

RIGHTLY DIVIDE THE WORD OF TRUTH

(No. 1217 – 3/21/22 – Sermon Online Zoom)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. We are living in the last days. It is a time of great confusion, where right is called wrong and evil is called good—all dividing lines between truth and error are being blurred. We have become like the people of Nineveh whom God said could not “tell their right hand from their left” (Jonah 4:11). But God’s truth hasn’t changed, and He is looking for those who will boldly preach His word without compromise... those who will rightly divide the word of truth.
- B. **2 Tim. 2:15** (NKJV): *Be diligent* [“study” KJV] *to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth.***
1. Ministry isn’t for the slack and lazy—it requires diligence, effort, study—we are “workers”!
 2. We must **rightly divide** the word of truth
 - a) Gk. *orthotomeō* = “to cut straight”
 - b) MSG: “laying out the truth plain and simple”
 - c) Translation: TELL IT STRAIGHT! Don’t mince words, water down the truth, or blur the difference between right and wrong!
- C. Old Testament priests were to teach the difference between the clean and unclean according to the Law
1. **Lev. 10:8-11:** ⁸*Then the LORD said to Aaron,* ⁹*“You and your sons are not to drink wine or other fermented drink whenever you go into the Tent of Meeting, or you will die. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. ¹⁰**You must distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean,** ¹¹**and you must teach the Israelites all the decrees the LORD has given them through Moses.**”*
 2. **Lev. 11:45-47:** ⁴⁵*I am the LORD who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy. ⁴⁶These are the regulations concerning animals, birds, every living thing that moves in the water and every creature that moves about on the ground. ⁴⁷**You must***

distinguish between the unclean and the clean, between living creatures that may be eaten and those that may not be eaten.

3. **Lev. 20:25-26:** ²⁵*You must therefore make a distinction between clean and unclean animals and between unclean and clean birds. Do not defile yourselves by any animal or bird or anything that moves along the ground—those which I have set apart as unclean for you.* ²⁶*You are to be holy to Me because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be My own.*
4. **Ezek. 22:26** (NASB): *Her priests have done violence to My law and have profaned My holy things; **they have made no distinction between the holy and the profane, and they have not taught the difference between the unclean and the clean; and they hide their eyes from My sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.***
5. **Ezek. 44:23** (NASB): [God’s message to the priests]: *Moreover, **they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.***

D. The apostolic writers of the New Testament laid out the truth plain and simple—they addressed many of today’s so-called “gray issues” as BLACK or WHITE—no gray, no in-between, no compromise! But let us first go all the way back to the beginning of creation to see how God made clear distinctions between things like light and darkness, good and evil, life and death...

II. GOD MADE CLEAR DISTINCTIONS IN CREATION

A. Light and darkness

1. **Gen. 1:1-5:** ¹*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.* ²*Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.* ³*And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.* ⁴*God saw that the light was good, and **He separated the light from the darkness.*** ⁵*God called the light “day,” and the darkness **He called “night.”** And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.*

2. **Gen. 1:16-18:** ¹⁶*God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, ¹⁸to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good.*

B. Animals and man

1. **Gen. 1:25-27:** ²⁵*God made the **wild animals** according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ²⁶Then God said, “**Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.**” ²⁷So God created man in His own image, **in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.***
2. **1 Cor. 15:39:** *All flesh is not the same: **Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another.***
3. Evolution is a lie: Man is NOT descended from an ape or chimpanzee!

C. Male and female

1. **Gen. 1:27:** *So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; **male and female He created them.***
2. **Deut. 22:5:** *A woman must not wear men’s clothing, nor a man wear women’s clothing, for the LORD your God detests anyone who does this.*
3. **Lev. 18:22:** *Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.*
4. **Rom. 1:24-28:** ²⁴*Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. ²⁵They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and **worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. ²⁶Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. **Even their women exchanged*****

NATURAL relations for UNNATURAL ones. ²⁷In the same way the **men** also abandoned **NATURAL relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another.** Men committed **indecent acts** with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their **perversion.**

²⁸Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, He gave them over to a **depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.**

5. **1 Cor. 6:9-11:** ⁹Do you not know that the **wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God?** Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes [lit. “**effeminate**” KJV] nor **homosexual offenders** ¹⁰nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹And **that is what some of you WERE.** But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.
6. Distinctions between men and women are clear from the natural created order (**1 Cor. 11:3-15**):

³Now I want you to realize that the head of every **man** is Christ, and the head of the **woman** is **man**, and the head of Christ is God. ⁴Every **man** who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. ⁵And every **woman** who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is just as though her head were shaved. ⁶If a **woman** does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off; and if it is a **disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut or shaved off**, she should cover her head. ⁷A **man** ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the **woman** is the glory of **man**. ⁸For **man** did not come from **woman**, but **woman** from **man**; ⁹ neither was **man** created for **woman**, but **woman** for **man**. ¹⁰For this reason, and because of the angels, the **woman** ought to have a sign of authority on her head. ¹¹In the Lord, however, **woman** is not independent of **man**, nor is **man** independent of **woman**. ¹²For as **woman** came from **man**, so also **man** is born of **woman**. But everything comes from God. ¹³Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a **woman** to pray to God with her head uncovered? ¹⁴**Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him,** ¹⁵but

that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering.

7. **Mark 10:6:** [Jesus]: *But at the beginning of creation God made them male and female.*
8. **Mat. 19:4:** *“Haven’t you read,” He replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female.’”*
9. The clear distinction between a male and female in the created order has been completely distorted and perverted in the modern culture with such strange terms as “bisexual, transgender, same-sex marriage”—these concepts are foreign to Scripture.

D. Good and evil

1. **Gen. 2:9, 16-17:** ⁹*And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of **good and evil**... ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of **good and evil**, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”*
2. **Isa. 5:20:** *Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.*
3. **Rom. 1:29-32:** ²⁹*They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, ³⁰slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; ³¹they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³²Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.*
4. **2 Sam. 14:17:** [Woman from Tekoa to David]; *“And now your servant says, ‘May the word of my lord the king bring me rest, for my lord the king is like an angel of God in discerning good and evil. May the LORD your God be with you.’”*

5. **Heb. 5:11-14:** ¹¹*We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn.* ¹²*In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!* ¹³*Anyone who lives on milk, being **still an infant**, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.* ¹⁴*But solid food is for the **mature**, who by constant use have trained themselves to **distinguish good from evil**.*

III. CLEAR DISTINCTIONS IN THE MOSAIC LAW

A. Righteousness and sin

1. God's Law revealed His righteousness—any transgression of that righteousness was sin
2. **1 Tim. 1:8-10:** ⁸*We know that the law is good if one uses it properly.* ⁹*We also know that **law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers,*** ¹⁰*for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for **whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine.***

B. Curses and blessings

1. **Deut. 27:11-14:** ¹¹*On the same day Moses commanded the people:* ¹²*When you have crossed the Jordan, these tribes shall stand on **Mount Gerizim to bless** the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph and Benjamin.* ¹³*And these tribes shall stand on **Mount Ebal to pronounce curses:** Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan and Naphtali.* ¹⁴*The Levites shall recite to all the people of Israel in a loud voice...*
2. Deut. 28 (curses and blessings)

C. Life and death

1. **Gen. 2:7-17:** ⁷*The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the **breath of life**, and the man became a **living being**...* ⁹*And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the **tree of life** and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil...* ¹⁶*And the*

LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”

2. **Deut. 30:19:** *This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you **life and death, blessings and curses.** Now **choose** life, so that you and your children may live.*

IV. JESUS MADE CLEAR DISTINCTIONS

- A. Narrow and broad roads
- B. Sheep and goats
- C. Saved and unsaved
- D. Lost and found
- E. Children of God and children of the devil
- F. Sheep and wolves (true and false believers)
- G. Foolish and wise virgins
- H. Wheat and tares
- I. Wheat and chaff
- J. Life and death
- K. Heaven and hell
- L. Good and bad
- M. Truth and error/lies
- N. Light and darkness

V. PAUL MADE MANY DISTINCTIONS

- A. Righteousness and unrighteousness
- B. Flesh and Spirit
- C. Temporal and eternal
- D. Kingdom of God and the world
- E. Life and death.
- F. Light and darkness, etc.

- G. Notice how Paul rightly divides the truth in the following passage (2 Cor. 6:14-17):

*¹⁴Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. **For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?** ¹⁵**What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?** ¹⁶**What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."** ¹⁷**"Therefore come out from them and **BE SEPARATE**, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you."***

VI. JOHN LAID IT OUT STRAIGHT

- A. As John neared the end of his life, his final epistles (written around 95 A.D.) have a distinctive no-nonsense, black-or-white boldness and simplicity. [NOTE: If modern preachers dared to rightly divide the word of truth like John, they would cause a revolution and probably lose most of their members!]
- B. Light and darkness
1. **1 Jn. 1:5-7:** *⁵This is the message we have heard from Him and declare to you: **God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all.** ⁶If we claim to have fellowship with Him yet **walk in the darkness**, we lie and do not live by the truth. ⁷But if we **walk in the light, as He is in the light**, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin.*
 2. **1 Jn. 2:8-11:** *⁸Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in Him and you, because the **darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.** ⁹Anyone who **claims to be in the light** but hates his brother is **still in the darkness.** ¹⁰Whoever loves his brother **lives in the light**, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. ¹¹But whoever hates his brother is **in the darkness and walks around in the darkness**; he does not know where he is going, because the **darkness has blinded him.***
- C. Truth and error
1. **1 Jn. 1:6-10:** *⁶If we claim to have fellowship with Him yet walk in the darkness, **we lie and do not live by the truth.***

⁷*But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin.* ⁸*If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.* ⁹*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.* ¹⁰*If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar and His word has no place in our lives. [NOTE: John uses the conditional “if” 23 times in his first epistle! Note also that what people “claim” is often quite different from the “truth.”]*

2. **1 Jn. 2:4:** *The man who says, “I know Him,” but does not do what He commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*
3. **1 Jn. 2:18-22:** ¹⁸*Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the **antichrist is coming**, even now **many antichrists have come**. This is how we know it is the last hour. ¹⁹**They went out from us**, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but **their going showed that none of them belonged to us**. ²⁰But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and **all of you know the truth**. ²¹I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because **no lie comes from the truth**. ²²**Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist—he denies the Father and the Son.***
4. **1 Jn. 4:1-6:** ¹*Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but **test the spirits to see whether they are from God**, because **many false prophets have gone out into the world**.* ²*This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the **spirit of the antichrist**, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world. ⁴You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. ⁵They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶We are from God, and **whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God***

does not listen to us. THIS IS HOW WE RECOGNIZE THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH AND THE SPIRIT OF FALSEHOOD.

5. **1 Jn. 4:20:** *If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.*
6. **2 Jn. 1:7-11:** ⁷*Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the **deceiver and the antichrist.*** ⁸*Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully.* ⁹*Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ **does not have God;** whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.* ¹⁰***If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him.*** ¹¹*Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work.*
7. **3 Jn. 1:9-12:** ⁹*I wrote to the church, but **Diotrephes, who loves to be first,** will have nothing to do with us.* ¹⁰*So if I come, **I will call attention to what he is doing,** gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church.* ¹¹*Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. **Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God.*** ¹²***Demetrius is well spoken of by everyone--and even by the truth itself.** We also speak well of him, and you know that our testimony is true.*

D. Righteousness and unrighteousness

1. **1 Jn. 1:9:** *If we confess our **sins,** He is faithful and just and will forgive us our **sins** and purify us from all **unrighteousness.** [unrighteousness = sin]*
2. **1 Jn. 2:29:** *If you know that **He is righteous,** you know that **everyone who does what is right has been born of Him.***
3. **1 Jn. 3:4-7:** ⁴*Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, **sin is lawlessness.*** ⁵*But you know that He appeared so that He might take away our sins. And in Him is no sin.* ⁶*No one who lives in Him keeps on sinning. No one who continues*

to sin has either seen Him or known Him. ⁷Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as He is righteous.

4. **1 Jn. 3:12:** *Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous.*
5. **1 Jn. 5:17:** *All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death.*

E. Love for the world and love for God

1. **1 Jn. 2:15-17:** ¹⁵*Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* ¹⁶*For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world.* ¹⁷*The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.*
2. **1 Jn. 3:1:** *How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him.*
3. **1 Jn. 3:13:** *Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you.* [NOTE: Why do Christians love a world that hates them!?]
4. **1 Jn. 4:1-5:** ¹*Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.* ²*This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,* ³*but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.* ⁴*You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.* ⁵*They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them.*
5. **1 Jn. 5:4-5:** ⁴*For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world,*

even our faith. ⁵ **Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.**

6. **1 Jn. 5:19:** *We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.*

F. Children of God and children of the devil

1. **1 Jn. 2:29:** *If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of Him.*
2. **1 Jn. 3:1-2:** ¹*How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him.* ²*Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*
3. **1 Jn. 3:6-10:** ⁶*No one who lives in Him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen Him or known Him...* ⁸*He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.* ⁹*No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.* ¹⁰*This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.*
4. **1 Jn. 4:7-8:** ⁷*Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.* ⁸*Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.*
5. **1 Jn. 5:1-4:** ¹*Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves His child as well.* ²*This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out His commands.* ³*This is love for God: to obey His commands. And His commands are not burdensome,* ⁴*for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.*

6. **1 Jn. 5:18-19:** ¹⁸*We know that anyone **born of God** does not continue to sin; the One who was born [“begotten” AMP] of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him. ¹⁹**We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.***

G. Life and death

1. **1 Jn. 1:1-2:** ¹*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the **Word of life**. ²**The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.***
2. **1 Jn. 2:25:** *And this is what He promised us—even **eternal life**.*
3. **1 Jn. 3:14-15:** ¹⁴*We know that we have **passed from death to life**, because we love our brothers. **Anyone who does not love remains in death.** ¹⁵Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that **no murderer has eternal life in him.***
4. **1 Jn. 5:11-13:** ¹¹*And this is the testimony: **God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.** ¹²**He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.** ¹³I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that **you have eternal life.***

H. Knowing or not knowing God

1. **1 Jn. 2:3-4:** ³*We know that **we have come to know Him if we obey His commands.** ⁴The man who says, **“I know Him,”** but does not do what He commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*
2. **1 Jn. 2:13-14:** ¹³*I write to you, fathers, because **you have known Him** who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because **you have known the Father.** ¹⁴I write to you, fathers, because **you have known Him** who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.*

3. **1 Jn. 3:1:** *How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason **the world** does not know us is that it **did not know Him**.*
4. **1 Jn. 4:8:** *Whoever does not love **does not know God**, because God is love.*
5. **1 Jn. 4:12-16:** ¹²*No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, **God lives in us** and His love is made complete in us. ¹³We know that **we live in Him and He in us, BECAUSE HE HAS GIVEN US OF HIS SPIRIT.** ¹⁴And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, **God lives in him and He in God.** ¹⁶And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love **lives in God, and God in him.***

VII. CONCLUSION

In these last days of great deception and confusion, there is an urgent need for clear voices of men and women of God who will boldly declare God's truth—rightly dividing the word of truth—laying out the truth plain and simple. They will tell it straight, black and white—no gray or compromise!