

Date: 10-11-19
 Speaker: Derrick Hills
 Topic: Core Beliefs. 6.
 'God Breathed' (Scripture)



"All Scripture is God—breathed." (verse 16) 2 Timothy 3:1-17

- **Forms of Deception.**

Paul, writing to his protégé Timothy wants first and foremost to remind Timothy of the importance and place of Scripture in the believer's life. In this chapter he begins by giving a list (in verses 2-3) of the consequences of not being true to God and to God's Word. He then (in effect) summarizes this list with the statement in verse 5 that people, living as they do, ignoring Scripture practice " ... having a form of godliness but denying its power ... " In other words, says Paul, people's faith is very subjective, appearing like God-honourers, saying they believe in the Bible, but they are at the same time deeming parts of it they don't like as 'a bit quaint, and out of touch with real life today.' Such people might have said/may say today, 'I've put together my own manual for life —built on what I've personally found to be true. These are my own lessons for living, and never mind the Bible: so what's wrong with that?'

How far can such delusion take us? How have some of the more infamous cults (Manson, Jones, etc.) started? Paul writes that such people who fall into ignoring Scripture will find themselves " ... always learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth ..." (verse 7). They are teachers who "... oppose the truth ..." and are "... of depraved minds ..." (verse 8). How far can one be deluded and how far can we fall from God's (good) instruction when we chose to neglect Scripture? Just how much does Scripture matter for the life of the believer, and the (healthy) life of society in general?

- **Scripture is Core**

Paul is in no doubt about the central place of Scripture, especially for the committed believer. He says to Timothy "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." (verse 16). How central? Well Paul goes so far as to say that Scripture is the very breath of God. God desires fervently that his followers will live right, will chose right, will have the right attitude; will love him. Scripture, when pursued zealously will draw us closer in relationship to God—to know his mind. Scripture will give us tools for right living, and the ability to lead and guide individuals and society in the right paths for abundant/full life: and why would we want anything else? Why then, is it necessary for us to claim to be our own law-givers, except that we are ignoring Scripture, ignoring God and striking out in our pride and self-righteous rebellion? On the contrary writes Paul, Scripture enables " ... God's people (to be) thoroughly equipped for every good work." (verse 17)

What difference does it make in the big scheme of things, and the ongoing healthy life of the world? How much? Well Jesus, as God's Son, declares Scripture as so essential to our world being sustained and our lives being lived well that he asserts, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." (Matthew 24:23). To Jesus, God's Word was of such overwhelming importance as this. Jesus was saying 'In the end God; and in the end when all else has disappeared, there will still be God's Word.' So how core is Scripture? As essential as God's breath— God's breath in us and the air we breathe! All else may disappear, but as long as there is Earth, as long as there is a Universe, so there will be God's Word active in God's Creation.

But rather than wrestle with, be conformed to, be enlivened by Scripture, we would rather see the Bible as just another interesting book. We would rather have peace by living in avoidance of the big issues, the non-circumstantial issues in our lives. We keep our Bibles on the shelf, rather than have our thoughts challenged, our consciences plucked, and our emotions disturbed by a now word from God and his Bible. We would rather get scientific about whether the Bible can have errors, be wrong, suffer in transcription, be incorrect in it's translation/interpretation, or be ignorant of contemporary issues. Of it's relevancy to the modern mind (the Enlightenment writer, historian and 18 Century philosopher) Voltaire predicted "A hundred years from my death the Bible will be a museum piece." A hundred years after Voltaire's death the French Bible Society set up its headquarters in Voltaire's old home in Paris. After my daughter's wedding I had a conversation with a young pastor So often we use the Bible as a weapon ...

Scripture, observes Paul, rather than being an inconvenient distraction from getting on with true life, or a convenient aid to display our intellectual prowess, is at the very centre of what it means to know God's intended life and his salvation for all believers. To Timothy he reminds, "... from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." (verse 15). Jesus—the Jesus revealed to us in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the very basis of our salvation and our life. If we ignore Scripture or Jesus, we do so at the expense of knowing our

very life. The wonder and mystery, the demeanour and attitude (Christ bearing) of Jesus; he who “ ... made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant ... humbled himself by becoming obedient to death (Philippians 2:7-8) remains for the Biblically ignorant just a quaint and unnecessary mystery. Unless we are reading and opening ourselves up to the story of Scripture (by the Holy Spirit) then the Bible’s words will never become Scripture; sacred, solemn and authoritative to our lives in Jesus the Christ. So the burning question becomes; whether Scripture is intrinsically and obviously a core belief in our lives and how we live it? Do we know Jesus, really know him: and do we know the Word (Scripture) that testifies to him?

- **We Believe Together**

Again, in his letter to Timothy, Paul urges Timothy to “...continue in what (he has) learned and (has) become convinced of.” (verse 14). In as many words, Paul is exhorting Timothy to stick close to the community that is built around, lives by, and celebrates the life of Scripture. How do we know who to worship, how to live, who to associate with, and how to make life decisions? Paul says it is plain for you to see Timothy. You know and follow my example. “You ... know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings ... the persecutions I endured.” (verses 10-11). Down the centuries we have known Scripture is God’s Word precisely because there is a community; saints and martyrs gathered around Scripture, testifying to Scripture, living out of Scripture, never shrinking from the truth of Scripture. Their stories (as was Paul’s) are testimonies that surpass all time. God’s Word is true and has effect: “My word that goes out from my mouth, will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire.” (says God in Isaiah 55:11)

It’s the witness of Christians ... the testimony of God at work ... the bearing of those who are saved, that bring testimony to the truth and efficacy of Scripture. God warns us not to ignore and overlook his Word. He once warned Israel “Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molek, for you must not profane the name of your God. I am the Lord “(Leviticus 18:21), but Israel chose to ignore God’s warning with resultant deathly consequences! Paul is therefore right when he observes “ ...Holy Scriptures ... are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (verse 15). In other words, Paul is saying you are being made wise, being equipped to live a saved life (through faith in Christ Jesus) in Scriptural community together.

- **If Scripture is Core**

So, do we read and absorb, then endeavour to adopt/live out Scripture?

Do we do hard-core thinking business with Scripture?’

Do we converse with brothers/sisters on challenging passages?

Do we take what we read to prayer and memory?

Do we witness to what Scripture tells us?

Remember, “All Scripture is God-breathed” - it has ultimate worth and purpose!

Questions

- 1) Is it important that Scripture is a Core Belief? Why?
- 2) What should our attitude be to a brother or sister in Christ who has another interpretation of a Scriptural passage?
- 3) How important is it that we follow what Scripture says if it differs from me “ ... to myself be(ing) true?”
- 4) What are the disciplines in reading/following Scripture that you have found to be helpful (e.g. memory verses)?
- 5) In what ways was Paul the best of mentors to Timothy, having read today’s passage (2 Tim 3:1-17)?