. He said, "No servant can serve two masters," but some are sure this can be done. They also deceive themselves. And no man can walk in harmony with the truth of two different churches. We can never expect to get the pure truth of the Church which is His body from those who serve other churches.

Once we determine from the Word the Church of which God has made us members, the matter of the will of God for us becomes exceedingly simple. Some men call this "extreme dispensationalism." We call it "going all the way with God."

**The End #SS06**

