

XII. Thy Word is Truth in Biblical Perspective
The Supremacy and Sufficiency of God's Word
“The Word of God – Its Nature, Part II”
II Timothy 3:16–17
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October 4, 2015 – Morning Sermon

This is our fourth study on these two verses, II Timothy 3:16–17. This is the second aspect on the profitability of 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.

In 1636 before there was a food supply, those who came to this country from Europe, with many escaping religious persecution and desiring the privileges to worship the Lord that when they landed the first thing they built was a place to worship and the next thing they built was a school and it was called Harvard. The motto for the school was "Et Christo Veritas Ecclesiae," Christ's truth for the Church. Their primary purpose was to educate ministers because God's people needed the preaching of the Word and their secondary purpose was to educate people with what we would call today a Christian world and life view. Within 40 years they had abandoned evangelical orthodoxy, the faith and embraced the heresy of Unitarian Universalism.

In 1740 a church called King's Chapel which is still there today, was the site of the great George Whitfield, the Gospel and great awakenings sweeping this country and in 1735 to 1765 Whitfield went to preach at King's Chapel. In 1740 the hand of God was upon him and it spread from that church throughout Boston. By 1780 King's Chapel had abandoned the faith and had embraced Unitarian Universalism and all of its attendant soul damning heresies.

In 1972, culminating in 1973, with the first general assembly of the PCA that we had the privilege to host here at Briarwood, under the leadership of our founding pastor Dr. Frank Barker and the reason for the assembly was because the Presbyterian Church of the United States had abandoned the faith. For decades it had confronted many theological issues but in 1967 the movement to confessional disengage itself from the authority, inerrancy, and infallibility of God's Word began. By much prayerful deliberation by 1972, 245 churches with 45,000 members knew there no longer was a church because now the foundation, the Word of God, had been removed. Therefore the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) was birthed which actually was a reclaiming of the original title and the confessional position of the Presbyterian Church when it came to these shores in the 17th Century.

I could keep multiplying this but I won't for I'll just give you three and one of them is very personal to us. One might ask how and why does this happen? I could give you scores of illustrations of this and every single one of them happened for one reason. The church, the school, the college, the seminary, the denomination became disconnected from the Word of God which alone is our foundation and by that foundation we can see

and experience the Cornerstone, Jesus Christ. Once you lose the Word of God you lose the Cornerstone. Once the foundation is removed everything crumbles. It takes time.

If you were to go back and examine this you would see a clear pattern. It begins in the book of Judges and is recorded throughout all of history. There would be a movement of God where people would be captured by the authority, integrity, infallibility and inerrancy of God's Word and the majesty and glory of Christ. The second generation would move it forward and starting in the third and fourth generation they begin to depart from it and it happens time and time again between the 40 and 80 year mark. That is a constant issue for me because I pastor a church that just went through a church that has passed its fifty plus years. We're right in that middle and I thank God for what is happening through the leadership of our elders and deacons, God willing a faithful staff and most of all a hungry committed people of God.

The seminary I love, my own seminary, Westminster Seminary just hit its 80th year and has to face this issue head on. Reformed Theological Seminary is moving into its 50th year. Our own denomination is moving into its 40th plus year now. It is always happening. The church, school, denomination, institution begins to disconnect itself from the Word of God for multiple reasons. One of the motivations is usually that man's approval becomes more important than God's approval. So the school would prefer the academia world to approve it than God to approve it or the church would prefer the culture to approve it than God to approve it. We were all made to be approved.

All of us want approval but the question is, who do we look to for approval? Our approval status does not come from the world or from academia or the media or the state. We would handle God's Word approved unto God. Beyond the motivations, what initiatives does Satan use? Satan has not changed his tactics. It started in the garden and continues to this day. To disconnect God's people from God's Word he does two things. He gets them to question the reliability of God's Word. He did this with Eve when he said to her 'has God said...?' This is called theological liberalism which attacks the very foundation of the church of Jesus Christ which is attacking the very Word of God upon which we are to build everything with Christ the Cornerstone. Satan attacks the Word of God in its inerrancy, infallibility, integrity, sufficiency and supremacy.

Satan's second tactic is that if he can't remove our confessional commitment to God's Word, he'll remove our functional commitment to God's Word and he does that with distraction. He disconnects us by denial of the authority and sufficiency of God's Word or he will disconnect us functionally by distracting us. So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, a delight to her eyes and desirable to make her wise, distracted from what God's Word says she now goes to the foolishness of this world that brings nothing but death and that becomes more important than God's Word. Those are the two things that Satan is constantly doing with churches, denominations, schools, seminaries and with the individual Christian to get you personally to question the reliability of God's Word or the useability of God's Word to distract you to think that other things are more enjoyable, engaging and beneficial to you than the time you get to God's Word. That is the constant ploy of Satan.

That's why I want you to know the dependability of God's Word and also the importance of God's Word from this text. 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. Every word in God's Word is important. My great desire is that you know that every word in your Bible is from God to you. My second desire is that you would want to know every word in the Bible from God.

We looked at the origin of God's Word that all Scripture is *theopneustos* – God breathed. The Apostles and Prophets were His lips to give you the Word which is truth. When you are handling God's Word you are handling the truth. Sanctify them in the truth – Thy Word is truth. How did we get truth from God? He breathed out His Word and the lips were the Apostles and the Prophets which is why they keep saying 'thus saith the Lord...' 'The word of the Lord came to me.' 'Hear the word of the Lord.' This is God's Word to them, through them, for you, to you and every word is beneficial. You need to know every Word. How can I know every Word? It is because the very nature of the entire Bible, from beginning to end, every jot and tittle, is there for your profit. *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable...*

In the last study we looked at what it was profitable for and that was for teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness that every good work that God has called us to do, not to merit salvation but to manifest our Savior, the Bible is the equipping center. It is sufficient, supreme and our only final authority and rule for what we believe and how we are to live. Praise the Lord for these Apostles and Prophets for they didn't just appear. God fashioned them in the womb and put them in the families He wanted them to be in. He sovereignly framed them so that His Word isn't dictated to them but it came to them and through them through the Holy Spirit who moved and carried them along. If your Bible was dictated it would read like a letter that was dictated by someone through a secretary and you don't know anything about the secretary but you know plenty about the authors of the books of the Bible. The Holy Spirit orchestrated all of this through these authors so that you could be benefited. All Scripture is profitable, beneficial or useful but you can't benefit from it if you don't use it.

You have this Word of truth that has been given to set you apart, to sanctify you, so how can you use it? The same God who has designed it so that every Word is for you and has given you a heart for every Word, has also designed how you can use it. I could show you a number of passages on this but I'm just going to look at two verses. For Timothy it is told that this is the Word that converted him through the help of his mother and grandmother. God is maturing him. So how can I profit from it? He sandwiches this by giving Timothy two directives. He has already told him the origin, importance, sufficiency and supremacy of Scripture in II Timothy 3:16–17. Now that Timothy has been converted by it and is being conformed and equipped by it for every good work, what is it primarily that He wants him to understand?

II Timothy 4:1–2 says [1] *I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom:* [2] **preach the word;** *be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.* Timothy's first directive is to preach the Word. This Word has been designed to be preached. Timothy this Word that has come to you, I want it to go from you because God's people need it preached. Timothy every time you stand at the sacred desk, you feel the eyelash of God upon you, His presence, you hear the footsteps of Jesus, He is coming, you hear the gavel of the Judgment Seat and you have the one message that will deliver men and women from the judgment to come, you preach it, proclaim it, announce it, declare it, bring it with clarity, understanding, love,

truth and love with the truth. I gave them the Bible to read but I designed it to be preached.

I have the privilege each week to give myself to the preaching of the Word on the Lord's Day morning and evening and usually one or two Bible studies during the week. When I do my study on the passage I go back about 2,000 to 4,000 years to look at the context it was written in order to develop the text accurately and rightly. Because all Scripture is inspired by God the text is sacred for this is God's Word. The text is where the preacher starts. It doesn't start when a preacher has something good to say and then finds a Scripture to back him up. It is not for the preacher's desired outcome – applause – to get an illustration that he heard just so he can share it. The first thing you do with the text is to find out in the original language, in the original setting, with the original author, how it was given, why it was given and then bring that forward to teach God's people for today. You can't live for Him until you know Him and you can't live by His Word unless you know His Word. So the first thing you do with the text is teach it. You expound, expository preaching.

One time I received a call from a lady and she said 'Are you at Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham?' I said 'Yes ma'am.' She said 'I heard you on the radio and thought you were one of those California preachers.' I said 'I'm not there yet for the Lord hasn't called me to a cross cultural ministry yet.' She said 'I'd like to come visit because I've been looking all over for a suppository preacher.' Some people probably thought she was accurate when she said that but it should be expository preaching where you take the text and give what it is saying. Then what do you do?

You give applications, life takeaways, reprove, correct and train in righteousness so the Word inscripturated pointing us to the Word Incarnate actually becomes the Word Incarnate in your life that you live out what you just learned. The Bible was given to be read but designed to be preached. Jesus says 'Have you not read?' People die for you to have a Bible to read. So Timothy's first directive was to preach it but he can't preach it until he knows it. So what is the second directive?

II Timothy 2:15 says *[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.* Don't just give God's Word a wave and a thought. When you handle God's Word handle it with excellence. Do your best. It doesn't mean to do your best so you can be saved. No, that is done in Jesus. Do your best so you can know and serve your Savior. Do your best in the Word under the eye of God. You do your best for God not for the approval status of the world. We are not to be obnoxious or arrogant but we don't get our approval from men but from God, as to how we handle and live His Word.

The second directive which precedes the first directive of preaching the Word, is to study the Word under the eye of God. The Bible is useful if you use it. You have to handle the Bible rightly, accurately, consistently, and with integrity under the eye of God. When you preach the Word it will help people study it. When you study it, it will help you preach it.

I want to give you a preacher 'touchdown' as you turn to Acts 17. Acts 17:10–11 says *[10] The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. [11] Now these Jews were **more noble** than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.* They received the preaching of the

Word with eagerness. If they are examining the Scriptures to see if things are so that presupposes the preaching of the Scriptures. Then they went to the Scriptures to see that what was preached was from the Scriptures. When they sat under the preaching they received it so here you see both directives (preaching and studying the Word) coming together.

Why does God call preachers? It is because we need to hear the Word. Why? It is because we need to believe and faith comes from hearing the Word of Christ but that is useless if you're not there to hear it or ready to hear it or prepared to hear it. These people had prioritized the preaching of the Word for they received the Word with eagerness. Then they went to personal Bible study for they examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. You see the two coming together – touchdown.

The first thing you see in this text is their noble-mindedness was because of the Scripture being a functional priority in their life. In other words, nothing was more important. There would be providential hindrances but nothing was more important. The second thing is that they heard the Word with eagerness. Thirdly, is that they heard it by learning. They were receiving the Word with eagerness and had a learning heart. Fourthly, they were discerning. They came to hear the Word preached to learn. They were open-minded but they weren't so open-minded that their brains were falling out. Is what I just heard handled accurately from the Scriptures? They were discerning. Fifthly, they had a daily time to study the Bible – they examined the Scriptures daily.

This one is not in the text but I fully believe they prayed all over the text because they needed the supernatural blessing of God for if you did this in the flesh one of two things would happen. One, in the name of discernment you would become such a critic you would never learn from the preaching and would only affirm what you already know. Or in the name of learning you become gullible. The preacher said it so it must be right. Bishops, counsels, preachers, teachers all can err for only God's Word is our final rule of faith and practice.

This is why when you get to a text that is difficult you there is thing called the analogy of faith. The Bible is the truth (singular) then that means I can go to the simpler texts to understand the more complex texts because God's Word can't contradict itself. So the difficult text is interpreted infallibly by the simpler text because the Word would never contradict itself. Sure you can ask for help, consult commentaries and Godly counsel but you prayerfully ask God to give you a heart of a learner and a discerner. In the name of discernment you don't become one with a critical spirit that can never learn anything and in the name of learning you don't become gullible. You test everything by the Word of God and you use the Word of God as the final interpreter of all things.

I will close by giving you two takeaways. The first one is to profit from God's Word requires two commitments and the first commitment is that I will prioritize the prayerful hearing of God's Word preached. This is a priority that I want to embrace it and build it into my life because God has designed His Word to be preached as a priority and I need this in my life. That is why God instructs the offices. There are teaching elders who are ministers of the Word. They not only get the honor of the office but they get a second honor to be supported in this office and it's not because they are more important but it's because of what they do that is so important – preaching of the Word. You are saved by faith and you grow by faith. Faith comes from hearing the Word of Christ.

I Timothy 5:17–18 says [17] *Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.* [18] *For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer deserves his wages.”* God is using the sacred tithe and people died in the Old Testament when they put their hands on the tithe but God is going to take that to support ministering elders of the Word because what they are doing is important. Paul said ‘I did not come to baptize but to preach the Gospel.’ Paul is not diminishing baptism for he knows it’s in the Great Commission. He knows if the preaching of the Word of God is not there then the sacraments become meaningless superstition and ritual.

Why is it that I always do the Word of God before the Lord’s Supper and baptism? It is because we benefit from these sacraments by faith and faith comes from hearing the Word of Christ. Baptism like everything else is downstream from the Word and that’s why our sanctuaries don’t elevate a communion table or baptism or shove a pulpit over to the side. We put the pulpit in the middle and up, not because it’s the only means of grace but it’s the primary means of grace whereby God’s Word comes to His people through the preaching of the Word. They need that. They need a preacher who preaches for the smile of God. I don’t need someone to tell me what I want to hear. I need someone to tell me the truth in love. God knows we need this. The preaching of the Word pulls the trigger and sets the thermostat even though the church functions on more than just that. The preaching of the Word moves God’s people forward.

I Corinthians 1:18 says [18] *For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.* Romans 10:13–15 says [13] *For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”* [14] *How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?* [15] *And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”* So faith comes by hearing the Word of Christ. To be saved you have to call upon the name of the Lord but to call upon the Lord you have to believe in Him and to believe Him you have to hear Him. I can’t explain that to you but whenever God’s Word is preached faithfully in the power of the Holy Spirit, it’s Jesus Himself that begins to speak to the hearts of His people. Jesus says ‘My sheep know My voice and they follow Me.’

That’s why in the Reformation they put the preachers in a black gown so that the preacher is blocked out but the preaching is everything. The preaching sets in motion everything. So preacher go work hard at preaching because the people need it and this is the way I move the Gospel of the Kingdom forward. This is what needs to be done. God’s people say if that’s the case then let me prioritize the hearing of God’s Word prayerfully.

The second takeaway is that to profit from God’s Word requires the commitment to personally study God’s Word prayerfully, diligently and regularly. I will examine the Scriptures daily to see if these things be so. This means that you open of the Bible regularly, daily, diligently and you do something called meditation. Forget this worldly kind of meditation – yoga, transcendental meditation, Hinduism – for that is the mirror opposite of the Biblical concept of meditation. Biblical meditation is reflection, then examination of the Word in my life and then contemplation – what does this look like in my life – and then application where I’m being reproved and corrected. We hear the

Word and then the Word of God handled becomes a template for me to handle it personally, to evaluate what I've heard and to prepare me for what I'm going to hear.

With the preaching and the studying I am praying before it, during it and after it. When we come to worship we need to get our minds on Him for we are about to read, sing, confess and hear the Word. Prepare my heart Lord, right now. Then while we hear it preached we're praying. I love to hear in those African American churches when they preach with the preacher as they say 'amen, hallelujah, preach it' or something like that throughout the time the pastor is preaching. Sometimes they will say 'help him Lord.' Those are the prayers that are taking place during the hearing of the Word. Then when we finish we take time to pray, 'Lord, speak to my heart from what I've heard. Change my life from what I've heard.' When I get into my secret closet and I'm worshipping the Lord in personal study of meditation, reflection, contemplation and examination, I pray before, during and afterwards, "God, please bring it to bear upon my heart."

This is how we develop a Christian world and life view that we can develop a Christian life style through the power of the Spirit of God. I want to see Jesus in the Word. I want to hear Jesus from His Word when it's preached and I'm ready. I prioritize the preaching and studying of the Word. I appreciate all the questions and emails I get but I get so many questions from people that I've already answered in a Sunday night sermon but it's just not a priority in some people's lives. I'm not working for job security here. I'm probably on the edge of losing my job. I'm just telling you that you need God's Word preached. If I'm not the right preacher for you then find one but you need God's Word preached and prioritize it as a prayerful element in your life. Then you need to join it with regular, daily, systematic study of the Bible.

Don't let Satan get you to question the integrity and inerrancy of the Word and don't let him distract you. Some of you may have noticed a new verse in the song Psalm 62 that we sang earlier. I asked our music leaders to put this poem into that song from Martin Luther. The poem reads;

*I will trust in God's unchanging Word till body and soul sever,
Though all things pass away His Word shall stand forever.*

Martha, Martha you are distracted by so many things but only one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the right thing. Come and hear the Word of God. Study the Word of God and hear Jesus. His Word shall stand forever. Our Savior the King is coming. From His mouth comes the sword of truth and He will stand at the grave of every nation, every -ism, for His Word will stand forever, King Jesus! I want you to be standing in His Word on that Day. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. You pray and ask God to speak to your heart. Savior, thank You that You allow us by Your Spirit, even through the incompetency of those who You've called and sent, in fact many times to highlight Your majesty You use such weak vessels so that people from Your Word in their closet as they study it, see and hear Jesus. Father, help these people follow Jesus. If there is someone reading this who has heard for the first time that Jesus loves them and He went to the cross, given His Word, so they could know what He has done to save them, may they come this day to Him. Jesus I come. Nothing in my hands I bring simply to Your cross I cling. Father, for those who have been disconnected from the Word

because Satan has done his work to try to get us to question its integrity, help us see Your Word as truth. For those of us like Martha, who can get distracted not simply by sin but even by good things that are out of place, help us to order our lives in Your Word, according to Your Word that we might feed upon every word for I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

How to Profit from God's Word According to God's Word

> Two Verses and Two Directives

> One Summation Verse

Life Takeaways

To profit from God's Word requires two commitments:

1. I will prioritize the prayerful hearing of God's Word preached.
2. I will personally study God's Word prayerfully, diligently and regularly.