

XIII. Thy Word is Truth in Biblical Perspective
The Supremacy and Sufficiency of God's Word
“The Word of God – Its Sufficiency”
II Timothy 3:16–17
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October 25, 2015 – Morning Sermon

I have shared with you I think that these are the two most important verses in the Bible. In this study we'll look at the sufficiency of God's Word from this text. This is God's Word. II Timothy 3:16–17 says, *[16] All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.* The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

We are sinners saved by grace gathered together to give praise to our Triune God – our Father who has saved us through His Son, Son of the living God, our Redeemer who has sent His Spirit to bring us to Himself. How do we know those things? You have stepped into what we're doing as a congregation. Every year we take a key text of Scripture that highlights a key theme of the Christian life. This year all that is around us and all that is happening inside the professing church we have decided to take a look at one of the seven prayer requests Jesus prayed in John 17. In John 17:17 Jesus says *[17] Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.* It is not the Bible contains truth or becomes truth but the Bible is the truth. Notice it is not the Bible is a compendium of truths but there is something singular about the Bible.

You walked in here today with a whole library. Some of you hold it in your hands. Some have it on their iphones or ipad but you have a library of 66 books that were written over 1600 years by 40 plus human authors and they are not just Scriptures but they are the Scripture, singular. They don't just contain truths, they are the truth – they very majesty of God's glory, the triune God of glory revealed in the preeminence of Christ as our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer. It contains this glorious message of not only who made you but how He saves you, how you can be right with Him and where you're headed for all eternity because of a warning that if you don't have this Savior where you're headed for all eternity. It is a place of the unendurable, yet endured eternal condemnation, called hell.

Why do we know all these things? It is because the Bible tells us so. That is why we are taking the time to look at what I think are the two most important verses in the Bible. I know there are great verses in the Bible that tell us great things like God loves the world, He gave His only begotten Son and if we believe in Christ there is no condemnation. The Bible tells us who made us, how we're saved and all these things but there are a lot of religious books that say a lot of things about who you are, where you're from, where you're going and who God is but we are people of the Book. Why are we people of the Book and why do we believe the Bible is true?

We believe the Bible is true because we believe it came from God. It's not man's word about God but it's God's Word through man to man and everything that is in it is true. God's Word is true because it came from God. The reason why you can have a book that is written over 1600 years with a singular message that is infallible, inerrant,

absolutely reliable, and unbreakable is because it comes from God. God Himself is the Author through the authors. These authors were not robots. God had prepared them ahead of time – who their parents were, what their DNA was, where they were from, what they were going to address and handle – because He brought His Word as the Author through them. The Holy Spirit carried along prophets and apostles to give us the Word of God and it's absolutely reliable and dependable.

The Bible comes from Him and that means it's profitable. All Scripture is not only breathed out by God but it is profitable or as another translation says, useful. It's not useful because it's a holy book that emanates vibrations as it sits on a coffee table. It's useful when you use it. He has given you the two primary ways to use the Bible so that God will use you through the Bible by His Spirit. Number one is to hear the preaching of the Word. Number two is to examine the Word daily.

That's why Paul said about the Berean Christians, 'they were noble minded because they heard the Word with eagerness.' They had prioritized the preaching of the Word of God into their lives and they were teachable when they were hearing it yet they weren't so open minded that their brains were falling out. They examined the Scriptures daily. *[15] Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.* (2 Timothy 2:15) You do this under God Himself. So you are handling His Word under His eye and you're hearing His Word that you may see and hear Jesus from His Word as He speaks to the heart of His people. He says 'My sheep know My voice and they follow Me.' Faith comes by hearing and hearing the Word of Christ and they are examining it.

What is it useful for? It is useful to transform your life. First of all it teaches you. All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching. Behavior reveals what you believe. So the Bible tells us what to believe about and what God has done. So it teaches us and then affects our behavior. It reproves us which is negative, why? We have to put off the old man because we're sinners. Then it corrects so we want to put on the new man and then it transforms us in righteousness. It is not a righteousness that gains our standing in heaven. No, that is Christ's righteousness that is given to us but it is a righteousness that reveals we want to be more and more like our Savior on our way to heaven. If any man is in Christ he is a new creation where the old is passed away and behold the new has come. This is a new life in Christ, for Christ, growing in grace and growing by His grace and mercy with the Holy Spirit in me and the Word saturating me.

Then we find out this new thing on the reformation and I love the fact it falls on Reformation Sunday. II Timothy 3:16–17 says, *[16] All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, (for what purpose) [17] that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.* It is so that the man of God may be competent, adequate, completed and equipped for every good work. Now we find out the Bible is sufficient. I don't need the Bible plus another religious book. I'm glad for commentaries and sermons but that which informs me, forms me and frames is the Word of God. It provides my foundation, the super structure of life, the direction of life, the trajectory of life and it gives me everything. It is the Word of God that I may know the God of the Word and serve the God of the Word with every good work that He calls me.

Every good work – yes but you are not saved by good works. He is not speaking of what the Bible equips you to do in the power of the Holy Spirit to save you but he is

telling you what the Bible equips you to do for your Savior. Paul put this so clearly for us in Ephesians 2:8-10 which says [8] *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, [9] not a result of works, so that no one may boast. [10] For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

My works do not figure in my salvation and my acceptance before God lest I would have something to boast about but I always tell people to keep reading after verse 9. He who has done the work to save us is working on us and in us. On the way to the cross I don't bring any works for nothing in my hands I bring but simply to the cross I cling. From the cross, O God, help me to do good works for my Savior. What are good works? It is in the Bible. Good works do not come from a non-profit organization or the cultural political correctness affirmations. For us, good works are defined and directed in the Bible and guide us to His Word.

I find out in the Bible that the only thing God seeks from me is worship so today I will gather in worship. It must be important so how do I know it's important? God says it's important in His Word. How do I worship? I worship in Spirit and truth. How do I find out how to worship in truth? My Word is truth so it will tell you what pleases Me in worship. How can I be a witness for Christ? He tells us in His Word why we're a witness for Him, how to be a witness and what happens when you witness. The Word shows us were free from converting someone for that is Christ's job but He will use us to spread, cultivate and plant the seed. God is the One who gives the increase as we do this.

If you want to know how to be a husband or wife or father or mother for Christ then go to God's Word. What does it mean to be a servant leader? What does it mean to lay down my life? How do you parent? You find this out in God's Word. I want Jesus to use me in my children's lives. I want to raise them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The Lord tells you how to do this. The Lord tells you how to be a Christian employer, a Christian employee, a citizen in the Kingdom of God yet be in the world so that you're in the world but not of the world and how to be liberated from the love of money to be a good steward. It is God's Word that is informing me and it's sufficient for every good work. Everything I need to know to serve Christ in a way that honors Him is in the Bible. Everything in the Bible is true but not all truth is in the Bible. All the truth we need to know to come to Christ and follow Christ is in the Bible and it's all true. That is the sufficient Word of God.

That's not the way it was 498 years ago. Back then on an October German morning, a not much heard of monk who was a teaching professor at the University of Wittenberg, went up to the cathedral church in Wittenberg and nailed 95 theses' on the wall. What was the world like back then? It was an interesting one. Throughout Europe in general and specifically in Germany the political world was full of tyrants. The world was full of a thin layer of aristocrats that controlled everything. It was full of those who would be called kings but were really dictators and tyrants who struck fear in the lives of everyone that they could. That is how they ruled and reigned. In the streets of the cities you would see filth, garbage, sexual promiscuity publically displayed, sexual perversion, and sexual predators publically engaged. If you were to go into a church back then you wouldn't have participated, you would have watched and listened and nothing that you'd have heard would have been in your language. The Bible would have been lifted up and worshipped not opened and taught to you. There would have been no hymn book.

Others would sing but you wouldn't for they would be singing in a language you wouldn't understand.

Most of all you would have been in a religious movement that had long forgotten the movement of the Gospel into Europe 800 years earlier where men and women had been set free for that was just a mere dream of the past. In its place were just ritual, superstition, religious manipulation and works salvation offered as a possibility if you kept working good enough. A cleric would tell you if you were working good enough and confessed enough. The people were in bondage. There was not only corruption in the world but there was corruption in the church because the church wasn't in the world for the world was in the church.

The manipulation became so great and horrendous to Martin Luther when he saw John Tetzel going from town to town with made up doctrines like purgatory, indulgences, with plays to strike fear in the people, with speeches to manipulate people and then came the clincher. He would say 'in the coffer, every time a coin would ring then a soul from purgatory will spring.' As Luther saw this, his own earlier conversion was not enough and so he spent his time writing those 95 theses and nailed them to the cathedral door. Something was ignited that changed nation after nation throughout Europe and then the Gospel went from there to South America where 125 missionaries went from Geneva to Rio De Janeiro in 1562. Then it went to Africa and a couple a hundred years later it went to the natives in North America. It was sent with imperfections but it was amazing what was being done.

It's not just 95 theses that were nailed but there was one in particular that was absolutely foundational. Out of that came the five solas. They were kind of the mottos of the Reformation. They all centered around this word 'alone.' When someone was asked how they were saved they may say 'by faith' or 'by grace' but they would never say 'alone.' They wouldn't say that truth is found ultimately in the Word of God. Scripture alone is our final rule of faith and practice. Counsels err, preachers err, clerics err, popes err, friends err, everyone errs but God's Word alone is truth. Let every man be a liar, the Word of God stands true because the Word of God has been given by God and it stands for us as true. In other words, Luther didn't go to the nations immediately for he went to the center of the Gospel and the church and the Kingdom – the Word of God is true. Then came the ignition of the Gospel flame that expanded the Kingdom and kept moving forward throughout all of the world.

So what about us? As I was describing the world of Martin Luther did that strike any chords of similarity to you? So where do we go forward? Let me tell you what you will hear. You will hear that we are in a culture war. We are not in a culture war but we're in a spiritual war. The culture is a battlefield for the souls of men and women and the souls characters of nations. We will hear there is a war on Christmas and certainly there is a war on Christmas because there is a war on Jesus. It didn't start in 2002. There was a war on Jesus in the 15th century and the first century when the believers took the Gospel to the world. There was a state power that said you can have your Christianity just bow to Caesar. They said no but we will respect Caesar for Caesar is not Lord but Jesus is Lord.

By the way, the war started in the Garden. It comes back to what you say about God's Word. Is God's Word our lifeline, does it define our life and direct our life? Go all the way back to the Garden. Satan says "Eve has God said?" The attack upon the

majesty of God began in the Garden but we are in a war but know this. The war has already been won. That grave did not hold Him back. He rose victorious over all His enemies and our enemies. He went to the cross and defeated His enemies and our enemies. He has not yet destroyed them and He'll do that when He comes back but He has defeated them. So we do not fear. We do not live in anxiety. We certainly have concerns living in a sin cursed world but we don't live in fear at all. We live with the confident information from the Word of God that Jesus Christ is the Savior of sinners. I'm a sinner and I need a Savior. Jesus Christ has won the victory. He has ascended and is now interceding for His people. He will come again and not one of His will be lost. This Kingdom Gospel will go from nation to nation and all the nations of this world shall die but standing at their grave is King Jesus and His Kingdom. That's what we know.

Why? It is because the Bible tells me so. The Bible tells me who my Savior is and that I need Him. Many of us ask how they can know if the Bible is true. The Bible says it's true and it proves out to be true. That's why the writers of the Bible didn't say 'we have these truths about God' but they said 'thus says the Lord.' That's why Paul says that all Scripture is inspired by God.

So we are in the same war that we have always been on, on this side of the cross. We won the war but now we're fighting out the battles as we go from nation to nation, family to family and neighborhood to neighborhood to bring with the weapons of the Spirit the glorious truth of the Gospel as we on the one hand stand firm on the truth of God's Word and then on the other hand as we go forth to take captive every thought unto the obedience of Christ. We go forward with evangelism and discipleship and we ask God to allow us to be salt in this world. We want to light the Gospel to this world and the Word of God is not a nightlight to help us with the boogie man in life but it's a lamp unto our life and a light unto our feet.

It is by this Word that I understand everything in life. He made me. How He saved me and where I'm headed for eternal life. The Bible tells me all of this. Satan is raging. There is a war. He had been defeated but has not been totally debilitated. So his rage we can endure. One little word shall fell him. So we do not run from him but we meet the war with humility, compassion, graciousness, confidence and courage to bring the truth into this world.

That is what our forbearers did when the Supreme Court passed stupid decisions like when a black man who is owned by another man is only 3/5 of a person. Those that knew the Word of God said that was utterly stupid. So we're going to expose the error and preach the truth in love. It took William Wilberforce 48 years to tell an entire nation that man stealing is wrong. He didn't bow to the unjust law and unjust magisterial dictates of a culture. He brought the truth of God's Word in love in Christ and what the Gospel calls us to be and do.

Some like me were taken by surprise and unaware when a 1973 decision in Roe v Wade says the sovereignty of self can kill the unborn child. We went to God's Word and said the sacredness of life, the call to mercy and grace for those who are moments of crisis in pregnancy, the opening of homes for adoption where God's Word began to frame our response and not the world. The same holds true about marriage. The Supreme Court can say all they want to about marriage but the fact is God has designed, it's sacred, it's the reflection of Christ's relationship with His people and it is one man for one woman for one life. Sexuality also belongs in the context of marriage. We want to

embrace that personally and proclaim that graciously but confidently. We see from God's Word that our identity is not our sexual behavior. My identity is that I am made in the image of God. By God's grace I can be restored to that in Jesus Christ who now becomes my identity as Lord and Savior, freeing me of sin's guilt and power.

Here is the takeaway. It is one that belongs in Reformation Sunday because of the infallibility, inerrancy and sufficiency of God's Word. Sola Scriptura – the Scripture alone is our final authority for faith and practice. We believe in how we want to live. Increasingly we want our lives to reflect what we believe yet we know that ultimately our behavior does reflect what we believe. Good news is that I don't have 95 theses for I just have one from which everything else flows and it's the same thing that happened in the Reformation.

It is the Scripture alone is our final authority but it's not the only authority. The reason I believe the Bible is the Word of God because my mother told me it was and so did my dad, my grandfather, my grandmother and then a church they took me to. Friends told me it was the Word of God and they kept telling me even if I was going in the opposite direction mocking it. They very graciously, compassionately and confidently kept telling me. I could see something in their life. Then I met Cindy (my wife) and she told me it was the Word of God. I have all kinds of authorities and you have authorities. Thank the Lord for the authorities that are faithful to say it's the Word of God but the final authority that stands supreme is God tells you that it is the Word of God in the Word of God. Now we ask God to help our life to be shaped by that Word.

One of the candidates running for political office brought out that he believed in creation and that there was a God. He believed God made everything in six days and rested on the seventh day. The reporter said "Do you really believe that stuff?" Almost all candidates say 'yeah, that's my private belief.' That is not your private belief. That ought to frame the way you'll be president. You just need to say 'yes that is what I believe.'

Why is it that every culture and people that has ever been discovered always has a system of a week with a holy day? Do you think it might flow from the reality of creation? Why do you think there are families and marriages and they may be perverted because of sin but they are always there, long before the Bible gets there? Is it not the download of the truth of creation and general revelation? So do I think the people I'm going to be president over are grown up biological mutations of a cell that divided and gets back together on its own and things just kept happening somehow and then it developed its own laws of reproduction and all? Or do I actually believe that the same God who spoke everything into existence made man in His image? Yes I am going to be president over men and women that are made in the image of God and not grown up mutations. That's what I would have said had I been that candidate being asked that question.

We know the Word of God. We're shaped by the Word of God. The Word of God shapes what we believe and how we behave. It guides us into every area of life. That is the only theses I have. I'm grateful for the Reformers and Martin Luther who told me. After Luther nailed those theses all that political and religious power put his life hanging in the balance and then he said "Here I stand, my conscious is captive by God's Word and I can do no other."

My dear friends, God used Luther, Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley and others who hold fast to the Word of God. Latimer and Ridley were being burned alive where they had to start a fire three different times but these Reformers said “Oh God let me light a candle for Christ that shall never be put out in England.” John Knox absolutely pours his life and loses years of it in his devotion to the Word of God being the translator of the Bible that was used to settle this country, the Geneva Bible. When he lands in Scotland he says “Give me Scotland or I die” and he did die but at the center was the Word of God. That is why the circumference kept expanding.

We look at our nation like an England or a Scotland or a Uganda and we want the Kingdom to expand but the circumference does not expand unless the center holds. The Scripture alone is our rule of faith and practice and that is why Luther says this not long before he dies;

“Feelings come and feelings go,
And feelings are deceiving;
My warrant is the Word of God—
Naught else is worth believing.

Though all my heart should feel condemned
For want of some sweet token,
There is One greater than my heart
Whose Word cannot be broken.

I'll trust in God's unchanging Word
Till soul and body sever,
For, though all things shall pass away,
HIS WORD SHALL STAND FOREVER!”

My concerns are not the wolves howling at the door of the culture or the cultural elite but my concern is the theological apathy of the termites that are eating at the floor of the professing church of Jesus Christ. It is the center that must hold.

I want to thank you for the privilege to be your pastor and the fact that every time I stand at this pulpit I'm reminded of the Bible that was buried under it when this church was built. I want to thank our founding pastor who when I came handed me a Bible and said “I don't know what a mantel is but this is yours. Preach it!” I want to thank the Lord for the stand that this church took for the Word of God in 1972 and 1973. I love the Bible because I wouldn't know the God of the Word without it. I wouldn't know that He loved me or saved me or about the cross or how to deal with life or anything but with that Gospel saturated Word to both motivate me and direct I know life. I can't believe I have the privilege to preach it so thank you for allowing me to do it. Thank you for supporting me to do it, not just financially but prayerfully.

What I preach for and pray for is that you will love God's Word and it will shape you. Is there a war? Absolutely for there is a war every Sunday when you try to determine (not talking about providential hindrances) the priority of worship and preaching for Satan is always probing at your underbelly to find the weakness to stop our worship and our witness for Christ or to pervert it to arrogance or compassion into retreat. I know God's Word is sufficient for every good work.

Pray for me as I preach it. Pray for yourself as you read it. Ask God with our eyes fixed on Jesus to frame us with it. I did not know when I was 6 years old how much theology was in that little song The B-I-B-L-E. The B-I-B-L-E yes that's The Book for me, I stand alone on the Word of God, the B-I-B-L-E. Even if I have to be alone I want to stand on it but what I'm really doing is ultimately standing in Christ because I stand on His Word alone. It's the truth and it will set you free. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for the glorious privilege to praise Your holy Name. Thank You for those who stood so that we have a Bible in our hands and a hymn book before us. Thank You for those who stood so that the Gospel was rescued from manipulation, ritual and superstition but O God we need this again for as the culture apostatizes may Your church stand firm. We want the circumference to expand but first the center must hold so we will hold the center for the Scripture alone is our final authority for what we believe and how we would live for Christ's sake, Amen.

Power Point

A BRIEF LOOK BACK
A BRIEF LOOK AROUND
A BRIEF LOOK FORWARD

LIFE TAKEAWAY

Sola Scriptura

The Scripture alone is our final authority for faith and practice.

Belief — Behavior