God has Spoken

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Sufficiency of Scripture / 2 Timothy 3:14–17

How do you know that what you believe is actually true? Have you ever stopped to consider why you believe the things you do? Perhaps you believe something because your parents taught it to you, or because a particular experience convinced you it was true. Or perhaps you feel so strongly about something that you cannot imagine being wrong. But what happens when something we have always believed comes into conflict with what God has said? How do we determine which one is right?

We live in a world where people arrive at their understanding of truth in very different ways. For some, truth comes from tradition. We accept certain things simply because that is what we have always been taught. For others, truth is shaped by experience. Someone who has been betrayed concludes that nobody can be trusted. Still others rely on their feelings. You've probably heard someone say, “I just know in my heart that it's right.” And then there are those who believe truth itself is relative. What is true for me may not be true for you, and everyone is entitled to their own truth.

But here is the problem. Traditions can be mistaken. Experiences are limited. Feelings can mislead us. And if truth is simply whatever each person decides it to be, how can we ever know what is genuinely right or wrong? As believers, we have something far greater upon which to build our lives. We have the revealed Word of God. Within the 66 books of the Bible, written by approximately 40 human authors over some 1,500 years, we find the unfolding story of God's dealings with humanity and His wonderful plan of redemption through Jesus Christ. Within its pages, God reveals answers to life's greatest questions. Where

did we come from? Why are we here? What is right and wrong? And what happens when we die? God has not left us without answers. He has spoken.

Yet even among believers who accept the Bible as God's Word, disagreements arise over what it teaches. Scripture contains history, poetry, prophecy, wisdom, letters, and symbolic language that sometimes requires careful study to understand. Such disagreements are not necessarily bad. When approached with humility, they can strengthen our faith. Proverbs 27:17 reminds us that "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." We should be willing to listen when another believer challenges our interpretation, because while God's Word is perfect, our understanding of it is not. But there is a danger when we approach Scripture having already decided what we want it to say. Rather than allowing God's Word to shape our beliefs, we begin allowing our beliefs to determine which parts of Scripture we will accept. Perhaps you've heard someone say, "I follow Jesus, not the Apostle Paul." At first, that sounds perfectly reasonable. After all, we are followers of Jesus Christ, not Paul. But if I accept the words of Jesus recorded in the Gospels while rejecting something Paul wrote simply because I disagree with it, who is really determining what I believe? Is it God, or is it me?

Some Christians distinguish between the words of Jesus, often printed in red, and the writings of the apostles, suggesting that Jesus' recorded words carry greater authority than the teachings of Paul, Peter, or the other biblical writers. But that raises a fundamental question: When I open my Bible, am I merely reading the opinions of men, or am I receiving the Word of God? Because the most important question is not whose hand held the pen, but whose Spirit inspired the words.

And that brings us to our passage this morning. In 2 Timothy 3:14–17, Paul reminds Timothy that Scripture is not merely a collection of human opinions or religious teachings. It is something far greater. All Scripture is God-breathed. Because God is its ultimate Author, His Word carries His authority. It reveals the way of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and equips us to live in

righteousness. So this morning, as we consider the message I've entitled “God Has Spoken,” I want us to remember one foundational truth: We do not stand above God's Word, deciding which parts deserve our obedience. We stand beneath its authority, because through Scripture, God Himself has spoken.

God’s Word is the Truth we Must Remain Faithfull To

2 Timothy 3:14–15 NIV

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

We live in a world that is not our permanent home (Hebrews 13:14). As believers, we are citizens of heaven and members of God's household (Philippians 3:20; Ephesians 2:19), called to live lives worthy of the gospel of Christ (Philippians 1:27). Yet we live in a world where truth is increasingly treated as something that changes with the opinions and values of society. Even within the church, not everyone who claims to speak for God can be trusted. Jesus warned that not everyone who calls Him Lord or performs miracles in His name truly belongs to Him (Matthew 7:21–23). Outward appearances of godliness do not necessarily reflect a heart transformed by God's truth. Earlier in this chapter, Paul gives Timothy a sobering warning about those who reject genuine godliness.

2 Timothy 3:1–5 NIV

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of

pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.

Against this troubling picture, Paul gives Timothy a very different command: “But as for you, continue in what you have learned.” While others were abandoning the truth and pursuing teachings that appealed to their own desires, Timothy was to remain firmly grounded in what he had received. Paul was not encouraging him to search for some new revelation or adapt his message to society's changing values. He was calling him to persevere in the truth he had learned and become convinced of. And that truth had been faithfully passed down through people Timothy knew and trusted. He had learned from Paul himself, but his spiritual foundation had been laid much earlier through his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice (2 Timothy 1:5), who had helped establish God's Word in his heart from childhood.

But notice that Paul does not simply tell Timothy to remember what he has learned. He tells him to continue in it. There is a difference between knowing God's Word and remaining faithful to it. We can understand what Scripture teaches and yet gradually allow the pressures of the world, the opinions of others, or our own desires to draw us away from its truth. Paul knew Timothy would face opposition and false teaching, but his instruction was not to change the message to make it more acceptable. It was to remain faithful to what God had revealed. And that same challenge confronts us today. The question is not simply whether we know God's Word, but whether we are willing to remain faithful to it when doing so becomes difficult.

Now, while there is danger in blindly imitating others, there is also tremendous value in following the example of faithful believers. God has not called us to pursue spiritual maturity alone. As the body of Christ, we are to encourage, teach, and strengthen one another, growing toward maturity in Christ (Ephesians 4:11–13). Learning to walk in step with the Spirit is a lifelong process (Galatians 5:25), and spiritual maturity requires more than biblical knowledge. It means putting God's Word into practice and allowing it to

transform our conduct (James 1:22; Romans 6:13). Those younger in the faith should be able to look to mature believers for examples of faithful Christian living. And really, this should not surprise us, because imitation is one of the most natural ways human beings learn. From infancy through adulthood, our understanding and behaviour are shaped by observing others, something widely recognized in psychology, sociology, education, and anthropology [1]. If imitation plays such an important role in human development, how much more should we recognize its value in spiritual growth? Yet there is an important qualification. Paul tells the Corinthians, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). We should imitate faithful believers, but only insofar as their lives and teachings reflect Jesus Christ and the truth of His Word. Their example is valuable, but it must never replace the authority of Scripture.

And perhaps this is where Paul's instruction becomes personal. When God's Word challenges something we have always believed, how do we respond? When Scripture confronts an attitude we have developed, a behaviour we have justified, or a conviction that has become unpopular, are we willing to submit to what God has said? Or do we look for reasons to set His Word aside? Timothy was called to continue in the truth he had received, and that same calling rests upon every believer today. We should be thankful for the faithful Christians God has placed in our lives, just as Timothy could be thankful for Lois, Eunice, and Paul. But our faith must never rest merely upon another person's opinions or example. The people who teach us God's Word may help establish our faith, but it is God's Word itself that must remain the foundation of what we believe.

God’s Word Reveals the Way to Salvation

Paul reminds Timothy that the Scriptures he has known since infancy are able to make him “wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15). Think about the significance of those words. Timothy had been taught the Old

Testament Scriptures from childhood, long before the New Testament had been completed. Yet those very Scriptures pointed forward to the coming of Jesus Christ. They revealed humanity's need for a Saviour, God's promises of redemption, and His unfolding plan to rescue sinners. Jesus Himself explained that the Scriptures testified about Him (John 5:39), and following His resurrection, He showed His disciples how Moses and the Prophets pointed to His suffering and glory (Luke 24:25–27). The Bible is not simply a collection of religious teachings. It is the book through which God reveals the way of salvation [2].

And what a wonderful message of salvation it reveals. Scripture tells us that all humanity has sinned and fallen short of God's glory, and that no one can make themselves righteous before Him through their own efforts (Romans 3:9–24). The wages of our sin is death (Romans 6:23), leaving us unable to save ourselves. But God, in His great love and mercy, has provided the Saviour we so desperately need. Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again on the third day, just as the Scriptures foretold (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). Through faith in His atoning sacrifice and victorious resurrection, we receive forgiveness, are justified by God's grace, and are welcomed into His family as His adopted children (Ephesians 2:8–9; John 1:12; Titus 3:5–7). From beginning to end, Scripture directs us to Jesus Christ, the only One through whom salvation is found (Acts 4:12).

But before we continue, I want to make something very clear. Paul is not suggesting that simply reading the Bible, memorizing its verses, or understanding its teachings automatically makes someone a Christian. The Pharisees possessed an extensive knowledge of Scripture, yet many rejected the very Saviour to whom those Scriptures pointed. Jesus told them that although they diligently studied the Scriptures, they refused to come to Him to have life (John 5:39–40). Even Satan was able to quote Scripture when tempting Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4:5–6). There is a tremendous difference between knowing what the Bible says and trusting the One it reveals. We can know the facts about Jesus Christ without ever placing our faith in Him. As Paul reminds

us, the message of Christ crucified may appear foolish to the world, but to those whom God has called, Christ is the power and wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:23–24).

And this brings us to something essential about salvation. God's calling is central, and the gospel is the message through which sinners are invited to repent and believe in Jesus Christ [3]. Paul tells us in Romans 10:17 that faith comes from hearing the message about Christ. Through the proclamation of God's Word, whether spoken or written, we hear the good news of what Jesus has accomplished for sinners [4]. But hearing that message is not enough unless God's Spirit works within our hearts. Scripture reveals the Saviour, while the Holy Spirit opens our hearts to receive Him in genuine faith. Salvation is not the achievement of human wisdom, religious knowledge, or moral effort. It is the gracious work of God, who calls sinners to Himself and gives them new life [5]. As Jesus explained to Nicodemus, we must be born again by the Spirit (John 3:3–8).

So when Paul tells Timothy that the Scriptures make us wise for salvation, he is reminding us of their most wonderful purpose. God has given us His Word so that we might know the Saviour it reveals. And through the gracious work of His Spirit, we can come to know Jesus Christ not merely as someone we have read about, but as our own Lord and Saviour.

God’s Word Carries the Authority of God Himself

We have seen that Scripture reveals the way of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. But that raises an important question: Why should we trust what Scripture tells us about salvation, or anything else for that matter? What gives these ancient writings the authority to tell us what we must believe and how we must live? Paul answers that question in the very next verse, and his answer brings us to the very heart of our message.

2 Timothy 3:16–17 NIV

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Paul has reminded Timothy of the sacred writings he learned from childhood, primarily the Old Testament Scriptures [6]. These writings were able to make him wise for salvation, not because possessing biblical knowledge could save him, but because they pointed to Jesus Christ, in whom salvation is found [7]. Now Paul explains why these Scriptures can be trusted. He declares that "All Scripture is God-breathed." The Greek word theopneustos means "breathed out by God" [8], emphasizing that Scripture originates from God Himself. Paul is not merely saying that the Bible contains inspiring thoughts or the religious wisdom of godly men. He is declaring that God Himself is its ultimate Author. The authority of Scripture does not rest in the men who wrote it, but in the God who inspired it.

This does not mean that God simply dictated every word while the biblical writers mechanically recorded what they heard. We can recognize their different personalities, backgrounds, and writing styles throughout Scripture. Yet the Holy Spirit worked through these human authors to communicate exactly what God intended to reveal. Peter explains this remarkable relationship between divine inspiration and human authorship.

2 Peter 1:21 NIV

For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Notice that Peter says the prophets were "carried along by the Holy Spirit." They were genuinely human, yet the message they communicated came from God. This is why Scripture can be trusted despite the imperfections of its human authors. Its truthfulness rests upon the character of the God who inspired it. As Jesus declared in John 17:17, "Your word is truth."

But this brings us back to the question raised in our introduction. What about those who say, “I follow Jesus, not the Apostle Paul”? Certainly, Jesus Christ alone is our Lord and Saviour. But if someone means they can accept the recorded words of Jesus while rejecting Paul's writings, they have misunderstood the authority of Scripture. The risen Christ personally commissioned Paul (Acts 9:15), and Paul explained that the gospel he preached came through revelation from Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11–12). He even declared that what he wrote to the Corinthians was the Lord's command (1 Corinthians 14:37). Paul's inspired writings were not simply his personal religious opinions.

In fact, the Apostle Peter himself recognized the authority of Paul's writings. In 2 Peter 3:15–16, Peter refers to Paul's letters and warns that some people distort them, just as they distort “the other Scriptures.” Notice the significance of that statement. Peter places Paul's writings alongside the Scriptures themselves. Although the sacred writings Timothy knew from childhood were primarily the Old Testament, the New Testament also recognizes apostolic writings as Scripture. Therefore, we cannot dismiss Paul's inspired teaching simply because we find something in it difficult to accept.

Perhaps this is worth remembering when we read a red-letter Bible. Louis Klopsch introduced the red-letter format in 1899, followed by a complete Bible in 1901 [9]. His intention was to draw attention to the words of Jesus, and there is certainly nothing wrong with that. But the colour of the ink must never lead us to believe that the words printed in red possess greater divine authority than the rest of Scripture. The recorded words of Jesus are precious to us, but the inspired writings of Paul, Peter, and the other biblical authors also carry God's authority [10]. We cannot claim to submit to Christ while deliberately rejecting the Scriptures God has given us through His apostles.

And this brings us to a very practical question. When Scripture challenges something we believe, how do we respond? Do we allow God's Word to correct our thinking, or do we begin looking for reasons to dismiss what it says? We live

in a world where opinions about truth and morality are constantly changing, but God's Word does not change with the culture around us. As Isaiah 40:8 reminds us, “The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever.” We may sometimes struggle to understand a passage, and faithful Christians may disagree over its interpretation. But there is a tremendous difference between struggling to understand God's Word and deciding that we do not need to obey it.

And God has not left us to understand His Word through human reasoning alone. The same Holy Spirit who inspired Scripture also helps believers understand and receive its truth. Paul explains that the apostles received the Spirit from God so they could understand what God had freely given them and communicate spiritual truths in words taught by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:12–13). And as believers, we depend upon that same Spirit to illuminate God's Word and transform our hearts as we submit to it (1 Corinthians 2:14; Psalm 119:18). This does not mean every interpretation we make is automatically correct, but it reminds us that understanding Scripture requires both careful study and humble dependence upon God.

So when we open the Bible, we are not merely reading the thoughts of ancient religious writers. We are reading the written Word of the living God. And because Scripture comes from God Himself, it has the authority to shape what we believe and how we live. Paul tells Timothy that Scripture is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, all working toward the same goal of preparing God's people for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16–17) [11]. God's Word is not only authoritative; it is sufficient to equip us for godly living.

God’s Word is Sufficient to Equip us for Godly Living

As we come to the end of this passage, remember the circumstances in which Paul was writing. Timothy was surrounded by false teaching, deception, and

increasing godlessness. Yet Paul's answer was not to encourage Timothy to find some new message that would appeal to the changing values of society. Instead, he directed him back to the Scriptures, reminding him of their divine origin and purpose [12]. Because all Scripture is God-breathed, it carries the authority of God Himself. And because it comes from God, it is sufficient to equip His people for the lives He has called them to live.

Notice how Paul describes the work of Scripture in 2 Timothy 3:16–17. God's Word teaches us what is true, revealing who God is, what He has accomplished through Jesus Christ, and how we are called to live. It rebukes us when our beliefs or behaviour are contrary to God's truth. It corrects us when we wander from the right path, showing us where we have gone wrong and directing us back toward righteousness. And it trains us, shaping our character and helping us grow in spiritual maturity as we learn to walk in obedience to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit [13]. These are not merely four things Scripture can do. They describe the continuing work God accomplishes in the lives of those who receive His Word.

Consider a simple example. Perhaps someone has hurt us deeply, and we have allowed bitterness to take root in our hearts. We may feel entirely justified in holding on to that resentment. But then we read Ephesians 4:31–32, where God commands us to put away bitterness and forgive one another, just as He has forgiven us in Christ. God's Word teaches us what forgiveness looks like. It rebukes the bitterness we have justified. It corrects our thinking by reminding us of the grace we ourselves have received. And it trains us to respond with the love and forgiveness of Christ. That is what it means for Scripture to do more than inform our minds. God uses His Word to transform our lives. And perhaps that is where this entire message brings us. We began by asking how we can know what we believe is true. We have seen that Scripture reveals salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, that its authority rests in the God who inspired it, and that it is sufficient to equip us for godly living. But possessing God's Word is not the same as submitting to it. James 1:22 reminds us not merely to listen to the Word, but to do what it says.

So let me leave you with one question this morning. When God's Word speaks into your life, does it have the final say? Not merely when it agrees with what you already believe, but when it challenges your attitudes, confronts your sin, or calls you to difficult obedience. May we approach Scripture with humble hearts, trusting the Saviour it reveals and depending upon His Spirit to help us live according to its truth. For when we open the Bible, we are not merely reading the opinions of men. We are hearing from the God who has spoken. And because He has spoken, His Word deserves our trust, our obedience, and our lives.

Footnotes

[1] Kenneth O. Gangel and Jim Wilhoit, *The Christian Educator's Handbook on Spiritual Formation* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1994), 205–206.

[2] David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2013), 197.

[3] Moisés Silva and Merrill Chapin Tenney, in *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible, Q-Z* (Grand Rapids, MI: The Zondervan Corporation, 2009) 5, 273.

[4] Quentin McGhee and Faith McGhee Lund, *Theology 1 & 2: God, the Bible, & Angels (Student Manual)*, ed. Quentin McGhee, Faith & Action Series (Chestnutridge, MO: Faith & Action, 2022), 271.

[5] Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 2:641.

[6] Don Thorsen, *An Exploration of Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2020), 36.

[7] Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 279–280.

[8] Donald Bloesch, “The Sword of the Spirit: The Meaning of Inspiration,” *Themelios* (1980), 5:3:14.

[9] Got Questions Ministries, *Got Questions? Bible Questions Answered* (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, 2014–2021).

[10] Mark L. Strauss, *40 Questions about Bible Translation*, ed. Benjamin L. Merkle, 40 Questions Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2023), 192–193.

[11] Douglas Mangum and E. Tod Twist, *2 Timothy*, ed. Douglas Mangum and Derek R. Brown, Logos Research Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2026).

[12] Terry G. Carter, J. Scott Duvall, and J. Daniel Hays, *Preaching God’s Word, Second Edition: A Hands-on Approach to Preparing, Developing, and Delivering the Sermon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2018), 178–179.

[13] Chris Green, *Cutting to the Heart: Applying The Bible In Teaching And Preaching* (Oxford, England: IVP, 2015).