

2 Timothy 3:16

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Preacher: Donald Macleod

[0 : 00] Let us turn now to the second epistle of Paul to Timothy, the third chapter, reading at 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 perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Amen. Now the train of thought to which these words belong begins at verse 13 of the chapter, where the apostle is telling us that evil men and seducers will walk worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

In other words, although the apostle lived at a time of mighty revival spiritually, he is yet conscious of the peril which even at this early stage was beset in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There were even in those days abundant evidences of apostasy and declension within the people of God. And in the light of all that apostasy and all that unfaithfulness, the apostle is saying to Timothy, But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of.

[2 : 01] In other words, he is warning Timothy not to float with a stream, to stand against the tide of declension, to continue in those things which he had learned and been assured of.

And the apostle goes on to indicate two great reasons why Timothy should remain committed to his own primary and original beliefs.

He should do so first of all, he says, because you know from whom you have learned. You know the quality of those people who were your original teachers.

There was Timothy, there was Paul himself, there was Timothy's mother and Timothy's grandmother. All of these were involved in the teaching of this young man in the things of the faith of Jesus Christ.

And the apostle is saying to him, bearing in mind the character and personalities of those who taught you those things.

[3 : 20] Therefore he says, continue in them. Now it may be a very elementary point, but it's one which on the personal level is to myself of increasing importance.

There are many times when one goes back for inspiration and confirmation to the quality of the Christian lives by which we ourselves were nurtured.

There are times when it is a tremendous confirmation of faith and inspiration to ourselves to recall the life and personality of those whom it was her privilege to know in the things of the Lord Jesus.

There are times when one's faith may be under certain stress. And one goes back in recollection to certain characters.

And one recalls the embodiment in those men of a power and a grace that was not earthly.

[4 : 40] A quality which is so deeply confirmatory of the power of the truth. That was my God's grace handed down to us.

Now I don't say that it is the only basis of faith. I don't even say it is the primary basis of faith. But there are so many times in my life where I'm not only grateful to God.

For some of the men it was my privilege to know. But when the lives of those men comes as a powerful confirmatory evidence of the reality and integrity and authenticity of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And it's at that level that Paul is functioning in this passage. Cling, he says, to those things you learned.

Because you know the character of those from and through whom they came. And it's at that level that Paul is saying. But then there is a second element in Paul's exhortation and it's this.

[5 : 53] Continue in those things you have learned. Because from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures. And Paul's argument here simply is.

That Timothy is to continue to adhere. To those things which he has learned. Because they come from the Holy Scriptures. You are, he says, familiar enough with the word of God.

You have known that word from childhood. And you know therefore that those things you have learned and has been assured of. You know that these things are biblical.

You know they are scriptural. You know they are part of the revelation that God has given. And because they are scriptural. I want you to continue with them.

I want you to adhere to them. And it's from the second point. That Paul launches into this great statement. As to what Holy Scripture is.

[7 : 04] Continue in those things you have learned. Continue in them because you know the quality of those from whom they came.

Continue in them because you know that they come from the word of God. They come from Holy Scripture. And he adds in confirmation of that again.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. You see the apostles launching. Continue in them because they are scriptural.

And all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. Now I want for a moment tonight. To reflect on this passage.

And to try to elucidate something of its message. With regard to Scripture. Bearing in mind that in our own day the Church of Christ. There are so many forces which are ranged.

[8 : 06] Against the historic doctrine of the Church. On this particular item of Christian teaching. We are told by the apostle.

That all Scripture. Is given by inspiration of God. The word that Paul uses for inspiration here.

Is a word that means more narrowly. All Scripture is out breathed by God. All Scripture is breathed out by God.

It is not so much the Bible is inspired. It is instead that the Bible is expired. The Bible is breathed out by God.

The Bible is the breath of God. It is expired by the Lord. The picture Paul gives us.

[9 : 04] It is not of a book. Which exists simply as a book. Into which God breathes. It is a book which exists.

Only as a product. Of the divine breath. God has breathed out. The scripture. It is in that great sense.

That the Bible is the word of God. Just as our words. Are breathed out. So the Bible is breathed out by God. And it is also interesting.

That the apostle applies the. Quality of inspiration. Not to the writers. But to the book. It doesn't say to us.

That the prophets were inspired. That may be true. But it is not the truth taught here. It is the Bible itself. That has the quality.

[10 : 04] Of inspiration. Or expiration. Paul is speaking. About a great. Collection of books. Which he calls scripture.

And those books. In their entirety says. Are breathed out by God. That is the quality they have. The apostle doesn't say to us.

For the Bible sometimes. It is inspired by God. He doesn't say. That it is God's word. When it comes to us. As her father sometimes spoke.

Of a scripture coming to them. Or of the Bible speaking to them. As if at other times. The Bible were not living.

And not speaking. And not inspired. And not the word of God. Paul is saying to us. It has this. Inalienable quality.

[11 : 06] It is always. It is always. The word. The word. Breathed out. By God. Now assuming that for a moment.

That the Bible is. Breathed out by God. There are two. Great qualities. Which I want to mention. With regard to this. Inspiration itself.

First of all. That inspiration. Is organic. Now I know again.

That it's a technical word. But if you bear with me. I'll explain what I mean. I mean that. The Bible is given.

Through the organism. Of human personality. It was breathed out. By God. But it was breathed out. [12:02] By means of human instrumentality. It was breathed out. Through. Human personality. And that human personality.

Was involved. In the production of scripture. And that scripture. Bears on it. Everywhere. Were the impress. Of human personality.

In other words. The writers. Of the Bible. Were not simply. Typewriters. On which. Impersonally. God.

Typed out. The message. They were not. Mere word processors. They were not. Mere stenographers. Or short-hand writers.

Taking. God's words. And God's. God's. God's. God's. God's. Dictation. Although. There are. There are instances. In the Bible. Where that is. Exactly.

[13:02] What happened. But for the most part. The word. Which God. Breathes. Out. Is breathed out. Through the personality.

Of the actual. Of the actual writers. Themselves. That is why. Throughout the Bible. We see such wide variations.

In the style. Of the individual books. The difference between. Isaiah. And Jeremiah. In the literary style.

In their vocabulary. In their standpoint. In their preoccupations. In their own personalities. We saw. In Jeremiah chapter 1. How beautifully. Jeremiah's own personality. Is brought out. In the protest. I cannot speak.

[13:59] I am a child. In the world. And that is why. It is part of the whole. Glory of scripture. That in every book. In every writer. We see.

The personality. Of the human authors. You take the four gospels. Matthew. Mark. Luke. And John. Every word.

Is God breathed. And yet. Each of these gospels. Is so magnificently. Distinct. And different. Matthew. With his Jewishness.

Mark. With his literary. Naivety. The constant use of. And. And. And. And. Luke. With a very. Developed.

Literary style. John. With. His deceptive. Simplicity. His use. Of tiny words. To convey.

[14:56] The most profound. And the most. Unfathomable meaning. So the truth. At every point. God's word comes. Through human personality.

Let me go beyond that still. These men. Through whom God gave us the Bible. Organically. God used their memories. God used their intellects.

God used their emotions. God used their experience. God used their education. God used those men. In the entirety.

Of their humanity. And that's why. It is perfectly permissible for us. In our biblical studies.

To deal. To deal. With all the problems. And all the questions. Which that humanity. Precipitates.

[15:57] Biblical scholarship. What I may even dare call. Biblical criticism. Is concerned with the exploration. Of the human side of the Bible.

The human side. The human side of the Bible. By the human side of the Bible. The human side of the Bible. The human side of the Bible. Sometimes. We get into quite unwarranted trouble. Over this whole question. Because we don't do justice.

To the humanity. To the humaneness. Of the word of God. It is perfectly proper. To ask questions. such as when was such a book written where was such a book written it is even perfectly proper to ask what sources did the writer use for example when Moses wrote Genesis God used Moses' personality and part of that must have involved the use of sources or sources or written sources in the same way when Matthew wrote his gospel we have every right to ask what sources did Matthew use did he use for example Mark's gospel which he almost certainly did those of you who are involved in religious studies in whatever capacity should we take it to heart that in the evangelical doctrine of inspiration full account is taken of the humanness of the word of God the inspiration was through personality all the books have the individuality and the sparkle and the brilliance the humanness the compassion the concern the experience of the individual men who penned these actual compositions and it is a perfectly lawful pursuit for scholarship within the church to concern itself with questions that relate to the humanness of the Bible and let me remind you of an incidental lesson that lies just beside this point and that is this that what is true of the writing of the Bible it's

true of every avenue of Christian service

God does not use us as automata he doesn't use us as machines or typewriters he uses us as human beings our personalities in all their diversity in all their individuality are part of what we have to offer to God now those personalities may have enormous complexities and very often we would love to disown our own personalities very often we wish we were somebody else but in the most solemn possible manner I want to put it to you that what God wants is you if Paul wants God wants three pastoral epistles from the apostle Paul then he wants

Paul's personality in those in those epistles he wants Paul's experience he wants Paul's compassion he wants Paul's insight he wants Paul's concern he wants Paul's biting analysis very often of the enemies of the church he wants Paul's personality and we have to render to God in the same way the service distinctive to our own personalities it's God come as a love in which there is all the strength of our hearts our minds our emotions our wills our experience our pains and sorrows our joys and triumphs everything is involved in the service just as it was in what I may dare to call the inscripturation of the word of God and I don't want us therefore backing off biblical scholarship [21 : 06] I don't want us leaving the criticism textual source form reduction criticism I don't want us leaving those things to the unbelievers I don't want us leaving them even to the un-evangelical I want us to move into them boldly to claim them as legitimate provinces of evangelical scholarship because it is our great personal belief that just as preaching comes through personality as preaching is in fact truth through personality so God's revelation is revelation given to us through human personality humanity but then alongside of this emphasis on organic inspiration there is also an emphasis on what I may call plenary inspiration now I want you to leave with two words fixed on your minds one is inspiration is organic the other is inspiration is plenary plenary in the sense of full plenary in the sense of complete the Bible is completely inspired it is inspired in its entirety it is

God breathed in its every jot and tittle that is Paul's doctrine now you notice a danger at once Paul doesn't say to us that some parts of it are human and some parts are divine the great reality is that it is all human and it is all divine every single word of it has come through human personality and every single word of it is God breathed there is nothing in the Bible which is not when interpreted according to the author's meaning God breathed now that does not mean that there are things in the Bible of course which are not true if you listen very very carefully the speeches for example of Job's enemies these speeches are not true but what is true is the biblical account of those speeches the narrative is true the narrative is God breathed even though those men spoke perversely and spoke for the disturbing of Job's faith but the actual account of what they said is an inspired account now that means that at every level of the word of

God we have the expired breathed out word of God himself the old testament is what Paul referred to particularly the old testament in its entirety is God breathed Genesis 1 to 3 is God breathed the story of the flood is God breathed the story of Abraham is God breathed the story of Moses on the exodus is God breathed the Psalms are God breathed the great prophecies are God breathed Jonah and the great fish that is God breathed the story of the axe head that floats that is God breathed all the narratives of miracles all the discourses all the historical accounts all these are God breathed that is the way that the apostle Paul sees the situation let me take you for a moment behind the apostle Paul to the teaching of

Jesus Christ himself and to a word which he speaks in the gospel according to John he tells us the scripture cannot be broken it's the same word as we use for breaking the south scripture cannot be violated scripture cannot be breached scripture scripture is unbreakable scripture is inerrant scripture is infallible that is the testimony not simply of orthodox theologians not simply of the apostle Paul but we are face to face there with the testimony of Jesus Christ himself it was his view that the bible was god breathed as Paul suggests and it was so god breathed that it could not be broken it was of unquestionable and inviolable authority if I must tonight what is my position my position is

I believe in organic inspiration and that is the mandate for all the disciplines of biblical scholarship I believe in the plenary inspiration the full inspiration of the word of god of scripture in its entirety and I believe in the infallible authority of the bible as something which cannot be broken but if I'm asked why do I believe in its infallible authority I am not going to say that I so believe because I have checked its every syllable against the facts against logic against scientific certainty

[27 : 56] I have not made such a check I cannot make such a check because at that level only omniscience could prove infallibility I believe in the infallibility of the bible for what is a very simple

reason and that is that such was the faith of my savior in other words my whole concern is to follow Christ and his attitude to holy scripture and it is in submission to his authority it is as a tribute of loyalty to him it is in that mind that I accept the infallibility of the word of

God now bear in mind I know no facts which threaten that conviction I feel tonight no intellectual uncertainty on that conviction but it is not by empirical verification it is not by any side to the demonstration it is not by due process of scholarship it is not by exhaustive comparison of the Bible with the truth that I have come to my faith I have come to it in submission to the authority of Christ if I happen to believe that one can be a Christian and not believe in the infallibility of the Bible and I do not want us uncharitably writing off people as non

Christians on the score of this doctrine alone but I am bound to say that it is to me an incomprehensible Christianity that can bow in professed adoration before Jesus of Nazareth and say before him my Lord and my God and yet think that he was wrong on something so fundamental and so monumental as the nature of the Bible itself and in submission to him in a willing submission in intelligent submission I hope I accept with Paul and Christ that this Bible which came through human personality in its entirety is yet fully inspired by God and being fully inspired by God is of absolutely infallible

God and righteousness for doctrine it's profitable for theology it's profitable for teaching Paul obviously thought that doctrine mattered Paul thought teaching mattered but Paul says that the place to get teaching is the Bible it is profitable for teaching and if we want to get doctrine then we go to the word of God and it will teach us now I cannot overestimate or overemphasize the importance of that there it is in the disciplined analysis of the word of God steeping yourselves in it searching it's every word comparing it's every statement that is where you get the doctrine and I would plead with you to face that fact the great theology in

Luther said is the great textuary the man who ponders the text the man who pours over the text and it is fatal if we get diverted into a different mental habit where we go with our theological questions not to the Bible but to some other human composition the Bible is profitable for teaching now I'm often if I may confess I'm bewildered by the ignorance on the theological level of many Christians I'm bewildered because they have the Bible and in that Bible there are all the great answers to the questions that one is so often asked and we should learn to synthesize to collate to gather together all the statements of God's word on particular doctrines what does the

[34 : 01] Bible teach for example as to the sinlessness of Christ that is the doctrine you don't need to go to some book outside the Bible in the first instance you go to the Bible itself there is absolutely no excuse for ignorance so long as we have the Bible in our own vernacular in our own common tongue the Bible is profitable for doctrine and what I'm asking you have your quiet times that is part of the current evangelical canon that one has quiet times and you go to the Bible but do we go to the Bible to get a soothing feeling do we go there to have our hearts painlessly warmed is that why no the feelings are tremendously important and so is the warmth there's a marvelous passage in

Hebrews 12 that says this to us you have forgotten the exhortation not to reason it with you and it quotes from the book of Proverbs the exhortation he says is reasoning it is discussing it is arguing now so often that is what the Bible is doing the Bible is actually arguing with the reader it's making a kiss it's very often has the most astonishing logical structure it is pleading and you've got to look for the links you've got to look not at a text in isolation you must see the paragraph you must see the chapter you must see the plan of the whole book and very often if you do not look at the plan of the book you will never understand the particular passage and I would ask you how often have you looked at the plan for example of

Philippians or first Timothy or the plan of Romans you have to see the architecture because here is in the Bible what we have is advocacy what we have is argument what we have is teaching logic did I say it is the building up of the case and our study of God's word must make a level for that great fact the Bible is reasoning with us it is arguing with us as intelligent men and women and I'm saying well let's go back to the Bible for the doctrine for the teaching and then you see this the Bible is profitable for reproof and correction in other words so often the Bible is judgmental and so often the Bible is condemnatory and so often the

Bible is quite simply damning we come with our own personalities our own lives our own present spiritual position we come with these to the word of God and I'm asking while I will listen into reproof I will listen into the correction to those judgments and condemnations that God's word is uttering against where we are at the moment the Bible often reproves our opinions it more often reproves

our lifestyle it reproves our conduct the way we're acting and the way we're speaking it's reproving it's correcting it's saying to us that's wrong it's condemning the way we're living the way we're speaking but all I find most is this that over large areas of it it's condemning not only my my deeds not only my my words it's condemning the way that I feel it's condemning my moods it's condemning my emotional conditional position heresy and I'm not at all sure but the biggest heresy in the church today is emotional heresy

I think your mood our mood is all wrong there's far too much anxiety there's far too much depression there's far too much neurosis in the church of Christ far too much discontent and at that level the Bible is damnatory it's condemning it's reproving and correcting it is saying to us that your feelings are entirely wrong this dejection this cynicism cynicism is the most awful curse it's cynicism that says to you it's no use trying outreach it's cynicism that says it's no use trying to reform the church it's cynicism that has lost all faith in the people of God the

[39 : 55] Bible is reproving it correcting it the Bible doesn't want sleepless anxiety on the part of ministers the Bible doesn't want depression and despondency and the Bible most emphatically does not want cynicism with regard to the prospects and potential of the church of God so this inspired word it teaches this inspired word it reproves and this inspired word instructs it trains in righteousness you remember blessed are they to hunger and thirst after righteousness and here is this man who hungers and thirsts after righteousness here he is trying to do something about righteousness by taking exercises he is under instruction and where do we do our training we do our training in the word of

God that is the gymnasium the word of God written the word of God preached in fidelity to the word of God written and there it is profitable for training and I'm asking a most elementary and simple challenge are we as Christians under constant training and do we maintain the program do we keep up our exercises shall I say four chapters of God's word a day are we in training I'm asking therefore are we approaching the Bible for teaching are we approaching it for a proof are we approaching it for training and it gives us at last this that the man of

God may be perfect that's what we are men of God not ministers but every single Christian we are supposed to be men and women of God that's our position and God's ideal of us is that we are perfect and that's why God gave us the Bible to make us perfect now obviously it never becomes in this life more than an ideal but the curious thing is the way Paul defines the ideal thoroughly furnished unto all good works the fully equipped Christian what's he fully equipped for for good works beautiful works something beautiful for God works which adorn the doctrine a perfect Christian is one who is a mature Christian mature in that he has all the equipment he needs for good works where can he get the equipment he gets it from that scripture which is inspired by God it was inspired by God to make the man of God fully equipped and if we want to be fully equipped then we have to make due and diligent use of this scripture that God has given to us let me then close two or three very brief practical points since we have such a Bible one given by organic inspiration one given by plenary inspiration one which makes the man of God fully equipped how shall we respond we shall respond first of all with thankfulness with thankfulness to God that from childhood we have known the holy scriptures or if not from childhood that then at this present moment we have access to

God's word in our own language let us thank God for that every man of us a Bible is carrying a miracle in his hands one of God's great perforations of history one of my other great confirmatory evidences of the truth of the Christian faith I have found in the wilderness of this world a book bound usually in black covers which is not of this world it has come from the heart and the mind of God and I'm thankful to God that I have known the holy scriptures the second point is this we must search the scriptures we must search them now I come back again to the deplorable lack of knowledge that characterizes the whole church of Christ including the free church and I make the point to you that there are people prepared for toil and blood and sweat and tears and the mastery of much earthly knowledge and many earthly disciplines and many human professions and you go through all the labor and all the sweat and all the agony involved in the mastery of that information but I find that the

[46 : 48] Lord's people are not so prepared to slog at the business of searching the scriptures I find that the pressure put on the portlet is not an expository pressure I am not conscious in this denomination in which I am called upon to serve God I am not conscious of a great groundswell from the hearts of desperate people saying to us go up there and show us what the Bible teaches

and I am not conscious that you are doing it for yourselves using every possible help grammatical lexicographical concordance theology is common to try to understand well why should we I say because if you are men of

God and you want to be fully equipped you have said Christ to search the constitution I believe that's what the Lord himself did where do you think the Lord's marvelous ability to quote the Old Testament where do you think it came from heaven do you think that all those quotations fell from heaven into the mind of Christ I tell you no he had the Bible at his fingertips because from a child he had poured lovingly over the word of his heavenly father using all the resources of his own human personality and all the resources of his own people and all the wisdom of his church he had pondered over the inspired world until when his life's work began at his baptism he had that world at its total control and did he not say himself to others you do err not knowing the scriptures how often he must have said if only these people knew their

Bibles how often I say it my positions are different and the things so relatively easy there is so much we cannot master there is so much in which we are so inept and so incompetent I find it difficult to forgive people ignorance of the word of God search the scriptures if you want to be thoroughly and fully equipped unto all good works we are thankful to God for it and we search it and my last point is this that we receive it as it is in truth the word of God suppose I speak tonight to someone who is not a Christian I put to you one simple question suppose the Bible is true suppose the Bible is true and maybe you say well I believe it's true and I say to you again well suppose it's true I don't say simply that with the back of your mind the top of your mind somewhere you think that because your father and mother believed in it therefore you believe in it that's in itself quite admirable but I put it to you much more stringently have you ever pondered if I may say so existentially anxiously in a decision making context as if it really mattered have you ever pondered the possibility the Bible may be true all it says about hell and all it says about heaven all it says about death and Christ and sin and glory but the

Holy Spirit and power and purity and elevation and glory even in this present life suppose it's true what I put it to you that many of you must say to me well you know I never thought of that I never really thought it might be true about hell and heaven and Christ to the cross and I put it to you well I suppose it's true you remember how Paul says you received my word he says not as the word of men but as it is in truth the word of God it's the marvelous thing many have lived 20 years side by side with the Bible and I'm sure you've never noticed it never really noticed it never supposed for a single moment

[52 : 32] God that it might be from heaven might be God's might be for it claims to be the word of teaching the word of training and the word of reproof and as a word of reproof tonight what it reproves and rebukes above all else is your stony indifference to its message and I'm asking go go and ponder most solemnly and go and ponder most urgently that it may be true I beseech you consider your indifference may be wrong let us pray oh lord we ask for the blessing of thy spirit we are bound to rejoice that we have a word which is inspired and authoritative and yet lord that word can be so can go forth as such be read as such but unless thy spirit come it has no power to teach us it has no power to rebuke us it has no power to train us grant us oh lord that power and grant that we as the lord's people may make amends in our own relationship to the bible and grant that those guilty of indifference to its claims and its threats and promises that they too may make conscience tonight of sorting themselves out in relation to the bible here as for our saviour's sake amen amen let's in gonuzi is can tell put in can , up in a foss can tune in scroll and together in gonna rise up to a special for it has seen a wall