

“Inspired Teaching”
2 Timothy 3:10-17
December 13, 2015

INTRODUCTION:

Our final core value is to be a teaching community. Since God has chosen to bring the gospel to us through Word and Spirit, we teach the whole Bible to the whole person by the power of the Holy Spirit. As Paul writes this second letter to Timothy, he is an old man in prison who thinks he is about to die. The approach of death has a way of clarifying to our minds what is really important. At the end of his life, Paul’s conviction about the importance of Scripture grew stronger, not weaker. He wanted Timothy to continue in the Scriptures, and that is what we believe God wants us to do as well, teaching the inspired word of God to all.

There are two or three passages in the Bible where the Bible talks about the Bible. Our passage this morning is the most well-known of those because it makes the claim that the Bible is the inspired word of God. Since it is the word of God, Paul says that it will be profitable to us. The context of this passage demonstrates its practical benefit. Paul wasn’t writing a theological treatise when he penned these words about the Bible. He was writing a letter to his friend, Timothy. He was writing to encourage Timothy as he faced several hardships, one of which was Paul’s expectation not to make it out of prison alive. Paul had been serving as Timothy’s advisor as he confronted these many problems in Ephesus, and the thought that his advisor would no longer be available to him was a frightening one. So Paul reminds Timothy that he has a resource far more valuable than Paul’s counsel; he has the inspired word of God. It is the Bible we teach here because it is the Bible that will prove most profitable to us. Let’s consider this more extensively.

I. What We Teach

We teach the Bible because it is the inspired word of God. I like the way our translation puts it. **“All Scripture is breathed out by God.”** Many translations read “inspired” by God. That’s not a bad translation, but it could be easily misunderstood. When we talk about something being inspiring, we mean that it has a positive, uplifting effect upon us. That’s not what is meant here. It means that the words of Scripture have their origin in God. They have come from his mouth as much as one’s breath comes out of the mouth. But the Bible is also human in its origin. Paul wrote this letter that we are studying in a process just like you and I might write a letter. He didn’t strive to get himself into some trance through which the Holy Spirit would channel divine oracles. Nor did the Holy Spirit dictate what Paul was to write. Paul and the other

human writers composed these 66 books in our Bible. But God chose to speak through the human authors so that the words of the Bible are both fully human and fully divine. That's what is meant when we speak of the inspiration of the Bible. In a famous book he wrote on this topic of inspiration, theologian B.B. Warfield summarizes it like this: "The Biblical writers do not conceive of the Scriptures as a human product breathed into by the Divine Spirit and thus heightened in its qualities or endowed with new qualities; but as a Divine product produced through the instrumentality of men."

Theologians often use two words to describe inspiration—verbal and plenary. Verbal means that we believe the words themselves are inspired, not just the thoughts. So Paul in the book of Galatians can quote the Old Testament and base a theological argument on the fact that a word is singular rather than plural. And we believe in *plenary* inspiration, which means that all the Bible is inspired. Numbers 3:16 is just as inspired as John 3:16.

The Bible is profitable precisely because it is the word of God, designed by him to bring profit to us. God's word has the power to bring about what he speaks. So when he says, "Let there be light," there is light. It is by the word of his power that he created the entire universe. He spoke it into creation. So when the Bible says that his word is profitable, God is doing more than giving a description of its profit. He speaks the profit into our lives. There are four areas where he designs it to be profitable: **"for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness."** The first and last of those are positive in nature, while the middle two are negative. The Bible is profitable for teaching, directing us to objective truth. The Bible also corrects and reproves by pointing out what is wrong in our lives. It is like a test for the presence of cancer, bringing healing through pointing out the wrong. The Bible is also profitable "for training in righteousness." Training is a word indicating the value of repetition. No athlete will excel without years of training. No musician will gain the skills to play with excellence without spending many hours every day in the practice room for many years. And no one will make progress in holiness without spending much time in the Bible.

So the Bible brings profit into our lives **"that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work"** (v. 17). One of the lies of the devil is that if we follow the Bible, we become less than what we would be if we followed our own instincts and longings. The exact opposite is the case. To follow the Bible leads to our improvement, to being equipped for every good work. We become more fully human as this word of God does its good work in our hearts.

II. How We Teach It

Verse 14 contains two very important principles concerning how we teach the Bible. **“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it.”** In contrast to the false teachers who were always coming up with things new and exciting, Timothy is to continue in the old words of the Bible throughout his life. We are to teach the Bible continually. There are a couple of important truths we learn from this command to continue in the word. First, we learn that the Bible is alive and able to address our needs even as we change over the years. The Bible is not like an algebra textbook, where once understood and mastered can be left behind. But the Bible can profitably be read and studied throughout life because it is able to speak to us about our present needs. Have you ever had the experience of reading a familiar passage of Scripture and finding new insights that speak to you in the present? It’s not necessarily that you learned anything new in that passage, but rather that the passage applied to your life in a new and fresh way. We continue in the Bible because it is able to do that.

Second, we learn from this command to continue in the Scriptures that the truths of the Bible grow more precious to us with age. Many things in life work the opposite, exciting at first but quickly fading. Paul thinks he doesn’t have long to live, and the Bible is precious to him at the end of his life. I have witnessed the same. Someone was telling me recently about his 89-year old father who has lost his interest in reading and television. But the one thing he still reads, for several hours each day, is the Bible.

There is another important principle in verse 14 about how we are to teach the Bible. We are not only to teach it continually, but also relationally. Notice that Paul tells Timothy to continue with the Bible, **“knowing from whom you learned it.”** The relational side of Bible teaching is often overlooked. When we teach the Bible, we are concerned both with the content and the relationship between the teacher and the student. Both the “what” and the “who” are important. While serving on a conference panel, John Piper was once asked, “Why did you conclude inerrancy is true?” His answer surprised everyone: “Because my momma told me it’s true.” Paul tells Timothy something similar. He is to continue in the word because of his confidence in the lives of those who taught it to him, his mother and grandmother and Paul himself.

Let’s talk about an application of this second principle of teaching the Bible relationally. We all know of some young people who have left home and end up leaving the faith of their home as well. One of the things we can all do to help prevent that is to establish the kinds of relationships with the children and young people of the church that would serve to hold them in the faith. So when they take a class from that atheist philosophy professor whose chief aim is to steal away the faith of any Christians in his class, they will remember a Sunday School teacher and ask themselves, “But what would Mrs. Carter think about my leaving the faith?” The faith commitments of those who love us are

powerful influences for good. So the application is to be that kind of teacher, the kind who loves his or her students to the point that you become such a good influence.

III. Why We Teach It

We teach the Bible because it is **“able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus”** (v. 15). Nothing in life is more important than being saved from the wrath to come. Such salvation comes only through Jesus. There is no other way. We receive this salvation from Jesus through faith alone. There is no other way. We believe in Jesus only because he is revealed to us in the Bible. There is no way to know him sufficiently for salvation other than through this revelation.

In order for the Bible to make us wise unto salvation, we have to read it in such a way that our faith in Jesus is strengthened. The Bible is not like a Swiss army knife, a multi-tool that addresses whatever need you may have. The Bible is not a book to give us tips on successful living, so that we approach it merely to make us successful in such things as childrearing, money-management and marriage. It will, of course, help us in all those areas and more, but not in isolation from its central purpose of making us wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus.

There is a very important implication of this. When we read the Bible, we need to let it take us to Jesus. Charles Spurgeon tells the story about an old Welsh minister trying to help a younger minister learn to center every on Jesus. After hearing one of his sermons, the Welsh minister said,

“It was a very poor sermon.” “Will you tell me why you think it a poor sermon?” came the response. “Because,” said the Welsh minister, “there was no Christ in it.” “Well,” said the young man, “Christ was not in the text; we are not to be preaching Christ always, we must preach what is in the text.” “Don’t you know young man that from every town, and every village, and every little hamlet in England, wherever it may be, there is a road to London?” “Yes,” said the young man. “Ah!” said the old divine, “and so from every text in Scripture, there is a road to the metropolis of the Scriptures, that is Christ. And my dear brother, your business is when you get to a text, to say, ‘Now what is the road to Christ?’ and then preach a sermon, running along the road towards the great metropolis—Christ. And,” said he, “I have never yet found a text that had not got a road to Christ in it, and if I ever do find one that has not a road to Christ in it, I will make one; I will go over hedge and ditch but I would get at my Master, for the sermon cannot do any good unless there is a savor of Christ in it.”

Let’s take an example of this from the story of David and Goliath. This story is often preached with only a moral application to face with courage the giants

in your life like David faced Goliath, and if you trust God, your giants will fall as well. “Be like David” is the main application. But if we let every text take us to Jesus, we will read the text differently. Notice that the point is made in the story that the armies of Israel could not face the giant themselves. When Goliath came forward to challenge Israel, even Israel’s bravest soldiers fled in terror. They needed a deliverer to represent them, and God provided one not through a strong person, but a weak one. Then he uses the weakness of David to defeat the giant as David came to him armed only with his stones and his sling. David triumphs through weakness, and all Israel benefits. Since David is their representative, his victory is their victory.

It’s not difficult to see Jesus in this. He faced the even bigger giants of sin and death. In doing so, he didn’t risk his life, but gave it. In that way, he triumphed through weakness, the weakness of death on a cross. But he was raised again from the dead, and through his death and resurrection has defeated sin and death, not just for himself, but for all who believe in him. His victory has become our victory. Because Jesus has defeated my big giants of sin and death, I can face the smaller giants like fear and anxiety. The worst that can happen to me, death, has been taken care of, giving me confidence and courage in all situations.

CONCLUSION:

It was not unusual for the Romans to persecute the early Christians. One of the ways they learned to identify the Christian leaders was to look for Christian literature. For a Christian to have such literature in their houses would make them liable to arrest and execution. So the Christians had to decide what literature they would be willing to die for. There were many different gospels in the second century, far more than the four we recognize as part of the Bible. But in the face of persecution, these other gospels were not judged by the church to be worth dying for. The consensus developed around the books that comprise our New Testament, that these were worth dying for. They are worth dying for because they make us wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus. The Bible doesn’t just contain wisdom, but has the ability to make us wise. I invite you to believe this and take it up and read it, lest you be a fool. Let these Scriptures take you to Jesus, deepening your hold on him by faith.