

Dear Friends,

My objective is to encourage each of us to a more diligent study of the New Testament. Last week we studied the angel's admonition to John to take the "Little book" and to eat it up, consume and digest God's Word into our lives. We need a daily diet of healthy food to sustain our bodies. We equally need a daily diet of Scripture to sustain our spiritual health. Neither a believer nor a preacher can savor "Food," Scripture, that they "Ate," studied five or ten years ago with any kind of healthy outcome. Our study and mental exposure to Scripture, like food, must be daily and fresh for spiritual nutrition and sound healthy spiritual growth.

This week we turn to the central question; to whom is Scripture written? The populist idea that Scripture is God's "Invitation" to all humanity to learn and accomplish their own salvation is not supported in Scripture, as our study passage this week simply and clearly teaches. God directed His Book to "the man of God," to believers. Further, our study passage reminds us that Scripture "thoroughly" or "thoroughly" (Per the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, different spellings of the same word)--completely--furnish the believer to "all good works."

We could offer any number of examples of unsanctified speculation and foolish questions that gender strife, according to Paul. I'll offer just one. How many times have we asked the question regarding why someone in Scripture said or did something? If Scripture doesn't tell us, forget the question! If we had the answer from Scripture, it wouldn't in any way increase our spiritual health or our knowledge and ability to

good works. Have you ever heard--or asked--"Why did Adam eat the forbidden fruit? He was present with Eve when the serpent beguiled her. Paul writes that he was not deceived as Eve was. So why did he eat it?" Can you offer one single verse in the entire Bible that addresses, much less answers that question? No, not one, so any answer we offer grows out of our imagination, not out of Scripture. Why? I don't trust my imagination, and you shouldn't trust yours. Invest your time studying questions and teachings that Scripture does answer and teach.

Lord help us to study His Word and not become distracted by anything, even by our own imagination.

Lord bless,
Joe Holder

New Testament—To Whom Written?

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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. (2 Timothy 3:14-17 KJV 1900)

Based on Acts 16:1-3 and 2 Timothy 1:5, we learn that Timothy's mother and grandmother were faithful believers. His father was Greek and probably not a believer. In the Acts 16 verses, we learn that Timothy was not circumcised, something Paul recommended because of the work they were called to do among the Jewish people.

Apparently from these verses, Paul knew Timothy's mother and grandmother and held them in high regard for their unwavering faith. Paul urges Timothy to abide in the faith tradition of these godly women from his youth. The carnal mind of man constantly looks for new and novel ideas, even in its consideration of God and His teachings in Scripture. Scripture, however, urges believers to discover the true teaching of Scripture, and to abide steadfastly in that truth. (Jude 1:3 KJV, as well as Paul's teaching to Timothy in our study passage)

And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. We know that Timothy was a young man, even when Paul wrote to him (1 Timothy 4:12 KJV), but, given Paul's reference to both Timothy's mother and grandmother, he likely first learned the Old Testament Scriptures from them, but Paul's description of their early teaching indicates that Timothy's grandmother and mother understood those Scriptures from the perspective of Jesus and His coming. "...*which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*" These words do not teach us about Timothy's salvation, but his learning about his salvation. Timothy and his early teachers understood that the

testimony of Scripture could be understood only “**through faith which is in Christ Jesus.**”

“**through faith which is in Christ Jesus.**” If we follow the teachings of the New Testament, we learn that no one ever has, much less exercises true faith other than “**in Christ Jesus.**” Scripture knows nothing of the populist idea that the unsaved sinner uses his faith to become saved. Faith is one of Paul’s descriptions of the “**fruit of the Spirit.**” (Galatians 5:22-23 KJV) Paul’s reasoning in this lesson is simple and strong. The tree (The Spirit) produces its fruit, which Paul describes by nine distinctive words. The fruit never produces the tree that bore it. The idea that our faith produces our eternal salvation relies on this upside-down thinking that the fruit occurs before the tree that bore it, something no farmer who grows things could imagine. Many years ago, a wise man observed, “Some people believe in their belief, others have faith in their faith. I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ alone as my Savior.” Amen! By the indwelling Holy Spirit, born again people manifest some degree of the Spirit’s influence in their lives. Their “Fruit” is not the cause of the Spirit’s indwelling; the Spirit’s indwelling causes their fruit. Further, Paul did not write that Scripture held the potential to save Timothy, but that Scripture, if faithfully believed and followed, would make him wise unto that salvation. We need to learn all we can know about our salvation, and our most reliable source is Scripture.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God. If we understand that Timothy’s first learning of Scripture was likely from the Old Testament, it seems reasonable to conclude that Paul intentionally expanded his scope of

“Inspired” Scripture by the word “**All**.” In 1 Timothy 5:18, Paul referred to a passage from Moses in the Old Testament. In the same verse, Paul included a passage from the gospel of Luke, referring to both equally as “Scripture.” Thus, Paul’s reference to “Scripture” in this lesson includes both Old and New Testament writings.

“...**is given**.” Paul didn’t write, “All scripture **was given** when the human authors wrote it,” a sadly common idea of our day. “...**is given**” conveys a sense of permanence in this description of Scripture. God gave it by His “breathe,” His intimate personal influence, but He also continues to preserve it as His message to His people. Psalm 12:6-7 affirms that God is perpetually involved in preserving His “words” for all generations. If He gave Scripture originally by inspiration, but allowed it to be compromised and lost, it loses all its original message and authority for His people. This verse, I believe, joins 1 John 5:7 as one of Satan’s most despised verses in the Bible. Take away the truth of these two verses and you compromise the whole message of Scripture, exactly what Satan has ever worked to do. “*Yea, hath God said?*” (Genesis 3:1 KJV)

Having affirmed the divine origin and preservation of Scripture, we may now turn to the question of our study. To whom did God direct the writings of Scripture? Paul answers this question as simply and clearly as he affirmed the source and preservation of “**The words of the Lord**.” (Psalm 12:6 KJV)

...*and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.* Paul first

answers the question, “Why did God give us the Scriptures?”

1. “...is **profitable**.” There is a distinct spiritual benefit to be derived from a study of God’s “Inspired” Scriptures. I have literally a room full of books, almost all of them in one way or the other about the teachings of Scripture. However, as I grow older, I spend more time with my Bible and less time with them. Paul didn’t write that commentaries and word study aids are profitable, did he? The supreme spiritual value every born-again person most needs is to be found in Scripture alone, not Scripture plus anything else. Many years ago, I had a fascinating conversation with a man who studied for Greek Orthodox priesthood before discovering the Bible’s emphasis on the grace of God in Jesus. He likely knew more about first century Greek language, the language in which the New Testament was first written, than any man I’ve known. When I asked him about the Greek language’s nuances in a particular passage, he responded in a way that I’ve never forgotten, “Brother Joe, our English King James Bible contains the best information available on God’s Word in the English language. I’ve never learned anything from Greek that wasn’t readily available in the KJV if I studied it diligently.” This man affirmed what the Holy Spirit directed Paul to write in our study passage.

2. “...**for doctrine**.” For teaching or instruction. If God were to write the syllabus for a class in spiritual truth, His textbook would be His Book, our Bible, not Strong’s concordance and dictionary or any other

supplement. If we want to know what God reveals to us, we need to invest regular prayerful focused time with our Bible.

3. “...**for reproof.**” Biblical “reproof” confronts us with God’s measuring rod that we have done something wrong and reminds us of His right way. Too often our sinful pride refuses to allow us to face and confess our wrongs, robbing us of the blessings of Biblical faith and faithfulness, **of reproof.**

4. “...**for correction.**” To be shown what we did wrong is a half-step to the right way. Once we face the Biblical reality of our wrong thinking or doing, we need the Bible’s answer to what—and how—we should do right. And that information is abundantly and clearly revealed in Scripture.

5. “...**for instruction in righteousness.**” Once we have allowed Scripture, not our personal opinions, to rule our thinking and conduct, we need—and God abundantly supplies—His instruction in the right way to think and live. Beware when anyone professing knowledge of Scripture tells you that the Bible contains little to no information regarding anything spiritual, so we are entitled to choose our own way. This idea blatantly contradicts Paul’s inspired description of Scripture.

We now turn to the final movement in this spiritual symphony of God’s resources for His people. If serious Bible students believed and remembered this one brief truth, their Bible study and their spiritual lives would be

powerfully transformed. To whom did God direct the teachings of “**All scripture**”?

That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. To whom did God direct His “inspired” writings? The populist belief of the day answers that God sent His words to all humanity to give them “an opportunity” to save themselves. Paul’s inspired-by-the-Lord response says differently. **God intended His “Book” for His people, “the man of God.”** I do not believe Paul used “man” in this verse in a pejorative against women. Traditional English grammar allowed “man” to be used as a reference to people, both male and female. Consider Scripture’s internal testimony. Who first taught Timothy from those “Holy scriptures”? His mother and grandmother. Who refined and instructed a young promising preacher in Acts? (Acts 18:26 KJV) Aquila and Priscilla, right? And who proved to be faithful friends and helpers to Paul? That same godly husband and wife “Team” who leave us a wise and godly example of men and women, husbands and wives working together, not competing and living in hostility toward each other? That same godly couple appears several times in Acts and in Paul’s writings as competent helpers to Paul in his spiritual labors. Scripture is not anti-woman at all when read fully and rightly. Who created woman? God, same as man, and He created both man and woman to work together and jointly honor Him more fully together than they possibly could apart.

If we believe Paul’s inspired words in this lesson, we learn that it literally serves as God’s formal “Salutation,” His specific address to “**the man of God**” “Dear man/woman of God, this Book is to you and for you. It answers all your wise

and necessary questions, and it fully instructs and equips you to know what is '***all good works.***' It teaches you how to do them. Learn it and heed it well. ***I wrote it to you!***"

Elder Joe Holder