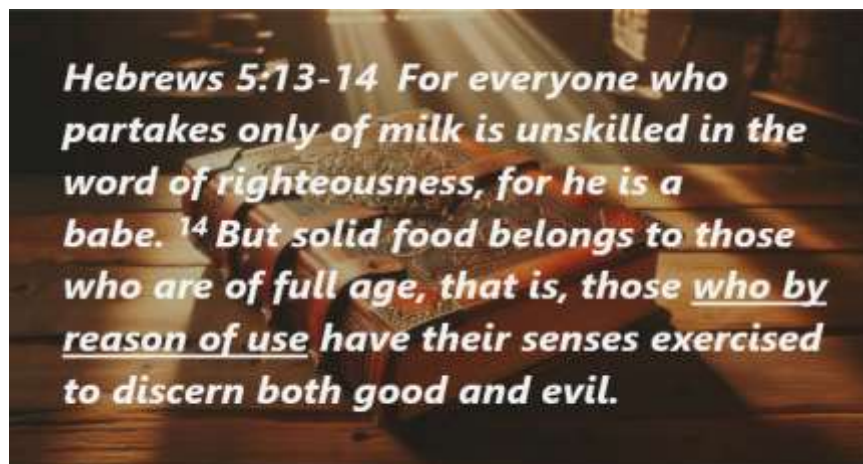




For this study, we'll be learning some techniques for sharpening our Sword of the Spirit. Some of these you may already know, but it never hurts to get a refresher course. So, let's get to sharpening...



So, a lot of folks will use this verse as a weapon against those new in the faith. But... if you read the context it was written in, it's actually an admonishment for those who have been

in the faith for a while but weren't practicing what they preached. That little phrase that's underlined is the "kick to the shins" for them and us. By reason of use.

Our faith TO God, our connection WITH God, and our understanding OF God is like a muscle that needs to be exercised. And just like any muscle that isn't exercised, if we don't use it, we could lose it. God gave us His written Word so that we could learn more about Him and His Living Word. By filling our minds with His Word, He fills our lives with His Spirit. As we begin, let's establish some parameters for our studying that'll really help us. To be able to digest "solid food", as the Bible calls it, there are a few keys to remember that will help us do just that.

1- MOTIVATION MATTERS

Hosea 4:6-

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me;

1 Corinthians 8:1-

Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.

First and foremost, when we study the Bible, whether personally or with a group, we need to begin from a place of humility with the goal of learning. We don't study just

to learn knowledge of the WRITTEN WORD, but to learn intimacy with the LIVING WORD.

If we fail to use humility and pure motives in our study, we run the risk of being puffed up with knowledge, and having puffed up knowledge is just as bad as having no knowledge. Here we see two verses that demonstrate the two extremes of either having no knowledge or of being arrogant with knowledge.

2-The Bible doesn't contradict itself Line upon Line, precept upon precept, it will always line up and be on one accord. When we encounter what seems like a contradiction, that's an opportunity for us to dig deeper and find out how to reconcile the contradiction, because it's never God's Word that's confused, it's our understanding. Here's an example:

1 Samuel 31:3-3 *The battle became fierce against Saul. The archers hit him, and he was severely wounded by the archers. 4 Then Saul said to his armorbearer, "Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised men come and thrust me through and abuse me." But his armorbearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword and fell on it.*

This is straight forward. Saul took his own life. Just a few chapters before this, Saul goes to a witch and is told about his death. So where would the supposed contradiction be? Let's look at another account of Saul's death.

2 Samuel 1:5-10 *So David said to the young man who told him, "How do you know that Saul and Jonathan his son are dead?" 6 Then the young man who told him said, "As I happened by chance to be on Mount Gilboa, there was Saul, leaning on his spear; and indeed the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him. 7 Now when he looked behind him, he saw me and called to me. And I answered, 'Here I am.' 8 And he said to me, 'Who are you?' So I answered him, 'I am an Amalekite.' 9 He said to me again, 'Please stand over me and kill me, for anguish has come upon me, but my life still remains in me.' 10 So I stood over him and killed him, because I was sure that he could not live after he had fallen. And I took the crown that was on his head and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them here to my lord."*

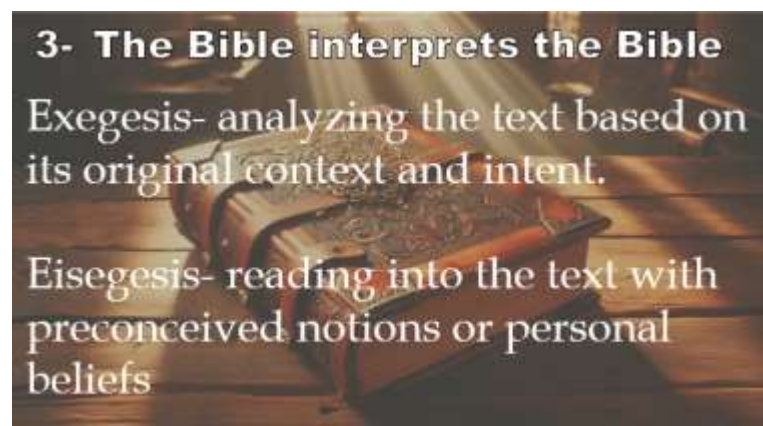
In your walk, maybe you've encountered folks that point to this as a reason we can't trust the accuracy and validity of the Bible. They say that if it gets how Saul died wrong, then what else did it get wrong. If we look at the context of these verses, we see that David believed this guy. He believed him so much, that he had the guy killed. The Bible never tells us that the guy was lying, so how do we solve this problem? Let's look at one last account of Saul's death...

1 Chronicles 10:3-6 *The battle became fierce against Saul. The archers hit him, and he was wounded by the archers. 4 Then Saul said to his armorbearer, "Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised men come and abuse me." But his armorbearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword and fell on it. 5 And when his armorbearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword and died. 6 So Saul and his three sons died, and all his house died together.*

Chronicles 1 and 2 is the official record of the Kings of Israel. How they lived and how they died. This is the true account and the second witness of how Saul died. In scripture, every word, every belief, every doctrine must be established by two or three witnesses. That opens the door for us to consider if all of what we believe is established by two or three witnesses, but that's for another study another time.

Back to this supposed contradiction, what we see in the man's story that he told David, was him lying. David doesn't know he's lying, and the Bible just gives us the 3rd person view of what is happening there, so it doesn't tell us specifically that the guy is lying.

We're just observing the conversation from the people's point of view. That's a common theme in the way the author's of scripture narrated different events. To put it a different way, the author records the lie and trusts that the reader is diligent enough to know the truth. The two witnesses of 1 Sam and 1 Chron agree. The man in 2 Sam was trying to gain favor from David, but ended up losing his life for the lie he told. Anytime we encounter what seems like a contradiction in Scripture, it's our duty as people of the Word to reconcile that, not to run from it. That way, we're ready in season and out of season to explain to those that doubt the Word, just how dependable it really is.



We must allow God's Word to tell us what it means instead of forcing our view into the scriptures. This is the difference between Exegesis and Eisegesis.

Exegesis is using the context and culture that a scripture was written in to interpret what it's saying. Eisegesis is using our own beliefs, biases, and culture to interpret what a scripture is saying. Eisegesis is very flawed and has enabled many false beliefs to infiltrate the Body. Here's an example:

Acts 10:9-16 *The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city,*



Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. 10 Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance 11 and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. 12 In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. 13 And a voice

came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." 14 But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean." 15 And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common." 16 This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.

The common belief is that these verses are showing that God changed His mind about the dietary restrictions He instituted in Leviticus. That's how most of us have been taught to view these verses, but is that really what the Bible is wanting us to focus on here?

If we read the verses right before this, the Bible tells us that a Roman centurion named Cornelius who wanted to be saved received a visit from an angel that told him exactly where to find Peter and that Peter could help him find salvation. So Cornelius sent three of his servants to find Peter and ask him if he would come to Cornelius' house. Three gentiles coming to Peter's house, three times the sheet drops...

A little background on the relationship between Jews and gentiles, especially Roman gentiles. The Jews hated the Romans. Not only did they despise them for conquering Israel, but they also viewed them as less than human and unclean. A Jewish man wouldn't even shake a Roman's hand, much less go hang out at his house.

Here's something to consider... what if Peter's vision wasn't about eating unclean things at all? What if it was about addressing Peter's own prejudice and preparing him to receive a visit from 3 gentiles that would request him to come to the house of an even more powerful gentile and preach the gospel, because God had spiritually cleansed these gentiles by the shedding of His blood? That sounds good, but we can't rely on our own beliefs and biases and traditions to interpret scripture, that's eisegesis. We have to let scripture interpret scripture; that's exegesis. So, does the Bible tell us how to properly interpret these scriptures? Thankfully, it does. In fact, it tells us exactly what the vision means. In the very next chapter, the Bible tells us what this vision was specifically referring to. Let's read...

Acts 11:1-18 *Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. 2 And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him, 3 saying, "You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!" 4 But Peter explained it to them in order from the beginning, saying: 5 "I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object descending like a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came to me. 6 When I observed it intently and considered, I saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air.*

7 And I heard a voice saying to me, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.' 8 But I said, 'Not so, Lord! For nothing common or unclean has at any time entered my mouth.' 9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, 'What God has cleansed you must not call common.' 10 Now this was done three times, and all were drawn up again into heaven. 11 At that very moment, three men stood before the house where I was,

having been sent to me from Caesarea. 12 Then the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. 13 And he told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house, who said to him, 'Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter, 14 who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.' 15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. 16 Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'

17 If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?" 18 When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

This is what the Bible tells us those verses in Acts 10 with Peter's vision are about. You'll notice nowhere in the explanation of chapter 11 does Peter or the other Jews he's talking to, mention anything about God changing the dietary restrictions. My point of bringing this up isn't to discuss what is and isn't considered food, but to demonstrate how eisegesis (interpreting scripture through our own preference and culture) has been used, in this case, to distort scripture that offers its own interpretation and exegesis.

When we are sharpening our sword and studying the Word of God, we do ourselves a disservice if we only view scripture through the lens of our culture and tradition. We miss so much Truth when we do this. Take this as an example. The awesome truth and grand revelation of Peter's vision is that even the gentiles now have access to God's salvation and Christ's sacrifice, AMEN! But what we're commonly taught the grand revelation is of these verses, is that we can eat some bacon! Somehow, the concept of filling our belly becomes more important than filling our spirit? Can you see how that diminishes what Christ accomplished on the cross? Our study of God's Word should never diminish God's plan of salvation. AMEN

