

The Antidote to Immaturity – Part 2

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Paul instructs Timothy in the antidote to the self-love of the imperfect church
2. aim – to cause us to seek discipleship in and around the Word of God in the face of opposition
3. passage – 2 Timothy 3:10-17

b. outline

1. The Mentorship of Paul (2 Timothy 3:10-11a)
2. The Reality of Persecution (2 Timothy 3:11b-14)
3. The Value of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:15-17)

c. opening

1. the **transition** in the chapter
 - a. the first half of the chapter (**vv. 1-9**) is a **reality check** – the harsh reality that, although the church is the instrument of the Spirit to advance the cause of Christ, it will *not* be a perfect organism
 1. **i.e.** many will continue to be *self-lovers*, concerned more about themselves and what *they* “get” out of the church rather than the advancement of the cause of Christ in them and in the world
 - b. the second half of the chapter (**vv. 10-17**) is the **antidote** – although the church will be imperfect, Paul reminds Timothy of *what matters most in the midst of “evil people and imposters”*
 1. or, what should be Timothy’s **focus** as he faces those only *focused* on themselves?
 2. the first part of this section is a reminder that the true disciple of Christ comes under the **mentorship** of the church = learning doctrine, applying that doctrine to everyday life, holding a proper worldview, being courageous in serving Christ, being patient in that process, being held accountable, being consistent in faith and action, and enduring the inevitable opposition that will arise *from those being left behind*
 - a. the **antidote** to the poison of self-focus is *continued* discipleship and training
 3. (**now**) in the second part of this section, Paul moves to the **specificity** of that discipleship: *from what* does doctrine come, *from what* is a worldview gleaned, *from where* does true Christian courage arise, *from what* do we learn consistency in faith and action, *from what* do we develop the endurance to face the opposition of a people *we are forced to leave behind*?
 - a. the **antidote** to the poison of self-focus is discipleship and training **in the Scriptures**
2. the **focus on Scripture** in the chapter
 - a. **note:** the “and” at the beginning of **v. 15** strongly suggests a *clarification* on the part of Paul
 1. that, although *his* mentorship of Timothy (alongside others) has been valuable
 2. the *true source* of Timothy’s mentorship has been the “*sacred writings*” (the “*Scriptures*”; **v. 16**)
 3. **LOW:** the *true source of Christian discipleship* comes from the Bible – it is the ever-increasing understanding of Scripture that serves to form us into fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ
 - b. **note:** to address this section properly, we will start with **v. 16a**, and then apply **vv. 15, 16b-17**

III. The Value of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:15-17)

Content

a. the **inspiration** of Scripture (v. 16a)

1. “*breathed out by God*” (*theopneustos*) = the creative work of God whereby he “speaks” authoritatively *through human agents* to communicate his will via the written word (**i.e.** as **inspiration**)
 - a. the concept of God “speaking” is central to his work in creation and redemptive history
 - b. **e.g.** the created world spoken into existence, the “calling” of Abraham, et. al., the covenants, the law “spoken” into existence before Israel, the prophets and “*thus saith the Lord*”, the Scriptures “*breathed out*” by God, and (most significantly) the **fullest revelation of God** in the **Logos**, the Word of God made flesh (**i.e.** whereby God’s fullest revelation comes)
2. **inspiration** = the writing of the words of God by human beings as God brings forth those words through them; the divine *influence* upon a person whereby he writes *as though he is writing for God*
 - a. not a *dictation* of the words that the authors simply wrote down as given to them
 1. contra Joseph Smith simply translating the words giving to him on the “Golden Plates”
 2. rather, the words of the human author, *his* ideas and conceptions and choices, etc. (**see below**)

3. true, there are many *direct quotations* of God in the Bible, but the vast majority is of the authors
 - a. **e.g. Revelation** quotes many, but is mostly John's impressions of his own experiences
 - b. rather, a *superintending* of the life of the author such that when he wrote *his thoughts*, the words that came forward were *precisely what God wished to communicate*
 1. **2 Peter 1:20ff** = a work of God whereby he *superintends* every aspect of a writer's life (education, language, style, experiences, intelligence, feelings, culture, etc.), to perfectly "*carry along*" an individual such that when he writes something *from his own thoughts*, he writes the very words of God *in that particular moment*
 2. **LOW**: the complete providence of God over the individual so that everything about his existence is molded by God in such a way that his writings "line up" perfectly with God's revelation
 3. **irony**: although Paul did not know that he was writing Scripture *here*, the circumstances of his life had been *so superintended to this point*, that even his writing "about" inspiration is inspired
 3. **verbal, plenary inspiration** = *every word into a cohesive whole* (the "*whole counsel*" of God)
 - a. **verbal** = down to the very words themselves, as *originally penned* (**i.e.** in the *autographs*)
 1. **clarify**: the words in the English Bible are not inspired (contra radical KJVO's) – only the original words, which we are *fully able to* "piece together" using forms of textual criticism
 - b. **plenary** = complete in every respect, including the *interaction* of the individual words (**i.e.** the concepts they induce) and what they intended to communicate *when originally penned*
 1. **clarify**: plenary means that even the *intention* of the original words is inspired by God; all of the various "strata" of understanding are part of the inspiration, as built up from the words
 4. **revealed inspiration** = the Spirit *providentially governed* the transmission of writings *through his chosen agents* such that they are *recognized* as inspired
 - a. for the O.T. = the Hebrew people, who collected together the Torah, the writings, and the prophets into a single canon of works *recognized* to have been given by God (complete by the 3rd C. BC)
 - b. for the N.T. = the church, who collected the various texts circulating in the 1st C. that they *recognized* to have been inspired (**i.e.** through apostles or associates; complete by the 2nd C. AD)
 5. **principle: the power of Scripture is its inspiration – as a divinely developed agent of revelation, its uniqueness lies in its ability to communicate not only to the mind, but to the heart**
 - a. **i.e.** it does not come to us as an "instruction manual" with an index in the back – it is a complex interweaving of many different genres of literature designed to *change every aspect of our life ...*
- b. the application of Scripture (vv. 15, 16b-17)**
1. the *life-long* value of Scripture (**v. 15a**)
 - a. the "*sacred writings*" for Timothy would be the Hebrew Bible (**i.e.** the O.T.) – at this point in church history (c. 65AD), *some* of the N.T. was circulating in the church, but what Timothy had (???)
 - b. raised by a Jewish mother, Timothy would have been taught the Torah from childhood – it would have been the *central text* of his formative years (alongside secular materials)
 - c. Paul sees as extraordinarily valuable a *life-long connection* to the Scriptures – he is *refining* the point he made in **2:2**: that the church needs to be mentored by "trustworthy men", *but that mentoring must be centered on the teaching of Scripture ...*
 2. the *salvific* value of Scripture (**v. 15b**)
 - a. Paul emphasizes the *connection* between Torah (**i.e.** Scriptures) and *faith* – he assumes that *even the "limited" nature of the O.T. texts (re: faith in Christ) are able to bring one to saving faith*
 1. true, the *progressive* revelation of the role of Jesus Christ in the promises of God is not *fully* known until the close of the N.T. canon (ironically, much of *Paul's* writings)
 2. however, the entirety *even of the O.T.* points to this Christ, and (under the direction of the Spirit) that text is *fully capable* of leading people to the *saving knowledge of faith*
 3. **e.g.** Jesus showed the disciples on the road to Emmaus (**Luke 24**) everything the O.T. said about him – not a **single word** of the N.T. was yet given, but the symbolisms, metaphors, foreshadows, and theophanies surrounding Israel *all pointed to him and how to come to him*
 - b. **principle: it is the preaching and teaching of Scripture that is the divine agent to bring about conversion – the Spirit uses his inspired Word to change hearts (note 4:2)**
 3. the *discipling* value of Scripture (**v. 16b**)
 - a. Paul (**then**) emphasizes the connection between Torah and *discipleship* – he assumes that *even the "limited" nature of the O.T. texts are "profitable" to disciple one fully into the image of Christ*
 1. "*teaching*" = for revealing the nature of Christ and his expectations upon the believer
 2. "*reproof*" = for refuting error, especially error relating to doctrinal matters (understandings)
 3. "*correction*" = for reformation, especially of how one's thinking effects one's actions
 4. "*training*" = for discipline, particularly "*in righteousness,*" in holy living flowing from holy desires

5. **IOW:** Paul is convinced that Scripture is the *agent of mentorship* – that the mentor’s “toolkit” is the inspired Word of God – it is **sufficient** for everything the believer needs to be a disciple
 - a. **e.g.** the *authority* of Scripture vs. the *sufficiency* of Scripture in SBC life – although the “conservative resurgence” was able to restore the *authority* of Scripture to the heart of SBC thinking and teaching, it *failed* (in the long run) to establish the *sufficiency* of Scripture for many Baptists, thus, it left open the door for “alternative” ways of understanding
 - b. **i.e.** for many, the Bible is “authoritative” (per se), but it is not “sufficient” to answer the problems of modern life – thus the popularity of “self-help” books “supplementing” it
- b. **principle: the inspired Word of God is absolutely sufficient to accomplish what the Spirit intends for it to do in us – it possesses the divine power to accomplish the will of God**
4. the *completing* value of Scripture (**v. 17**)
 - a. Paul (**finally**) emphasizes the connection between Scripture and *completion* – he assumes that even the “limited” nature of the O.T. texts are able to “complete” the nature of Christ in us
 1. “man of God” = **not:** a minister or preacher (**i.e.** just Timothy); **rather:** everyone who is elect by God and brought to saving faith by the Spirit of God through the Word of God
 2. “complete” and “equipped” are *synonyms* = fully ready; finished; made adequate – the goal of discipleship: to mature believers so that they are so fully aware of the things of Christ, and so fully trained up in “good works,” that they are *transformed* into the “image” of Christ himself
 - b. principle: **the Bible is fully capable of turning every believer into a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ – the Spirit uses his own Word to complete our sanctification**
- c. **the mentorship of Scripture**
 1. the **antidote** to the poison of self-focus in the church is discipleship and training **in the Scriptures**
 - a. the Bible is a book of **unimaginable power** – its development is so *divinely orchestrated* that it “screams” out as the final authority of all matters of faith and life as applied by God himself
 2. **the church must be a place where the focus is entirely on Christ as he is revealed in the inspired Word of God – it is the duty of every professing believer to know this Word, and to be molded by it into a fully sanctified follower of this Jesus**