

False Doctrines in the Church: The Scriptures I

By Tom Hill

Bible Text: 2 Timothy 3:14-17

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Spiritual decline characterizes the Church of Jesus Christ today. Numerous signs confirm the reality of this condition. Selfishness, hypocrisy, and deceit infect the life of the Church and influence Her plans and programs.

Timothy, the Apostle Paul's protégé, faced this same condition. The attributes which describe the Church today had surfaced in his setting, too.

In his second letter to Timothy, the Apostle, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote counsel and encouragement for Timothy's turbulent times. Paul reminded him of the impact of God's word upon his life and the effect it could have upon believers (2 Timothy 3.15-17).

From Paul's advice to Timothy, I want to examine with you powerful doctrinal truths about Scripture and their purpose for Christians. I pray that the Holy Spirit Who first breathed them will use them in your life to bring you to submission to God's word and to provoke you to spiritual revival.

It records God's declaration to mankind.

Paul reminded Timothy that all Scriptures came from God. He said it in this fashion, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God..." In this fashion, the Spirit through Paul made two things clear: the source and the extent of the inspiration.

Leaving no room for doubt, the Spirit clearly stated that the Scriptures came from God in every respect. He inspired the writers to write and breathed into them what they recorded. Thus, each separate Biblical unit, its matter and its words, originated with God and disclosed His declaration to mankind.

Then, as now, an inherent, though perhaps unspoken, problem existed. Believers failed to view God's word in that fashion. Their behavior contradicted and opposed the Biblical record.

The verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures stands as the foundation of all Christian conduct--sufficient, certain, and dependable. Now, as then, the spiritual decline of the Church of Jesus Christ demands that Christians regard the Scriptures as God's declaration to mankind, and live by them.

It reveals God's truth to mankind.

Second, the reference reminded Timothy that the Scriptures unveil God's truth. The Spirit put it this way, "... (Scripture) is profitable for doctrine..." (2 Timothy 3.16). The word of God provided teaching on God's truth, Paul said.

In it, Timothy would find God's truth about His self-revelation, mankind's condition before God, what to believe and to do, the saving work of Christ, and the practical purpose(s) these truths promoted. In his day, Timothy needed these Spirit-breathed precepts about God and mankind to overcome and to correct the spiritual collapse of believers.

Without question, the failure to know and apply true Biblical doctrine affects the Church of Jesus Christ today, too. Its lack prevents true worship and glory to God. Its absence causes the Church to conform to the world and its methods. In addition, individual believers grieve, quench, and resist the inward work of the Holy Spirit by satisfying fleshly desires. The Church and Christians today, as then, must conform their ideas, opinions, thoughts, and actions to God's truths as revealed in the Bible. A change of this magnitude will revive the hearts of God's people.

It reproves you.

Third, the Spirit through Paul made it clear that the truth of Scripture affects behavior. He said that the word of God "...is profitable...for reproof..."

This word reproof has a significant meaning. It literally means a rebuke that brings conviction of sin. Thus, God's word searches the heart, examines the mind, challenges the will, and tries the thoughts of mankind. It stirs the affections against sin and unrighteousness. Like a sword, it discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4.12).

Timothy sorely needed this word of encouragement. He faced a group of people who needed conviction for their sinful deeds. Though they called themselves Christians, they lived contrary to Biblical truth. The inspired instruction of Paul led him to the means of reproof, the Scriptures. Our modern era requires the same counsel. Often the Church of Jesus Christ and many believers today decry the Biblical standard of truth and reject the necessity of precise doctrinal declarations. Thus, they hide behind the defense of 'differing interpretation' to excuse their sinful conduct.

That's exactly why the Church today needs to follow the prescription given to Timothy. The current condition of the Church requires the reproof of God's word, too.

It restores you back to God.

Paul's letter to Timothy reminded him that God's word restores believers back to God. The Spirit's message clearly stated this in the following manner, "... (It is) profitable...for correction (and) for instruction in righteousness."

These two phrases identify the Scripture's extent in restoration. First, it corrects. In its literal meaning, this term describes restoring something to an upright state or setting something right. In spiritual application, then, the Bible gives correction or improvement in life and character. It corrects from error, disciplines in disobedience, and develops faith.

Second, God's word instructs in righteousness. It imparts admonition, training, and education through commands, warnings, and reproof. No wonder, then, Paul by the Spirit followed this counsel with the direction to preach the word (2 Timothy 4.2-4). The word of God would sanctify the believers with the truth and correct them (John 17.17).

In like fashion, believers and the Church of Jesus Christ today need the sanctification of the Scriptures. With rare exception, the Child of God in this era neglects the Bible and its restoring message. No revival will ever occur without faithful adherence to the truths of Scripture in life and practice.

It refines you unto Godliness.

To demonstrate the effect of Scripture, the Holy Spirit through the Apostle identified its end purpose: to refine the Child of God unto completion and good works. The revelation of God in His word identifies what mankind is to believe and what to do. Through its application, the Holy Spirit brings mankind into conformity to God's will in thought, purpose, and action. His word cultivates the mind and morals to increase virtue. It edifies the soul by correcting sin and curbing passions (Psalm 119.11).

As in Timothy's day, the Church of Jesus Christ desperately needs these results. She has become selfish, hypocritical, and deceitful. The faithful preaching and application of Biblical truth will engender spiritual revival in the Church, which She so desperately needs.

No spiritual revival ever occurred in history without a proper regard for the Scriptures. These simple declarations disclose fundamental truths to believe about God's word. They provide correction from doctrinal error and direction for life. Spiritual decline always results from the failure to submit to the Scriptures. It inevitably causes unbelief and disobedience. It places mankind's personal authority above the authority of God and His word.

David, the Psalmist, stated it clearly in Psalms 119:11: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." To those who follow this instruction, it works.

I pray that the Holy Spirit has shown you the necessity of applying these Biblical truths to your life. Only the Spirit of Truth can reveal them to you. Only He can carry them out in your life. May He come to you in grace and bring a spiritual transformation in your life today.