How To Handle The Gospel

Intro: In 2 Tim. 2:15 “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” Paul told Timothy that he was to “rightly dividing the word of truth.” The ASV has in the place of rightly dividing, “handling aright.” This passage is dealing with our properly teaching the Gospel. Also, we see in this that our being approved of God depends on how we handle His Word. This involves more than just teaching it properly. What are some of the things involved in handling aright the word of Truth.

I. DON’T PERVERT IT.
   A. There are some who would do harm to the Gospel of Christ.
      1. Gal. 1:7 “Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.”
         a. Pervert means to transform into something of an opposite character, to change.
         b. The Judiazers were turning the Gospel into something else, and thus were troubling the church.
      2. 2 Pet. 3:16 “As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.”
         a. The unlearned and unstable were wresting the Scriptures and doing this to their own destruction.
         b. Wrest means to twist or torture; they were twisting the Scriptures from the true meaning.
   B. We see they had done this even in the 1st century.
      1. 1 Tim. 1:20 “Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.”
      2. 2 Tim. 2:17-18 “And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; 18Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.”
   C. What are we to do to those who would pervert the Gospel.
      1. We are withdraw from them, mark them, note them, and avoid them.
         a. Rom. 16:17 “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.”
         b. 2 The. 3:6, 14 “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.... 14And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.”
      2. 2 John 9-11 “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. 10If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: 11For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”

II. OBEY IT.
   A. The Gospel is not just to be heard and read, but it must be obeyed.
      1. Rom. 6:17 “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.”
2. Jam. 1:21-25 “Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. 22But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. 23For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: 24For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. 25But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”

3. 1 Pet. 1:22 “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:”

B. If we fail to obey it; 2 The. 1:6-9 “Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; 7And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, 8In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: 9Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;”

III. HOLD FAST TO IT.

A. Once we have obeyed the Gospel, we must cling to it.

1. 1 Cor. 15:1-2 “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.”

2. 1 Tim. 4:16 “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”

3. Mat. 10:22 “And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.”

4. Rev. 2:10 “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

B. We cannot allow ourselves to forsake it, or we are doomed.

1. Heb. 2:1-3 “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. 2For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; 3How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;”

a. *Slip* is literally to flow by or passing by; we are not to flow by or pass by what we have heard.

b. We are not to neglect (to be careless) the great salvation.

2. We are not make shipwreck of the faith; 1 Tim. 1:19 “Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck:”

3. It would be awful to stand at the judgment with a memory of faithfulness that had been abandoned.

IV. DO NOT BE ASHAMED OF IT.

A. We are not to be ashamed of God’s Word.

1. Rom. 1:16 “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”

2. 2 Tim. 1:8 “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;”
3. Mark 8:38 “Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

B. As a result of not being ashamed of the Gospel, Paul suffered continually.
1. 2 Cor. 6:4-5 “But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;”
2. 2 Cor. 11:23-28 “Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.”

C. When we are not ashamed of the Gospel, we too will suffer persecution.
1. Mat. 5:10-12 “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”
2. 2 Tim. 3:12 “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”
3. 1 Pet. 4:14, 16 “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.... Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.”

V. DEFEND IT.
A. Paul was set for the defense.
1. Phi. 1:7 “Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.”
2. Phi. 1:17 “But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.”
3. This was true even if it involved an apostle; Gal. 2:11, 14 “But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.... But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?”

B. We are to be prepared to do this.
1. Tit. 1:13 “This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith;”
2. 1 Tim. 6:12 “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.”
3. Jude 3 “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”
4. There are some today who are teaching that the Gospel does not need to be defended only to be proclaimed.
   a. If it will defend itself, why will it not proclaim itself.
   b. It must be both defended and proclaimed.
C. 1 Tim. 3:15 “But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”
   1. Pillar is a column supporting the weight of a building; here used as the church supporting and maintaining the Truth, God’s Word.
   2. Ground is a support, bulwark, or stay.
   3. The church is the stay and support for the Gospel.

VI. LIVE IT.
   A. Phi. 1:27 “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;”
   1. Conversation deals more with walk than talk.
   2. Our manner of life is to be consistent with the Gospel.
   3. That life:
      a. Phi. 3:20 “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ;”
      b. Col. 1:10 “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;”
      c. 1 The. 2:12 “That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.”
   B. It is not enough to be hearers of the Word, but we must do doers of the Word, good practitioners of the Gospel.
      1. Mat. 5:16 “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”
      2. What do our neighbors, kinfolks, friends, work associates think of our lives?
      3. Our lives are to adorn the Gospel; Tit. 2:10 “Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.”

VII. PREACH IT.
   A. We are commanded to preach the Gospel to every creature.
      1. Mark 16:15-16 “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”
      2. 1 Cor. 1:21 “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”
      3. 2 Tim. 2:2 “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”
   B. It is the only power to save man.
      1. 1 Cor. 1:18 “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”
      2. Rom. 1:16 “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”
      3. Jam. 1:21 “Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.”
   C. We should have a compelling influence to preach the Gospel.
      1. Rom. 1:15 “So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.”
2. 1 Cor. 9:16 “For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”

3. Jer. 20:9 “Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.”

Conclusion: There is nothing that compares to the Gospel. It is that unique message from heaven that reveals God’s plan to redeem man by the blood of Jesus. God has with infinite and loving care given it to us and preserved it for us. It was certified and energized with the blood of God’s only begotten Son. It is so important and precious that our attitude toward it gauges our attitude toward Christ himself; John 12:48 “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.” Let us handle that Word properly.