

Essential Commitments of a Local Church

Pt. 2

2 Timothy 3:13–17

2 Timothy 3:13–17 (NKJV)

¹³ But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴ But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, ¹⁵ and 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.

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

Introduction:

The Word of God has been under attack from the very beginning.

Genesis 3:1 (NKJV)

3 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden’?”

And throughout the ages the Devil has not ceased to raise up men and movements to attack the Word of God.

Looking back a little to see how the attacks on the Word of God have accumulated

Roman Catholicism exchanged the authority of Scripture for the authority of Religious Tradition.

One of the earliest deception that infiltrated the church was Romish Sacramentalism. The idea that an individual can connect with God through ritualism and religious ceremony. So somehow we connect to God through a mechanical External way.

As this external sacramentalism gained popularity, the Roman Catholic Church assumed itself to be a Surrogate Christ and so people began to be contact

to the Roman Catholic System, but not to the Real Christ.

Religious ritual became the enemy of the true Gospel and genuine Grace and undermined the authority of God and His Word.

This Deception and delusion swept the Western world and then the whole world while holding much of Europe in this this deception for a millennium.

The Reformers where raised up by God and stood up against the Roman Catholic Church. The Rejected the system and the Pope, knowing that Christ was the only Head of the church. Knowing this, they gladly submitted to the authority of the Word of God.

Sola Scripture was the Bedrock upon which the Reformation grew. It was the Reformers commitment to the sole authority of the Word of God and not Tradition, ritualism, sacramentalism or Papal Authority but rather ONLY the Word God.

Following the Reformation came Higher Criticism or Historical Critical Theory

This exchanged the Authority of Scripture for Human Reason and Atheistic Naturalism.

This second attack emphasized

Rationalism, Human reasoning and scientific empiricism.

This age of the enlightenment was exalted over the Authority of Scripture.

As men placed themselves and their human reasoning over the Divinely revealed Word of God,

It gained access to the church through academic elitism. Many of the Seminaries were seduced but the so called Reasoning of men.

As a result men in seminaries and in the pulpits began to question the historical accuracy of the Bible.

Who is the Real Jesus

Did Moses really author the 1st 5 books of the Bible.

The Exodus

The Miracles of the Bible

The Miracles of Jesus

The Resurrection.

etc.

Then the cults arise on the scene, the Mormons, the Jehovah Witnesses, World wide church of God. Christian Science.

The claim direct revelation from God or an Angel. and misinterpret and rewrite or add to the scripture.

The Charismatics, Pentecostals rise up with revelations, words from God, words of knowledge, signs and wonders and claims of the miraculous.

They believe the Bible to be the word of God but its just not enough.

The latest is the New Apostolic Reformation....which isn't New, isn't Apostolic and isn't a reformation.

The church is also now plagued with Pragmatism.

What every works we use, Biblical or not
Exposition is replaced with Entertainment.

Pulpits are replaced with plays

Worship is replaced with the weekend

Reverence is replaced with Relevance

Hymns are replaced with hiphop

It is important to know that worst of the attacks on Scripture do not come from without but from within.

Our greatest threat are not the Atheist, or Ungodly philosophers of the age, but those who claim to be Christian, evangelical, orthodox.

Paul warned

Acts 20:29–30 (NKJV)

²⁹ For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

³⁰ Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

Jesus Warned

Matthew 7:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ **“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.**

These are currently coming from the
 The Professors of the Seminaries
 The Pastors of the Churches
 The self appointed Prophetesses

These are currently coming from the

1. Professors

N.T. Wright

considered by some to be a heavy weight when it comes to biblical scholarship and a prolific writer of more than 70 books

he has written one of his most popular books on the new perspective on Paul which is a denial of justification by faith alone.

My response is the same as A.W Pink

“When the father of lies enters the pulpit it is not his custom to flatly deny the fundamental Truths of

Christianity, rather he tacitly acknowledges them. And then proceeds to give erroneous interpretation and false application”

Professor Clint Bass fired for belief in inerrancy

He was the professor of church History at Redford College of Theology and Ministry at Southwest Baptist University.

Thru a series of conversations it was determined that some in the university did not believe in inerrancy of the scripture and the eternal nature of hell and the role of men in the pulpit.

As a result of Professor Bass’ commitment to the authority and inerrancy of Scripture, He was fired!!!

2. Pastors

Andy Stanley

teaching we should unhitch from the OT recently saying that we the 10 Commandments don’t apply to christians, only the sermon on the mount does

Matt Chandlers- bizarre dreams of pirate ships and interpreting God Speaking to him

3. “Prophetesses”

Sarah Young who writes books claim Jesus is speaking thru her

Priscilla Shirer - who wrote the #1 best seller in lifeway christian books.

“Discerning the Voice of God, How to recognize when God Speaks. she is a false teacher who believes in extra biblical revelation.

Beth Moore - another false teacher who has not got to the point of doing expositional studies of her own dreams and words she believes she is receiving from God.

She has also appeared with Joyce Meyer on her show, an Beth agreed with Joyce on the need of unity. Beth Moore affirmed that she would would serve Christ with anybody, no matter what their belief system is.

She claims that God have her a vision while on her back porch of the need for the unity of evangelicals with Roman Catholics

Review:

I. We are Committed to a High View God Rather than a Deification of Man.

II. We are Committed to the Absolute Authority of Scriptures Rather than the Tradition of Man

III. We are Committed to Sound Doctrine Rather Than the Dumbing Down of Doctrine.

IV. We are Committed to the Preaching of the Word Rather than Pragmatic Methodology

V. We are Committed to Integrated Worship with the Family rather than the Segregation of the Family

VI. We are Committed to Personal Holiness Rather than Worldliness.

VII. We are Committed to a plurality of Godly Leadership than the Business or Democratic Model.

VIII. We are Committed to Evangelism of the Sinner rather than Moral Reform of the Society.

IX. We are Committed to the Return of Jesus Christ rather than the Riches of Earth

I. We are Committed to a High View God Rather than a Deification of Man.

Lesson

II. We are Committed to the Absolute Authority of Scriptures Rather than the Tradition of Man

- I. Claim of Scripture
- II. The Cause of Scripture
- III. The Consequence of Scripture.

I. Claim of Scripture

The Scripture claims to be authoritative. Not just generally but absolutely.

A representative dictionary definition records that authority is the “Power or right to enforce obedience; moral or legal supremacy; right to command or give a final decision.”³

Bernard Ramm suggests,
“Authority itself means that right or power to command action or compliance, or to determine belief or custom, expecting obedience from those under authority, and in

turn giving responsible account for the claim to right or power.”⁴

⁴ Bernard Ramm, *The Pattern of Religious Authority* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959) 10 [emphasis in the original].

Matthew 28:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “**All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.**”

Jude 25 (ESV)

²⁵ to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, **and authority**, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

The Bible has authority because of who’s Word it is

It is the Word of God

The Word of God assumes Authority and requires obedience

Deuteronomy 4:2 (NKJV)

² You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the

commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.

Joshua 1:8–9 (NKJV)

⁸ This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God *is* with you wherever you go.”

Psalms 119:86 (NKJV)

⁸⁶ All Your commandments *are* faithful;

Psalms 119:89 (NKJV)

⁸⁹ Forever, O Lord,
Your word is settled in heaven.

The Words of God and the Scripture are the Same.

Galatians 3:8 (NKJV)

⁸ **And the Scripture,** foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, **preached** the gospel to Abraham beforehand, *saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.”*

Galatians 3:22 (NKJV)

²² **But the Scripture** has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Galatians 4:30 (NKJV)

³⁰ Nevertheless what does **the Scripture say?** *“Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.”*

Romans 9:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ **For the Scripture says** to the Pharaoh, *“For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.”*

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE IN PRACTICE

The outworking of God’s authority in Scripture can be summarized in a negative (what it is not) and positive (what it is) statements.

1. It is not a derived authority bestowed by humans; rather it is the original authority of God.
2. It does not change with the times, the culture, the nation, or the ethnic background; rather it is the unalterable authority of God.
3. It is not one authority among many possible spiritual authorities; rather it is the exclusive spiritual authority of God.
4. It is not an authority that can be successfully challenged or rightfully overthrown; rather, it is the permanent authority of God.
5. It is not a relativistic or subordinate authority; rather it is the ultimate authority of God.
6. It is not merely a suggestive authority; rather it is the obligatory authority of God.
7. It is not a benign authority in its outcomes; rather it is the consequential authority of God.

Just how important is the authority of Scripture?
Listen carefully to one of the preeminent Reformers when he spoke to this very question at the Diet of Worms in April, 1521. Martin Luther, under intense pressure to recant regarding “justification by faith”

and other recently embraced truths from the Bible, responded to Meister Eck in this fashion:

Since then Your Majesty and your lordships desire a simple reply, I will answer without horns and without teeth. Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason—I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other—my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen.²

² Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (New York: Mentor, 1955) 144.

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II. The Cause of Scripture

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

Simply put, Inspiration is the cause of Scripture

Carl F.H. Henry put forth this truth of the divine inspiration of Scripture in the clearest possible way:

Inspiration is that supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit whereby the sacred writers were divinely supervised in their production of Scripture, being restrained from error and guided in the choice of words they used, consistently with their disparate personalities and stylistic peculiarities. God is the source of Holy Scripture; Christ Jesus is the central message; and the Holy Spirit, who inspired it and illumines its message to the reader, bears witness by this inscripturated Word to the Word enfleshed, crucified, risen, and returning.

Carl F. H. Henry, "The Authority and Inspiration of the Bible," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979) 25 [emphasis in the original].

Matthew 22:31–32 (NKJV)

³¹ But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ³² *'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'?* God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

Acts 1:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ "Men *and* brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David

concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus;

Acts 28:25 (NKJV)

²⁵ So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word: “The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers,

Romans 3:1–2 (NKJV)

3 What advantage then has the Jew, or what *is* the profit of circumcision? ² Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.

Romans 15:4 (NKJV)

⁴ For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

2 Peter 1:20–21 (NKJV)

²⁰ knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, ²¹ for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.

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the teaching scripture
for teaching, (3:16b)

As mentioned in chapter 8 of this commentary in regard to verse 10, *didaskalia* does not refer to the process or method of **teaching** but to its content. In this context, as in most others in the New Testament, *didaskalia* refers specifically and exclusively to divine instruction, or doctrine, given to believers through God's Word, which included not only the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) and the **teaching** of Jesus during His incarnation but also the inspired **teaching** of the apostles and New Testament authors.

“A natural man,” Paul explains, “does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them.” It is not that the unsaved person is intellectually inferior, but that such truths “are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:14–16).

While warning believers about the dangerous teachings and work of antichrists, John assures his readers: “You have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know.... As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.... And as for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him” (1 John 2:20, 24, 27).

When it comes to godly living and godly service, to growing in “the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4), God-breathed Scripture provides for us the comprehensive and complete body of divine truth necessary to live as our heavenly Father desires for us to live. The wisdom and guidance for fulfilling everything He commands us to believe, think, say, and

do is found in His inerrant, authoritative, comprehensive, and completed Word.

Even after conversion, trust in one's own wisdom is a severe hindrance to correct understanding of Scripture and to full usefulness in the Lord's service. The counsel to "trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding" (Prov. 3:5) is every bit as valid for Christians as it was for Old Testament saints.

Throughout church history, the Lord has uniquely and wonderfully sustained and blessed the spiritual lives and influence of believers who, because of imprisonment, illiteracy, isolation, or other restrictions beyond their control, could not study His Word. But the teaching of Scripture is the divine body of truth without which no believer who has access to it can live, minister, or witness effectively. Tragically, some of the most biblically illiterate believers in our day live in lands where God's Word is readily available and where scriptural preaching, teaching, and literature are abundant.

It goes without saying that it is impossible to believe, understand, and follow what you do not even know. It is completely futile, as well as foolish, to expect to live a spiritual life without knowing spiritual truth. Biblically untaught believers, especially those in biblically untaught churches, are easy prey for false teachers. They are spiritual "children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by

the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming” (Eph. 4:14). Throughout most of redemptive history, God could have said what He said in Hosea’s day: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hos. 4:6). It is for that reason, as well as for the even greater reason of honoring the Lord, that regular, systematic, and thorough study of the doctrine in God’s Word is imperative for God’s people.

We not only are to guard what we know but sincerely seek to learn more of God’s inexhaustible truth. We should pray with Job, “Teach Thou me what I do not see” (Job 34:32). That dauntless man of God had lost his children, his servants, his flocks, his health, and even his reputation. He was wholly unable to see why God permitted those calamities to come upon him, and he therefore wanted the Lord to teach him whatever he needed to learn in order to endure his painful existence and to profit from it spiritually.

Just before Jehovah’s covenant with Israel was ratified near Sinai, Moses “took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, ‘All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!’ ” (Ex. 24:7). Unfortunately, the people of Israel seldom again demonstrated such reverence for God’s Word. Shortly before they were to enter and take possession of the Promised Land, Moses reminded them again: “See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the Lord my God

commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it.... And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that you might perform them in the land where you are going over to possess it” (Deut. 4:5, 14). God’s command to Joshua, Moses’ successor, applies to every believer: “Be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success” (Josh. 1:7–8).

When the young but godly King Josiah heard read to him “the words of the book of the law,” which had been discovered as the temple was being repaired, “he tore his clothes. Then the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Achbor the son of Micaiah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the king’s servant saying, ‘Go, inquire of the Lord for me and the people and all Judah concerning the words of this book that has been found, for great is the wrath of the Lord that burns against us, because our fathers have not listened to the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us’ ” (2 Kings 22:11–13).

Although they did not believe their own words, the unbelieving and hypocritical Pharisees were completely correct when they said of Jesus, “You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any” (Matt. 22:16). It was because of His utter truthfulness and righteousness and His refusal to defer to anyone that those men, and others like them, put Jesus to death. Contrary to their godly forefather Josiah, they would not accept the teaching of God.

On a trip from Greece back to Jerusalem, Paul reminded the Ephesian elders, many of whom had ministered both with him and with Timothy, “You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ... how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.... For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God” (Acts 20:18, 20–21, 27).

Both the first and last pieces of spiritual armor that Paul mentions in his letter to believers at Ephesus pertain to Scripture. “Stand firm therefore,” he says, “having girded your loins with truth.” Then, after putting on the “breastplate of righteousness,” shodding our feet with “the gospel of peace, “taking up the shield of faith,” and donning “the helmet of salvation,” we are to equip

ourselves with the only offensive implement mentioned here—“the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:14–17). *Machaira* (“sword”) refers to a short sword, or dagger, a weapon used in close combat that required skillful use in order to be effective. “Word” translates *rhēma*, which refers to a specific statement or wording, not to general truth, as does the more commonly used *logos*.

Our “wielding” of Scripture, as it were, should be as precise, accurate, and appropriate as possible. No matter how good our intentions might be, to interpret or apply a passage thoughtlessly or to quote it out of context creates confusion and uncertainty. It does disservice to the Lord and to those we are attempting to instruct. In order to present ourselves “approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed,” we must handle “accurately the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). Careless use of Scripture, even by the Lord’s own people, can do great damage to the cause of Christ, as it often has done throughout church history.

During His wilderness ordeal, Jesus responded to each of Satan’s temptations with an accurate and carefully chosen quotation from Scripture (see Matt. 4:3–10). Because He was the incarnate Son of God, anything He might have said would have carried the same divine weight as Scripture. But as an example for His followers, He chose to quote divine truth that already was recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Following the pattern of our gracious Lord, our weapon against the temptations and deceptions of the devil should always be a careful and precise use of God's revealed Word. It then goes without saying that, in order to use Scripture in that effective way, we must thoroughly know it and understand it. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we must "let the word of Christ richly dwell within [us], with all wisdom" (Col. 3:16).

The truths of God's Word are spiritual wealth that we should continually be depositing into our minds and hearts. Like deposits of money in our bank account, those deposits of divine truth become spiritual assets that we can draw on readily when confronting temptation, when making moral choices and when seeking God's specific will and guidance for our lives.

the reproofing scripture

for reproof, (3:16c)

A second work of the Word in the life of believers is that of **reproof**. *Elegmos* (**reproof**) carries the idea of rebuking in order to convict of misbehavior or false doctrine. As with teaching, Scripture's work of reproof has to do with content, with equipping believers with accurate knowledge and understanding of divine truth, in this context divine truth that exposes falsehood and sin, erroneous belief, and ungodly conduct.

Richard Trench, a noted nineteenth-century British theologian, comments that *elegmos* refers to rebuking “another with such effectual wielding of the victorious arm of the truth, as to bring him not always to a confession, yet at least to a conviction of his sin.”

Regular and careful study of Scripture builds a foundation of truth that, among other things, exposes sin in a believer’s life with the purpose of bringing correction, confession, renunciation, and obedience.

Using the same Greek word as Paul does in Ephesians 6:17, the writer of Hebrews speaks of the Bible as a divine sword that exposes sin in a believer’s life. “The word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword [*machaira*], and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” (Heb. 4:12–13). Scripture precisely and thoroughly penetrates the believer’s mind, soul, and heart.

Every Christian who has been saved for any length of time has experienced times of being sharply and deeply convicted by reading a particular Bible passage or hearing it preached or taught. Every experienced Christian also knows that during times of disobedience he is strongly tempted to forsake Bible study and worship and finds that fellowship with faithful believers

becomes less attractive and comfortable. Looked at from the opposite side, decreased desire to study God's Word, to worship Him, and to be with His people is reliable evidence of unconfessed and unforsaken sin. It is for that reason that a Bible-teaching, Bible-believing, and Bible-obeying church is never a haven for persistent sinners. As Jesus explained the principle to Nicodemus, "Everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed" (John 3:20).

Scripture has the negative ministry of tearing down and destroying that which is sinful and false as well as of building up and improving that which is righteous and true. Just as in medicine, infection and contamination must be excised before healing can begin. Paul told the Ephesian elders, "I testify to you this day, that I am innocent of the blood of all men.... Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears" (Acts 20:26, 31).

Reproving the wrongdoing of his people is as much a pastor's responsibility as helping build them up in righteousness. At the beginning of the next chapter of this letter, Paul wrote, "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience

and instruction” (2 Tim. 4:1–2). The first two of those three admonitions are negative, the first one being the verb form of *elegmos* (**reproof**). God’s minister, like God’s Word, must reprove sin and falsehood.

Scripture is the divine plumb line by which every thought, principle, act, and belief is to be measured. Paul reminded the Corinthian church what he doubtless had taught them many times. “We are not like many,” he said, “peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.... We have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God” (2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2). Luke commended God-fearing Jews in Berea because they “were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11). As every preacher and teacher should be, Paul and Silas were not offended but were greatly pleased that everything they said was measured against God’s Word.

“I have more insight than all my teachers,” the psalmist testified before the Lord, “for Thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, because I have observed Thy precepts” (Ps. 119:99–100). “From Thy precepts I get understanding,” he

continues a few verses later; “therefore I hate every false way. Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path” (vv. 104–105). God’s Word steers us away from sin and toward righteousness.

Isaiah warned the people of Israel to “hate every false way.” “And when they say to you, ‘Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter,’ should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn [light]” (Isa. 8:19–20).

When we are constrained by God’s Word to reprove a sinning brother or sister, we should do so in humility and love. That always was Paul’s practice. “I do not write these things to shame you,” he told immature and disobedient believers in Corinth, “but to admonish you as my beloved children” (1 Cor. 4:14). If the holy Lord obligates Himself to reprove and discipline His disobedient children in love (Heb. 12:5–11), how much more are His children obligated to reprove each other in love.

It is just as important, although more difficult, to be gracious when we *receive reproof*, whether directly by God’s Word or from other believers who call us to biblical account. “For the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching is light,” an Old Testament saint professed, “and reproofs for discipline are the way of life” (Prov.

6:23). Like him, every believer should be as grateful for the reproofing work of the Word as for its encouragement. It is impossible to genuinely seek righteousness and truth if we do not hate and renounce sin and falsehood.

the correcting scripture

for correction, (3:16d)

Epanorthōsis (**correction**) is used only here in the New Testament and refers to the restoration of something to its original and proper condition. In secular Greek literature it was used of setting upright an object that had fallen down and of helping a person back on his feet after stumbling. After exposing and condemning false belief and sinful conduct in believers, Scripture then builds them up through its divine **correction**.

Correction is Scripture's positive provision for those who accept its negative reproof. "Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander," Peter admonishes, "like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation" (1 Peter 2:1–2).

Perhaps the most extensive praise of God's Word in all of Scripture is found in Psalm 119. Among the many well-known verses in that beautiful tribute to God and His Word, the unknown psalmist wrote, "How can a

young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Thy word. With all my heart I have sought Thee; do not let me wander from Thy commandments. Thy word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee” (Ps. 119:9–11).

“If we confess our sins,” the Lord assures us through John, “He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). “And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace,” Paul told the Ephesian elders, “which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (Acts 20:32). When submitted to the Lord’s marvelous grace, our areas of greatest weakness can, through correction, become areas of greatest strength.

Shortly before His arrest and crucifixion, Jesus told the disciples, “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit” (John 15:1–2). In order to make His people obedient, useful, and effective in His service, the Lord has to trim away not only things that are sinful but also things that are useless. He may take away things that are perfectly good in themselves, even things that seem necessary, but which He knows are a hindrance to our spiritual growth and service. They can sap time, attention, and effort from the work He has for us to do. Like His

discipline, this process sometimes “for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful,” but also like discipline, “to those who have been trained by it” the Lord’s wise and gracious cropping of superfluous branches “afterwards ... yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness” (Heb. 12:11).

As with reproof, godly believers, especially pastors and teachers, are often the channel through which the Word brings **correction**. Earlier in this letter, Paul reminded Timothy that “the Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness *correcting* those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 2:25, emphasis added). In his letter to believers at Galatia, the apostle gives similar counsel: “Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted” (Gal. 6:1). Despite the dreadful calamities with which God allowed him to be afflicted, Job affirmed to his friend Eliphaz that “he who has clean hands shall grow stronger and stronger” (Job 17:9).

the scripture that trains for righteousness

for training in righteousness; (3:16e)

Training translates *paideia*, which had the original meaning of bringing up and training a child (*paidion*), but it came to be used of any sort of **training**. It also is rendered “correcting” (2 Tim. 2:25) and “discipline” (Eph. 6:4; Heb. 12:5, 7, 11). In the context of verses 16–17, it clearly refers to **training** in the broader and probably more positive sense, since the negatives are covered by **reproof**. It is directed at the ideas of instruction and building up. Until the Lord takes us to be with Himself, His Word is to continue **training us in righteousness**.

As with teaching, reproof, and correction, godly believers—especially leaders in the church—are instruments through which Scripture provides **training** for God’s people. After reminding Timothy that “everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude; for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer” (1 Tim. 4:4–5), Paul assured him that “in pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished *on the words of the faith* and of *the sound doctrine* which you have been following” (v. 6, emphasis added).

Peter gives similar counsel to believers: “You have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God. For, ‘All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the

flower falls off, but the word of the Lord abides forever.’ And this is the word which was preached to you” (1 Peter 1:23–25).

And just as milk nourishes a baby in ways it does not understand, so God’s Word nourishes us in ways we often do not understand. No matter how deep our understanding of Scripture may be, we still should be able to affirm with the psalmist, “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for Thee, O God” (Ps. 42:1). We should rejoice with Paul that “we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18).

the enabling scripture

that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (3:17)

The Bible can be of great value to an unbeliever. Most important, as discussed in the previous chapter, it will lead to salvation those who come to trust in the Savior and Lord it proclaims. But Paul is speaking here of Scripture’s special value for preachers, who are able, with the Spirit’s guidance, to understand and to proclaim the truths of God’s Word.

The apostle is addressing **the man of God**, a technical phrase used only of Timothy in the New

Testament. In the Old Testament it is frequently used as a title for one who proclaimed the Word of God. In this context, **man of God** refers most directly to Timothy and, by extension, to all preachers.

Artios (**adequate**) refers to persons who are complete, capable, and proficient in everything they are called to be or do. In Christ “you have been made complete,” Paul tells Colossian believers (Col. 2:10). The preacher who carefully studies and sincerely believes and obeys the truths of Scripture will stand strong in living and defending the faith.

Equipped for every good work could be paraphrased, “enabled to meet all demands of righteousness.” By his life he will affirm the power of the Word to lead men to salvation and to equip them for righteous living and for faithful service to the Lord. When the **man of God** is himself **equipped** by the Word, he can then equip the believers under his care. Just as “we are [the Lord’s] workmanship,” Paul explains, we also should be doing His work. We are “created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). Christ says to all those who belong to Him what He said to the Twelve: “We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work” (John 9:4).

Whether our purpose is to lead men and women to saving faith in Jesus Christ, to teach God’s truth to

believers, to refute error in the church, to correct and rebuild erring believers, or to train believers to live righteously, our supreme and sufficient resource is God's Word. It not only gives us the information to teach but also shapes us into living examples of that truth.

One cannot help wondering why so many evangelical pastors of our day, like many Christians throughout history, have lost sight of that foundational truth. Every church, everywhere and in every time, should be totally committed to preaching, teaching, and implementing the Word, thereby pleasing and exalting the gracious and sovereign God who has revealed it.

Through the convincing and convicting power of the Holy Spirit, Scripture is *God's own provision* for every spiritual truth and moral principle that men need to be saved, to be equipped to live righteously in this present life and to hear one day in the life to come, "Well done, good and faithful servant, ... enter into the joy of your Master" (Matt. 25:21)

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). [2 Timothy](#) (pp. 154–165). Chicago: Moody Press.