February 7, 2016

“Unlike Any Other Book”

2 Timothy 3:16-17

**FCF**: Our lack of appreciation for what we have with the Bible

**PROPOSITION**: (magnet) The Bible is unlike any other book.

(anchor) It should be received accordingly.

**SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:**

We Americans have an odd relationship with the Bible. Surveys show the percentage of those who view it is sacred has fallen in recent years. But the majority still views the Bible very positively. That said, being pro-Bible does not equate to regular use. Only 37% read the Bible once a week or more. And of those, only 57% give much thought to how it applies to their lives.

Pollster George Barna says (READ quote), “*While the Bible’s place in America as a cultural icon endures, it’s not always perceived as a transformative text. Even as Bible ownership remains strong, readership and engagement are weak*.” Well, what about us?

**SCRIPTURE READING**: 2 Timothy 3:10-17

**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

**SERMON INTRODUCTION:**

The premise of the PBS TV program “Antique Roadshow” is simple and has proven to be successful. The crew travels and tapes in various cities. Local antique owners then bring in items to be appraised by experts – often with surprising results. Three years ago, a man brought in a violin he had found in the trash. It turns out it was more rare of a find than even he thought. It was crafted by Giuseppe Pedrazzini, a famous Italian violin maker. After examination, the appraiser declared to the new owner (READ quote), “*After it’s cleaned up and put in good condition, it would have a value of around $50,000*.” That’s quite a shift from trash to treasure.

Our text is from the last letter we have from the Apostle Paul. He was imprisoned in Rome, awaiting execution. It is written to Timothy, as a spiritual father to a son, preparing the younger man for the challenges ahead. How will Timothy resist the opponents of the gospel? How will he remain faithful? Part of the answer is by holding fast, staying true, recognizing the treasure we have in the Scriptures. For the Bible is unlike any other book. And it should be received accordingly. That’s the theme of our text and what we need to consider. The Bible is unlike any other book. And it should be received accordingly – most especially, with these two things in mind. First, the origin of the Scriptures. And, second, the purpose of the Scriptures.

1. **THE ORIGIN OF THE SCRIPTURES**

So, first, the origin of the Scriptures. That is, where do they come from?

1. *Its Authorship*

(READ 2 Timothy 3:16a) The Greek word used here is “theopneustos”.

1. A unique word

It’s a unique word, not found in any other Greek text, inside or outside of the Bible. It’s quite possible that Paul coined it. In any case, its unique usage speaks to its unique meaning.

1. Double authorship

The idea being that, just as we expel breath when we speak, so it is that God has spoken with Scripture. There is a double authorship here. It is man’s word. His thought, planning, and style are in play. But behind that it is God’s Word – prompting, enlightening, superintending it all. On one hand, man is the writer, the secondary author. But God is ultimately the primary author.

1. *Some Clarifiers*

There is mystery here. Which lends itself to some qualifiers that should be made.

1. It is Scripture breathed out by God

It is not pre-existing texts or authors that were breathed into. It is Scripture breathed out by God.

1. Humanity is preserved in the process

It was not a mechanical dictation, mind and consciousness suspended. It was not the nullifying of the personality, style, outlook, or context. The human author’s humanity was preserved.

1. Authority is implied as a result

The Holy Spirit was working in the writers, causing them to write exactly what God wanted to be written – no more and no less. So Scripture is then without error and with divine authority.

Where is it from? Theopneustos – God breathed. This isn’t explained. Just stated.

*Illustration:*

It is a miracle. There’s really no other way to describe it. It’s like the Incarnation, the second Person of the Trinity, the eternal Son of God, taking on flesh. Somehow He is both fully God and fully man. Not one or the other but both. The Scriptures are a mystery, a miracle.

*Application:*

And we can stand upon them. For the Scriptures are the Word of God – steady, firm, and sure, giving the only real answers to our deep searching questions. Where are we from? Why are we here? What has gone wrong? How will things be made right? How should we live?

We can stand upon them. And we must stand under them. The Scriptures are the Word of God, true and authoritative. We must stand both upon them and under them – every chapter and verse. This is where we have to begin with questions on sexuality, gender, justice, and mercy. This is where we have to go in the midst of relational strife, temptations, and fear.

The Bible is unlike any other book. And it should be received accordingly.

1. **THE PURPOSE OF THE SCRIPTURES**

We see that with its origin, where it’s from. And also with its purpose, what it’s for.

1. *To Save*

Part of that purpose is to save us (READ 2 Timothy 3:14-15). What does that mean?

1. In contrast to false teaching

Paul says that the Scriptures can make us wise for salvation – in contrast to a theme throughout this letter – the bitter fruit of false teaching. Jealousy, backbiting, division, scandal, heresy.

1. In line with the Truth

In contrast to false teaching, the Scriptures are in line with the Truth. They alone can make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. That is, the message of both the Old and New Testaments, that our one sure hope is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

1. *To Sanctify*

Part of the purpose of the Scriptures is to save us. And to sanctify us. Not only to bring us to Christ but to make us like Christ, fully ourselves, fully human (READ 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

1. Profitable

Because the Scriptures are the Word of God, Paul says they are then profitable, useful and valuable, both for orthodoxy and orthoproxy. Orthodoxy, right belief, profitable for teaching and reproof. Orthoproxy, right living, profitable for correction and training in righteousness.

1. Maturity

The Scriptures are profitable in those areas and so they bring us to completion, to maturity, to being well-fitted and thoroughly equipped for the tasks God has in mind for us to carry out.

What then is the purpose of the Scriptures? To save us. And to sanctify us.

*Illustration:*

Which is why we have to turn to them first, before and above all other sources. It’s Super Bowl Sunday. So here’s a football analogy. January 8, 2000 – The Tennessee Titans and the Buffalo Bills, “The Music City Miracle”. After the Bills had taken a 16-15 lead on a field goal with 16 seconds left in the game, Frank Wycheck threw a lateral pass across the field to Kevin Dyson on the ensuing kickoff. And Dyson then ran 75 yards to score the winning touchdown.

But was it a lateral or a forward pass? The officials had to be sure. To what would they turn? To fans? To commentators? No. To film and the rules. That’s where they had to turn.

*Application:*

Where are we to turn? First and foundationally, to the Scriptures, to God’s Word. Now please hear me. I’m not saying other disciplines and areas of study have nothing to say, nothing to contribute to our understanding of life. I’m not saying we can’t learn a great deal from other voices in the conversation. We ought to be studying and learning from biology, psychology, sociology, and anthropology. But where we begin, first and foundationally, must be in the God-breathed Scriptures. That is the lens through which we can see and see all things truly.

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**CONCLUSION:**

In one of my favorite films from last year, *The Martian*, astronaut Mark Watney devotes his considerable intellect and indomitable morale to surviving on Mars for as long as it takes NASA to rescue him. He has only enough prepackaged food to last him 400 Martian days, so he estimates that he has to grow three years’ worth of food. Using waste as fertilizer, he plants some potatoes from the storeroom and nurtures them to maturity, with the idea of living off of microwaved potatoes after his freeze-dried rations run out. It’s a grand plan. And it works fine until an accident that wipes out the potato crop. Initially, Watney is beyond frustrated by this. He is furious. Why? This garden was just not a hobby. It was the means of his survival in a hostile environment. Watney recognized his need. And so he was devastated by the loss.

How would we respond if the Scriptures were taken from us? Moving from a fictional film to a biblical song, let’s close this out by looking at Psalm 19. After contemplating the stars of the heavens, the wonder of creation and the handiwork of its Creator, David turns his mind to a clearer, more intimate way God has revealed Himself to us (READ Psalm 19:7-11). Do we know what we have? The Bible is unlike any other book. It should be received accordingly.

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