

Steadfast in the Word

2 Timothy 3:14-17 – p. 996 in pew Bibles

¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy was very likely Paul's last letter before he was martyred. He was in a dark, dank prison in Rome awaiting his execution by the order of Nero. Paul's life was ending. And so Paul looked to Timothy to carry on the faithful preaching and teaching of the gospel.

The thing is, Paul knew that the gospel is the only hope for salvation in this world, therefore the gospel absolutely had to be proclaimed faithfully! But he also knew that it was all too easy for that gospel message to become adulterated and compromised. The sheer volume of evil in the world is enough to make even the most faithful person stagger sometimes. Paul describes what Timothy was up against. Look with me starting back in verse 1:

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. ² For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. ⁶ For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, ⁷ always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. ⁸ Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith.

In other words, there will always be opposition to the truth of Scripture. The gospel will always have enemies, as well as those who will seek to pervert the pure message of the gospel.

Paul knew this first hand and so he was preparing young Timothy, his son in the faith, to face the dangers of the world and to still be able to remain strong and keep the gospel pure.

One of the biggest dangers we face today, both in the world and even in the church, is the total redefining of right and wrong. What has become the fashionable thing to do today in many circles is to normalize sin. To embrace deviant lifestyles and relabel them as normal and acceptable. And most of the time, all this is done, sadly, under the guise of "loving" them.

And while we certainly are commanded by God to love all people regardless of their sin, in order to *truly* love them, and in order for the gospel to have the power it was meant to have to save sinners from eternal condemnation, the great need of the day is to remain steadfast in the Word of God.

- 1. We need to remain steadfast in the Scriptures because they lead you to Christ. (vv. 14-15)**

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it 15 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.

Notice first that the passage begins with, “But as for you...” This provides a stark contrast with the people just described in verses 1-8. Those people were men who oppose the truth, men who are corrupted in mind, men who are lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant. They were men who are without self-control, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, and on and on.

Sounds like people in the world today, doesn't it? Our world is inundated with ungodliness. All you have to do is turn on television in order to get a pretty clear window into the heart and soul of the world.

We have a society where sin is being embraced and encouraged. It's like Paul said in Romans 1:28-32: “And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. 29 They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.”

What's happened is that **they have rejected God, they've rejected His Word, and in doing so they've rejected any standard of righteousness and have embraced a completely lawless way of life.** As a matter of fact, the only law they seem to live by is, you can't tell anyone how they should live their life. People should be free to live however they personally define sexuality, however they personally define relationships, however they personally define life. As Paul says, they not only do these things, but they give approval to those who practice them.

This world is out of control! Yet there is nothing new under the sun. Paul described the same thing in his day.

But Paul says to Timothy, “But as for you...” In other words, your life is different, Timothy! Paul tells him, “continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it 15 and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings” Hold fast to the Word of God! Don't stray from it! Don't depart from it! Don't progress past it! And never forget it!

Timothy's mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois, were both devout Jews and brought Timothy up in the authority of the Word of God. Timothy was raised to know the Scriptures, the “sacred writings” Paul mentions in verse 15. Then there was some point when Paul preached the gospel to Timothy and more than likely to his mother and grandmother, and connected the dots Scripturally from what they believed from the Old Testament to its fulfillment in Christ, and they believed. All of this is what Paul means when he says, “knowing from whom you learned it.” In other words, he's telling Timothy to continue in the Scriptural and apostolic teachings that he has

learned from childhood and from Paul. Those “sacred writings,” by the way, are the Old Testament. In spite of what some people teach, we don’t need to forget the teachings of the Old Testament. They are every much the Word of God as the New Testament. As a matter of fact, Paul says that these Old Testament Scriptures “are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”

The Old Testament testifies about Christ. The Old Testament points to Christ. Jesus said to the Jewish crowd in John chapter 5, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me.” And in Luke 24, on the road to Emmaus, Jesus said to two of His disciples, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” And Paul was referring to the Old Testament in 1 Corinthians 15 when he said, “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures,⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.”

The Old Testament speaks of the death and resurrection of Christ and it is able to make us wise unto salvation. The Old Testament anticipates Christ, while the New Testament explains Christ. **We see Christ through all of Scripture.** He is promised in the beginning, He comes to earth in the middle, and He is held up at the end as the object of our worship for all eternity. Many people know the stories of the Bible, yet fail to recognize the wonderful Christ-centered storyline throughout the whole Scripture.

But notice, Paul points to the remedy to all the ungodliness in the world. He says to Timothy, “Make sure you continue in what you’ve learned from the Scriptures because they lead people to Christ!” **Jesus Christ is the remedy for the brokenness of this world!** Jesus Christ is the one and only salvation which God offers humanity! Acts 4:12 says, “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

But make no mistake. This isn’t my opinion or the opinion of any man. The Bible isn’t just some book of alternative viewpoints that some ancient religious people made up. Jesus is the only name under heaven by which we must be saved because GOD said so in His Word!

And that brings us to our second point this morning...

2. We need to remain steadfast in the Scriptures because they are from God. (v. 16a)

¹⁶All Scripture is breathed out by God

Paul states that the Scriptures are *inspired*, the Greek word *theopneustos*. It means literally “breathed-out by God.” This speaks of the Bible’s authority. There are two things to notice here.

First, notice that God is the source of Scripture. The Bible is the Word of God. Being the One who created all things, He is the standard of all truth. His is the final say on all matters pertaining to everything. And that means that Scripture carries all the authority that God has. It’s as if God were there speaking these words to us right now with all His majesty and authority. As a matter

of fact, when we read Scripture or when we hear the Bible read, **we should receive the words of Scripture and respond to them just as if God were speaking them to us personally**, and in fact, He is. So then, Scripture derives all of its authority over creation from God Himself.

But second, notice that the Scriptures are *breathed out* by God. The picture we have here is like that of creation when God spoke the universe into being. It says in Genesis chapter 1, “And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” And the next thing it says is, “And God said...”

People often object, saying, “but the words of the Bible were written by man.” This is true. However, just because God used man to pen the words of Scripture doesn’t negate the fact that they are His words. We’re told in 2 Peter 1:19-21:

And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, ²⁰ knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. ²¹ 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.

This means that the Holy Spirit moved upon the writers and superintended the writing of Scripture such that the words that the human authors wrote were the exact words, the exact thoughts, the exact teaching, that God intended, to the very word.

But Paul also emphasizes that what he’s talking about is “all Scripture.” In this he is certainly referring to the whole Old Testament. But he is also referring to the New Testament writings as well. Peter refers to Paul’s letters as being Scripture in 2 Peter 3:16. In 1 Timothy 5:18, Paul quotes from Luke 10:7 and calls it Scripture. Indeed, the apostles were the ones who were commissioned to speak the authoritative teachings by Jesus Himself. Their teachings and commands carry the same weight as the Old Testament Scriptures.

But all of this actually means something. It means that Scripture comes to bear on our lives and has the power necessary to sanctify us and equip us to live kingdom lives.

3. We need to remain steadfast in the Scriptures because they are completely sufficient. (vv. 16b-17)

and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

What we have here are four functions of God’s Word. The first two, teaching and reproof, are doctrinal in nature, while the second two, correction and training in righteousness, are referring to the application of the doctrinal teaching in order to grow in Christ-likeness.

And that is exactly how Paul breaks up many of his letters, like Romans and Ephesians, for example. The first portion of the letter lays out correct theology, and then turns a corner at some point and says, “therefore, since all this is true, here is how you should now live.” Theology should never be something that is merely cerebral. It should always result in a godly life of worship and obedience.

First, Paul says that all Scripture is profitable for *teaching*. **Teaching reveals what is true.** It tells us who God is, what He has done, and how He has created life to function.

Since God is the standard, then we must know God properly. And while knowing God certainly involves much more than knowing correct truths about Him, knowing correct truths about Him is absolutely foundational. We **MUST** know correct things about God in order to truly know Him, and we must truly know Him if we are live according to His ways.

Paul states that all Scripture is profitable for teaching. This is God revealing to us who He is, how He acts, and how He has created the world to function. And when we talk about God revealing things about Himself, we call that “theology.” Theology, in order for it to be good theology, must accurately reveal who God is, how He acts, and how the world is to live rightly before Him.

There is an absoluteness about what God is like. We can’t just make up how we want him to be. God truly is a certain way, no matter what people might believe about Him. In the same way that God doesn’t need anyone to believe in Him for Him to exist, He also doesn’t change based on what people think about Him. There is an absolute truth about God that is unchanging and undeniable. Good theology sees in Scripture how He is revealed and receives Him as He is, such that our thinking about Him matches what He has revealed about Himself.

Some people would say, “Well I don’t care about all that theology stuff. I just love Jesus.” Well, which Jesus do you love?

In 2 Corinthians 11:3-4 Paul says, But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. ⁴For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.”

Folks, theology matters! And whether you realize it or not, everyone has some kind of thinking concerning what God is like, who Jesus is, and how we are to live before Him. That’s theology! And time and time again, Paul and every other New Testament writer, stresses the necessity of having right doctrine. Doctrine simply means “teaching.” And what teaching we accept matters greatly as to how we will live.

But that brings us to the second function of the Scriptures, and that is reproof. If *teaching* tells us what is the true way to think and believe, **reproof tells us that we ought not believe anything different from that truth.** It also tells us that realizing what is error is very important so that we don’t stray from the faith. Look again at what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 11:3:

But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

In Galatians 1:8-9, Paul says, “*But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.*” ⁹As we have said before, so

now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.”

Paul warns Timothy in the strongest of terms against false teachers in 1 Timothy 1:3-4:

³ As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, ⁴ nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.

There is no shortage today of those who stand on a national stage and teach a different doctrine from what the Scripture teaches, and in so doing, they lead millions astray.

Just this week it was in the news about a nationally known prosperity preacher who was telling his followers that he needed \$54 million to buy a private jet. If that wasn't bad enough, he said to them, "If Jesus were on earth today, he wouldn't be riding on a donkey." This is the product of years of distorted thinking about Scripture.

We also see this distortion in other parts of the church. There are many that see it as progress to help people to finally see certain issues differently than what Scripture plainly teaches. Feminists, supporters of abortion, supporters of gay marriage, they all seek to bring about "progress" to society. Their thinking has become so distorted that they actually see as good what Scripture defines as bad, and as bad what Scripture defines as good. Folks, when we consider it "progress" to leave behind the truth of God's Word, what you end up leaving behind is the only truth that will save people from condemnation.

This has everything to do with the lens through which people see the world. Do we see things through the secular, humanistic philosophy of the world or do we see the things through the lens of Scripture? Charles Spurgeon once said, "He that perverts truth shall soon be incapable of knowing the true from the false. If you persist in wearing glasses that distort, everything will be distorted to you."

So the first two, teaching and reproof, deal with right thinking, right doctrine. And that's vitally important.

The second two, correction and training in righteousness, deal with right actions. This is where the Word of God acts as a mirror.

James 1:22-25 – ²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴ For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵ But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

The Word of God reveals to us how our lives should be lived before God. It is "the perfect law of liberty." Many people think that the teachings of the Word keep us held back from experiencing freedom. Folks, you will never experience freedom, true freedom, until your life is in alignment with God's Word. And you certainly will never experience eternal life without His Word.

We look into His Word and we see how our lives should be lived, and it shows us all the ways that we fall short. And there are people who would see that as a downer, as if it's always saying something negative. When we have a problem with what the Word of God says, the problem is not with the Word of God. The problem is the rebellion in our own hearts. Our attitude should be such that we see God's ways as the only ways in which we will truly have joy and freedom. Then when we see in Scripture where it corrects us, we realize that this correction is actually God's gracious provision. If He didn't love us, He would just allow us to go on and live however we wanted, giving us over to our own lusts. Do you know what that's called in Romans 1? The wrath of God. Now how does that sound for a downer? But God's Word seeks to free us from that.

So, correction shows us how our actions fail to line up with God's Word and calls us to repentance. As a matter of fact, the word "correction" here comes from the Greek word for "straight." The New Living Translations actually says, "It straightens us out." Those who accept the reproof and correction of the Word of God will find their lives straightening out. They will be ready for the Word's positive effect of "training in righteousness." ***Training in righteousness does just that – it trains you, positively, to walk in righteousness, that is, in God's good and right ways.*** The righteousness that is given to the believer by faith is actualized by the training of God's Word. These two together say to the believer, "No, that's not how you should walk. Walk this way."

Many today will say they believe in the inspiration of Scripture, yet they deny their belief by their practice. Let us make sure we don't just say we *believe* Scripture. We need to use it! If Christians believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, then they should naturally see it as profitable.

Finally, all this works together to accomplish something. It says in verse 17, "that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." Paul actually uses two forms of the Greek word for "equip" here – an adjective, "complete," and a participle, "equipped" – in order to make his point. In essence, the man of God (which includes all believers) is super-equipped by the Word of God.

Equipped for what? It says, "for every good work." And this brings us once again to the purpose of theology. That our lives may be fruitful, that we may live according to His ways, and that we may produce good works which advance His kingdom.

The man of God is before all else a man of the Bible. The woman of God is before all else a woman of the Word. If we are to weather the evil and the suffering and the pressure to compromise which is so prevalent in this world, we must hold fast to the Word of God. We must be steadfast in His Word day after day, and receive it as God speaking directly to you.

The Bible grows us personally as we live in it. We should have the same heart as the psalmist who said in Psalm 119:97, "Oh how I love Your law (Your instruction)! It is my meditation all the day."

Matthew chapter 4 recounts the time when Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He was in the wilderness, the desert, and he fasted 40 days and 40 nights. And the Scripture says “he was hungry.”

Then it says that the tempter came to him. That’s when Satan comes to us. When we’re physically or mentally or emotionally weak. And he tempts us to compromise our faith.

Well, he came to Jesus and said to Him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” Now we may not think this sounds too bad of a temptation, but what we have to understand is that Satan was trying to get Jesus to depart from His Father’s ways and to step out in His own wisdom.

But Jesus answered him from the abundance of the Scripture which He had in His heart, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

Just as we cannot live without the nourishment of food which physically sustains us lest we die, so we cannot live without the continual live-giving nourishment of God’s Word.

Our understanding of God’s Word will fuel our passion for God’s Word. Our passion for God’s Word will in turn fuel our commitment to God’s Word. And the level of our commitment to God’s Word will determine our obedience to God’s Word.

And today more than ever, as we live in this ever-compromising world where people are continually deceiving and being deceived and the Word of God and the pure gospel so often get left behind, it is absolutely imperative for us to be steadfast in God’s Word. For it is His Word that leads us to Christ. It is His Word that is God-breathed, and it is His Word that teaches us and corrects us so that we may be fully equipped for every good work.

Maybe you’re here today and you are in need of God’s grace to strengthen you to be steadfast in the His Word. We read in Scripture that by grace, if we continue to hold fast to His Word by faith, God actually accomplishes in you what He commands. When we see places in our own lives where we have fallen short of God’s perfect Word, God wants us to ask Him to work in our hearts and lives. The Bible tells us that it is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

Maybe you’re here today and you don’t know Christ, and you sense God is working in your heart for the first time, convicting you of sin, and drawing you to Himself.

Whatever your circumstance, I want you to know that there is forgiveness. The Word of God tells us that “if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” Jesus said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest for your souls.” He also says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

There will be an elder up here after the service and I will be here. If you sense that God is working in your heart today, I invite you to come and we will pray with you.