

2 Timothy 3:15-16

Instructions to Timothy

Guiding, Growing, Guarding!



Profitable For Reproof



What the NIV translation has translated as "**useful**" the King James Version and more than half of the other translations have translated as "**profitable**". The Complete Jewish Bible translates the word as "valuable", when something is profitable, it means that if you use it profitably, you are coming out ahead! It's like when I might sell something on Craigslist, or on Facebook Marketplace. I'm trying to sell it for more than what I paid for it. If I bought it really cheap, and I sell it for what it is actually worth, I might double or triple my money! If I do that, I have made a profit! The capitalistic economic system runs on the principle of profit. If I sell my goods for more money than it took to produce or to buy them, then I will end up with more money than I had when I started. With that extra money (profit) I can buy things that I need or want - things I did not have enough money for before. But thanks to the fact that I have been making a profit, I can now buy those things, and the things I'm buying, someone else is making a profit off of, and those profit-makers will increase their wealth and be able to buy bigger and better things, that someone else is making a profit off of, and so on and so forth. Capitalism – is not perfect for eradicating poverty, but it is the best system ever devised by human civilizations for building wealth by the largest percentage of people in any given society. It alone is responsible for the broad **middle class** in western societies. Before capitalism, there was primarily just rich and poor, and not much in-between.



Paul compares the knowledge and use of the holy scriptures as **useful/profitable** for "**doctrine**", for "**rebuking**", for "**correction**" (which is very similar), and for "**instruction in righteousness**" so that the Christ-follower may have all we need for everything God wants and sends us to do as His people. Now, that is a different kind of profit, isn't it! It has nothing to do with money and material wealth, but everything to do with a person's complete mental/emotional well-being! It is a life filled out – a life properly aligned with their Creator and with creation as God originally intended. The Bible is full of words like "**joy**", and "**peace**" (inner), and "**hope**", and "**(agape) love**" [Vs 17 – "**thoroughly equipped/furnished**"]! I think a person is much better off with intellectual, mental, and emotional well-being than with just physical wealth. We know of a great many prominent people in society, from rich and famous Hollywood actors, to pro athletes, to rock/ pop/ or country music performers, to CEOs of huge companies that have millions, even billions of dollars - and they are the most miserable people on earth! Their families are in shambles! They are on their fourth or fifth marriage, or have sworn off of marriage altogether because they simply cannot remain faithful to one man or one woman, nor get along with them! They or their children are OD-ing and dying on prescription drugs that were intended to ease their inner pain. How many have died of suicide - and those are only the ones that we know about.

I am looking at that phrase here, “**good for rebuking**” and wondering how that is a thing of profit? How do we make a profit off of “**rebuking**”, or of “**reproof**”. Reproof is a confrontation of bad behavior – facing up to our own bad behavior, or being faced with it by someone else. It can happen via another person confronting us, or by God Himself through His word – the scriptures. **Or**, it is us facing someone else with **their** bad behavior – often with an open Bible. Ultimately it is like a look in the mirror to see how we really are or how someone else **really** is – the real truth of the matter! **[James 1:23]** – this addresses the intellectual/ mental/ emotional poverty of the person that is given truthful reproof (a verbal mirror held up to his or her face by the quiet inner voice of God’s Spirit, or by the verbal confirmation of a friend or loved one), *but who will not take it* – or not take it seriously - that discounts it - that does not consider it - that finds excuses, rationalization, self-justification, denial, deflection, willful self-blindness! This is characteristic of someone who makes an appearance of following Jesus, but is not – at least when you get down to it! But we don’t give up on people! We keep expecting them to respond to recognition of their sin, and then repentance! But sadly, some never do! Their egos are too fragile to admit that they are to blame, or that they have done wrong! As a pastor, it is heart-breaking for me to see this when it happens. Such a person has all the right words but little or no substance underneath! Christ-following includes right up front, that a person sees and recognizes their sin – their participation in the problem. I spoke to this a few weeks ago, that the essential ingredient to turning one’s life over to Jesus Christ to be saved, is that a person must **HUMBLE** themselves. You have to humble yourself to even allow yourself a look into the true mirror of God’s word and admit to what is actually there looking back at you, rather than wishful thinking of what you would prefer to see there!



So when the verse says that the rebuke is “profitable” or “useful”, we have to think about that. No one likes to be corrected. We want to be right all the time. Yet all of us do wrong and need correction when we do, or we just might keep doing it, right? That is unprofitable!



Ezekiel chapters 3 and 33 charge a righteous person to speak to a person that is involved in wrongdoing, and try to get them to stop. If the righteous person does not correct the person involved in wrongdoing, that person’s guilt is shared by the righteous person. But if they confront the wrongdoer, and the wrongdoer does not listen to them, they do not share in that person’s guilt! It is God’s intention to “confront” and to “reprove” us when we do wrong! That is also the role of the scriptures. It is perhaps the scripture’s most profitable role for us! We need that work of God’s Spirit upon our character! It is His purpose that when he confronts us with His work, that it smacks us, that it cuts our conscience like a knife [**Hebrews 4:12**]! This is the work of the Holy Spirit that the scriptures themselves do the confronting. It is better that way! So He brings those words to life, and we see ourselves as we are without any direct confrontation from any particular person. You see, the problem is that we tend to resist confrontation from people, **even if it is true**. Even the Christ-follower tends to react with hurt feelings, or defensiveness, or anger, or denial, when another person reproves them and says, *“Look, what you did was really wrong, or what you are doing is unbecoming and wrong! You are going in the wrong direction and you should be willing to admit it, repent before God, apologize if you’ve wronged someone, and make it right”*. But most everyone struggles with that. So, the better way is to hear the voice of God speaking to you through the scriptures, and for your resistance to Him to crumble. The greatest profit a person will ever experience is to be stopped from doing more wrong! It propels our bottom line out of the red and back into the black! It is just so much better when no one caught us in sin or confronted us, except the Holy Spirit, and we responded immediately in obedience! *One time I was discipling a young man who had just recently given his heart to Jesus. We were chit chatting to begin with, and it got pretty heavy when he told me about the grudge he bore toward his brother’s fiancé. He did not trust her at all! Well, that day we studied the scriptures on the topic of apologizing to God and to people when we wrong them, and during the course of studying the scriptures he became convicted that his attitude toward his brother’s fiancé was sin. She happened to be next door at his brother’s house that day, and right in the middle of our time together, he rose from his chair, put his jacket on, went next door, and apologized to the woman for his bad attitude, and told her it would not happen again. He came back so happy. He’d done something he’d never done before, and he’d obeyed God on the spot, it was exhilarating to him! It didn’t even matter to him what her reaction was – it was okay – but not great. What mattered most was that he had been obedient to the Holy Spirit - that as the scriptures spoke to him and confronted Him and convicted him of sin – he had acted in obedience on the spot. God confronted, he acted! It was so cool! I was a very happy pastor, because that is what it is all about, isn’t it! It was a great start for him! I was a witness to how the process of God works, and was impressed once again with the intelligence and wisdom of God. He really does know what is best for us, and even in the hard things, it is so well-worth it when we respond in obedience!

If you have a knowledge of the scriptures, you have the mind of God in you! You know what He wants! He can speak to you now through what you know! You are so far ahead of everyone else! You will be kept from living in the red where there is only loss, and instead be living in the black where there is profit! God Himself works with the knowledge of of scripture in you, by His Spirit, to enrich your mind with life-giving, life-enhancing, life-upholding wisdom! When you are confronted by Him, you will actually see reality, and you will respond appropriately! The ears of your heart are bent low to listen to the voice of God, and even if what He says hurts, you welcome it! *I know from experience that when the doctor looks at you and informs you that you have cancer, that you had better be grateful! Some people - actually many people - will avoid going to the doctor when they know something is going wrong with their body, because they do not want to hear what has gone wrong with them - as if by not hearing the diagnosis, it isn't there! Maybe it will just go away! Except that it is there, **now!** The doctor telling you what is wrong doesn't make it happen! He is just telling you what has **already happened** - what exists - reality - even if it may be grim reality! It is necessary and vitally important for the patient to pinpoint the problem. Sure, it may be bad news, but it is better to know than to not know! Once you know, you can plot a course of action with your doctor that may save your life! Likewise, by pointing out our shortcomings, the scriptures are out to save our lives and to make us useful to God! That is tangible profit! The one who listens will be enriched in the course of their life in proportion to the degree that they obey and do what God says.

