

SERMON TITLE: God's Word, Doctrine and Truth(in an uncertain age)
II Timothy 3:14-17

INTRODUCTION

Science, Personal Religious visions, Government, Church, Reason, Academia, the Bible...Do you know what tie these varied things have together? The list while representative is not exhaustive, and perhaps you can think of something else that belongs here and is more applicable to your life. What all of these have in common is that people every day base decisions they make on worldviews derived from these subjects, often choosing from among them haphazardly since their lives rest on shifting sand instead of a firm foundation and they have no confidence to take a stand for anything. Take science for example as many people in our society base their worldview and ground truth on its claims. One characteristic of a scientific theory is that it must be tentative, correctable and dynamic, and allowing for changes to be made as new data is discovered rather than asserting certainty. Despite the fact that this is less than a hearty endorsement of science as truth all but one of the above subjects have the same weakness yet they form the foundation and the presuppositions by which people live out their daily lives and make decisions that confront them each day. In contrast, from the very first communication, the very first revelation from God to Adam, God has graciously revealed all that man needs for his eternal welfare and yet in every age man manages to supplant that revelation with something more of his own liking. It is not surprising that this is the case for man desires to feel a sense of superiority and control over his life which he carries over into science, personal religious experiences, government, church, his own reason and academia. In these areas man can claim to find truth apart from God, or to sound more religious, truth influenced by God. Not satisfied to stop there, man in every age, including our own, looks to even impose his desires on God's word in order to feel as if he has some control over the revelation that God has passed on to His people. The title of the sermon states "God's word, doctrine and truth in an uncertain age", yet the irony of that statement is that only those seeking to control their life by grounding themselves in things outside the Word of God find uncertainty. We, on the other hand should have more confidence than others for we have God's Word available in ways only imagined in the past and which many today do not share. And yet access is useless without knowledge and application so as we examine this passage let us remember why the Word of God is so valuable and necessary, why it must be treasured and why it alone by the power of the Holy Spirit should guide us in pursuing salvation and righteousness in every aspect of our lives.

Before delving into the main passage, I want to set the scene of the letter as Paul builds up a powerful case for Timothy as to why the Word of God is central and sufficient for all of life. Paul makes a very personal and challenging appeal to his loyal companion utilizing some very active verbs in order to spur his friend towards this definitive end that he has in mind. While I encourage you to examine the letter to determine all of the ways Paul encourages action in Timothy, for this sermon we will look at the many ways he specifically mentions the Word in conjunction with an exhortation or command to Timothy. We begin by looking at Chapter 1 verse 13 where we see Paul tells Timothy to "**hold fast** the pattern of sound words that you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus." In Chapter 2 verse 2 we see Paul write "and the things that

you have heard from me among many witnesses, **commit** these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” Next, later in Chapter 2 in verse 14-15 we see the command to “**remind** them of these things(truths about Christ and salvation), **charging** them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers. **Be diligent** to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, **rightly dividing** the word of truth.” After these exhortations, Paul now shifts gears just prior to chapter 3 and commanding Timothy to “be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility **correcting** those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth.” And this is the first evidence we see now in this letter where Paul is prepares Timothy not only why and how to build his life on God's word but how to recognize and deal with those who have abandoned the Word as their foundation. Now while Paul will highlight the condition of these people and we will look at it in the next sermon, suffice it to say for now that Paul is providing for Timothy a dualistic view of mankind with the difference being the way in which the two groups approach the truth, the Word of God, the Scriptures from which we find salvation.

II Timothy 3:14-15

Beginning now in our main text starting in verse 14 Paul writes, “But as for you(commenting to Timothy who is not like the evil men and impostors in verse 13), continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them. Paul here, while commenting on the life of Timothy, is taking direct aim at every member in this congregation, whether in a position of authority over another or whether in submission. First, we see that Timothy **learned** something in the past. We will be looking at some specifics of doctrine(the things he has learned) later in the sermon, but for now we can say that Paul knows Timothy has already been instructed in that which he needs to avoid the pitfalls that have befallen those evil men, the impostors and the deceived. Not only has Timothy learned of those things, but he has also been **assured** of them, and while assurance does come through the Spirit, Paul is teaching us here that the Spirit uses the character of people to influence how their message is perceived and believed. There is no mistaking that the assurance Paul discusses here references not only the things of faith passed down to Timothy from Paul, but also includes previous instruction from his grandmother Lois, his mother Eunice(See II Timothy 1:5). Again, this is another challenge to ourselves, Grandparents, Parents, Husbands, Friends, Elders, we must ask ourselves are we teaching the things of God, the doctrine of God to those God has placed us in authority over. Not only are we teaching these things, but are we providing assurance of those things in the very character of our life. Are we living our life according to that which we teach or are we walking a little differently than we talk. Are we reinforcing God’s truth in the way we live our life or are we failing to provide assurance by our hesitation to live by that same word of God. Are we more like the scribes and Pharisees that Jesus warned the people (Matthew 23:3) about who did not walk according to their talk or are we faithful to both doctrine and life like the family of Timothy. [Despite what we think of ourselves and that which we pass on, there is at least some evidence that we do not fare as well as Lois and Eunice. Given even a modest error rate inherent in any survey and the range of the results, the numbers I’ve seen in studies show greater than 50% of children raised in a home where church attendance was expected do not continue in that practice in their 20's after leaving home. While there are many explanations, at least we must at least examine ourselves again to

see if we are following Paul's prescription or if we are leaving our kids unprepared for what they encounter when they leave home.] Now that I've targeted all of those in the room who stand in positions of authority, let us not forget that Paul is speaking to Timothy as one in submission to others and he is not without responsibility as well in this passage. For those children who consider themselves blessed to have the spiritual heritage and guidance like Timothy, Paul's command to Timothy remains true to you, He is to "Continue...in the things which you have learned and been assured of." Sounds simple enough, but being a parent, I can hear the voice of some who think, rightly or not that their parents have not lived out their life according to the things they have taught and so the children feel as if they do not stand under the same assurance that Timothy had. For those of that category I turn your attention again to Jesus' statement to the people in Matthew 23:3 where he commands them to "observe whatever they **tell** you." None of us can escape our responsibility, for those in authority it is to teach and assure and for those in submission it is to learn and continue in. No matter how others follow the injunctions and commands given to them in their position, each of us will be held accountable as to how we handle these things of God, how we apply scripture in all of our life, no matter what others did or did not do for us. Paul does not stop there but reinforces this same point and provides specific guidance concerning parental responsibilities in verse 15 where he states "and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures." Since knowing requires teaching, the responsibility God places on the parent here is enormous and it is one in which I fear we too often fall short of God's standard. Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 20-25. In light of this straight forward and clear passage, let us examine ourselves, do we Love God with all of our heart, soul and might? Do we teach our children diligently the words of God? Do we bring scripture to life in common everyday activities? Do we put the words and commands of God at the forefront of all of our life? Do we rightly explain to our children from our own experience what the passage from darkness and bondage to sin to that of life means? And Children, do you engage your parents in questions concerning eternal things or do you constantly dwell on that frivolous things or that which only impacts you temporarily? Do we observe all that God has commanded? If we do not both follow and teach God's word, is it no surprise that our children forsake God's word and instead choose to form a foundation for their life that is from among the other choices on the list described earlier. Do not forget the example of the Israelites who despite these exhortations and promises soon drifted away from God and His word and began to live as the Canaanites did. But if we are true to God's commands and have passed on His word to our children, the promise of God is made known to them where Paul states in completing verse 15, "...you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." You see, we do not need a mystical revelation, contemplative meditation, self help guide or anything of this world to save us, for God has made known to us salvation through His revealed word. The WCOF Chapter 1 section 1 states concerning the Holy Scriptures, "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 they are not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and of His will which is necessary unto salvation"...and turning to section 6 it continues, "The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life is either expressly set down in Scripture or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture." Having looked at the Confessions view of scripture, let us look now for an example of scripture and its tie to the message of salvation. I will

concentrate on one passage but look to your outline later for other passages that touch on the same idea. Let us turn and read from Luke 24:25-32 where we find Jesus on the Road to Emmaus with the two travelers. Read 27 and 32 emphasize Scriptures, Christ, opening of the Scriptures, burning heart (reference for later with itching ears of apostate). Could it not be more clear why Paul is constrained by the Spirit to exhort Timothy as concerns God's word throughout this letter and should we not be as concerned as Paul is when we consider the Word of God. It is no small matter when we choose to daily live our life on a foundation of sand rather than the Rock of God's word. Remember the words of Paul, do we hold fast, commit, remind, rightly divide, charge, show diligence, correct, teach, assure, learn and continue in... You see the problem is that when the skies are clear, the sun shining bright, the sand seems a pretty comfortable place to be, unlike a rock which demands objects to form around it, the sand will mold to our life or we can form it into any shape we desire to build a magnificent sculpture to our eye. But when the storms of life come, you can hold on to that sand castle all day long and not only will you be moved, but that foundation itself will crumble. Instead of living on the sand, let us live on the sure foundation doing all of these things knowing that we hold in our heart and our minds the Word of the Only Living God and that it is His Word alone which brings salvation and teaches us how to live righteously in this present age.

Paul has given Timothy exhortations concerning Scripture yet he never treats salvation as the end of the road, he never sees salvation as a means of merely escaping everlasting torment but the way to a new life, the regenerated life where faith and repentance continue as we are sanctified throughout our lifetime. And so it is the scriptures that both make us wise to salvation and guide us in our ongoing sanctification. Read 3:16-17. Paul is kind enough here to lay out for Timothy several practical applications for Scripture which apply to us in our everyday life. (Talk about how these all are interlocked, each building on the previous and all working together to transform a person into a new person)

Paul starts by emphasizing that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." This is important to keep in mind because we can have confidence not only building our foundation on Scripture but applying that same Scripture to all of life because it is ALL the revelation of the one true and Living God as much God's word as that spoken to Adam or that spoken of Christ on earth. We do not need to look for answers to life's questions or build a worldview from extra-biblical sources nor do we need to marry up the bible with other things as if only a part of the Scriptures is applicable to life for it is in scripture where truth and salvation are found.

In the first of the practical applications, Paul tells Timothy that the Scriptures are profitable for doctrine. Now I now out there in the congregation there are those who would like to turn a profit in their business and would go to great lengths in terms of time, effort expended and even sacrificing their own up front capital for future potential. The question we must ask ourselves is if we are willing to give our time, our energy and perhaps our expenses to educate and ingrain the scriptures in ourselves and our families which is profitable to our eternal state and not merely our financial bottom line. Let us now turn to the word doctrine which in the greek is didaskalia. When we are talking about doctrine, what we are looking at here is the teachings, instruction and precepts that are illuminated in the Scriptures. It is important to take a look at where this doctrine comes from and to whom it is intended because there are those that picture Jesus running around Israel like a lone ranger giving out words of wisdom and healing the sick. While

these people want to associate closely to Jesus and his life, they lose sight of His place in the ongoing revelation of doctrine, the prophetic office of Jesus, and thereby eliminate, or at least minimize, his doctrine while looking to embrace his life as if the two could be separated. John 7:16-17 states, "Jesus answered them and said, "My doctrine is not Mine, but Him who sent me. If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God, or whether I speak on my own terms." As Jesus clearly states, his doctrine was not an invention of Himself, it is not the words of a mere moral human, His doctrine is from the Father and he did not deliver it except as the Father led Him. Yet, while the doctrine did not originate with him, Jesus does state that he was putting forth a doctrine and teachings and that this doctrine was His just as much as it was the Father who delivered it to Him. Again I will have you reference your outline for other verses concerning this subject and we will concentrate on John 12:50 ,” And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak.”” We must see that there is no way in which we can separate the work of Jesus from his doctrine, a doctrine which first proceeded from the Father and Son and then was carried forward by the Apostles and their converts as seen in Acts 2:42 “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship.” From the apostles we see the transmission of this same doctrine to Timothy as Paul writes in the Chapter 3 verse 10 ,” But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, perseverance,” And so we see that this doctrine, this foundation for life, salvation and sanctification is brought today even to us some 2000 years after Christ through an unbroken chain which proceeded from the Godhead through the prophets and apostles and has been brought to us in the Scriptures, a unity which is much greater than most people conceive of or that ever imagined by the Roman Catholic church which looks for unity in externals rather than the type of unity in doctrine and teaching which the scriptures declare. The challenge I have for you today is to continue teaching the doctrine described here which has come to us at so great a cost throughout history. Ask yourself, are you teaching and instructing according to that which was faithfully transmitted or have you abandoned the word and determined it is not sufficient for salvation and life.

Having shown the correct place of doctrine as the foundation for the remaining steps of scriptural application we can now move to Paul’s next application which is that it is capable of offering reproof. Now reprove in the modern dictionary is to condemn, to scold or correct or to censure but in Scripture there is also the element of conviction whereby the Word through the Spirit convicts us of sin as we depart from the doctrine and teaching described above. Now the preeminent place to examine how reproof is characterized in Scripture is to look in the book of Proverbs where 13 of the 15 biblical references occur. Let us look at the difference in the way man is pictured according to whether he accepts or rejects the reproof of the Lord in Scripture.

Rejects: **Proverbs 10:17** He who keeps instruction *is in* the way of life, But he who refuses correction **goes astray**.

Proverbs 12:1 Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, But he who hates correction **is stupid**.

Proverbs 15:10 Harsh discipline *is* for him who forsakes the way, *And* he who hates correction **will die**.

Accept: **Proverbs 13:18** Poverty and shame *will come* to him who disdains correction, But he who regards a rebuke **will be honored**.

Proverbs 15:5 A fool despises his father's instruction, But he who receives correction is **prudent**.

Proverbs 15:31 The ear that hears the rebukes of life Will **abide among the wise**.

Proverbs 15:32 He who disdains instruction despises his own soul, But he who heeds rebuke gets **understanding**.

Proverbs 29:15 The rod and rebuke **give wisdom**, But a child left *to himself* brings shame to his mother.

Again, we must ask ourselves, once we spend the time to understand and then apply the scriptures to our life, are we humble and dependent enough on God to allow His word to convict us when we error.

Our walk of sanctification requires not only that we identify our sins but that we implement correction which Paul naturally transitions as the next way to apply scripture. The word correction here has the connotation of restoring upright or improving life and character and this is where scripture is used not only to recognize sin and to put off the old but to identify what must be done to put on the new man. Although the word correction is again used often in the Proverbs which not surprising given the biblical concept of putting off the old and putting on the new, instead we will look at how the prophet Jeremiah showed the importance of Godly correction in his condemnation of Israel which refused the correction of God. Read Jeremiah 7:27-28. "Therefore you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not obey you. You shall also call to them, but they will not answer you. So you shall say to them, 'This *is* a nation that does not obey the voice of the LORD their God nor receive correction. Truth has perished and has been cut off from their mouth.'" The prophet shows us here the multitude of outcomes for those that fail to receive God's correction. For the Israelites, their failure to receive correction meant they determined to live in their sin, to reject obeying God, to turn their ear to his words. As a result, His truth was removed from their society. Have we become hardened like the Israelites of Jeremiah's time, do we feel that we can live without the word of God influencing our life every day as it reveals His doctrine, convicts us of our sin and restores us spiritually when we fall away from His will. Let us not look foolish in rejecting the correction God gives us in His word lest He take that Word of life away from us.

The last application Paul brings forth from scripture is its value in instructing men in righteousness. Of the many definitions I have seen used for the phrase instruction in righteousness, the one that stands out is "a cultivation of the soul, that which increases virtue, purity of life, integrity and correctness of thinking." As a side note here, Paul's listing of practical applications has so much relevance not only to our daily lives but also to other areas of life such as evangelism. As we look to reveal Christ to those around us, Paul's list parallels provides a practical example of how we can communicate the gospel message and remain true to the form of the Great Commission. First, we are called to make disciples and Paul's first three applications correlate well to informing the non-believer about the doctrine of God's word concerning Christ, our standing as convicted by the judgment of God and our justification and restoration provided through the sacrifice of Christ. Last we see that the command to teach them to observe all things that Christ has commanded us aligns with Paul's last practical application of instruction in righteousness. As we read the first part of Proverbs 1(1-8) we can see how important instruction according to the word of God is to us given that we are taught to Trust in the Lord with all of our heart and lean not on our own understanding. (Proverbs 3:5)
Extended illustration: Preparing pilots to fly and bringing up people in God's word.

CONCLUSION

I provided a list of things earlier that I considered representative of where people today look for truth and guidance for their everyday life. These are the foundations of a worldview and whether we want to recognize it or not, we have both a worldview and presuppositions that feed into that view. I know that since the earliest days I can remember I have never had a doubt that the Bible is the inerrant and infallible Word of God and yet that is not enough. Perhaps you were or are in the same position that I was, absolutely confident in the Word of God yet not building your worldview entirely on God's word but on a mixture of God's revelation and things of the world. I know at those points in my life I could talk a mean game concerning the Bible, its importance and its inerrancy yet when it was merely trivial talk since I was neither complete nor had I thoroughly equipped myself for every good work because I was not taking the practical applications Paul lays forward here and putting them to use in my own life. If we do not ingrain God's word into our thinking and use it practically, then it will inevitably become mixed with other things when we make decisions, truth will mix with error and soon we will grasp at anything when tough decisions need to be made. Let us together help persuade each other to know our doctrine, know the teachings of Christ...let us not pridefully refuse the conviction of that same word nor reject the correction that the Holy Spirit brings to our life...and lastly let us cultivate a mind of virtue and biblical morals as we train and educate both our children and each other so that each of us is made complete in Christ and prepared for those good works that Christ has prepared for us. Amen.