

The Bible, God's Profitable Effective and Sufficient Word

“¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

2 Timothy 3:16-17 NASB

These two verses communicate four significant truths to Christians.

1. All Scripture is Inspired (God-breathed)
2. All Scripture is Profitable
3. All Scripture is Effective
4. All Scripture is Sufficient

1. All Scripture is Inspired

The phrase *inspired by God* translates the Gk. word *theopneustos*. It is a compound Greek word formed by combining *Theos* (God) and *pneo* (to breathe). A literal translation of the word could be either God-breathed (YLT, NIV) or breathed out by God (ESV). Today, our English word *inspired* is usually understood as a word referring to motivation such as someone being inspired or motivated in a particular work or by a work. However, this has not always been the case. According to Merriam-Webster's Dictionary an archaic meaning of *inspire* is to *breathe* or *blow into or upon*. This meaning, archaic though it may be, is more closely related to the Latin word *inspirare* (in- + spirare) which is to *breathe*. From this archaic definition we can see why the word *inspired* is used to translate the Greek word *theopneustos-God breathed*.

That Scripture is *God-breathed* (inspired by God) conveys at least three obvious and fundamental truths to the believer regarding Scripture:

a) Scripture's Origin

In that Scripture is God-breathed it is from God. Scripture is God's Word. We don't often realize it but our words are intimately tied to our breath. When we speak words we breathe. This is most notable when we watch a vocalist sing. The length of time the vocalist is able to carry the note is directly proportionate to the amount of air (breath) reserved in the lungs. Occasionally, a parent who wishes to bring clarity to an excited child's conversation might say something like, "Take a breath". Understanding the relation of words to breath we may better understand Scripture's use of the phrase *God-breathed* as an anthropomorphic (speaking of God using human terms) way of stating that Scripture is God's Word. Scripture is what God speaks in the sixty-six books of the Bible!

Since all Scripture comes from God and God cannot lie (Titus 1:2) then all Scripture is true. Jesus stated the veracity of Scripture when He prayed to the Father on behalf of believers and said, "Sanctify them in the truth; Thy Word is truth." (Jn. 17:17). As Christians we can be confident that all Scripture comes from God and is true.

b) Scripture's Relevancy

Just as intimate as breath is to words so is breath to life. No breath-no life. Scripture equates breath to life when it uses the phrase *breath of life* (Gen. 2:7; 6:17; 7:15; Is. 2:22; Rev. 11:11). Accordingly, the Holy Spirit used the Greek word *theopneustos* (God-breathed) to describe Scripture as the living Word from God. The implication of this in verse sixteen of 2 Timothy 3 is a fact specifically stated elsewhere in the Bible—God’s Word is living and active:

“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, 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.” Hebrews 4:12 NASB

Thus, God’s Word contained in Holy Scripture, because it is said to be living, is always relevant. Of course, this does not mean that Scripture changes. God’s Word is settled in heaven forever (Ps. 119:89). God’s Word will not fade away but abides forever (Is. 40:8; Mt. 5:18; Jn. 10:35; 1 Pet. 1:24-25. Also consider Proverbs 2 which communicates the practical relevance of God’s Word).

Those who profess the need for latter day prophets or depend on a so-called “word of wisdom from God” by-which they mean that the Holy Spirit discloses a special revelation to them, fail to understand the relevancy of Scripture that is communicated by the phrase *God-breathed* and explicitly stated in other verses of Scripture, thus, they actually undermine the Scripture.

c) ***Scripture’s Distinction***

This third point communicated by the phrase *Scripture is God-breathed* is very closely related to the former two points in that it is a conclusion derived from them but it is significant enough that it must (I believe) be stated as a separate point. The text states explicitly that it is the Scripture that is inspired. It does not say that the writers of Scripture were inspired.

Another verse in God’s Word communicates how God used men as instruments to write His Word. 2 Peter 1:21 tells us that the Holy Spirit *moved* men to communicate God’s Word. Unlike the word of God they communicated, they were not inspired but *carried along by the Holy Spirit* (ESV). In essence, without pre-empting their individuality God divinely directed the writers of the Bible so that they, without error, wrote exactly God’s Word. *The writers were directed. God’s Word is inspired.* Thus, Scripture’s inspiration is to be understood as being distinct from the writers being moved. While the writers were in agreement with what they wrote, they were not the origin. While they were restricted by time and eventually died, God’s Word lives on!

Note verse 16 tells us **All** Scripture is inspired by God. The text does not say “Most”, “Much”, or even “Some Scripture is inspired by God.” Very clearly, by this verse, the Holy Spirit tells us it is **All Scripture** that is inspired by God. The word *all* encompasses all that is Scripture. Thus, it includes both the Old and the New Testaments which make up the sixty-six books of the Bible.

There is not a part of Scripture that is any more or any less inspired than any other part of Scripture. The Old Testament is as inspired as the New. All sixty-six books of the Bible are inspired. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 is clear—**All Scripture** is inspired by God. Thus, **all Scripture** must be treated as being from God and relevant.

Furthermore, although the sixty-six books of the Bible are comprised of various kinds of literature, e.g., historical narratives, poetry and prophecy, these types of literature and others, when they occur in Scripture, do not diminish from Scripture's inspiration. At the same time, Scripture's use of various types of literature does not mean that the literature type is inspired. Neither does Scripture's record of sins such as lies, murders, adultery, etc..., diminish from Scripture's inspiration. This does not mean that these sins and other sins recorded in Scripture are inspired but it is the record of these sins as documented in Scripture that is inspired.

2. **All Scripture is Profitable**

Secondly, all Scripture is profitable. *Profitable* communicates the idea of being beneficial or useful. Just as all Scripture is inspired so is all Scripture profitable. There is not a part of Scripture that is any more or any less profitable than any other part of Scripture. The Old Testament is as profitable as the New Testament. The truth of the Gospel as well as all truths contained in Scripture is profitable. Thus, all sixty-six books of the Bible are profitable. **All Scripture** must be treated as being from God and profitable.

Using four nouns the Holy Spirit gives us four specific benefits of Scripture:

a) *Teaching*

The first of the four benefits mentioned is teaching. We often think of this word as a verb. However, the Greek word translated *teaching* is *didaskalia* and it is used here as a noun. As a noun the emphasis is on content as opposed to communicating Scripture or Scripture communicating. While Scripture does teach us, what is in view here is that which is taught, in this case, as translated by the King James Version—doctrine. The doctrines of Scripture are profitable.

b) *Reproof*

The second in this list of four benefits of Scripture in the life of the believer is that of reproof. Once again, the verse presents us with a noun. As it does the emphasis is on the effect of the doctrine of Scripture or in other words, what Scripture accomplishes in the life of the believer. As Scripture is brought to bear on the believer's life it brings with it a rebuke of sin which results in conviction in the believer. This conviction of sin is the reproof that is in view in this verse.

Often reproof is perceived as a negative but because 2 Timothy 3:17 informs us that reproof brings maturity to the person of God it should not be despised as a negative but understood as a positive aspect of a believer's life. Consider Proverbs 6:23,

“For the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching is light; And reproofs for discipline are the way of life...”NASB

c) *Correction*

The third noun is correction. The literal meaning of the Greek word refers to “a restoration to an upright or right state” (Vines). God’s word sets the soul to God’s standard. Consider a few of the corrections the Word makes in the believer as seen in Psalm 19:7-8:

- God’s law is perfect and **restores the soul** (7a)
- God’s testimony is sure and it **makes the simple wise** (7b)
- God’s precepts are right and they **cause the heart to rejoice** (8a)
- God’s commandment is pure and it **enlightens the eyes** (8b)

d) *Training in Righteousness*

The Bible uses the Greek word translated *training* to speak of nurture (Eph. 6:4) and discipline (Heb. 12:5, 7, 8, and 11). Thus, training in righteousness speaks of Scripture’s sufficiency for perfecting the believer in holiness.

3. All Scripture is Effective

¹⁷“*that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*”

All Scripture is effective in perfecting (KJV) the person of God. *Adequate* translates a word that means “what is proper or becoming” (Kittel). Thus, it speaks of maturity. It is the Word of God that matures the believer so that he or she is *equipped* for every good work. Believers are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that they should walk in them. (Eph. 2:10) Scripture prepares God’s people to fulfill the good works previously prepared by God.

Like 2 Timothy 3:16-17, John 17:17 speaks of the effective nature of the Word of God, “Sanctify them in the truth; Thy Word is truth.” God’s Word sanctifies God’s people. Jesus also spoke of the effective nature of the Word of God when, as recorded in Matthew 4:4, He quoted Deuteronomy 8:3, “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” The Word of God sustains God’s people. The phrase *every word* conveys the same point as does the phrase *All Scripture*—All of the Word of God is effective in the life of the believer.

4. All Scripture is Sufficient

Since Scripture is inspired by God, profitable, and effective for maturing the believer so that he or she is equipped for every good work, Scripture is sufficient. Note the fact that verse 17 says the man of God is equipped for *every* good work. The believer needs no other source than the effective Word of God for being equipped for the good work God has prepared. Therefore, we should study the Word of God (2 Tim. 2:15) that we may be approved before God. As instruments used by God to convey His Word, pastors and teachers should teach and preach the Word of God without relying on the humanistic psychology of the day or any other philosophy of man.

Christians, while many are turning away from the Word of God or supplementing the Word of God with the vain philosophies of the world, let us stay the course of divine truth. The Scripture will make us holy, equip us for doing the will of God and prepare us to meet God!

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