

October 15, 2006

“CPC: Grounded in God’s Word”
2 Timothy 3:16-17

FCF: Misunderstanding re. inspiration > low view of Scripture

PROPOSITION: (magnet) Because of the very nature of the Scripture,
(anchor) we must humbly hear, obediently heed, and tenaciously hold to it.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

Knowing who is speaking has a way of changing how we listen. Case in point, the conference I attended last week at Covenant Seminary. On one occasion, I met a student I thought – because of his age – to be a pastor. On another, a professor I thought to be a student. Not that I treated them differently. But the questions I asked, the deference I gave in terms of the wisdom and insight they offered, did differ once I knew who they were. Knowing who is speaking has a way of changing how we listen.

This morning, we’re going to be considering the underpinning of the second clause of our Vision Statement – “*Grounded in God’s Word.*” Some reasonable questions: Is that really necessary? Why would we say that? And, what does it mean?

SCRIPTURE READING: 2 Timothy 3:10-17

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

([READ IllustrationViewer2](#), “Believing the Bible”):

A certain pastor observed a little girl standing outside the preschool Sunday school classroom between Sunday school and worship, waiting for her parents to come and pick her up for “big church.” The pastor noticed that she clutched a big storybook under her arm with the title “Jonah and the Whale.” Feeling mischievous, he knelt beside the girl and asked, “What’s that you have in your hand?” “This is my storybook about Jonah and the whale,” she answered. “Tell me something,” he continued, “do you believe that story about Jonah and the whale?” The girl said, “Why, of course I believe it!” The pastor inquired further, “You really believe a man can be swallowed up by a big whale, stay inside him all that time, and come out okay?” She declared, “Yes! This story is in the Bible, and we talked about it in Sunday school today.” Then the pastor asked, “Can you prove to me this story is true?” She thought for a moment and then said, “Well, when I get to heaven, I’ll ask Jonah.” Finally the pastor asked, “What if Jonah’s not in heaven?” The girl put her hands on her hips and sternly declared, “Then YOU can ask him!”

I love that story. What gave that sweet girl such boldness? Her confidence in the Scripture as the very Word of God – a confidence called forth in our text this morning.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 are well-known and often quoted in evangelical circles. But I wonder if we appreciate their meaning. They come in the context of Paul’s final letter as he awaited execution in a Roman jail. They come in the context of Paul’s direction to his spiritual son, Timothy, urging him on in boldness, endurance, and faithfulness. They come in the context of a chapter in which Paul is telling Timothy to stand firm against the pressure to cave in to false teaching, to remember what he has been taught, who had taught him, and how it was in accord with the sacred Scripture. “*Continue in the Word, Timothy! Let the Word of God make you a man of God! Timothy, because of the very nature of the Scripture, you must humbly hear, obediently heed, and tenaciously hold to it. Because of its very nature.*” Words Timothy needed to hear. And us as well.

I. ITS ORIGIN – WHERE IT CAME FROM

Because of its very nature, because of the origin of the Scripture, where it came from, we must hear, heed, and hold to it. After all, what does Paul say here? (**READ 2 Timothy 3:16a**) The Greek is “*theopneustos*,” meaning “God-breathed” or “breathed out by God.” Simply put, as surely as we breathe out our words, God has breathed out His.

A) *The Fact of Inspiration*

The term used to describe this is the “inspiration” of Scripture.

1. What it does not mean

This is not to say it is simply “inspiring.” It is far more. Nor does it imply a mechanical dictation to the human authors or an obliteration of their unique personality or style.

2. What it does mean

(**READ 2 Peter 1:16-21**) Peter is describing a “double authorship.” We can say of what we read here “*Moses or David or Paul said it.*” But we can also say, “*Thus saith the Lord.*” God moved the men whom He had chosen and prepared to write exactly what He wanted written. Their words are no more or less His. For He carried them along.

Illustration:

I think back to some of the canoe trips I’ve been on. Each party makes their way down the river. Some straight down the smoothest course. Others over rocks, maybe even backwards. Each has their own style. But they are all carried where the river wills.

B) The Implication of Inerrancy

Such is the inspiration of Scripture. And the fact of inspiration brings the implication of inerrancy. Being inspired by God, it is without error. And authoritative.

1. Because of who said it

Why? How do we know it is without error? Because of who spoke it. Again, what was written is only what He wanted to be written. And what do we know of Him? Remember what we read of Psalm 19 earlier in the service. If you didn’t know right off it was the Scripture being described, you might have thought it was God Himself.

2. All of it

Well, how much of it is without error? “All Scripture.” What is included in that? Certainly the Old Testament. But not just the Old but the New as well. Of the gospel of Luke, Paul said (**READ 1 Timothy 5:18**). Then note the weight Paul gives to his letters (**READ 1 Thessalonians 5:27; 1 Corinthians 14:37; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:13**). Peter also notes of Paul’s letters (**READ 2 Peter 3:15-16**). How much? All of it. The point? The One who breathed this Word is inerrant. And so too is all His Word.

Application:

Which means we are to hear, heed, and hold to it in its entirety. Yielding to all of it, excluding none. No “cut-and-pasting” according to our tastes and preferences.

Illustration:

Thomas Jefferson is known for many things – his presidency, Monticello, the Declaration of Independence. And The Jefferson Bible. Jefferson was convinced the Gospels needed to be purged of the miraculous so as to get back to the “real Jesus.” And so he literally took to cutting and pasting a New Testament. He said (**READ quote**):

I have performed this operation for my own use, by cutting verse by verse out of the printed book, and arranging the matter which is evidently his, and which is as easily distinguishable as diamonds in a dunghill.

With all due respect to his other abilities, it begs to be asked which then was the dunghill.

The position we are to take to the Scripture is not us over it but it over us. To do anything else is to make ourselves God. And who would want to live in that universe?

Application:

We are to hold to it in its entirety. And exclusively. Regarding the traditions of the past, we must be teachable. We must acknowledge the Spirit-given, Scripture-rich wisdom of those who’ve gone before us and the few around us today. But ultimately, the sole authority to which we must look for faith and life is not their words about the

Scripture but the Scripture itself. John Calvin put it this way: “*Tradition is a good guide but a poor master.*” That is, it is to be valued but not seen as invaluable. We are to lend it a willing ear but not a bended knee. Scripture alone is inspired. It alone is inerrant.

Or, to say it as we did before, because of the very nature of Scripture, of where it comes from, we must humbly hear, obediently heed, and tenaciously hold to it. The first question, the one before all others must be, “*What does God say in His Word?*”

II. ITS PURPOSE – WHAT IT IS INTENDED FOR

But there is another reason we see Paul giving for the full attention we would give to the Scripture. Not just its origin, but its purpose – what it is intended for. (**READ 2 Timothy 3:16-17**) Precisely because it is God’s Word, it is then “profitable.” It is valuable, useful, beneficial. And for what purpose? Look at what the Apostle says.

A) For Creed

It is profitable for creed – for things pertaining to what we believe.

1. For teaching

For “teaching” – a word referring to the instruction and explanation of doctrine.

2. For reproof

For “reproof” – referring to the refutation of error regarding the teaching and doctrine.

B) For Conduct

Because the Scripture is inspired and inerrant, Paul tells us it is profitable for guiding our creed. And not only that but for guiding our conduct as well.

1. For correction

For “correction” – the word used here has the sense of straightening out what was bent.

2. For training in righteousness

For “training in righteousness” – conjuring an image of patient, even parental, discipline.

C) For Completion

The Scriptures, again because of their source are profitable in guiding our creed and our conduct. To what end? Look again at Paul’s words (**READ 2 Timothy 3:17**). Paul has in mind here an end, a purpose, a goal for which this Word has been breathed.

1. Competent

To make us “competent.” To make us fit, complete, fully qualified.

2. Equipped for every good work

To equip us for every good work. The interesting thing is that the words we translate as “competent” and “equipped” actually come from the same root word. It’s as though Paul really wants us to hear this. Which means the Lord really wants us to hear this.

Now think with me. What does this tell you about the Lord’s love for us? He has given us everything we need. His Word is sufficient. It is what we need. And His Word is ultimate. There’s nothing to be added. What does this tell us about the Lord’s intent in giving us the Scripture? He is interested in cultivating not just faith but faith working itself out, bearing fruit. And one more thing. What does this tell us about ourselves? If He has given it to us to make us fit, complete, and equipped, doesn’t that imply we are unfit, incomplete, and unequipped without it? Does that not imply we then need it?

Illustration:

True story. A youth leader was trying to think of a way to impress upon his students the fact of God speaking in His Word. And so before everyone arrived, he set the chairs in a circle and placed in each chair a verse from the Bible written on a piece of paper. Then he placed one chair in the middle with a blindfold resting on it. The

students filed in and he explained his idea. Each of them in turn was to sit in the middle with the blindfold. They would share with the group a problem they were facing. Those in the circle would then look at their verse, the one who matched the problem would read it, and for the one with the blindfold, it would be as though God was speaking to them.

Well, it sounded great. But the kids thought it was dumb. No one would admit to anything more than needing an “A” on an upcoming test. Until finally, a girl who was new and on the outside of the group spoke up. “*I’ll sit in the middle.*” She sat, put the blindfold on, and said, “*I am so miserable. I can’t stand my life anymore.*” A hush came on the group. After a few moments, one of the kids saw their paper and read (**READ 1 Corinthians 10:13**). And she said, “*But nobody cares for me.*” And another read (**READ Jeremiah 31:3b**). “*You don’t understand. My parents kicked me out today and told me never to come back.*” Another read (**READ Joshua 1:5b**). They took the blindfold off. And she was crying. And she said, “*But why doesn’t God really speak to me that way?*”

And the youth leader was able to say with all truth and tenderness, “*Oh, but don’t you see He does? That was Him speaking to you just now through His Word.*” And the same is true for us. God still speaks through His Word. And He speaks to where we are.

Application:

What is left then for us? Simply this – to act on what we believe about it. To read it. To make time for it and read it. That’s why the insert is in your bulletin this morning, “*The Bible Program for Shirkers and Slackers.*” If you’re not already reading daily through the Scriptures, you need to be and here’s a helpful tool to get you going.

Make the time for it. Ask questions of it. Go deep and search it out. Mine the treasure. “*What is it saying? What does it mean? What does it tell me about God, the world, me, and my need for Him?*” Go to Him, desiring to be taught, to learn from Him, not with a posture of suspicion and cynicism but of hunger and humility. Make the time for it. Dig deeply. And live it out. Take it to heart and then take it out into the world around you. Again, because of the very nature of the Scripture, its purpose, we must humbly hear, obediently heed, and tenaciously hold to it. Which means we must be in it.

CONCLUSION:

Think back to Spring 1992 – the first Rodney King verdict and the Los Angeles riots. Of them all, one video image stands out. In the midst of the violence and anarchy, a white man dragged from his vehicle, being beaten to death by a crowd. And a black man wading into the crowd to stop it. Wading into the crowd, pleading with them to stop, putting his body between the attackers and their victim so as to absorb the blows. He waded in to this sea of violence but with one thing in his hand. The man was a preacher. His name was Benny Newton. And all he held was his Bible. Now you have to ask, “*What did he believe about his Bible that he would take such steps, such risks?*” What did he believe, what confidence did he have, that you and I need to have as well? He knew where his Bible came from. And he knew what it was for. And that freed him, drove him, impelled him to do what no one else would. And it should us as well.

Who will you trust – in this life and the next? To whose voice will you tune your ear? What do you believe you’re here for? What will you give your life for? What are you willing to die for? And what will we base it all upon? What will we hold tightly as we wade in? May it be the Word of God, all Scripture, assured of both its origin from God and its purpose for us. And may we hear it, heed it, and tenaciously hold to it.

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