

2 Timothy 3:15-16

Instructions to Timothy

Guiding, Growing, Guarding!



Profitable Prophecies



We learned last week that God has caused the information about Himself to be written down – the information we need to know about who He essentially is and what He is like, His activity in human history to save the world back to Himself, what He wants from us, and finally, how He is ultimately going to resolve the mess that humans have made of His world! There was an era in human history when God chose and strongly guided certain individuals to write down and preserve what He revealed to them, or what they knew about Him, and what they had seen Him do. They didn't always know why they had to write it down, but they did it. And God says that His Spirit guided their minds and pens to put down information that was accurate. He didn't homogenize it and make it all sound the same, but God allowed the distinctive traits of the, at least, 44 different human authors, from different time periods of that scripture-writing era, to “leak” into their writings so that you can tell the differences in style and human personality between the different human authors. Yet, their writing was guided by God Himself! They wrote as they were moved by God's Spirit to write [2 Pet. 1:21]!



My personal belief is that the first five books of the Bible – **Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy** – were written by Moses. Some theologians differ with that, but I disagree with them. Moses is the only man of his time that could have done it! Growing up in the king's household in Egypt, He would have been one of the most highly educated men in the world in His day. There would have been hardly a compatriot of his that could read, much less write! The fellow Israelites with Moses were a nation of slaves that were forced to work from dawn to dusk - hard menial labor - seven days a week! They didn't have time for reading, much less, writing. It was only Moses that could have known the region enough to be able to name the places where they sojourned, or even where their ultimate goal, Canaan, was. Jewish tradition says that Moses was a highly educated man and a great general in Pharaoh's army! No one else in Israel had any kind of access to the library, or to maps, besides Moses. I know that Israel followed the Spirit of God by day, in the form of a cloud, and didn't need a map, but Moses seemed to know just where they were along the way, and what the places were named. No one else in the nation would have had the slightest idea of where they were when they stopped at the end of a long day of walking. But here's the thing - God chose Moses for the job of leading the descendants of Abraham out of the region of Goshen, in Egypt. He revealed Himself to Moses in ways that He had never done since He had walked with the first man, Adam, in Eden in the cool of the morning! Up there on that craggy mountain, Mt. Sinai, amid smoke and fire, lightening and thunder, God gave Moses the laws that would both govern Israel – govern their **behavior**, govern their **justice**, and govern their **worship**! All of it was meant to separate them from the neighboring nations in every conceivable way, even to the point of making them,.. well,.. kind of weird/“peculiar”! If they would adhere to these laws, their role in the plan of God could be preserved! If they did not, God would still use them, but in spite of themselves, and **against** their will! And that **is** how God had to do it – the hard way!

The story that Moses portrays is a strange one, full of fantastichappenings that seem at first glance like the writings of the brothers Grimm, or of Hans Christian Anderson – only, maybe, for a more mature audience. It is the first time in the Bible that we see what we call miracles – when the Creator’s power is utilized to warp, twist, and contravene the laws of physics and the laws of nature. Those portions of Moses’ tale is quite interesting and intriguing. But there are other portions of those 5 books that are both strange and very tedious! For most of my life, I struggled with why it is even in there – all these examples of how ecclesiastical law is supposed to work, meticulously detailed! The purification laws – weird stuff! Foreign to our minds! Everything sprinkled with blood for purification! Blood,.. **blood every-where**, veritable streams of blood running down from the constant animal sacrifices, blood shaken onto alters and utensils, even clothing. I can’t even imagine the smell on a hot day, as blood smells badly quickly in the heat! But what it smells like to me now is the danger that God poses to sinful human beings like you and I, unless Christ stepped in-between! We need to take that in! It is essential! Maybe then we will show some respect!

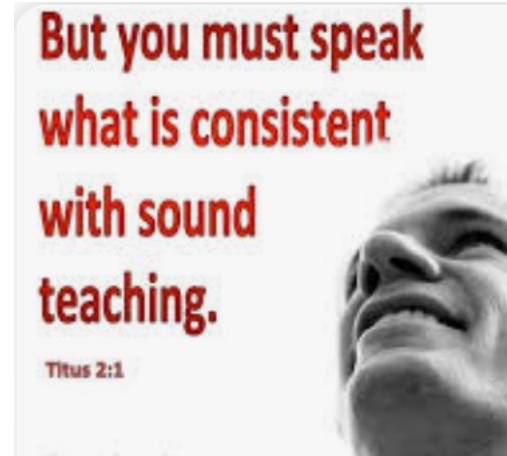


But then, in more recent years, I started to realize that no one today can really appreciate how great the need for Jesus to step into the middle, between God and humanity, until you read Leviticus! Truly!! You smell **DANGER** in Leviticus – radiating from a holy God! So when Paul begins with the word “**ALL**” in our text this morning, he means **ALL**! “**All scripture is God breathed**” – it’s all there for a good reason! None of it is superfluous – unneeded, or overdone – even Leviticus and Numbers – even the minor prophets – **Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah** - (I didn’t include **Jonah, or Malachi** among them because they aren’t like the rest). Few can really understand most of the minor prophets, much less find benefit in reading most of them! And they are pretty depressing, actually – **disobedience** on Israel’s part, **judgment and wrath** on Gods part, but God also holds out the prospect of mercy to Israel if they will just repent and turn from their sin – which, of course, they won’t do! They always choose “the hard way”. But even these books are in it for a reason. Disobedience is the big issue, if one is human! We are like strong-willed children! So this always is an issue! Our hearts are inclined to do as we please despite knowing it may deeply displease our Creator/God! So, in reading through the minor prophets, maybe the point is that we need to learn from their bad example?! The Minor prophets confront who we are by nature as fallen human beings, and our natural bent toward everything wrong – our blindness, arrogance, and stubbornness, and how it all effects God! ³ It hurts and angers Him deeply! But God hangs in there – just barely, sometimes – but He sticks with it!

It's all important, and there for a reason! God doesn't do things without a reason, and the scriptures are something He has done – so it is well thought out by a mind far greater than our own! It's our job to read the words of God, meditate upon it, and figure it out! It took me **decades** to figure out why Leviticus and Numbers are important in the Bible! But I think it is important to not take a shortcut and leave the difficult books out of our reading! I think we should make it our goal to read through the Bible from beginning to end, not leaving anything out! I'm not saying it won't be difficult in places. Just put your head down and plow through! By the 10th time through in 10 years, it will have gotten a lot easier, and you may want to spend some extra time there as the difficult parts begins to intrigue you!

The verse goes on to assert that these God-breathed/inspired scriptures will **profit** your mind, your life, your relationship with God, and we can safely assume that our relationships with other people will also profit by it!

~It is "**profitable for doctrine**"! As I explain to my Bible study groups, there is important information that God has included in the scriptures, and it is scattered throughout. But it is not given to us systematically. It is not listed somewhere in the Bible – "*Here are 10 things that are revealed about God*", for instance! You just won't find it that way in the Bible. So we properly collect bits and pieces of information on an important topic as we go along reading through the Bible. **We** have to put what we glean, together, so that it is organized and makes sense to us. And we put it into a cohesive statement that says "*From what we have gathered while reading the scriptures, these are the things we have determined to be true about **God**, about **humanity**, about **sin** and the **sin nature**, about **salvation**, about **Jesus**, about the **Holy Spirit**, about **the soul**, about **the afterlife - heaven and hell**, about **God's plan** and the **end of things on earth** as we know it*",.. and so on and so forth. There are many such topics and when we compile what is there in the scriptures and organize it, in the end, we have a **doctrine**. We need organized, well defined doctrines so that we know what to believe and what not to believe! *I spoke with someone this past week that is dealing with a group of people in her church that are putting as much emphasis on extra-biblical knowledge – what knowledge they think they have gained purely from experience, as that which can actually be found in the scriptures. Or, they take a scripture and run with it – stretching its meaning into something that, to them, fits their experience! They are well-meaning, and very passionate about it, but they are also false teachers! They have gone beyond scriptural doctrine to come up with something on their own. They do not recognize any pastoral authority over them, especially if that authority is doing what it is supposed to and says "*no - you are in a danger zone, and we don't want you promoting that view here. That is extra-biblical teaching and we warn you that in doing so, you have lost touch with the head, which is Christ*". Instead of stepping back and questioning themselves and re-examining their position - as would be wise and prudent - they are incensed and ready to cause trouble in the church!



This is exactly why we profit from scriptural doctrine, and it doesn't need our doctoring/enhancement. It is God-given information that stands on its own without our messing around with it! All we do is compile it. It is what the apostles did. It is enough! What is plainly there, written in the words of God, ***is enough!*** So **doctrine** is based on inspired scripture, and we absolutely need it to protect ourselves from,.. ourselves,.. and from,.. (how can I put it) - ***making stuff up*** – usually overcomplicating it! It's just what people do! The really smart people among us are continually outsmarting themselves and the rest of us. That is why we need to fight that impulse – that tendency – and keep things as simple and clear as possible. Like I said a week or two ago, the longer the explanation, the bigger the lie, or (I would add) ***mistake.***



Listen - we don't "correct" scripture. Scripture corrects us! Scripture has the authority to put us in our place if we stray from the truth even a little! And if we are truly Christ-followers, we sober up and listen! We know that the Holy Spirit of God speaks to us through the scriptures, sometimes in a spiritual, more subjective way - but mostly in a concrete, objective way. So, scripture forms our doctrinal truths, and scripture keeps us there. Instead of drifting off the path, it corrects our course, ****like a compass.*** We don't make the needle conform to where we think it should point. The needle *conforms us* to the true direction!