**Rightly Dividing the Word vs. the Backfire Effect**

Have you ever been confused by a Bible teaching that seemed contrary to something else in the Bible in that same area?

Have you ever read a scripture that seemed to contradict another scripture?

If a person’s held belief/doctrine/dogma/option requires them to shun, ignore or change the meaning of other scriptures that contradict it, is their belief/doctrine/dogma/opinion correct?

Biblical **Inerrancy**, as formulated in the "Chicago Statement on Biblical **Inerrancy**", is the doctrine that the Bible "is without error or fault in all its teaching" or at least that "Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact".

**Dogma** "that which one thinks is true" applied to some strong belief or doctrine that the one adhering to often uses to refer to matters related to religion.

If you find a Bible verse(s) that seems to or clearly contradicts something you believe or at least have been taught (i.e. Dogma) there are only three possible reasons if you believe scripture is “Inerrant”.

1. The verse(s) you believe is correct and that the other(s) is wrong or doesn’t mean what it clearly says.
2. Both are wrong.
3. Both are correct.

If another Bible verse(s) contradicts what you believe is correct in meaning, context and application then the Bible is not Inerrant.

If both verses are wrong then the Bible is not Inerrant.

If both are correct then your belief (opinion) or understanding about that subject or doctrinal point is not correct otherwise there would be no contradiction between the two if the Bible is Inerrant.

**Rightly Dividing the Word?**

**2Ti 2:15** Study **G4704** to shew**G3936** thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **rightly dividingG3718** the word of truth.

**G4704** - (Verb) spoudazó (spoo-dad'-zo): to make haste, to give diligence (I hasten, am eager, am zealous.).

**Tense**: Aorist *- A verb tense expressing action or, in the indicative mood, past action, without further limitation or implication.*

**Voice**: Active - *Active voice describes a sentence where the subject performs the action stated by the verb*

**Mood**: Imperative *- The imperative mood is a command or instruction given to the hearer, charging the hearer to carry out or perform a certain action.*

Person: second [you]

Number: Singular

**G3936** - (Verb) paristémi (par-is'-tay-mee): to place beside, to present, stand by, appear (I bring, present, prove, come up to and stand by, am present.)

**Tense**: Aorist *- A verb tense expressing action or, in the indicative mood, past action, without further limitation or implication.*

**Voice**: Active - *Active voice describes a sentence where the subject performs the action stated by the verb*

**Mood**: Infinitive *- Is used mainly to express acts, situations and in general "states of affairs" that are depended on another verb form.*

**G3718** - (Verb) orthotomeó (or-thot-om-eh'-o): to cut straight (I cut straight; met: I handle correctly, teach rightly.) - rightly divide.

**Tense**: Present *– Greek present tense conveys a focus on the ongoing action, not on the beginning or end of the process.*

**Voice**: Active - *Active voice describes a sentence where the subject performs the action stated by the verb*

**Mood**: Participle *- Indicates the purpose of the action of the finite verb (a principle fundamental truth or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behavior or for a chain of reasoning.)*

Case: Accusative (direct object; motion toward; time: "how long")

Number: Singular

Gender: Masculine

In New Testament times, o*rthotomeo* (*or-thot-om-eh'-o)* was primarily a civil engineering term. It was used, for example, as a road building term. The idea of the word was to cut straight, or to guide on a straight path. The idea is to cut a roadway in a straight manner, so that people who will travel over that road can arrive at their destination directly, without deviation. *Orthotomeo* was also used as a mining term. It meant to drill a straight mine shaft so that the miners can get quickly and safely to the "mother lode."

There is another word in Greek, *katatomeo* ***G2699***, which means "to cut into sections." But that is not the word that the Apostle Paul, under divine inspiration, used in 2nd Timothy 2:15. Paul is not talking about "rightly dividing" in terms of dissecting the Word of God, or cutting it into sections or any other criterion.

**G2699** - (Noun, Feminine) katatomé (kat-at-om-ay'): concision, mutilation (a mutilation, spoiling.) - concision. Compare G609.

**G609 apokoptō** (ap-ok-op'-to) **-** From G575 and G2875; to amputate; reflexively (by irony) to mutilate (the privy parts): - **cut off**. - Compare **G2699**.

It's interesting that the Apostle Paul does use that other word – ***katatomeo G2699*,** cutting up - in Philippians 3:2, where he says, literally, "beware of those who would divide you up".

Php 3:2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the **concision *G2699***

So what is the proper meaning of *orthotomeo* - "rightly dividing" the Word of truth? What is intended is not the dividing of Scripture, not cutting it up, but teaching Scripture accurately, as a single, unified whole, without being turned aside by false teaching, man-made agendas or opinions.

The faithful practice of o*rthotomeo* in the handling of Scripture demonstrates that God's Word is a glorious whole from beginning to end. We dare not employ the theological equivalent of a pathologist's scalpel to carve up God's living Word.

**Does God’s Word Contradict itself?**

If the Bible is inerrant it **cannot** contradict itself or it would **not** be inerrant.

**2Ti 3:16 All** scripture *is* given by **inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine , for reproof for correction, for instruction in righteousness: (***Note: see Greek definitions and grammar for this verse below)*

Many *apparent* contradictions people have pointed out are not formal contradictions at all. They are simply different accounts, different perspectives, or different versions of the story.

The four Gospels give each author’s account. Each has countless similarities with the others but there are some differences in the details based on the perspective of the Author led by the Holy Spirit.

*Example: Many authors have written about the lives of President Washington or Lincoln. Each author writes from their own perspective about the same President but they are not identical to what others have written which gives readers a greater understanding of those Presidents*.

**What is a contradiction?**

If one sentence is true, then the other has to be false. Important examples can be found at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/contradiction/>

So why do people not question their beliefs/doctrines/options when they find that other scriptures contradict them?

**The Backfire Effect (Man’s fallen nature)**

**The Misconception:** When your beliefs are challenged with facts, you alter your opinions and incorporate the new information into your thinking.

**The Truth:** When your deepest convictions are challenged by contradictory evidence, your beliefs get stronger.

People are likely to resist or reject arguments and evidence contradicting their opinions – a view that is consistent with a wide array of research.

Once something is added to your collection of beliefs, you protect it from harm. You do it instinctively and unconsciously when confronted with attitude-inconsistent information. Just as confirmation bias shields you when you actively seek information, the backfire effect defends you when the information seeks you, when it blindsides you. Coming or going, you stick to your beliefs instead of questioning or proving them. When someone tries to correct you, tries to dilute your misconceptions, **it backfires and strengthens them instead**. Over time, the backfire effect helps make you less skeptical of those things which allow you to continue seeing your beliefs and attitudes as true and proper.

*The human understanding when it has once adopted an opinion draws all things else to support and agree with it. And though there be a greater number and weight of instances to be found on the other side, yet these it either neglects and despises, or else-by some distinction sets aside and rejects, in order that by this great and pernicious predetermination the authority of its former conclusion may remain inviolate*

*– Francis Bacon*

Human beings are irrational, selfish, and proud (*fallen nature*). This affects both the un-Saved and Saved. We are personally invested in our most deeply held views, and not just religious, and we cling to them like a dog on a bone when we think they are under threat.

This is why we must submit all our beliefs/doctrines/dogmas/opinions to the HOLY SPIRIT and not to man as these are really spiritual issues or we will be powerless to correct them and will be led astray.

**1Th 5:21  Prove G1381all things G3956**: **hold fast G2722** **that which is good G2570.**

**G1381** - (Verb) dokimazo (dok-im-ad'-zo): to test, by implication to approve (I put to the test, prove, examine; I distinguish by testing, approve after testing; I am fit.)

**Tense**: Present (**Continuous liner action**)

**Voice**: Active (**You are responsible**)

**Mood**: Imperative (**A Command**)

Person: second [you+]

Number: Plural

**G3956** - (Adjective) pas (pas): all, every (all, the whole, every kind of.)

**G2722** - (Verb) katechó (kat-ekh'-o): to hold fast, hold back ((a) I hold fast, bind, arrest, (b) I take possession of, lay hold of, (c) I hold back, detain, restrain, (d) I hold a ship, keep its head.)

**Tense**: Present (**Continuous liner action**)

**Voice**: Active (**You are responsible**)

**Mood**: Imperative (**A Command**)

Person: second [you+]

Number: Plural

**G2570** - (Adjective) kalos (kal-os'): beautiful, good (beautiful, as an outward sign of the inward good, noble, honorable character; good, worthy, honorable, noble, and seen to be so.)

Because we are prone to the Backfire Effect maybe this why the **LORD** does not put new wine in old bottles.

**Mat\_9:17** Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.

**Mar\_2:22** And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.

**Luk\_5:37** And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish.

**Luk\_5:38** But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved.

We get certain ideas from Church history mediated to us as doctrine.

The Bible is either filtered through these tradition’s or a tradition actually supersedes what the biblical text actually says.

Many Christians are not students of the texts of scripture so do not pick up on these inconsistencies. It is important that what we think and say about scripture actually conforms to biblical text or we will be led to error or worse will lead others to error. We to must follow Paul’s command to Timothy

**2Ti 3:14**  But continue**G3306** thou in the things which thou hast learned**G3129** and hast been assured of**G4104**, knowing**G1492** of whom thou hast learned**G3129** *them*;

**G3306** - (Verb) menó (men'-o): to stay, abide, remain (I remain, abide, stay, wait; with acc: I wait for, await.)

Tense: Present

Voice: Active

Mood: Imperative

Person: second [you]

Number: Singular

**G3129** - (Verb) manthanó (man-than'-o): to learn (I learn; with adj. or nouns: I learn to be so and so; with acc. of person who is the object of knowledge; aor. sometimes: to ascertain.)

Tense: second Aorist

Voice: Active

Mood: Indicative

Person: second [you]

Number: Singular

**G4104** - (Verb) pistoó (pis-to'-o): to make trustworthy, to establish (I convince, establish, give assurance to; pass: I am assured of.)

Tense: Aorist

Voice: Passive

Mood: Indicative

Person: second [you]

Number: Singular

**G1492** - (Verb) eidó (i'-do): be aware, behold, consider, perceive (I know, remember, appreciate.)

Tense: Perfect

Voice: Active

Mood: Participle

Case: Nominative (subject; predicate nominative)

Number: Singular

Gender: Masculine

**2Ti 3:15**  And that from a child thou hast known **G1492** the holy scriptures, which are able **G1410** to make thee wise **G4679** unto salvation through faith **G4102** which is in **G1722** Christ Jesus.

**G1492** – See above

**G1410** - (Verb) dunamai (doo'-nam-ahee): to be able, to have power (((a) I am powerful, have (the) power, (b) I am able, I can.)

Tense: Present

Voice: middle or passive deponent

Mood: Participle

Case: Accusative (direct object; motion toward; time: "how long")

Number: Plural

Gender: Neuter

**G4679** - (Verb) sophizó (sof-id'-zo): to make wise (I make wise, instruct; pass: I am skillfully devised.)

Tense: Aorist

Voice: Active

Mood: Infinitive

**G4102** - (Noun, Feminine) pistis (pis'-tis): faith, faithfulness (faith, belief, trust, confidence; fidelity, faithfulness.)

Case: Genative (possession, "of"; also origin or separation, "from")

Number: Singular

Gender: Feminine

**G1722** - (Preposition) en (en): in a fixed position, on, at, by, with (in, on, among.)

**2Ti 3:16**  All **G1882** scripture *is* given by inspiration of God **G2315**, and *is* profitable **G5624** for doctrine **G1319**, for reproof **G1650**, for correction **G1882**, for instruction **G3809** in righteousness **G1343**:

**G3956** - (Adjective) pas (pas): all, every (all, the whole, every kind of.)

**G2315** - (Adjective) theopneustos (theh-op'-nyoo-stos): God-breathed, inspired by God (God-breathed, inspired by God, due to the inspiration of God.)

**G5624** - (Adjective) óphelimos (o-fel'-ee-mos): useful, profitable (profitable, beneficial, useful.)

**G1319** - (Noun, Feminine) didaskalia (did-as-kal-ee'-ah): instruction (the function or the information) (instruction, teaching.)

**G1650** - (Noun, Masculine) elegchos (el'-eng-khos): a proof, test (a proof, possibly: a persuasion; reproof.)

**G1882** - (Noun, Feminine) epanorthósis (ep-an-or'-tho-sis): correction (correction, reformation, setting straight (right) again.)

**G3809** - (Noun, Feminine) paideia (pahee-di'-ah): the rearing of a child, training, discipline (discipline; training and education of children, hence: instruction; chastisement, correction.)

**G1343** - (Noun, Feminine) dikaiosuné (dik-ah-yos-oo'-nay): righteousness, justice ((usually if not always in a Jewish atmosphere), justice, justness, righteousness, righteousness of which God is the source or author, but practically: a divine righteousness.)

**2Ti 3:17**  That the man of God may be perfect **G739**, throughly furnished **G1822** unto all good works.

**G1739** - (Adjective) artios (ar'-tee-os): fitted, complete (perfect, complete, fitted, ready.)

Case: Nominative (subject; predicate nominative)

Number: Singular

Gender: Masculine

**G1822** - (Verb) exartizó (ex-ar-tid'-zo): to complete, to equip fully ((a) I fit up, completely furnish, equip, furnish, supply, (b) I accomplish, finish.)

Tense: Perfect

Voice: Passive

Mood: Participle

Case: Nominative (subject; predicate nominative)

Number: Singular

Gender: Masculine