

July 14, 2019

# The Centrality of Scripture

2 Timothy 3:16-17

*Faithfulness in last days ministry begins and ends with unwavering submission to the authority of God's word.*

LTS: Psalm 19

Once again, we come to 2 Timothy chapter three where we are learning what it takes to be a faithful minister (or faithful Christian) in these last days. Over the past three weeks the apostle Paul has laid down six instructions for faithfulness in troubled times. They are:

- I. Expect a general apostacy (People won't be as receptive as you may like)
- II. Remain alert for Deceivers (False teachers will be on the prowl).
- III. Rest in a Sovereign Promise (Jesus is still building his church. Everything is going as planned)
- IV. Follow a Worthy Example (Learn from the godliest people you can find).
- V. Embrace a Sobering Reality (Godliness will certainly bring persecution).
- VI. Fulfill Your Foremost Calling (Namely, continue to minister the word).

Unlike the false teachers who have drifted away from their devotion to God's word, Timothy was to "continue in the things he had learned as a child. He was to continue learning and passing on the divine truths – the Scriptures he had always known. The word of God was his staple spiritual diet when he was young, and it needs to be the center of his ministry now that he is an adult.

But some may ask, "Why should the word of God be the central feature of his ministry? Why not give the central place to music, or drama? Why not focus on positive thinking, fireside chats, and practical hints for a happy, healthy life?"

In verse 16-17 Paul points to three characteristics of Scripture that identify it as the only wisdom worthy of holding the central place in the Christian's life and ministry. These characteristics can be labeled...

The Authority of Scripture  
The Efficacy of Scripture

## The Sufficiency of Scripture

Now, before we consider these three characteristics of the word of God, let's stand together in reading 2 Tim. 3:14-17.

Read v. 14-17

The first characteristic of the Scriptures that Paul wants to remind us of is that it comes with all the warrant of God himself. We call this...

### I. The Authority of Scripture:

1. Now we should have already noticed that in v. 14 Paul mentions the Scriptures when he says,

“...and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

2. Timothy's mother and grandmother had taught him the sacred writings (the *hebraic grammata*) from his earliest years.

- The tradition of the Jewish Mishnah declared that a Jewish child was to start learning the Scriptures at the age of five.

3. “Sacred writings” is a technical term for the O.T. Scriptures. And if you think about it for more than 2 seconds, you realize that Paul saying the O.T. is able (has the power) to make one wise unto salvation.

Friends: **Behold the central purpose for the Scriptures!**

God has given us his truth to reveal the means and the Master of salvation. That's what he means when he says that “the sacred writings are able to make you wise for salvation.”

4. Now, we need to be careful here. The O.T. Scriptures do not have the power to save. But they do reveal the means and Master of salvation; namely, faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus demonstrated this about the O.T. as he walked with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus when he declared in Luke 24:25-27,

O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets [ O.T] have spoken! <sup>26</sup> Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" <sup>27</sup> And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets [O.T.], he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures [O.T.] the things concerning himself.

5. And you may remember the rebuke Jesus laid on the Pharisees when he declared (John 5:39), *You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about Me...*

6. The point is that the O.T. Scriptures are able to make one wise for salvation in Jesus Christ if they have a heart to believe and obey it.

7. Now this is NOT how we 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians typically think about the O.T. We may be tempted to think that the truths one needs for salvation only come to us through the N.T. But that's not true. The O.T. scriptures had all the wisdom necessary to prepare one for salvation.

8. Someone will ask: How can the O.T. make someone wise for salvation? The key components of the gospel were all there. For example,

- A. The OT teaches that the world exists because God created it.
- B. It teaches that God created man to bear his image and show the world what he is like and enjoy fellowship with God forever.
- C. It teaches us that this same man (along with his wife) decided that his appetites were a better guide than God, so he rebelled against his Maker. The wages for that sin was death. Adam and Eve died spiritually and everything around him (including himself) began dying physically. From that day on all humans were born with a sinful nature (a natural propensity to sin) so that now all people face the prospect of being justly condemned before face of the just and holy God.
- D. But God because of His great mercy, made an atoning sacrifice. An animal was killed in man's place to temporarily cover his sin.
- E. The O.T. later introduces us to the priesthood by which continual

sacrifices were offered as a substitution for sinners.

- F. The O.T. then reveals that one day, God himself would come to earth, that He would be born of a virgin in the little town of Bethlehem, and that he would come to take away the sins of the world.
  - G. It reveals (Isa. 53) that the Christ would be a suffering servant who would bear all our sins and the punishment of the full wrath of God which we deserve.
  - H. It teaches that a righteous standing before God comes NOT by works, but by grace and faith (as was true of Abraham).
  - I. You see, All the core truths of the gospel are right there in the O.T. Anyone who knew God's word and believed it, who loved God and trusted his promises, discovered that the O.T. Scriptures made him "wise for salvation." And that salvation would come on the merits of Jesus' righteous life and the payment of his bloody death as a substitute for sinners.
9. To be sure, we know there were people in the O.T. whom God considered justified and redeemed. For example:
- A. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord...
  - B. Job was convinced that he had a Redeemer who would raise him from the dead
  - C. Abraham believed God and it was counted as righteousness;
  - D. King David was a faithful believer in the Lord,
  - E. Simeon and Anna at the temple waiting for the "consolation of Israel," the Messiah..
  - F. John the Baptist was a prophet who not only believed in Messiah but was the first real evangelist of the Gospel of Jesus

G. The tax collector at the temple (Jesus said) went to his home Justified. And the truths he believed were exclusively O.T. truths.

H. The Ethiopian Eunuch was baptized by Phillip after reading and believing the words found in the O.T. book of Isa.

I. And there are many more.

10. How were these people saved? Same as you and me! They were saved by faith in the promised Messiah who would one day come and deliver them from their sins and reconcile them to God. The O.T. saints looked forward to the atoning work of Christ on the cross in a similar way that we look backward to the atoning work of Christ on the cross. In every case, a man or woman is justified by grace, through faith, because of Christ.

11. How do we know that the Scriptures have the authority to tells us the only way to be saved. It possesses that authority because of one tremendous reality:

“All Scripture is inspired by God...”

12. Look at v. 16. “All Scripture.” this a different term than the “sacred writings” mentioned earlier. Here it is *Pros Graphe* (All Scripture). Not just the O.T. but all Scripture. That includes the 39 books of the O.T. and all the epistles and writings of the N.T. that were complete to that point in time. All of it (and a few more that came later – including revelation) “Inspired by God the H.S.”

13. The word “Inspire” is different than the way our culture normally uses it. Someone might say, I was inspired to write a song, or to create a piece of inspired art. But that’s not what Paul means here.

14. The word for inspire is *Theopneustos*, which occurs only here in the bible. It means “God Breathed.” Literally, it means that God’s breathed out. You will remember from the very beginning of the bible the word of God (or breath of God) creates things and gives life.

A. In Gen. 1, God spoke and light bursting into existence. And so did the earth, and sun, and stars. By his word all the plants and

animals - with all their complex systems for life came into being.

- B. Then God formed the first man and breathed into him the breath of life (Gen. 2:7).
- C. Later in the N.T. Gospel of John Jesus breathed on his disciples and they received the H.S.
- D. So, when Paul says, “All Scripture is breathed out by God” he is saying that the words of Scripture are as much a product of the breath of God.

15. The apostle Peter affirms this when he writes (2 Pet. 1:20-21)

Knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

16. What Peter is saying is that divine truth does not come to man by the wisdom or imagination of man. Rather, God’s men (those who wrote the Scriptures) were “carried along by the H.S.” The term carried along is used in Acts 27:15 when the Roman ship that was transporting Paul to Rome was being carried along (or driven) by the wind.

17. So, inspiration can be compared to the way the wind fills a sail and carries the boat along in the direction that it is supposed to go. The human author is a part of the process, but the power and direction is all from God.

- A. And we need to be clear here, that what God inspired was not the men who wrote, but the words they wrote. “All Scripture is inspired.
- B. Yes, their own unique vocabulary and personality is apparent in what they wrote, and yet when the H.S. had them put pen to paper, the words they wrote were fully their own words but also the very words God wanted them to write: words that God would also claim to be His own. Therefore, (as Wayne Grudem writes] “to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1994), 81

18. So Paul is saying “All Scripture” comes to us the same way. It comes NOT from the clever imaginations men, but from the very breath of God. Not just the O.T. Scriptures, but the N.T. scriptures as well. For example:

A. 1 Tim. 5:18 Paul writes “The Scripture says”

1. Don’t muzzle the ox. (Deut. 25:4)
2. The Laborer is worthy of his wages (Lk. 10:7)

B. 2 Pet 3:16

1. Peter speaking of Paul’s letters. He says that ignorant and unstable men twist what Paul has written just as they do to all the Scriptures,
2. Peter calling Paul’s writing “Scripture.”

C. John: Jesus said (gospel of John)<sup>2</sup>

1. The H.S. will bring to remembrance all that I have said (promise of inspiration)
2. The spirit of truth will guide you into all truth (which you haven’t heard yet but they would write... in the epistles)
3. The H.S. will bear witness and you will bear witness (inspiration for the book of Acts)
4. The H.S. will teach you things to come (inspiration for the book of revelation)

These are the four categories of the N.T. Gospels, Acts, Epistles, Revelation - all of them are inspired Scriptures).

19. So Paul is saying, not only are the O.T. scriptures inspired by God, but All Scripture is inspired by God. And because it comes from the breath of Almighty God it comes with supreme authority. That’s why we read statements in the Bible like:

A. “Have you not read?”

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<sup>2</sup> John MacArthur, audio sermon on this text, from [www.GTY.org](http://www.GTY.org)

- B. “Do not go beyond what is written”
- C. Satan tempted Jesus by saying, “It is written...”
  - a. “Thus sayeth the Lord” and Jesus responded with the proper authoritative use of Scripture.

20. Perhaps the clearest statement on the authority of God’s word comes to us through Jesus who famously said (Jn. 12:47-50),

If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. <sup>48</sup> The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. <sup>49</sup> For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. <sup>50</sup> And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.”

21. This is the perfect illustration of the authority of Scripture. Because it is “God breathed” its commands and eternal promises come with all the authority of God himself. Therefore, all who love and obey God’s word are blessed. As God said to Isaiah, (66:2) “This is the one to whom I will look: one who is humble and contrite in heart and who trembles at my word.”

22. Do you want to know why Christians live as they do? We live in obedience to God’s inspired, authoritative word.

22. Do you want to know why Paul is so sure that all who desire to live a godly life will be persecuted? It’s because there is a clash of authority. The world demands to be free from authority while God invites us into true freedom by submitting to His wise, gracious, and sovereign authority.

23. Do you want to know why you are a Protestant rather than Catholic? It’s because one day 500 years ago a man had the courage to stand in the face of all the false teachers of his day and declare, “I will not recant! My heart is held captive by the word of God.” Then he translated God’s word into the language of the people and the authority of Scripture in the hearts of ordinary people transformed Western civilization.



24. You see friends, all of Scripture is breathed out by God and therefore comes to us with all of the authority of God. It speaks with authority on all things pertaining to life and godliness. Therefore, the Scriptures must stand as the central feature of our lives and ministries.

24. Much more can be said about the authority of Scripture from this text. But Paul also wants us to know something of the Efficacy of Scripture and the Sufficiency of Scripture. And we will learn about them next week.