

## Eschew Obfuscation

### Commentary for September 15, 2015 — ... Espouse Elucidation

What is meant by “eschew obfuscation”? This phrase is used ironically to show that obscure words can cause confusion, the opposite of what is desired. The best synonym for “eschew” is “avoid.” “Obfuscation” has synonyms such as “complication” and “confusion.” Its antonym is “clarification.” So, “eschew obfuscation” is a plea to avoid confusion and be clear whenever we write or speak words. We should try to use words with plain meaning. Scripture encourages the use of plain words.<sup>1</sup>

**“Hold fast the form of sound words, which you have heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.”**

• *2 Timothy 1:13, KJV*

The Concordant Literal Version has a clearer rendering, which several modern translations express in a similar way:

**“Have a pattern of sound words, which you hear from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.”**

• *2 Timothy 1:13, CLV*

Solomon advises his subjects, **“Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding”** (Proverbs 23:23 KJV). If you learn to do these things, then you will begin to use **“sound words.”** It does not matter where you buy the truth, but the point is, “buying truth” has greater value than if you receive it free and then do not access it, read, or listen to it, consider it, study it, meditate upon truth, and then act upon it. Otherwise, it is just a book on the shelf, or even perhaps another idol on your mantle.

Truth has a clarity to it, truth “sings.” Truth on one subject fits with other truth, or at least provides a pathway to verify other truths. The rules regarding true things are simple. Here is one rule: **“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good”** (1 Thessalonians 5:21 KJV). Then go on and do the other recommendations the apostle Paul makes for us in the epistles of First and Second Thessalonians as we approach the end times. Clarity is important.

We must not be counted among those who oppose sound doctrine [sound teaching] (1 Timothy 1:10). Such opposition can have negative effects that God will not honor. Note this “if-then” statement the apostle Paul makes in First Timothy, one of the last of Paul’s writings:

**“If anyone is [1] teaching differently and is [2] not approaching with sound words, even those [words] of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the [3] teaching in accord with devoutness, [then] he is**

<sup>1</sup> Some Bible books such as Isaiah and Hebrews were written by highly educated writers (Isaiah and Paul) who used very sophisticated language packed with information, which we are just beginning to fully understand. Yet they also preached and wrote with the intent to be clear. Ask God to open your mind to the — truly — plain words He uses through His prophets and His Son (Hebrews 1:1–2).

- conceited, versed in nothing,
- but morbid about questionings and controversies,  
out of which is coming
- envy, strife, calumnies, wicked suspicions,
- altercations of men of a decadent mind and deprived of the truth, inferring that devoutness is capital [gain].<sup>2</sup>

• *1 Timothy 6:3–5, CLV*

What were such teachers doing? They were [1] “teaching differently” than what Paul was teaching, they were [2] teaching without “sound words,” and they were [3] teaching not “with devoutness,” which means to instruct with the desire to present spiritual truth.

“The younger men, similarly, entreat to be sane as to all things, tendering yourself a model of ideal acts, in teaching with uncorruptness, gravity, with words sound, uncensurable, that the contrary one may be abashed, having nothing bad to say concerning us.”

• *Titus 2:6–8, CLV*

Isaiah gives us clues as to why we cannot understand God’s plain words:

“Seek you YHWH while he may be found, call you upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto YHWH, and he will have mercy upon him; and [return] to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For

- my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
neither are your ways my ways, says YHWH.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth,

- so are my ways higher than your ways,  
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and returns not thither, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

- So shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth:
- it shall not return unto me void, but
- it shall accomplish that which I please, and
- it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”

• *Isaiah 55:6–11 KJV*

Someday we shall fully know and understand all God has told us in His Word, and His message will be clear. It is His will to give us a full knowledge of His truth (1 Timothy 2:4). The word “knowledge” in the KJV is *epignosis* in Greek. It is a powerful word meaning “full knowledge” of truth. Such is God’s will for all of us.

David Sielaff  
[david@askelm.com](mailto:david@askelm.com)

<sup>2</sup> The apostle Paul goes on to explain in 1 Timothy 6:9–10 that proper devoutness is indeed gain, just as wisdom and understanding are presented as good things to strive for and gain, as in Proverbs 4:7–8:

“Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom:  
and with all your getting get understanding.  
Exalt her, and she shall promote you:  
she shall bring you to honor, when you do embrace her.”