

2 Timothy 2:15.

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

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COMMENTARY.

Timothy 2:15: Shame is a terrible thing that God never intended man to feel. When God created Adam and Eve, they knew no shame (Genesis 2:25). Shame came as a result of sin, and since all have sinned (Romans 3:23), everyone since Adam and Eve has known shame.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines “shame” as “a painful emotion caused by a strong sense of guilt, embarrassment, un-worthiness, or disgrace.”

Through the atonement of Christ, we have been freed from all shame. Jesus took our shame upon Him and gave us His glory.

“Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed” (Romans 9:33).

Paul told Timothy to study God’s Word to discover his freedom from shame. That is always the proper use of God’s Word. If study of God’s Word produces condemnation instead of freedom from shame, then the Word of God is not being rightly divided

This phrase “rightly dividing” means to correctly dissect the Word of God. The New International Version translated it as “who correctly handles the word of truth.” The Amplified Bible renders it as “correctly analyzing and accurately dividing [rightly handling and skillfully teaching] the Word of Truth.”

There is a right and wrong way to interpret God’s Word. You can preach A truth from a certain passage, yet it may not be the truth the verse is proclaiming. This is not handling the Word of God correctly.

The context of this statement is speaking about studying the Word of God for the purpose of proving to ourselves our righteous position in Christ. Once we comprehend and understand our acceptance in Christ, it will lead us to rightly divide all Scripture in the light of this truth.

For instance, a person could take Exodus 20:8, which says, “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy,” and expound an Old Testament truth that would put people under bondage about observing certain days. The New Testament makes it clear that the Sabbath was a picture of an N.T. reality that was fulfilled in Christ (see **Colossians 2:16** and **Colossians 2:17**). If people don’t reveal the N.T. reality of what the O.T. Sabbath shadowed, then they aren’t rightly dividing the word of truth.

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Colossians 2:16-17.

16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:

17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

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COMMENTARY.

Colossians 2:16.

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:

This is a radical statement for Paul's time. The Jews judged people all the time over these things. It was prescribed in Scripture that a person who didn't keep these laws could be killed. But Christ took all of these laws and nailed them to His cross (Colossians 2:14), thereby freeing us from their observance.

Most Christians have departed from the Old Testament laws concerning restrictions on what believers eat and drink, because of New Testament scriptures like 1 Timothy 4:1-5, where the Apostle Paul made it very clear that to practice the O.T. dietary laws is a doctrine of devils. Likewise, most Christians have realized believers have been redeemed from the O.T. laws concerning special feasts and sacrifices every new moon. Most Christians don't even know when the last new moon was. So, four of the five things listed in this verse have been recognized by the N.T. church as **symbolic, with their fulfillment in Christ**. Therefore, we don't follow these O.T. patterns.

But when it comes to the Sabbath **{holy days}**, many N.T. Christians exempt it from this list and the obvious truth expressed in the next verse. This is inconsistent and hypocritical. If we are redeemed from the first four things listed in this verse, then we are redeemed from the O.T. observance of the Sabbath too. Under our New Covenant with God, we now live in a continual Sabbath (see my notes at Hebrews 4:3-9 and Colossians 2:17).

If Colossians 2:14-16 were not true, then we should all be Seventh Day Adventists. Only God can "blot out" what He has written (Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14). God told Israel to make a distinction between clean and unclean food so that He might make a distinction between Jews and Gentiles (Deuteronomy 14:2 and 21). Under the New Covenant, however, the wall of partition that separated Jews from Gentiles has been broken down so that all may have equal access to God (Ephesians 2:14-15 and 18). God hears and answers prayers whether or not we've eaten pork or worshiped on a certain day.

This is in reference to the Old Testament laws concerning meats that could and could not be eaten. The definitive chapters concerning this in the O.T. are Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14:3-21. Rabbits, camels, pigs, and other animals were forbidden among beasts of the field. Among the animals in the water, lobsters, shrimp, oysters, and anything else that didn't have scales or fins was considered unclean. In the bird kingdom, all birds that were scavengers were forbidden. Any animal that had paws was unclean, and all creeping things such as snakes, snails, and turtles were unclean.

Although these dietary laws were strictly enforced in the O.T., Paul revealed in the New Testament that it was a doctrine of devils to command anyone to "abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is

good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving” (1 Timothy 4:3-4). Peter was shown in a vision that God had cleansed things that were considered unclean in the O.T. (Acts 10:10-16 and 28, see note 5 at Acts 10:16). All these things were symbolic (see note 28 at Colossians 2:17).

Therefore, anyone who uses the O.T. dietary laws, **{holy days}**, for anything other than symbolism that finds its complete fulfillment in Christ, is in error. Those who preach that the dietary laws were for health reasons are missing the point that Paul was making in these verses.

Note 24 at Colossians 2:16: The “drink” that Paul was referring to here is a little ambiguous. There were drink offerings required in the Old Testament (Exodus 29:40-41; Leviticus 23:13, 18, 37; Numbers 28:7-15, 24, and 31), but these were nearly always referred to as “drink offerings.” The only other restrictions on what could be drunk are total abstinence of any drink made from grapes for those who took a Nazarite vow (Numbers 6:2-3) and a total ban on blood (Leviticus 17:10-14).

Just as the other things listed in this verse, abstinence from certain drinks was symbolic and finds its New Testament fulfillment in Christ. The O.T. abstinence pictured the separation described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:31.

In Leviticus 23, there were seven feasts listed that the Jews had to observe:

- 1) the Passover (Leviticus 23:4-5, see note 1 at John 2:13).
- 2) the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:6-8), which immediately followed the Passover and became part of the Passover feast.
- 3) the feast of Firstfruits (Leviticus 23:9-14).
- 4) the feast of Pentecost (Leviticus 23:15-21), which was also called the Feast of Weeks (Deuteronomy 16:9-12).
- 5) the feast of Trumpets (Leviticus 23:23-25 and Numbers 29:1-6).
- 6) the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:26-32, 16:29-34; and Numbers 29:7-11).
- 7) the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:33-43, Numbers 29:12-40, and Deuteronomy 16:13-15; see note 1 at John 7:2), which was also called the feast of Booths (Leviticus 23:39-43).

It was mandatory for all males to come to Jerusalem to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread (which probably included the Passover), the feast of Firstfruits, and the Feast of Ingathering, which was also called the feast of Tabernacles, or Booths. See Exodus 23:14-17.

The Jews later came to commemorate the feast of Purim (Esther 9:24-32), which celebrated Esther’s victory over Haman, and the feast of the dedication (see note 1 at **John 10:22**), which celebrated the re-purification of the temple under the Maccabees.

John 10:22.

And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter.

The feast of the dedication was an annual festival instituted in 165 B.C. by Judas Maccabeus to celebrate the renewal and purification of the temple exactly three years after it had been desecrated by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who polluted it with Greek idolatry.

Also called the festival of lights, it was celebrated for eight days in much the same way as was the Feast of Tabernacles (see note 1 at John 7:2). Beginning on the twenty-fifth day of the Jewish month of Kislev (which approximates our month of December), it was a winter festival that the Jews still observe today, now called **Hanukkah**.

Paul made it clear that the observance of **holy days** was an individual decision **not to be imposed on others** or forbidden to others (see note 3 at **Galatians 4:10**, note 8 at **Romans 14:5**, and note 9 at **Romans 14:6**). *****

Galatians 4:10.

Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.

Paul was rebuking the Galatians for trying to incorporate observance of the Old Testament Law into the Gospel that he had brought to them (see note 8 at Galatians 1:7). Here, he named some of the things they were proclaiming had to be done to receive right standing with God.

The observance of days refers to keeping the Sabbath (see note 1 at John 5:16). Observing months and times is a reference to the new moons (Numbers 10:10, 1 Chronicles 23:31, and Psalms 81:3) and feasts (i.e., Passover, Firstfruits, etc.). **Observing years** refers to the Sabbath year and the Year of Jubilee of Leviticus 25. Paul made it very clear that the keeping of these rituals is not necessary for salvation. Those who preach that it is are dangerously close to having their faith in Christ voided (Galatians 2:21), as Paul described in the next verse.

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Romans 14:5.

One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

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On other occasions, Paul called it bondage to observe special days (Galatians 4:9-10). Once again, this must be denoting people who were observing certain days as a mere conviction and not a command (see note 3 at Romans 14:1). Personal conviction and doctrinal truth are two different things.

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Galatians 4:9-10.

9 But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?
10 Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.

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Romans 14:6.

He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

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This verse verifies that these observances of certain days and abstinence from meats were not done in a legalistic manner that caused people to think they were earning salvation. They were doing these things as unto the Lord..

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Romans 14:1.

Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.

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Paul was saying that we shouldn't be critical of or discriminate against those who are weak in their convictions. This has been interpreted by some as inconsistent with some of Paul's actions.

Right here, in this epistle, Paul had called the legalistic Jewish Christians impenitent and hardhearted (Romans 2:5). In dealing with the same subject in the letter to the Galatians, Paul was very uncompromising, saying that they had been bewitched (Galatians 3:1) and that they were fallen from grace if they trusted in circumcision (Galatians 5:2-4). He also said, in Galatians 2:5, that he didn't give any place to the legalistic Jews who were advocating circumcision for salvation.

How do Paul's actions harmonize with what he was teaching here?

There are some doctrinal points that are nonnegotiable and others that are not. When it comes to the doctrine of grace for salvation, Paul didn't compromise. He even said, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8).

If these Jewish believers had taught that abstinence from meats and observance of special days are essential for salvation, Paul would not have tolerated it. However, if these Jewish Christians were professing righteousness with God solely based on the work of Christ yet had a personal conviction about these other things, that was okay.

The thought or the motive behind the action is what must be judged.

Paul didn't object to circumcision; Paul objected to faith in circumcision instead of faith in Christ. **He even circumcised Timothy to keep from offending the Jews** (Acts 16:3). Yet when the legalistic Jews tried to pressure Paul about the circumcision of Titus (Galatians 2:3-5), Paul would not bend.

Likewise, we cannot compromise on the matter of salvation by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8). But there should be room for Christians to dwell together yet have different ways of conduct.

Burnt offerings were to be made every new moon (1 Chronicles 23:31). Some believe that Psalms 81:3 links the feast of Trumpets (see note 25 at this verse) to the Seventh New Moon offering, making that feast a new moon feast (New Unger’s Bible Dictionary).

Each of the five things listed in this verse was a shadow of Christ (see note 28 at **Colossians 2:17**).

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Colossians 2:17.

What is a shadow? It is not the real person or thing, but it gives us information about the real person or thing. If I was around the corner of a building so that you could not see me but you could see my shadow, then that shadow could give you useful information. It could tell you if I was moving or standing still. And if I was moving, it could tell you whether I was coming closer or moving away. It could provide you with vague information about what I looked like. But it’s only a shadow.

If I walked around the corner and was in full view, it would be crazy for you to hug my shadow. Its only value is in the way it represents me. I would be the one you would want to greet and talk to. Likewise, the Sabbath and the other four things listed in Colossians 2:16 were shadows of New Testament realities. Those who cling to the shadow are missing the real person of Jesus and the rest that is now ours in Him. See my notes at **Hebrews 4:3-9**.

The word “shadow” means “a faint indication” (American Heritage Dictionary). When used as a verb, it means “to represent vaguely, mysteriously, or prophetically” (AHD). Each of the things listed in Colossians 2:16 served to represent something that the Messiah would accomplish. Now that Jesus the Messiah has come, the representation isn’t necessary. The New International Version translates this verse as “These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.”

A shadow is never as important as the person who casts it. Those who cling to the Old Testament shadow are missing the New Testament reality found in Jesus (see note 12 at Romans 14:14).

Jesus Christ is the body that cast all the Old Testament shadows. Now that we have Jesus Himself, why would anyone still cling to the shadow?

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Hebrews 4:3-9.

3 For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

4 For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.

5 And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest.

6 Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief:

7 Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

8 For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.

9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

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COMMENTARY.

Hebrews 4:3.

For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

This is a quote from Psalms 95:11, which says, "Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest." Then the writer of Hebrews speaks of God resting the seventh day from His labors of creation. This sheds more light on what this rest of the Lord is. It is the same rest that the Sabbath illustrated.

When God rested on the seventh day of creation, it wasn't because He was tired. He could have created twice as much as He did. Isaiah 40:28 says, "Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding." God rested not because of exhaustion but because everything was complete. There was nothing else to do. It was done perfectly. Anything more would have made it imperfect. It was a rest like a painter who finishes a painting and then rests from his painting. It's not because he's tired from holding the brush. It's because the painting is a masterpiece just the way it is. One more brushstroke would ruin it.

Likewise, God created everything so perfectly that there was nothing else to do. He created the animals and all plants and grass with the ability to procreate. Therefore, He doesn't have to create more animals or plants each day to replace the ones that died. He built the ability to reproduce into every living thing. He has never done more creating in the natural realm. He's resting in what has already been done.

Adam and Eve were created at the very end of the six days of creation. That's because everything was not ready for them before that time. If they would have been created first, they would have had to tread water for two days until the dry land appeared. There wouldn't have been sunshine, and therefore the earth would have been cold. There wouldn't have been any food to eat.

But they were created last, at the very end of creation and then moved immediately into the Lord's rest. They didn't have to plant the trees and wait seven years for them to bear fruit. The trees were already there with fruit on them. The climate was just right. Everything was perfect for them. They just rested in what was already done.

That's the way it is in the new birth. Jesus has already purchased salvation and all its benefits for us. It's already done. We don't have to pray and ask God to heal us or prosper us. It's already a done deal. We just need to rest in what has already been provided. We can reach a place where we aren't striving to get God to bless us but where we are resting by faith in what has already been done. That is the Sabbath rest that is being spoken of in this chapter.

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Hebrews 4:4.

For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.

This is a quote from Genesis 2:2, which says "And on the seventh day God ended the work which he had made: and he rested on the seventh day from all the work which he had made." So, the rest spoken of in this chapter is being compared to the Sabbath rest the Lord took after creation. The O.T. Sabbath was primarily a picture of this N.T. rest in Christ. See my notes at Colossians 2:17 and verse ten of this chapter.

The Sabbath pictured our rest in the Lord in the sense that just like God created everything that Adam and Eve would need before they were created, likewise everything we would ever need was purchased for us before we were born again. Now we don't have to ask the Lord to come and die for us. It's already been done. We just receive our salvation. And we don't have to ask the Lord to heal us. It's already been done (1 Peter 2:24). We just rest in the fact that it has been done and receive our healing. It's the same with prosperity, joy, deliverance, and everything else we could ever need. The supply was made before we ever had the need.

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Hebrews 4:5.

And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest.

The author had just quoted from Genesis 2:2, which spoke of the Lord resting on the Sabbath from His work of creation. Now he quotes Psalms 95:11 again about entering into the Lord's rest. This shows that this wasn't a one-time rest that was completed at Creation. But David was still encouraging people to enter the Lord's rest in his days. The

author later says in Hebrews 4:9, "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God."

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Hebrews 4:6.

Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief:

Since David spoke in Psalms 95:11 about entering into a rest, it is evident that the rest the Lord took after Creation (Genesis 2:2) wasn't the first and last rest. There was still a rest to be entered into in the days of David. And this was after the children of Israel had entered into the Promised Land. So, the occupation of the Promised Land wasn't the fulfillment of God's Sabbath rest either. The author is revealing that our trust and reliance on Christ's completed work is the rest that was prophesied and is available to all believers today.

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Hebrews 4:7.

Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

David's statement about entering into the rest of the Lord was made over 400 years after the children of Israel had occupied the Promised Land. Therefore, the occupation of the land of Canaan could not be the fulfillment of entering into the Lord's rest. That was and is only fulfilled as we rest in what the Lord Jesus has accomplished for us through His atonement.

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Hebrews 4:8

For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.

This is not speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ, but this is a reference to Joshua. Jesus is the Greek word for Joshua. The writer is saying that if Joshua bringing the children of Israel into the Promised Land had been the fulfillment of entering into the Lord's rest, then David wouldn't have spoken of entering into the Lord's rest (Psalms 95:11) 400 years later. The Jews' occupation of the Promised Land was not the rest that David spoke of.

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Hebrews 4:9.

There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

The conclusion of the arguments made in the previous verses is that the O.T. prophecies and the picture that the O.T. Sabbath was painting were all about a rest that is now available to us in the N.T. through faith in Christ.

The dietary laws, feast days, new moon offerings, and the Sabbath all represented Christ and what He would accomplish (Hebrews 4). Now that we have the person of Christ, each one of these things has now served its purpose and is no longer necessary to observe.

Most agree with this regarding the first four things listed in this verse, but many Christians still proclaim the Sabbath is a day that must be observed. However, this is not so. The Sabbath was a picture of a relationship with God that Jesus has now opened to all who believe. The Sabbath was only a picture and is now fulfilled in Christ (see note 12 at Romans 14:14). *****