

October 23, 2011 by Steve Brandon



Trust the Bible

2 Timothy 3:16-17

The Bible has ...

1. Authority (verse 16a).
2. Power (verse 16b).
3. Sufficiency (verse 17).

On March 16, 2010, the Kimyal Tribe of Papua, Indonesia received the first shipments of the New Testament in their own language. The above video shows the celebration that ensued when they received the Bible. When the plane landed, there was dancing and singing and rejoicing! Many were in tears of joy that God's word had finally come into their land. When the boxes of Bibles began to be taken out of the plane, the tribe quieted down and one of the pastors prayed the following prayer, ...

O God, O God!

The plan which you had from the beginning, regarding your Kimyals, which already existed in your Spirit.

The month that you had set, the day that you had set, has come to pass today.

O my Father, my Father!

The promise that you gave Simeon that he would see Jesus Christ and hold Him in his arm before he died.

I also have been waiting under that same promise, O God. You looked at all the difference languages and chose which ones will be put into Your Word.

You thought that we should see Your Word in our language.

Today, the day you had chosen for this to be fulfilled, has come to pass.

O God, today, you have placed Your Word into my hands, just like you promised.

You have placed it here in our land.

And for all this, O God, I give You praise! Amen!

They then proceeded to walk down the airstrip and into their village, carrying the Bibles into their village. During this time, weeping and wailing had increased to full pandemonium, as people sang and danced and celebrated with each other that they now had the New Testament in their own language! [\[1\]](#)

Do you realize what you hold in your hands when you read your Bible? What we have in our hands at this moment is more valuable than anything that you have ever placed in your hands. It is the very Word of God.

Of all things on earth, God's Word will last forever. "Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89). You cannot say that of anything else that you can put in your hand. It is the ultimate standard of truth. Jesus said, "Your word is truth" (John 17:17). No writer, no author, no other document can make and substantiate such a claim. It is the ultimate source of wisdom. David said, "The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple" (Psalm 19:7). Nothing else on earth is able to give you the wisdom that the Word of God can do. It is able to change the soul. "The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul" (Psalm 19:7). Nothing else on earth is able to change and heal a soul like the Word of God can do. It can give more delight than anything on the earth. David wrote that God's word is "more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold. Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb" (Ps. 19:10).

And it is to this word that Paul directs Timothy to turn to help him in his pastoral struggles. Let's turn to the book of 2 Timothy. In our exposition of this wonderful book, we find ourselves in the last two verses of chapter three.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Here we have one of the clearest explanations of the authority and power and sufficiency of the word of God in all the Bible. If the Bible is inspired by God, then it is entirely authoritative. If the Bible is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training, then it is powerful to change lives. If the Bible is able to equip the man of God for every good work, then it is sufficient for our walk with God.

I remember hearing a lecture delivered by Kent Hughes entitled, "Fundamental Beliefs You Must Hold in Order to Preach Expositionally." In that lecture, he gave three points.

1. The Bible is Wholly Inerrant
2. The Bible is Massively Potent
3. The Bible is Totally Sufficient

When you believe that the Bible is entirely without error; and when you believe that the Bible is massively powerful to change lives; and when you believe that the Bible is sufficient to instruct us in the ways we should live, then (as Kent Hughes argues) you will be compelled to preach it expositionally. This is because you believe that the Bible exposed will have the longest, most powerful effect in your ministry.

These are my beliefs. This is why the pattern of my ministry is simply opening the Bible, reading it, explaining it, and applying it to your lives. I believe that this is the most effective way of building the church.

We might be able to build a bigger church if we turned to other methods of ministry - preaching that is humorous and draws a crowd, preaching to felt needs to make you feel better, preaching that never confronts sin. We may be able to see more people come. We may be able to build a bigger church this way. But we won't be able to build a better church this way. The way to build a better church is by letting the word of God loose, opening it and letting it speak to us. This is what I seek to do for all of you every week of my life. I seek to open the Bible and let you see it clearly.

Getting back to the lecture that Kent Hughes gave, we see each of those three characteristics in our text this morning. The fact that the Bible is inspired speaks to its inerrancy. When God speaks, He doesn't speak error. That the Bible is profitable for teaching, reproving, correcting, and training speaks to its power. That the Bible is able to equip men for all righteousness speaks to its sufficiency.

But, the good question to ask at this point is this: why did Paul include such a statement on the authority, power, and sufficiency of Scripture at this point in 2 Timothy? Because, it wasn't put here merely to inform us of the doctrine of the Scripture. It had another purpose. So what is it? Well, let's review and I think that it will be clear.

At the beginning of chapter 3, Paul wrote of the difficult days that were coming upon the church. Deceivers and false teachers would enter the church, pursuing after their own desires and their own passions, and seeking to deceive those in the church. But, Timothy's post was in the church. His task was to protect the church. He was to advance the church into the kingdom of darkness.

Beginning in verse 10, Paul gives Timothy a strategy to help. He says, "Stay the course. You are going the right way. Keep walking in the way that you are going." Verse 10 reads this way, "Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions and sufferings." It is like he is saying, "Timothy, you know all about my life. You heard my teaching. You saw my conduct. You know my purpose in life. You have seen my faith in actions, my patience when tested, and my love in all things. You know that I've persevered through them all. You even know of the persecutions and sufferings that I have experienced. And you walked that path with me. You followed after my ways. So, continue to follow in these ways. Yes, you will suffer. Yes, you will face persecution. But, such is the fate of all who desire to live a godly life." This was our first point last week: Follow Me (verse 13).

But, Paul didn't merely call Timothy to follow him. He called Timothy to follow everything that has been taught to him by his godly influences - his mother, his grandmother, the Rabbis at school, whoever was a godly influence upon his life. That was our second point: Follow Your Teachers (verses 14-15a).

Finally, Paul called him to follow the Scriptures. Verse 15 says, "And that from childhood, you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." This was our final point last week: Follow the Scriptures (verse 15b).

Again, this isn't anything new for Timothy. Rather, Paul is telling him to stay the course. "Timothy, you have learned these things as a young child from the Old Testament. They have taught you of God. They have taught you of your sin. They have taught you of your need for a Savior. You have come to embrace Jesus as your Messiah. You are on the right course. So, don't abandon Him now." In this context comes our text, ...

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

These verses come as an encouragement to the usefulness of Scripture for Timothy's life as a pastor. "Timothy, the sacred writings are a faithful guide for you! They have led you to Jesus. They will lead you home. So, trust them!" That's why Paul wrote these words in verses 16 and 17: to give further help to Timothy to know that the Scriptures are trustworthy. Thus, the title of my message, "Trust the Bible."

Books have been written on this topic. I have three such books in my library. R. C. Sproul wrote a little book entitled, "Can I Trust the Bible?" Erwin Lutzer wrote a book entitled, "Seven Reasons Why You Can Trust the Bible." John MacArthur wrote a small booklet entitled, "You Can Trust the Bible." Each of these men took different approaches. R. C. Sproul used the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy to guide his discussion of the authority, revelation, inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible. Erwin Lutzer put forth seven reasons why you can trust the Bible. He gives: A Logical Reason; A Historical Reason; A Prophetic Reason; A Christological Reason; A Scientific Reason; A Providential Reason; and A Personal Reason. John MacArthur (in typical style), uses Psalm 19 as a guide in his discussion.

These are but a few books that address the reliability of Scripture. But, there are many more books that deal with the authenticity of the documents, themselves, the process of copying the documents, the formation of the canon, and the reliability of translations.

This morning, we don't have the time to look at all the ways of why we should trust the Bible. But, we will look at the way that Paul told Timothy to trust the Bible. Paul gives Timothy three reasons why we can trust the Bible. Now, technically, these verses don't speak about the entire Bible, because the entire Bible wasn't written when Paul wrote these words. Namely, the gospel of John and the book of Revelation probably weren't yet written, perhaps John's epistles as well. Furthermore, there may have been some New Testament books that Timothy

didn't have the chance to read yet, because copies of them hadn't yet reached Ephesus.

However, everything that Paul says about "All Scripture" certainly applies to our Bible as a whole by principle. God's work of inspiration with Genesis and the Psalms and the gospel of Luke apply equally as well to every book of the Bible.

Anyway, let's see what Paul says about the Scripture. Why can you trust the Bible? Here's my first reason: The Bible has ...

1. Authority (verse 16a).

I get this from the first half of verse 16, "All Scripture is inspired by God." That is, the words are the very breath of God. The word "inspired" comes from the Greek compound word, which means "God" and "breathed." Literally, we translate, "All Scripture is God-breathed." That's exactly how the NIV translates this term. The ESV captures the same sense, "All Scripture is breathed out by God."

The Scriptures are the very breath of God. Peter said it this way: "Men, moved by the Holy Spirit, spoke from God" (2 Peter 1:21). Yes, the Scriptures are a product of men. Men wrote them. But, yes, the Scriptures are ultimately the product of God, as He moved men to write them. And the result is that they "spoke from God." Therefore, all Scripture has authority in our lives.

And when you read the Bible, you get a clear sense of the authority that it brings. Over and over and over again, the Scripture says words like, "Thus says the LORD" (Exodus 4:22; Judges 6:8; Isaiah 66:1; 2 Kings 7:1 to say a few). Literally, this phrase, "thus says the LORD" occurs hundreds of times in the Bible. It tells us this -- that the Bible is to be obeyed. It is to be obeyed because it is the very word of God.

Now, let me point out that there is a big difference between "inspiring" and "inspired." Perhaps the best way to say this is to relate a bit of my experience growing up. I grew up in a church that, for the most part, didn't pay a lot of attention to the Bible. Oh, it was used. It was read. It was quoted. But, in the end, we didn't turn to the Bible as authoritative. You might say that we viewed the Bible as "inspiring" rather than "inspired."

The difference is this: "Inspiring" literature is used to help you live better. It helps to motivate you. It gives you a goal and a drive. My little book of Bible prayers and promises that I showed to you last week seem to be written from this premise. This is how it felt to be in the church in which I grew up. To be fair to the church I grew up in, I know that they wouldn't say it this way. But, it is how it felt. It felt like they were looking to the Bible as "inspiring" them to live better.

But, "Inspired" literature is different. "Inspired" means that God has spoken to us. And if God has spoken, we must pay attention to it regardless of how it makes us feel, regardless of what we may feel is right, regardless of what it might mean for our lives. Because, they are the very words of God!

Now, it's not that if you believe the Bible to be "inspired," that it isn't "inspiring." It is. An inspired Bible inspires us to live a passionate, God-filled life. In fact, I believe that viewing the Bible (as Paul says here) as "inspired" is the key to living a life filled with hope and joy and passion for the Lord.

God used a church filled with people who believed that the Bible was "inspired" to change my life. And when I stepped for the first time into a church filled with people who believed that the Bible was "inspired," not merely "inspiring," I could see the difference and feel the difference. They brought their Bibles to church, because they wanted to hear from and learn about God. They talked about their Bibles, because they wanted to encourage others with the Lord's work in their life. They knew their Bibles, because they placed a priority on learning and obeying God's word.

Stepping into that church changed my life. I wanted to be like those sorts of people who knew their Bibles and learned their Bibles and obeyed their Bibles. Yvonne's testimony is the same.

I believe that much of the difference in the churches came down to the difference between "inspiring" and "inspired." When you believe that the Bible is "inspired," you believe that it has authority over your life. My question for you all is this: If someone would step into our church from a church where the word of God is "inspiring," would they get the impression that we believe that the word of God is "inspired"?

Let's move on to my second point. Not only does the Bible have Authority (verse 16a), it also has ...

2. Power (verse 16b).

By "power" I mean "the ability to guide us in how we should live." I get this from the last part of verse 16, ...

2 Timothy 3:16

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.

We see here four areas in which the Bible is able to help us. It teaches us. It reproves us. It corrects us. It trains us. Teaching provides for us the raw content of what we need to believe. I love the Westminster Catechism, question #5, "What do the scriptures principally teach?" The Answer: "The scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of man." That's what the Bible does. It tells us what to believe.

Reproof tells us when we are going the wrong way. The Bible is filled with prohibitions. You shall not have any gods before Me. You shall not lie. You shall not murder. You shall not steal. These prohibitions identify our sin. And that's what "reproof" is, showing us our sin.

Correction shows us the right way that we should go. The Bible is filled with counsel for us regarding how we should live. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength." "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." "Husbands, love your wives." "Wives,

submit to your husbands." "Children, obey your parents." That's what "correction" is: showing us the way of righteousness.

Training describes the whole process of growing in godliness. You train your children by commending them on what they have done well and by disciplining them when they do wrong. When you have done this consistently, "afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness" (Heb. 12:11).

This is what the word of God does for us. It teaches us the right way. It reproves us when we are wrong. It corrects us to walk in the right way. It trains us to do so consistently. Such is the power of the word of God. In other words, the word of God has the power to influence our lives, so that we live a life pleasing to the Lord.

The great example of this is the Lord Jesus Christ. Before His public ministry, and just after His baptism, Jesus fasted for forty days and forty nights in the wilderness. Satan came and tempted Him, saying, "If You are the Son of God, b that these stones become bread" (Matt. 4:3). Jesus responded, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God'" (Matt. 4:4). Again, Satan came to Jesus, saying, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command His angels concerning you'; and 'On their hands they will bear You up, so that You will not strike your foot against a stone'" (Matt. 4:6). Jesus responded, "On the other hand, it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test'" (Matt. 4:7). A third time, Satan approached Jesus saying, "All [the kingdoms of the world and their glory] I will give You, if You fall down and worship me" (Matt. 4:9). But Jesus replied, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only'" (Matt. 4:10).

Don't take lightly the example of Jesus. When tempted, Jesus went to the Bible as a source of strength and power to overcome the temptation. Three times responding to Satan, "It is written. It is written. It is written."

I believe that it was the power of the word of God that taught Jesus what to believe, that reproved the devil in his wayward ways, that corrected the devil in the right ways He should go, that trained Jesus to walk in the path of righteousness.

Near the end of Moses' life, he told the Israelites, "Take to your heart all the words with which I am warning you today, which you shall command your sons to observe carefully, even all the words of this law. For it is not an idle word for you; indeed it is your life" (Deut. 32:46-47).

My question for you all is this: Do you believe in the power of the Scriptures? Do you believe it for your life? Is the word of God your very life? Do you find it sweet and satisfying and life-giving? The Scriptures are powerful to nourish your souls.

Let's move on to my last point this morning. Not only does the Bible have Authority (verse 16a) and Power (verse 16b). But, it also has ... 3. Sufficiency (verse 17).

By this I mean that the Scriptures are all-comprehensive. They tell us what we are to believe and how we are to live, giving us the needed tools to live that way. Ultimately, we don't need anything else. We have the Scriptures, and that's all we need. This is the message of verse 17, ...

2 Timothy 3:17

"... so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

The "man of God" is a term that is used more than 70 times throughout the Old Testament. Every time it is used, it describes God's man, the prophet who proclaimed God's word. Moses was called "the man of God" (Deut. 33:1). Samuel was called "the man of God" (1 Sam. 9:6). Elijah was called "the man of God" (1 Kings 17:18). Elisha was called "the man of God" (2 Kings 1:9, 11, 13). These men, along with a handful of other lesser-known prophets.

The phrase "man of God" is used only twice in the New Testament. Here and in 1 Timothy 6:11, where again Paul uses it of Timothy. You can't escape the conclusion that this term has reference primarily to God's man, God's messenger, God's minister, God's pastor.

The Scripture is authoritative and it is powerful for everything needed in pastoral ministry, "that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:17).

There were many problems arising in the church at Ephesus. A few weeks ago, we looked at 19 characteristics of the evil men intent upon deceiving the church. But, there was one solution to dealing with all of these problem people: The Scriptures.

"Timothy, do you want to be equipped for your pastoral duties? ... then take up the book.

Timothy, do you want to know how to deal with the deceivers of this age? (3:1-9)... then take up the book.

Timothy, do you want to know how to protect the church? ... then take up the book.

Timothy, do you want to know how to counsel the flock? ... then take up the book.

Timothy, do you want to know how to be 'kind to all, able to teach, and patient when wronged?' (2:24)... then take up the book.

Timothy, do you want to know how to endure persecution? ... then take up the book.

Timothy, do you want to know how to live as a model before others? ... then take up the book.

Timothy, do you want to know how to live godly in Christ Jesus? ... then take up the book.

Timothy, do you want to know how to discern truth from error? ... then take up the book.

Timothy, do you want to know how to pass on the faith to faithful men? ... then take up the book.

Timothy, do you want to know how to pray? ... then take up the book.

Timothy, do you want to know how to endure hardship? ... then take up the book.

Timothy, do you want to know how to do the work of an evangelist? ... then take up the book.

Timothy, do you want to know how to fulfill your ministry? ... then take up the book.
Timothy, do you want to know how to fight the good fight? ... then take up the book."

This has far-reaching application for how we seek to equip those to serve the church in a pastoral (or any other leadership) role. Fundamentally, everything that we need to use to train up spiritual leaders is found in the Bible.

Seminaries are good and helpful. But, sadly, seminaries can easily become academic institutions, rather than pastoral training centers. When that happens, focus is taken away from the Scriptures to other academic (or practical) pursuits. And as they do that, they drift from the word of God. And as they drift from the word of God, they lose the inspired training manual. They begin to focus their attention upon sociology and ministry methodology and the pragmatics of pastoral life, and the Bible isn't emphasized in churches where these pastors serve. Soon people of the church aren't taught and reproved and corrected and trained in righteousness. Instead, they too are directed to the practicals of building a finely run church. And as a result, the church loses its power.

That scenario has played out over and over and over again throughout church history. You show me a mainline denomination that has been around for years and has drifted in its belief and trust in the inerrancy of the Bible, and I'll show you a denomination that is weak and dwindling in numbers.

Fundamentally, everything that we need to use to train up spiritual leaders is found in the Bible. That's why I love what Leadership Resources International is doing in Nepal and in other countries. They train pastors in reading, understanding, and expounding the truth of the word of God. That's why I'm committed in my ministry to do everything in my power to bring the book to all of you in all of my training efforts (men, youth, Kids KLUB)

But, let's bring it home to application for all of you. What was true of Timothy, the pastor of the church at Ephesus, is equally true for all of us.

Do you need help in what to believe? ... then take up the book.
Do you need help in what to do? ... then take up the book.
Do you need help with an upcoming decision? ... then take up the book.
Do you need help with a rebellious child? ... then take up the book.
Do you need help with your marriage? ... then take up the book.
Do you need help with your work? ... then take up the book.
Do you need help with a difficult family situation? ... then take up the book.
Do you need help with your discouragement?

Turn to the Scriptures. Let them be your guide. Take up the book!

I had an opportunity this week to speak with someone here at Rock Valley Bible Church who has been a Christian for about 20 years. During that time, this individual has been to many different churches in many different places. But this week, she told me, "I have never been so equipped in my Christian life than I have been since coming here to Rock Valley Bible Church." Particularly, this individual was talking about my preaching. The message of Hebrews, "Jesus is Better, So Press On!" was very helpful to realize how to live. And now 2 Timothy has been helpful as well.

I say this, not because I have illusions as to the greatness of my preaching. I'm fully aware of my inadequacies. But, this I know: My aim is to open up the text of Scripture for you each week. My aim is to make the meaning of the text clear. My aim is to let God's word work in your life. And to hear a testimony of how Rock Valley Bible Church has equipped this person for ministry is really a testimony of the sufficiency of God's word to equip us for the Christian life. I am convinced that the Scriptures are the key to equipping you all (in the church) for every good work. I am convinced that there is no better way to build a strong church for the glory of Christ than to keep this front and center.

But, the crown of this equipping is in the crown of the Scriptures. And that is the gospel. As a church, we have three core beliefs: The power of God, the power of the Word, and the power of the gospel. May we keep the "main thing" the "main thing". May we Trust the Bible.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on October 23, 2011 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] The 10 minute video of this event can be seen here: http://youtu.be/w9dpmp_-TY0. A written account of one who saw the events first hand can be read here: <http://www.kimyaltribe.com/2010/07/events-surrounding-kimyal-new-testament.html>.