

**“The ABC’s of the Christian Life: (8) Following Jesus Christ Rightly –
#4: The Authority and Sufficiency of Scripture**

Introduction:

Today I would like us to consider one of the most important matters for the Christian life. How one views and applies this principle will largely determine his ability and his success in following the Lord Jesus rightly. We are taught in God’s Holy Word that the Holy Bible itself is to be our sourcebook for all authoritative information about what we are to believe about God and our relationship with Him, and how our God would have us live in His world. The opening words of our confession set forth this important principle of Christian living:

The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience, although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and his will which is necessary unto salvation. Therefore it pleased the Lord at sundry times and in divers manners to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his church; and afterward for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan, and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing; which maketh the Holy Scriptures to be most necessary, those former ways of God’s revealing his will unto his people being now ceased.¹

The Lord Jesus Himself asserted that life in the truest sense--life from God and before God--comes through the Holy Scriptures. When the devil tempted Jesus to turn stones into bread so that the Lord would not die of starvation in the wilderness, our Lord said to him, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). In contending with the devil, our Lord quoted Scripture. It is clear that “every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” is what we have contained in the Holy Scriptures. As Christians we are to affirm and we are to employ the Holy Scriptures alone to determine all matters of truth respecting our faith and practice as Christians.

But it is a sad and lamentable problem that Christians will tend to either substitute the Holy Scriptures or augment the Word of God with other sources for information about God and how He would have His people live before Him. More often than not, the substitute for the authority and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures lies in an impression or an inward sense of what is true or right. They are wholly subjective in this. The Bible is the Word of God. It is the only objective source of information we have about God and His dealings with us. All other claims to “hearing from God” are subjective and unverifiable.

The essence of their error is that they do not believe that God’s revelation of Himself and His will to direct His people is limited to His written Word, the Bible. They claim that through their devotion, prayer, and meditation that *they receive direct communication from God*. Or, similar to this, they believe that some “holy” man or woman has received direct communication from God, to whom they look for guidance and direction. This is the error of mysticism.

Mysticism is a common error in evangelicalism. It is commonplace in many Pentecostal denominations, but it is not only common with them. The Quaker denomination is characterized by mysticism. They look to an “inner light” for guidance, not the Holy Scriptures. Mysticism is seen as a

¹ *The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*. The Scripture verses cited to affirm this statement include the following: 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Isa. 8:20; Luke 16:29, 31; Eph. 2:20; Rom. 1:19-20; 2:14f; Psalms 19:1-3; Heb. 1:1; Prov. 22:19-21; Rom. 15:4; and 2 Pet. 1:19f.

common belief and practice by many television preachers. But there are very many churches and Christians that combine mysticism with biblical teachings.

The evangelical scene is rife with the idea that *God communicates directly with your spirit*, which is believed to be a heavenly, spiritual self that is distinct from your soul, and that this kind of communication or revelation from God's Spirit supposedly to your spirit is a higher and more desirable and purer kind of knowledge and experience with God that your soul could never contemplate or encounter. Their thinking is like this:

“What is the use or value of doctrine? For God has spoken to my spirit! That is what is really important. Scripture says what? So what! What is most important is what God has said to my spirit.”

This is not biblical. I would argue it is not even Christian. It is pure mysticism, yet many, many, are deceived with this silly and foolish idea of spirituality. What matters to many people is not the Word of God, but they are looking for an “impression”, a “feeling”, that God “spoke to their spirit.” May God deliver us from this error. May we look to the written, authoritative, inerrant Word of God in the Scriptures, for it is through the Scriptures alone that the Lord speaks to His people.

It is quite amazing to me how many evangelical voices have asserted that Christians are to look to other sources than the Bible in order to hear from God. This is counter to what evangelicals have affirmed since the Protestant Reformation of the 1500's, in which one of the clarion calls was *sola Scriptura*, Scripture Alone! Some are more blatant in their assertions than others. **Jack Deere**, a former seminary professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, a Presbyterian minister, and the leading theologian for the Vineyard church movement, wrote this,

In order to fulfil God's highest purposes for our lives we must be able to hear his voice both in the written word and in the word freshly spoken from heaven... Satan understands the strategic importance of Christians hearing God's voice so he has launched various attacks against us in this area. One of his most successful attacks has been to develop a doctrine that teaches God no longer speaks to us except through the written word. Ultimately, this doctrine is demonic even [though] Christian theologians have been used to perfect it.²

Understand what he has written. *This evangelical says that the historic Protestant doctrine concerning the sufficiency of Scripture to direct the people of God in all matters of faith and practice is demonic.*

There are others who are less overt in their assertions, but they are saying essentially the same thing. One very influential Southern Baptist, **Henry Blackaby** (along with Claude King) wrote a book that has sold over 250,000 copies. It is entitled “*Experiencing God*.” It is a very popular book that contains much helpful material, but unfortunately it advocates the Christian's need and ability to hear from God apart from the Scriptures in order to experience a vital relationship with God. Blackaby speaks of a “will of God” outside of the Scriptures that is found by properly reading day-by-day events that occur in one's life. He advocates the importance of a life of “experiencing God” that is largely based on the subjective interpretation of personal experience rather than through the authoritative and objective revelation of the Scriptures. This is a departure from historic evangelical understanding and practice.

I will cite one more example. **Bill Bright** was the founder and director of Campus Crusade International. His organization is worldwide. It is one of the largest and most influential evangelical ministries today. It receives hundreds of millions of dollars a year in donations. It is the organization that has funded and promoted the Jesus Film project throughout the world. Bill Bright said this,

There will be an awakening in America... Our World Center will be erected; we will see the International Christian Leadership University developed, where Vonette and I will take the basic

² Armstrong, John, gen. ed., *The Coming Evangelical Crisis* (Chicago, Moody Press, 1996), p. 78.

truths and messages of Campus Crusade to thousands... I am telling you what God told me and I'm willing to stake my life on it.³

In one of his books, Bright declared that God told him after he had completed a 40 day fast, that He, God, would bring revival to America if Bright could get 100,000 Christians to fast for 40 days. He wrote a book saying that the 40-day fast was the secret key to see the blessing of God in this day. All of these assertions about God's will are extra-biblical.

But let me correct a possible misunderstanding. When we are asserting that Bible alone is the sole rule in all matters touching what we are to believe and how we are to live, we are not saying that God does not presently "lead" His people. Evangelicals have always affirmed that God guides and directs His people as the Holy Spirit illuminates the Scriptures to them. The Holy Spirit prompts actions, brings to remembrance Scriptural principles, and places upon our hearts the desire to do good works. But what these evangelicals are saying is quite different. *They are saying that God gives additional revelation apart from His Bible that is necessary for His people to know His will and be used and blessed by Him. They are saying that God speaks in ways that cannot be found in the Bible. This is a departure from historic evangelical faith.* This denies what the Bible itself asserts with respect to its sufficiency in matters of faith and practice.

The corrective to Christian mysticism is restoring the role of the mind as the arbiter of the truth of God as informed solely by the Word of God, the Holy Scriptures. Romans 12:1 and 2 underscores this truth. It sets forth the primary role of the mind of understanding truth as the divine means of sanctifying God's people. **Romans 12:1 and 2** read,

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Here we see that Paul appeals to the need for Christian to experience transformation, in other words, the believer's sanctification. How is this experienced by the believer? The "mind" needs renewed through acquiring truth. The believer is then to order his life according to that truth that his mind has acquired. This is the way of sanctification, through the hegemony (domination) of the mind. This is the corrective to mysticism.

There are a number of places in Scripture where the authority and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures are affirmed. But for our purposes, let us turn to **2 Timothy 3:1-17**. Our passage reads as follows:

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ²For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! ⁶For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, ⁷always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁸Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; ⁹but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.

¹⁰But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, ¹¹persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. ¹²Yes, and all who desire to

³ From Bill Bright's newsletter, *The Brightside*, as cited in Craig A. Parton, "From Arrowhead to Augsburg: Bill Bright in the Light of the Lutheran Confessions, in *Reformation & Revival* Journal, Vol. 5, Number 1, Winter 1996, 91.

live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. ¹³But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, ¹⁵and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

¹⁶All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

God tells us in this portion of His Word that He has given the resources for His people to stand strong and to stay true to Him even in perilous times that come upon them. The Apostle Paul's reference in verse one to "perilous times" in "the last days" is not referring to conditions just prior to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Rather, Paul was declaring that this entire church age, which the New Testament describes as "the last days", will be characterized by periods of great difficulty for Christians. Although Christians are living in the age of fulfilment in which they enjoy God's salvation through the Messiah, they would have to endure periods of great peril. And down through church history, the people of God have had to suffer through great seasons of trial and persecution. At times there has been the peril of the sword. At other times the peril of heresy threatened the people of God. Perilous times will continue to come upon God's people in these last days, even until the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Nevertheless Paul assured Timothy that God had equipped His people (or more precisely Timothy) to stand strong in these difficult times. We read in our passage of Paul encouraging and instructing Timothy so that he might face courageously the perilous times that were before him as he served the Savior and His people. Paul set before Timothy the fact that he had no reason to be timid or fearful, for God had provided everything that Timothy needed in order to live godly in godless days.

Let us consider this passage. Notice first, that...

I. Timothy had a spiritual mentor to learn from and an exemplary model to follow (3:10-11)

We read in verses 10 and 11,

"But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra -- what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me."

Paul could site himself as a godly example to Timothy. We see implied in these verses the value and importance of having a godly Christian mentor, to teach and guide a younger Christian in the way of Christ. Many who claim to be believers have not grown as believers because they have not had personal, spiritual interaction with one or more who have already grown to a measure of spiritual maturity. All too often we are prone to be individualistic about spiritual matters. We regard our faith as a personal, private matter. We keep to ourselves. We do not voice our questions or make known our doubts and struggles. We do not seek the counsel of those who could help us. Our Christian walk, therefore, is hindered. Most mature believers in the Lord are so, because they have been taught by others who have brought them along in the faith.

Timothy had a great mentor—the Apostle Paul. Timothy had heard Paul preach and teach. He had heard Paul counsel others. He had spent time with Paul learning from Him, while he observed him engage others and encounter hardship. Paul could appeal to Timothy due to their close interaction and mutual experience. Timothy had followed Paul about, much as the disciples had followed the Lord Jesus about Palestine. Paul could recite to Timothy all manner of experiences through which Timothy had been with the Apostle, whereby Timothy had been taught valuable lessons. What were these?

Timothy had followed carefully Paul's *doctrine*. Timothy was taught doctrine by Paul. *Doctrine is an expression of one's understanding of truth as taught in God's Word*. It is important to have and trust the Scriptures. But one must have understanding of the teaching of Scripture, if the Scriptures are to have influence in your life.

The fact is that each of us holds to doctrines. For if you believe in God, or even if you do not believe in God, you have an opinion, you hold a position of either Who God is or who he is not, whether or not He may be known, how He may be known, or what you believe you know about Him. Every rational person in this world holds doctrine. You cannot escape it. The issue, therefore, is if you possess *good doctrine*, that is, it accurately reflects biblical teaching; or if you have *bad doctrine*, which is belief that is in contradiction with Scripture; or if you have *weak doctrine*, you do not know with clarity or depth what the Bible teaches. Timothy had followed Paul's doctrine, which is the doctrine of the apostles, the very teaching of the Lord Jesus Himself about the nature and purposes of God.

Timothy had followed carefully Paul's *manner of life*. Paul did not merely teach God's Word, he lived it. As the London pastor, Spurgeon, once said, "The lives of some Christians are so little like their words, they would do better saying less about spiritual things." Paul was not like that. He could appeal to Timothy citing himself as an example as to how a Christian was to live.

Timothy had followed carefully Paul's *purpose in life*. Paul lived for three primary ends: (1) He sought to know Jesus Christ more fully. (2) He sought to defend the truth of God before others. (3) He sought to serve others in Jesus' name. Timothy had witnessed first-hand to what Paul had dedicated himself. Timothy knew Paul's priorities. Paul could appeal to Timothy, "You know my purpose in life"; implying, of course, that this should be his purpose for life also.

Timothy had followed carefully Paul's *faith*. I take this to be an observance of Paul's subjective faith, the faith that Paul had in His God and His Lord. How can one follow another's faith since it is itself unseen, being a matter of the heart? A firm faith in Jesus Christ will be seen in the fruit of patience, calling upon the Lord as Protector and Provider, waiting upon the Lord for His blessing and leading, and a calm resignation to the providence of God in one's life. The one that has a stability and confidence in difficult and trying circumstances is the one whose faith should be followed. Paul had borne witness of this kind of faith before Timothy.

Timothy had followed carefully Paul's *longsuffering*. A true test of Christian maturity is the bearing up under prolonged trial. It is one matter to endure a severe sickness for a few days. It is quite another to continue in peace, righteousness, and joy in the Holy Spirit through long periods of personal hardship. Paul had to endure much suffering, and some of it was of a prolonged nature. In doing so, he set forward a good example for Timothy to follow.

Timothy had followed carefully Paul's *love*. Paul was not "as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal", having many gifts but no love. Paul's love was shown in that he suffered long, and was kind. He was not envious. He did not parade himself as somebody before others. He did not behave rudely, nor was he self-seeking. He was not easily provoked. He did not rejoice in iniquity, but rather he rejoiced in the truth, bore all things, hoped for all things, and he endured all things (cf. 1 Cor. 13:1ff).

Timothy had followed carefully Paul's *perseverance*. Paul stood firm through his trials until the Lord had granted him relief and had given him success in the ministry. He never surrendered his principles or retreated from his desired goals.

Timothy had followed carefully Paul's *afflictions/persecutions*. Paul cited specific places where he had encountered much resistance and hardship. Timothy had been with him in these places. They were cities in the region where Timothy had lived when he had first met Paul. He had ministered in Lystra, Derbe, and Iconium, but had suffered greatly in doing so. But he could say of that time, knowing that Timothy had seen it all, "Out of them all the Lord delivered me." The believer may know by faith but also he will know by experience that the Lord delivers His people who are doing His will out of all of their persecutions and afflictions.

Now, what may we say respecting these things? First, we see in our passage an overarching principle for being used of the Lord even in perilous times: *We can perhaps learn best how we might live*

before God in an ungodly world as we interact with a more mature believer while he is encountering problems. Jesus had called 12 to be with Him. Although the crowds had heard Him, the 12 had learned from Him more frequently and more thoroughly. As the disciples followed the Lord about they spoke about their daily activities and encounters with people. Questions arose from the circumstances that they were mutually experiencing and over the course of several years these disciples had become leaders.

How may we apply this principle in our own church? If you desire to grow strong and become mature, find someone whom you respect and follow him or her. Do you desire to grow and be discipled? Express that fact to us that you are willing to meet with someone regularly for prayer, accountability, and discussion about God and your life before Him.

If you cannot find someone whom you can follow, a great substitute would be to walk with others through their life as told by biographers. Some of the most influential, significant, and life-changing times that I have experienced is through reading biographies of men of the faith whose lives have been retold by others. Frankly, I never have had a personal living mentor. But I could cite a number of persons from history whom I could say that I have observed, and have followed their *doctrine, manner of life, purpose in life, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, and afflictions*, through the course of their life as recorded in a biography.

Second, ***as good as it would be for you to find another whom you can follow, how much better, if by God's grace, you could be or become one whom others could follow, from whom others could learn and grow in spiritual maturity.*** There is a great need for people to step forward and disciple others. At some point in our Christian walk we should stop being only followers and increasingly become teachers of others. The writer of the Book of Hebrews rebuked his Christian readers by telling them, "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food" (Heb. 5:12). They had been in the Lord for a sufficient period of time that they should have been examples and teachers of others, but they had failed to assume that role. They had become stunted in their Christian growth. Instead of helping others to grow, they were shrivelling in their spirituality. It is clear from the passage that their weakness was due to their ignorance of the "word of righteousness", that is, knowledge of the Word of God, or doctrine, and how to apply that doctrine to daily life.

How does one become a discipler of others? If I might perhaps over simplify the matter, you begin to meet with someone who is either a non-believer or a young believer, and you begin to talk about the Scriptures and seek to apply the teachings and the principles of the Scriptures to his or her life, as you seek to model before him how a Christian is to live for Jesus Christ.

II. Persecution comes to the godly, when living among the worsening ungodly of the world (3:12-13)

Paul wrote, "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived."

The perilous times of this age would increasingly become more difficult with the unfolding of history. Paul declared that this would occur because evil men and imposters will increasingly afflict the people of God *in the churches*. They intend to deceive others for their own ends. But in doing so they reap what they sow; ***the deceivers are themselves deceived by error.*** They reap what they sow. Those that attempt to deceive others, will in turn be deceived, either by themselves or others.

We see that these wretched men afflicting the churches are ones who oppose and afflict the godly. Those who seek to be godly and live godly will be in conflict with these evil men and thereby incur their anger and persecution. Down through history the worst persecutors of true Christianity have been false religionists opposed to the truth.

Because perilous times are frequent, those who live godly in this fallen world will encounter persecution. Now we might ask ourselves, "Have we encountered or do we encounter persecution due to our Christian faith?" If not, does that mean we are not godly? It is true that we have lived in a free society and have been able to live as Christians with little persecution. But even in a society that is sympathetic to

Christianity (which is no longer the case in our land), we will encounter difficulty if we boldly and faithfully live and witness for Christ. Granted, the persecution that we can face presently in our society cannot compare with that which our brothers and sisters in Christ are currently enduring in other lands, but as times get worse, we can anticipate more opposition from those about us. Here is a statement that addresses the matter that though we may not be enduring great persecution, yet it is present to a degree if we are living for Christ:

But it is asked, “Must all men be martyrs? For it is evident that there have been many godly persons who have never suffered banishment, or imprisonment, or flight, or any kind of persecution.” I reply, it is not always in one way that Satan persecutes the servants of Christ. But yet it is absolutely unavoidable that all of them shall have the world for their enemy in some form or other, that their faith may be tried and their steadfastness proved; for Satan, who is the continual enemy of Christ, will never suffer (allow) any one to be at peace during his whole life; and there will always be wicked men that are thorns in our sides. Moreover, as soon as a believer manifests zeal for God, it kindles the rage of all ungodly men, and although they have not a drawn sword, yet they vomit out their venom, either by murmuring, or by slander, or by raising a disturbance, or by other methods. Accordingly, although they are not exposed to the same assaults, and do not engage in the same battles, yet they have a warfare in common, and shall never be wholly at peace and exempt from persecution. (John Calvin)

III. Timothy was to continue in the faith taught him from the Holy Scriptures (3:14-15)

We read in verses 14 and 15:

“But as for you, continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is Christ Jesus.”

A. Timothy was to continue in the faith

Paul exhorted Timothy to continue or persevere in his doctrine. The strength to endure hardship and continue to live for Christ in perilous days is found in our own understanding of who God is, what His will is respecting the salvation of His people and the overthrow of His enemies, and the confidence that the Lord will accomplish His purposes through us. If a man has little understanding or confidence in who God is and what He is doing in this world, that man or woman will not be courageous or strong in the Lord. He will become discouraged and easily foiled by the opposition. But a man such as Timothy, who had been taught well, who had been assured that what he had been taught was indeed the truth of God, that man will stand strong in the faith, even unto his salvation.

Timothy had been blessed to have been taught the Holy Scriptures “from childhood.” He had never known a time in his life that he had not known the Holy Scriptures. We know from other places that it was his mother and grandmother, *Lois* and *Eunice*, who had poured knowledge of God and His ways into the heart and mind of Timothy even from his youth. Their faith had been communicated to Timothy until it was his faith also. It was then that Paul had himself taken Timothy as a young man to be with him and to travel with him on his missionary journeys. Even when Timothy was but a teenager, he had been taught by Paul so that he knew the Lord and the Lord’s ways. As a result Timothy had a resource to call upon when others about him would shrink from their duty. He had a store from which to draw, when the need arose, to recall God’s Word. When he faced some challenge or opportunity to serve his Lord, he was better prepared than most, for he had an understanding of the Scriptures. But Timothy was to see to it by the grace of God that he continued in what he had learned and been assured.

B. The Scriptures’ ability to give understanding of salvation

Notice that **verse 15** describes the Holy Scriptures as enabling Timothy to become “wise for salvation.” In fact, only the Scriptures can do this. God has ordained that His Word, which alone can bring life, be recorded in a book, the Bible. His Word alone, can make people wise unto salvation.

Now, let us not take anything for granted. What is the salvation that Paul is referring to? He is speaking of escaping the presence and power of sin and God’s condemnation of sin that will be administered on Judgment Day. The great need of mankind is to be saved from sin. Sin has set us against God and He against us. Sin permeates our beings. The “best” of us are hell-deserving sinners who are not deserving of the least of God’s mercies. God’s wrath is upon sinners. His holy, undiminished, unrelenting justice weighs heavy upon every soul. “The soul that sins, it shall die.” God has appointed a day of judgment. God has appointed a judge, Jesus Christ. Each and every sinner shall appear before Him on that Day. We read of this in **Acts 17:31**,

He (God) has appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness (i.e. by His Law) by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He has given assurance unto all men, in that He has raised Him from the dead.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ has assured that a final Day of Judgment is coming when Jesus Christ will execute God’s wrath upon all sinners. As Jude recorded,

Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him. (Jude 14, 15)

The Bible speaks of “books” in which our sins are being recorded (cf. Rev. 20:12). Even now there is a heavenly register of every one of your sins that you have ever committed in transgression of God’s Law in action, speech, attitude, and thought. Those books will be opened, your case will be rehearsed before you and before the Judge. People will cry out of horror when they have an understanding that day has arrived: Of that time the Scriptures record,

Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” (Rev. 6:14-17)

The great need of fallen, sinful humanity is to be saved from God’s wrath on that Day. Paul declares to Timothy that the Holy Scriptures, and we might add, *only the Holy Scriptures, the Bible*, are able to give you a knowledge of how to be saved from God’s wrath on that day. Will you be saved from God’s wrath when you are brought before Him? Will you be declared guilty, sentenced as condemned to suffer God’s unending, undiminished, and eternal wrath that is do any and all who have sinned against the eternal holy God? How may we be saved? What do the Scriptures say?

Paul wrote to Timothy, these Holy Scriptures that you have known since a youth, they are able to “make you wise”; that is, they are able to give you understanding how to be saved. And where do the Scriptures point? Again, verses 14 and 15

But as for you, continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation *through faith which is Christ Jesus*.

We cannot save ourselves from our sin on that Day of Judgment. We need One to save us. God has appointed His Son not *only the Judge of this world*, but He has appointed Him *the only Savior of the world*. And “*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12).

God has promised that He would acquit all those whose faith is Jesus Christ. When the books are opened and their lives are examined, they will be overjoyed that their sins had been “blotted out” (cf. Acts 3:19). That is, there will be no basis of their condemnation. Why? For they will have no debt to pay. God’s justice with respect to them had been satisfied. Their sins had been paid for. Further, they will be found not to be clothed in the filthy rags of their own unrighteous deeds, but they will be shown to be clothed in righteousness, not a righteousness of their own, but a righteousness that has been given to them freely through their faith in Christ. Paul spelled all of this out in great detail in his epistle to the Romans:

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God which is through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Rom. 3:21-26)

IV. Paul’s concluding Word of encouragement based on the authority and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures (3:16)

We read in verse 16:

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

A. The sufficiency of Holy Scripture due to its inspiration

The source of Timothy’s authority and assurance was not on some experience that he had, or some position that had been conferred upon him. Timothy could be assured that he could withstand all the evil that evil men could generate because He knew God. He knew what God was like in all His glory. He knew what God had purposed to do in history. He knew that his God through Jesus Christ would secure his salvation as he directed him and empowered him to engage with great evil. How did Timothy have this knowledge? Because God had spoken through men who had written down God’s words in a book, or a collection of books, which is the Bible. Now granted, much of the New Testament had not yet been written at this point, and the more specific reference of Paul is to the Old Testament books. But what is said here may be applied to all of the inspired books that God has given us, both the Old and the New Testaments.

God Himself had breathed truth and life into the very words recorded. The very words that the writers of the Bible recorded were the words that God intended for them to write. Therefore, the words that are written, are the words that God has spoken, and they were spoken with God’s authority. They may be relied upon as absolutely true and faithful. The Holy Scriptures may therefore be seen as equipping a Christian to face any challenge and overcome any obstacle that would stand in the way of the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

B. The sufficiency of Holy Scripture due to its utilitarian value in spiritual matters

Specifically, the Bible “*is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*” In other words, the Bible is fully reliable and sufficient, so as to teach doctrine to the people, to withstand error and evil teaching, to correct errant understanding or behavior in God’s people, and to guide them in living rightly before God. This covers all possible situations that may arise in the course of living for Christ. Learning about God and His ways needs to take place in the hearts and minds of God’s people; the Bible is sufficient toward this end. Those who would oppose the truth or fall into error so as to be convinced of that their error is truth need to be reproofed; the Bible is sufficient for this purpose. Believers make wrong decisions and choices in ordering their lives or they err in their understanding of God’s ways so that they need correction; God’s Word is sufficient for this too. And then people must know how to live before God, ordering their thoughts, attitudes, and actions in a manner that pleases God; the Bible is sufficient for guiding God’s people in the steps He would have them walk.

And so, we see before us a statement of the sufficiency of Holy Scripture to deal with any spiritual contingency that may arise in this life respecting ourselves and our relationship with God as we engage a hostile and evil world. A confidence in the sufficiency of Scripture was needful for Timothy to be born along by God so as to live for God and serve God’s people faithfully. There is a great need today for believers to be convinced of the sufficiency of the Bible to address all matters of faith and practice. We do not need gimmicks, or tell half-truths, or use modern marketing strategies or methods drawn from psychological and sociological research. God has given us His Word by which His work is to be conducted. All other resources are subordinate, in fact futile. Only God through His Word can accomplish His purposes in transforming sinners into saints, making them over into the image of their Savior whom they have embraced in faith. The man of God is “complete” when He has God’s Word and possesses a good understanding of it. He is “thoroughly equipped”; that is outfitted with all he needs to conduct “every good work” to which God has called him.

Now, let me ask us, do we really believe this? Do we believe that our church can do all that God would have us do in this world through believing and doing what the Scriptures alone direct us? Or, do we really have doubts about the Bible’s sufficiency? God will use no other means than His Word to create spiritual life in believers of His Word. If your child does not love God’s Word, he does not love God. If he loves church because of the friends that he has there, or the activities they do, but he won’t sit through a sermon explaining and teaching what God is saying from His Holy Word, it is because there is no life in him. He is a stranger to God’s grace. If men or women, boys or girls, do not have an interest in, a desire for, a delight in hearing and understanding the Word of God, it is because there is no light in them. And all of the exciting, fun, clever, impressive, or “awesome” experiences, will not change that, for the “light” of God’s knowledge of salvation comes only through the Word of God clearly and plainly taught and preached.

In conclusion, let me cite our Lord’s own teaching on this matter. Luke 16 records a story that is terrifying in its depiction of the damnation of an unbeliever. But it is also comforting to the one who suffers in this life but believes on Jesus. Jesus told the story of *the rich man* and *Lazarus*.

There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in his flame.” But Abraham said, “Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.” Then he said, “I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to

this place of torment.” Abraham said to him, “They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.” And he said, “No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.” But he said to him, “If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.” (Luke 16:19-31)

Take careful note of what our Lord was teaching through this story. Jesus was saying,

1. God uses only His Word to communicate the way of salvation. *“They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.”* But the rich man did not see the Scriptures as sufficient to bring his brothers to salvation. They needed something more than the Bible, he thought.

2. Witnessing miracles cannot transform unbelievers into Christians. If we could raise a dead man to life once a week at the end of every Sunday morning service, in about three weeks there would be standing room only in this place. But that would not, could not, bring one soul to salvation. *“If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.”*

One final word, then we will pray. We spoke much about faith in Christ as the way of salvation. Do you see Him in His ability to save you from sins on the Day of Judgment? If you have faith, it requires a response from you. It requires you surrendering your heart, soul, mind, and strength to Him. Do not claim to be a believer and cling to your sins. He is not a Savior of sinners who live in their sins. He saves people who repent of their sins. You must not reserve one aspect of your life as exempt from Him. You will have no Savior on Judgment Day. He has promised to save His people, who believe and follow Him.

May the Lord help us to have this confidence in His Word. May He increasingly give us, His people, the desire to know His Word more fully, and may He enable more and more of us to communicate His Word more effectively and broadly in the perilous times that are increasingly coming upon us.

Benediction:

Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. (Heb. 13:20f)
