

STUDY TO SHEW THYSELF APPROVED UNTO GOD

TEXT: II TIMOTHY 2:15

INTRODUCTION:

1. Many years ago, the American evangelist R.A. Torrey held evangelistic meetings throughout Great Britain. Second Timothy 2:15 was the watchword or slogan of the evangelistic campaign.
2. In sending letters people would put on the envelopes, "II Timothy 2:15." Christians would dispatch telegrams bearing the message, "II Timothy 2:15."
3. Christians would greet one another in the street by quoting this verse of Scripture. Placards and signs and posters with this Scripture were everywhere -- on buildings, street corners, houses, walls, and so on.
4. It would be wonderful to see something like that here in New York!
5. "Study" (2:15) means hard work. King Solomon said, "Much study is a weariness of the flesh" (Eccl. 12:12).
6. There are no shortcuts when it comes to studying God's Word.
7. Regarding II Timothy 2:15, D. Edmond Hiebert says, "The word rendered 'study' in the KJV...means to make haste, to exert oneself, to be zealous or eager, to give diligence" (*Second Timothy*).
8. *Strong's Concordance* says "study" means, "to exert one's self, endeavour, give diligence."

I. WANTING GOD'S APPROVAL

1. The *Biblical Illustrator* says "*approved* indicates ceaseless, serious, earnest zeal, which was one of Paul's chief characteristics."
2. The Bible says, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God..." -- not unto man.
3. Each and every Christian should want to hear these words from our Lord: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25:21).
4. We study to show ourselves approved unto God, but in I Timothy 4:15 Paul told Timothy, "that thy profiting (progress, advancement) may appear to all."
5. We should study many books, but first and foremost should be the Bible.
6. Psalm 119:11 says, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."
7. Psalm 119:105 says, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

8. Psalm 119:133 says, "Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me."
9. Some Christians say they have little time for Bible reading and Bible study. Then they must make time. They must find the time. We must get our priorities right.
10. The idea behind the word "workman" is hard work, strenuous work. The word is often translated "labourer." Jesus said, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:37, 38).
11. In II Timothy 2, Paul has already referred to the hard work of a soldier (2:3, 4), an athlete (2:5), and a farmer (2:6). All of these workers must work diligently in order to be successful.
12. Colossians 3:23 and 24 says, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ."
13. We serve the Lord. And part of our service is studying God's Word. We cannot effectively share the Word of God with others until we first learn it ourselves.
14. Daniel said, "In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem" (Dan. 9:2).
15. By studying the prophecies of Jeremiah, Daniel understood that the 70 year Babylonian captivity had nearly run its course. Just as Daniel "understood by books" the end of the 70 year captivity, so we today can understand through studying God's Word that the return of the Lord is near.

II. IF WE STUDY WE WILL NOT BE ASHAMED (2:15).

1. My wife used to like watching the television show "Jeopardy." Many years ago we were watching it together and were impressed by the knowledge of one of the contestants. He breezed right through difficult questions about science, history, geography, and so on.
2. But there was one category left -- the Bible, and this intelligent, educated contestant did not know the answer to any of the questions!
3. Educated but Biblically-illiterate! How shameful!
4. It is one thing for a worldly, unsaved person to be Biblically-illiterate, but what about a Christian who is Biblically-illiterate?!

5. Every New Year's Eve we have a Bible quiz and sadly some members (especially teenagers) prove they do not know the Bible very well.
6. Many Christians will be ashamed at the judgment seat of Christ (cf. I John 2:28; II John 8).
7. I recall watching the Pentecostal preacher Jim Bakker interviewed on television right after he was released from prison. He admitted that prior to his incarceration he had never read the Bible! He read it for the first time after he was imprisoned and he had plenty of time to read.
8. This is how Pentecostalism spreads -- people are not reading the Bible!

III. WE MUST RIGHTLY DIVIDE THE WORD OF TRUTH (2:15).

1. "Rightly dividing" literally means to "cut straight." This means we must properly interpret the Word of God.
2. "Rightly dividing" literally means to "cut straight." Perhaps Paul was thinking of his skill as a tentmaker.
3. The Bible is a big book and it must be handled properly. It has certain divisions in it -- for example, the Old Testament and the New Testament. You cannot just lift a verse out of context and run with it.
4. That is what the cults do.
5. Scripture must be compared with Scripture.
6. I heard about a young Bible-college student who was preaching about Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16), but he got this Lazarus mixed up with Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha.
7. We must learn to distinguish between salvation by grace, and rewards for service. Second Corinthians 5:10 says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." This is talking about rewards for service, not salvation.
8. Some Christians get the rapture mixed up with the revelation of Christ at the end of the tribulation. At the rapture, Christ comes *for* His saints. At the revelation, He comes *with* His saints.
9. Some mix up the White Throne Judgment with the Judgment Seat of Christ. There is a big difference!
10. Some Christians cannot tell the difference between Israel and the church. First Corinthians 10:32 says, "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God."
11. Some people (for example, the Seventh-Day Adventists) scramble together law and grace.

12. Hyper-dispensationalists (or "ultra-dispensationalists") teach that baptism and the Lord's Supper are not for the churches today.
13. H. A. Ironside wrote a very good booklet about this error called *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth: Ultra-Dispensationalism Examined in the Light of Holy Scripture*. This little booklet is available on the Internet.
14. Second Timothy 3:16 says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."
15. However, while all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for us, we must learn to "rightly divide the word of truth" (2:15).
16. For example, the Old Testament animal sacrifices are not for the church age. We do not have a high priest today.
17. We understand that these sacrifices pointed to Christ, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).
18. The epistle to the Hebrews teaches that Christ is our great High Priest.
19. We do not observe the Jewish sabbath. We worship on Sunday, the Lord's Day, etc. This is rightly dividing the Word of truth.
20. Why are Roman Catholics mixed up? They do not rightly divide the Word of truth. They say Mary was the mother of Jesus; and Jesus is God. Therefore, Mary is the "Mother of God."
21. They say there were priests in Israel, therefore they have their priests today, etc. We must rightly divide the Word of truth!

CONCLUSION: hand-out sheets for Bible study.