

Sermon - 10/16/22
Ps 119; Jer 31:27-34;
2 Tim 3:14-4:5; Lu 18:1-8

Today's passage mentions the Holy Scriptures in a couple of important ways. When Paul says Scripture, or sacred writings, he means the Hebrew Bible. He makes two major points you and I need to remember: First, the Bible does a lot of work – all those things (2 Tim 3:13-17) – instructs us for salvation (salvation is lowering all our defenses and all our resistance, allowing God to call the shots in our lives). More importantly, Scripture is inspired by God – to inspire is to breathe in. When you were born – expelled from your mother's body – you breathed in for the first time. That is the breath of life – it is God-given. The Holy Bible was inspired by the Holy Spirit in the hearts and minds of the writers. And God is still breathing,

Second, this Word, this Gospel (Old and New Testaments) is not a dusty book to be placed on a shelf. It is a **message** (2 Tim 4:2) to be shared, told, repeated, sung and celebrated every day. The sad corollary is this: the wonderful **message** is being offered to hearts and minds that are hardened against the Good News. In fact, Paul warns us that in the last days there will be real contempt for God's people and the message we bring.

Back to 2 Tim 3:13-17: Look at the work, the transformation that is done by the Word of God. We are **taught** (v 16) when we hear or read the Bible. We currently follow the Revised Common Lectionary because it provides us a survey of the Gospels and the Epistles, the Histories, the Writings, the Prophets, the Torah, the Poetry and the Wisdom writings of the entire canon. We need to be continually in the Word of God – to learn and to remember **who God is**. And to remember who we are in Christ, the only begotten Son of God.

By this God-breathed Word, we are given **reproof**. That is, we learn when we are not doing things according to God's perfect will. It is a reprimand – a reminder of the rules for living a life pleasing to the Lord.

Paul also says the Word of God – this whisper of the Holy Spirit comes to **correct** us (v 16). You know when your grammar has been corrected. You are told the right way to say something. **Correction** sets things right by supplying what was lacking. The matters that Scripture sets straight are much more than your grammar or your table manners. This correction has to do with your worldview and the way you live your life.

Then Scripture offers the faithful hearer **training in righteousness** (last point in 2 Tim 3:16). I went through a season of being fascinated with amber jewelry. Amber is considered a semi-precious gem, but it is actually ancient, fossilized tree resin. It is a vessel for spores, seeds, bits of leaves, dust and insects. Amazing stuff.

We could think of the Bible as such a vessel for us in our day. It was laid down a very long time ago. Each generation brings the treasures of God's Word into its own time and place. Actively, not passively. The breath of God is continually released anywhere His Word is read and studied. It is not static. It is a living thing – a Holy Wind. The Word constantly moves and acts and transforms those who faithfully pursue the Lord revealed there – our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer. The Word of God calls us – troubles us – stirs us up – woos us to seek more of God's presence.

God is present in the world. God would be present even if the inspired writers of the Scriptures had not provided this material. It was so in Eden. It was so when Jesus walked the streets and highways of 1st c Palestine. We are considering very big issues here. The last point in 2 Tim 3:16 is especially large. When it comes to "training in righteousness," the worldly mind – reading the Bible without faith or trust – always brings in strictly rational arguments for not using Scripture for this training. Don't check your brain at the door. We are rational beings.

Real, working historians have evidence that the events presented in the Bible are very well attested by eyewitnesses. There are documents outside the Bible that attest to its accuracy. The Holy Scriptures are a treasure to historians as well as to those seeking God. No other document in the world is so well attested as the Bible. Carefully examine the credentials of those who attack the accuracy of the Bible. Their agenda is not pure history – they do not seek pure truth.

Hearts and minds have picked up many ideas and attitudes of the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th centuries – the Enlightenment, Modern and Post-Modern schools of thought. During these times, authority has been re-located to the human mind, the human heart, the human soul. We live in the humanistic period of history.

The world is living out the Apostle Paul's prophecy that "...the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires." (2 Tim 4:3)

Even though Paul points to our time of history, we can choose to put to death the old man, the old woman, boy or girl. We have before us a New Covenant, the promise of God in Jesus Christ. Thus says the Lord: "...this is the new contract (covenant) I will make with them: I will inscribe my laws upon their hearts, so that they shall want to honor me; then they shall truly be my people and I will be their God." (Jer 31:33 TLB)

Keith Green wrote this prayer song many years ago:

*Rushing wind blow through this temple,
Blowing out the dust within,
Come and breathe your breath upon me,
I've been born again.*

*Holy spirit, I surrender, take me where you want to go,
Plant me by your living water,
Plant me deep so I can grow.*

*Jesus, you're the one, who sets my spirit free,
Use me lord, glorify, your holy name through me.*

*Separate me from this world lord.
Sanctify my life for you.*

*Daily change me to your image,
Help me bear good fruit*

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Amen.