

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

God Speaks to Us 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Keywords: Bible, Word of God, Scripture, Inspiration, Authority, Spiritual Growth
PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE
SermonAudio Blurb:

- I. Introduction.
 - A. Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
 - B. My argument over these last two weeks is how God has ordained the life of His children to triumph and blossom through the bible.
 1. It is the way you mature and flourish. But only when you submit yourself to it.
 2. The challenge for many is the temptation to seek to cause the Word of God to conform to our desires and goals rather than conforming ourselves to our Lord's word.
 3. We need to see its value, we need to be quick to hear it taught, and we need to receive it with clean hearts. And when we unleash it into our lives in that manner, exciting and yet frightening things begin to occur.
 - C. Today I want to begin to unpack these two verses to show you the gift that God gave to us and why we should value the scripture in the most extreme of ways.
 - D. Structure:
 1. Two descriptions about the bible: inspired and profitable.
 2. Two purposes: We might be complete and equipped.
- II. The Inspired Word.
 - A. We need to address certain terms here so that we know what is going on. We don't want to assume we know what they mean.
 1. Scripture: in the New Testament it always refers to what we would call the Bible.
 2. At times it speaks to it as a whole and other times to a specific passage.

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- B. “Inspired” is not the best term to use. ESV is better with “breathed out by God.”
1. Paul has just pointed out in vs 15 several points regarding the Old Testament: They are sacred/holy, they are able to save sinners, they exist to bring you to know Jesus Christ.
 2. Now he moves to the uniqueness of scripture here:
 - a. It is God breathed.
 - b. When you hear this you should think of passages in the Old Testament like:
 - (1) "He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD. (Deu 8:3 NAU)
 - (2) Or the prophet Isaiah in the 46th chapter where God speaks through him of how there is but one true God and there is no other. "I have sworn by Myself, The word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness And will not turn back, That to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance. (Isa 45:23 NAU)
 - c. Over and over we find words like these “Now the Word of the Lord came to”
 - (1) And when this happened lives were changed.
 - (2) Abram turned his back upon his country and his gods and followed YHWH.
 - (3) When it came to the prophet Samuel we learn that Israel’s first king, Saul, was rejected by God.
 - (4) Or when it came to Nathan the prophet the result was the sin of David was revealed and declared.
 3. When we speak about the nature of inspiration we have to understand what is inspired.

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- a. It was not the writers, it is the writing itself..
 - b. God worked through various human authors over a period of 1,500 years to make the Scripture.
 - c. These are not human writings into which then God breathed something special or divine. Rather as these men wrote there were times when the Spirit of God was upon them in such a way as to create God breathed words.
 - d. 2 Peter 1:20-21 gives us a sense on how it worked.
4. A word about how a person decides if the Scripture is truly God-breathed.
- a. I won't talk about those who reject any divine working in the writing of the bible. There is nothing I can really say that is of value.
 - b. However, within the realm of those who are Christians there are basically two schools of thought. Autopists and axiopists.
 - (1) Autopistic—this is a person who holds to the belief that the Scriptures themselves are sufficient to determine the truthfulness, inerrancy, trustworthy, authority and preservation of itself. It does not rely upon outside arguments to help buttress the Bible's own declarations about itself.
 - (a) This position argues that there is no need to make a defense of the bible outside of what it says about itself.
 - (b) by a simple process of inductive study the conclusion a person would arrive at is that the bible declares that it is God's word to us. (Definition of 'inductive': This is simply using the Scriptures themselves as the place from which we gather our facts with the goal of making certain conclusions based on those facts)

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- (c) Here is what Wayne Grudem says, “[T]he words of Scripture are ‘self-attesting.’ They cannot be ‘proved’ to be God’s words by appeal to any higher authority. For if an appeal to some higher authority . . . were used to prove that the Bible is God’s Word, then the Bible itself would not be our highest or absolute authority: it would be subordinate in authority to the thing to which we appealed to prove it to be God’s Words. If we ultimately appeal to human reason, or to logic, or to historical accuracy, or to scientific truth, as the authority by which Scripture is shown to be God’s words, then we have assumed the thing to which we appealed to be a higher authority than God’s words and one that is more true or more reliable.” (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p, 78).
- (d) This is my position.
- (2) Axiopistic—this is a person who brings in a great deal of outside thought, logic, and argumentation into the discussion of bibliology, specifically regarding the Bible’s self-statements regarding its truth, inerrancy, infallibility, authority and preservation.
 - (a) The problem with this position is that no matter how tight of a logical argument that is given, there is always some point that can be contended.
 - (b) It is often very common for that axiopist to eventually doubt at some level the truthfulness of the Bible.
 - (c) As Grudem pointed out, once you rely on external sources to cause you to believe then you have already, often without meaning to, shown that the bible is not your final point of truth and authority.

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- (d) This is not to say that external evidences regarding the Scripture are not helpful, but they cannot be the determining factor for what we believe.
- C. This is the kind of passage that creates a decision-making point for many people. What do we do with the Bible? How do we approach it? And what are the consequences if we accept it as it declares itself to be? I came up with at five.
- 1. This is huge today in what is commonly called a post-modern age that we live in.
 - a. One of the key arguments is that there is no way to know if anything is true.
 - b. At best everything is a preference rather than actual truth.
 - c. As a result there is a greater emphasis upon how one “feels” about something rather than what they know.
 - d. This has invaded the Church in a major way. There is a massive disconnect between “truth” and “feeling” so that now the question asked is if you liked the sermon or not rather than did you hear truth taught?
 - e. Listen to so many of the songs sung today in church. They are designed first and foremost to promote a feeling, an emotion rather than to declare truth.
 - f. Why? What does the feeling matter? If I were to order my life and my decisions upon my feelings there would be serious repercussions in every part of my life.
 - g. What matters is what do I know and if it is true.
 - (1) What do I know about my soul?
 - (2) My sin?
 - (3) God.
 - (4) Jesus Christ and what he accomplished.

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- h. We must speak and hear and sing what is true. And when a man stands in the pulpit he must proclaim what is true and what must be known, not what he feels.
 - (1) On a bad Sunday the last thing you want to know from me is how I feel. Frankly, if I functioned based on what I was feeling you might not even see me on some Sundays.
 - (2) But by God's grace even on the worst of Sundays I still can rise up and tell you what is true and good for your soul.
 - (3) And if you approach my sermons based upon how they make you feel then you fail in how you hear preaching.
 - (4) You must approach each sermon with a desire to hear truth, to understand truth better. And when you walk away on a Sunday you need to ask two questions, what do you now know better? And, how did you fare under the Word of God?
 - i. When you speak let it be grounded in the Bible, let it be something which is informed and defined and conformed to the bedrock of truth.
2. Trustworthy.
- a. When you read it you can read it with confidence.
 - b. This is unlike everything else I read. There is always a question in my mind regarding what the person is writing, whether it is true, appropriate or helpful.
 - c. It means that I can use it to explain to me what is going on all around me. It becomes my interpreter and my guide. Sin, humanity, direction of history, why I exist, what is my purpose, how to know God, how to be right with God.
 - d. Part and parcel to the Christian faith is the engaging of the mind and confronting it with the Bible as truth.

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3. Uniqueness.
 - a. If the bible is the Word of God then it is unique, it stands alone.
 - b. The bible doesn't play well with others. It will not tolerate other teachings that claim to be God's Word.
4. Authority.
 - a. This is very important and cannot be diminished in any way in our minds.
 - b. The question is, if this is truth and it is God's Word than it is authoritative in our lives in every way. If it declares something to be wrong it is wrong, and if it declares something to be true, it is true.
 - c. And this is the rub for many. Countless people will say that the bible is true and without error. But when you watch their lives you realize that they don't really believe it because how they live contradict it in so many ways.
 - d. In the Old Testament countless times it says, "Thus saith the Lord" "The Lord spoke, saying" "The word of the Lord came" All of these bringing the very authority of God into what is said.
5. Power.
 - a. It is in the bible that we have the gospel, the good news from God. It speaks to us how we can be right with God. It tells us how our problem with rebellion and sin is resolved.
 - b. And so the bible says that the gospel is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes (Romans 1:16).
 - c. Jesus told some people who were trying to trip him up regarding the resurrection that their real problem was that they did not understand the Scripture and the power of God (Matt 22:29). I would argue that if they understood the Bible then they would understand the power of God.

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- d. It is in the Scripture that we can know Jesus. “For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. (1Co 1:22-24)
 - e. Therefore, we need not be ashamed of the Word, nor do we need to apologize for it. We need to graciously but confidently unleash it to a world that needs hope.
6. Sufficiency.
- a. If this is what God has revealed to us and there is no more, then we should find it sufficient for what we need in life.
 - b. As Jesus said, quoting Deuteronomy, “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” (Matthew 4:4)
 - c. King David wrote that God’s Word was sweeter than honey (Psalm 119:103).
 - d. The prophet Jeremiah said “Your words were found and I ate them, and Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart.” (Jeremiah 15:16).
 - e. We are called to long for it like a newborn baby longs for milk so that we will grow as Christians (1 Peter 2:2).
 - f. When we speak of the bible as being sufficient we mean that it is sufficient to reveal God, who man is in relation to God and how we can properly worship Him.
 - g. We do not believe it is sufficient for maintaining swimming pools or how to prepare a proper pizza. It is sufficient to define what is sound doctrine and how one is to order his life before God.

III. Conclusion.

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- A. So when Paul, facing a death sentence, tells Timothy that all Scripture is God-breathed he is not merely giving him vague, ethereal information.
- B. He is giving him the essence of what is needed to stay faithful to the end, even when the end involves all sorts of evil and frightening events.
- C. He points this man to the one place where he will be able to strengthen and establish the churches he will affect over the course of his life.
- D. And in doing so he sets down for each of us something we must resolve in our minds. What do we do with the Scripture. And if we accept it as it describes itself, what changes in our lives and minds?

Small Group Questions

- How have you understood the nature of inspiration of the Scripture in the past and what has changed as a result of hearing this sermon?
- Of the five consequences of believing in the inspiration of the Scripture, which is easiest for you and which is hardest? Why?