

TBC – 5/25/03 p.m.

WHAT THE APOSTLE PAUL BELIEVED ABOUT THE SCRIPTURES

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Intro: This was one of our verses in Assignment 11 of the memory book, *Bible Verses Everyone Should Know*. It is found in what most Bible teachers believe was the last letter which Paul wrote which was to be included in the canon of Scripture. While he was writing under the direction of the Holy Spirit, so that it is in reality the Word of God, yet at the same time we know that it was the Apostle Paul's abiding conviction regarding Scripture.

The Scripture, or Scriptures, was a commonly accepted name by this time for the books of the Old Testament. But even before the NT was completed, it was used for the writings of the NT. We have a statement in Peter's second epistle which indicates this. I am referring to 2 Peter 3:15 and 16:

15 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction (2 Peter 3:15-16).

This word, scripture, or its plural, scriptures, is found 52 times in the NT, and only once in the OT: Dan. 10:21. When Peter said "the other scriptures," he was indicating that some of Paul's epistles were already being recognized as being on a par with the OT scriptures, and so Peter was recognizing that Paul's epistles were written the same way that the OT books were written.

Peter's statement about the Scriptures is given in 2 Peter 1:20-21:

20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

The idea is that the Scriptures did not originate with those who wrote them, but the writers wrote as they were moved, or carried along by the Holy Spirit. But what I want you to notice is Peter's use of the word, "scripture."

So what Paul said about the OT scriptures applied equally to the writings of the NT. In other words, all of the Bible is described by 2 Tim. 3:16, 17.

And so we can say that these two verses give us:

I. GOD'S DEFINITION OF HIS OWN WORD.

But we must go on to say that this was Paul's belief, his understanding also, of the unique character of what we now have in the books of the Old and New Testament. They are all *inspired by God*. Lit. he meant that they were *God-breathed*. He used different writers, but so led and controlled them by the Holy Spirit, using their personalities and characteristic writing styles in such a that what they have given us is the Word of God.

The Bible is called Scriptures because they are written down. They are a written record of God's word. And notice that they were "given." They are a gift from God. They stand as God's own revelation, and no other writing is to be included. We must not add to what is in our Bibles, nor can we take anything away.

Paul firmly believed this. He was writing to his younger fellowservant, Timothy, and he was reminding Timothy of this to strengthen Timothy's faith that in the Scriptures we have the true Word of God.

Then as the verbally inspired Word of God, Paul said it was "profitable." What God has given us in His Word is greatly advantageous for all of the people of God, including Paul himself, Timothy, all of those early Christians, and all of the people of God down to the present day. We can't get along with it. Spiritual growth is impossible without it. But Paul mentioned four ways in which the Bible will be useful for us, all of us:

- 1) For doctrine, or teaching.
- 2) For reproof.
- 3) For correction.
- 4) For instruction in righteousness.

As soon as a person is saved, he needs to begin reading the Bible for himself, or herself, and he needs to keep reading it all of his life, reading it over and over, possibly reading some parts more than others, but he needs to read it all. I am still having trouble seeing how important all of those words are in 1 Chronicles which we are reading now, but I read it each

year and so my best to pronounce all of those names out loud.

The Bible tells us everything that we need to know about God, about creation, about history, about sin and salvation, about our relationship with God, and our relationship with each other, about heaven and hell, I could go on and on, but I want you to know that the Bible is a complete book. Not only are we not to add or to take away anything from the Bible, but nothing needs to be added, and nothing can be taken away. Our Bibles are just exactly what God meant for it to be. Paul firmly believed this.

But not only is it profitable for doctrine, but for reproof. This word can mean conviction, but reproof is a good translation. It shows us where we are wrong, and it does it with conviction. The Bible does not tell us that truth is relative. Truth is absolute. Right is right, and wrong is wrong. In fact the Bible establishes the standard of truth, of right and wrong, and it is an enduring record because the truth does not change.

But the Bible also is profitable for correction. It tells us what we should be instead of what we are, what we should do which we are not doing, and in line with reproof, it points out what we are doing that needs to be changed.

And then Paul added “instruction in righteousness.” The Bible presents truth to us that we have never thought about. It points out that we need to grow. What we do we can always do better, but in the instruction that we find in Scripture we come across verses like Phil. 2:13 and statements to the effect that Christ is our life. After all, the Christian life is a life far above and beyond what we are capable of doing. And so we are not only told how we are to live, but we see in the Bible that God will enable us to be what He wants us to be and to do what He wants us to do.

Verse 16 tells us purpose that God has for giving us His Word. And the first purpose that Paul mentioned was that we might be “perfect,” or mature, growing to become more like the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and then Paul added, the Word of God will thoroughly equip us for every good work that the Lord calls upon us to do. “Work” in Scripture is not always some occupation, but it has to do with our lives and how we can glorify God and also be an instrument of blessing in the lives of others.

I have scarcely touched upon the value there is for all of us in the Word of

God. But it is tremendous! The more we are exposed to the Word, and the more we respond positively to the Word, the greater will be our blessing. We ought to read our Bibles with the same regularity that we feed our bodies. The Bible is to our souls what food is to our bodies. It is easy to neglect it, but we must seek God's help to keep us faithful with the Word.

But, you say, Paul was writing to Timothy, and Timothy was giving his life, like Paul was, to serving the Lord. Maybe you are inclined to say that it is not as important for you to be faithful since you never expect to be a pastor, or a Bible school or seminary teacher, or a missionary. It is true that Timothy was in the ministry, but do you know why Paul was telling Timothy these things, writing them down, although he and Timothy had undoubtedly talked about these things over and over many times?

Timothy was to be an example. Cf. 1 Tim. 4:12. Peter told the elders to whom he was writing in 1 Peter 5 that they were to be examples to the flock of God. You see, it was important for Paul and Timothy to be faithful in their lives with the Word because they were to be examples for all of the people under their ministry to follow. There are high standards for apostles and elders and deacons and parents because as they live, so those who are under their ministry will live. To have seminary training is wonderful, but seminary training as such doesn't qualify anyone for the ministry. What qualifies any Paul or Timothy for the ministry is daily obedience to the Word of God.

Now with all of this in mind, I want to go to three other passages in this epistle to show how Paul felt about the Bible.

Let us notice in this chapter what Paul said about:

II. THE TRAINING THAT TIMOTHY HAD RECEIVED AT HOME (2 Tim. 3:14-15).

Paul and Timothy had completely different backgrounds. Paul had been raised in a strict Jewish home. He grew up feeling that he could serve God the best by doing away with Christians and anything that had to do with Christ.

Timothy had a godly grandmother and a godly mother. We don't have any reason to believe that his father was a Christian. See 2 Tim. 1:5. In

Acts 16:1 we are told that Timothy's father was a Greek, a Gentile, but his mother was Jewish. How Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice were brought to Christ, we don't know. But what we do know is that Timothy was brought up on the Scriptures. Paul called Timothy his son in the faith. I don't know if that means that it was under Paul's ministry that Timothy was saved, or that Paul had taken Timothy under his wing and taught him in addition to all that he had learned under his grandmother and mother. But what I do know is that Paul told Timothy not to depart from what he had been taught as a child. That godly grandmother and godly mother had laid a tremendous foundation upon which Paul could build. And so Paul said for Timothy to continue doing what he had been told by his mother and grandmother to do, and which they evidently had impressed upon him by the lives that they lived.

Our backgrounds are all different, but if you had a godly father or a godly mother, or both, or some godly person who took you under their wing to instruct you in the Word of God, continue right on believing what they taught you, and doing what they instructed you to do.

But let me make another point.

III. PAUL'S ADVICE FOR TIMOTHY'S PERSONAL LIFE.

And the verse in 2 Timothy that I want you to turn to now is the fifteenth verse of chapter 2. (Read.)

God is very protective of His Word. Paul told Timothy here that his first objective in studying the Word, in handling the Scriptures, was always to seek the approval of the Lord. We are not to seek the approval of men in the way we handle the Word of God. We need to seek God's approval, a workman who does not need to be ashamed because by God's grace we are seeking to handle God's Word the way He wants us to handle it, the way He wants us to teach it. We are going to need the Holy Spirit's help if we are going to be able to do this.

In the first place, Paul did not want Timothy to ever stop studying the Word of God. We can never exhaust it. We can never learn all that is possible for us to know. The word "study" means *to be diligent*. Paul was telling Timothy that he should never stop studying the Word of God. God never stops teaching us, and we must never stop learning. And in all of our learning, as I have said, we need to be seeking God's approval.

Now there is one more point that I want to make. In 2 Timothy 2:15 we see Timothy in his study. In the fourth chapter of this epistle we see Timothy in the pulpit (if you will allow me to express Paul's words to him in this way).

IV. THE WORD IN TIMOTHY'S MINISTRY (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

Paul's charge to Timothy was to "preach the Word." Timothy had no right to do anything else. But what could be greater than to preach the Word. If you and I were to visit many churches today you would have heard a political sermon. In others you would have learned that the Pastor was promoting some civic project. In still others you might have heard a moral essay about being good and doing good, but during which the Pastor made not one reference to the Word of God. In other churches you would have heard so much music, and much of it with a contemporaneous sound brought in from the world, that there was just a few minutes left for the preaching, but even then it probably was not preaching the Word.

Paul told Timothy that he had no right to make any substitute for the Word of God when he stood before the people of God. But why would we ever want to leave the best, for anything else because whatever we might choose could never measure up to the Word of God.

God works through His Word. God convicts and convinces through His Word. God's Word is living and powerful and sharper than any twoedged sword. God with His Word strikes deeply into the hearts of sinners, turning them to Christ. People may demand something else, but the Pastor who has been feeding his own soul through the week, will not turn aside from the Word of God.

Concl: Paul knew that his ministry was coming to an end. He had enjoyed the blessing of the Lord upon his ministry far more than most of us have. But he stood unshakeable in his devotion to the Lord and to the Word of God. And he sought to do all in his power to encourage Timothy to stay on course in his ministry.

And what is written in his last epistle is a kind of trumpet call for the church and her pastors in all succeeding generation to know that the Scriptures are the Word of God, and that though the ministry of the Word to the hearts of the people of God, we have all that we need to assure the blessing of God and to have the approval of God in the ministry of the Church.