

## TO MY SON

An Expositional Study of II Timothy

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### CHAPTER THIRTEEN -

#### A THOROUGH-GOING BIBLE MAN

II Timothy 3:14-17

**14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them:**

**15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.**

**16 An scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:**

**17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.**

IN such an age as this, when there is abroad so much loose thinking, lax living, and lop-sided teaching, few things are so important as that Christians should be men and women of the Bible - stayed on it, and steeped in it. But then, this was no less the case in Timothy's day. As verse 13 said, "**evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived**"; and, indeed, all over the Epistle there are scattered warnings and descriptions of a like sort; making it as essential for him, as for us, to have a real, solid, Bible foundation. We stand, as it were, on the shore, with the ocean of life swirling around us: and we find that the undertow of false teaching is so strong, and so subtle, that it behooves us to have our feet firmly set upon the Rock, what W. E. Gladstone called The Impregnable Rock, of Holy Scripture. Paul, therefore, devotes this section of his Letter to the urging of his spiritual son to be, in all respects, a thorough-going Bible man, even as, through him, the HOLY SPIRIT would urge us also to be the same.

Note, then, how the apostle speaks of the Book in relation to the young man.

#### ITS EARLY INFLUENCE

We have

(a) The faithful scholar - "**continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of.**" I think I see here two avenues of spiritual impression. He "**learned**" the things from someone's lips; he was "**assured**" of the truth of them by watching their effect in someone's life.

How grand it was that, whoever was responsible for his upbringing, discharged the responsibility by teaching him the things of GOD, in the Book of GOD, not only by Lip, but by Life. It was part of the Master's charge against the Pharisees that "**they say and do not**" (Matthew 23:3) - that kind of teaching carries little weight.

I remember one occasion on which I was having my hair cut, the tonsorial artist, somewhat too personally remarking that my hair was getting rather thin, proceeded to recommend a wonderful hair restorer that was warranted to be an infallible remedy for my unfortunate condition. He really was most eloquent. Unluckily for him, I have been blessed [or, cursed?] with a sense of humour, and he caught my eye as I looked at him in the mirror - his own head was as bald as an egg! His lotion had obviously been of no use to him, so why should it be to me?

I am not altogether to be blamed if I do not take what the preacher does not take himself, if I do not trust what, for all his words, the preacher does not trust. Many years ago a man wrote to the famous Duke of Wellington that he had invented a bullet-proof waistcoat; and at a subsequent interview he expatiated most eloquently upon the marvellous properties of his garment.

The Iron Duke bade him put it on and examined it most carefully, and then, to give it a test, he sent for a rifleman - but the inventor bolted out of the other door! He seemed, by all his talk, to believe in it; but, quite evidently, his behaviour demonstrated that he did not really believe. Alas, alas, for us preachers whose Lips are not supported by our Lives.

It was beautifully otherwise with Timothy's teachers. What, then, is he to do with those "**things**"? Says the apostle, "**Continue thou in**" them: live in them, abide in them, make your home in them, as the word suggests. To stay within the bounds, within shelter, within the intimacy, within the blessing, of Bible truth, is to be happy, indeed; to stray without, is to find only quickly in Queer Street, to invite the attention of spiritual and moral footpads, and to lose all that joy that reigns and radiates within. Timothy is to prove himself a faithful scholar, not only by learning the things, but by living in them.

Then see:

(b) *The fine teachers* - "**knowing of whom thou hast learned them.**" In the second verse of this very chapter he mentions "**the things that thou hast heard of me.**" If, as is the more likely, he is thinking of more than one, we shall probably look to that grand pair in 1:5 - dear old grannie Lois and beloved mother Eunice.

What a godly influence they had exerted upon the life of this boy; with what undying gratitude and affection he would always remember them. Paul was right up on a high pedestal in his estimation; but the pinnacle these two occupied in his mind and heart was, I fancy, even loftier still. What he had "**learned**" from them - listening to their words, and watching their lives - was intrinsically of deepest, eternal importance; but, however that might be, the "**things**" would always carry weight with him when he recalled the holy, and lovable, personalities that had taught them to him.

Well, look at:

(c) The first lessons- "**from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures.**" They are unusual words that here rendered "**holy scriptures**": the word at the beginning of verse 16 is the regular one; but in this verse it is an uncommon phrase that is employed. "Sacred writings", or "sacred letters" - is the idea. It occurs in several places in the New Testament; but the only other occasion on which it is adopted as referring specifically to the Bible is in our Lord's words, in John 5:47, "**ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe My words**"?

His allusion is, of course, to the Pentateuch, the Five Books of Moses - the portion of the Bible that has been more savagely attacked than any other; and, strangely enough, the portion which, so far as our records go, the Master quoted more than any other. As if, long ere the attacks began, He would set His own imprimatur upon them. In view of what He said, in the verse quoted above, it would seem to behoove us to go very carefully in our handling of "his writings," according to His "**words.**"

However, there will be no denial that, in our present portion, Paul is speaking of the Old Testament Scriptures, when he mentions the sacred writings, or letters. But I want to suggest that he was thinking of a particular use of them. This same (unusual) word is also found in Galatians 6:11, "**Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hands**" - it was "large characters" that he used.

Do you think it over fanciful to suggest that, when Timothy was learning his letters, it was the "sacred letters" of the Bible that his teachers used for the purpose? The word "**child**" here used signifies just a wee thing: he couldn't very well have known his Bible, in the ordinary way, at that tender age; but he could have known its letters. I see one or other of his instructresses, with Tiny Tim on her knee - his little finger, following hers, tracing out the characters, thus early coming to know the "feel" of the paper, the "look" of the letters. Then, too, his first stories were learnt out of the same sacred book.

Oh, wise and happy teachers, that nurtured and nourished this little opening mind from such a source. Oh, you who have a like privilege, see that you follow a like plan: make the Bible the child's book of letters. We have a Whole Bible to teach them from. Well - Timothy has thus enjoyed, and is for ever to profit by, the Early Influence of his Bible: now note:

### **ITS PRIMARY OFFICE**

The Bible has many functions to perform; but first and foremost, fundamentally, this: to make plain to sinful men the Way of Salvation.

(a) It deals thus with what is our first need - "**able to make thee wise unto salvation**" Man is just a bundle of needs - physical, mental, and spiritual; but his greatest need is for salvation. As Peter, speaking by the HOLY GHOST, said, in Acts 4:12, " . . . **we must be saved.**"

A man, under deep conviction, once went to the American Evangelist, Dr. Torrey, and told him he wanted to become a Christian.

"Well?" said that monosyllabic preacher. "I have a great difficulty", continued the enquirer. "Well?" "You see, I feel sure that if I am to be a Christian, I must give up my business." "Well?"

"Well, I must live!" "Why?" He didn't get much change out of the Doctor, did he? But he did get this: that even life itself is not a real necessity - at least, not this present life.

Eternal life is the one eternal necessity, "we must be saved." Let us not restrict that word "**saved**" to the narrow limits of being rescued from hell - it does include that, thank God it does; but it means so much else besides.

May it be put this way? It embraces:

(i) *A freeing from sin*, in all its aspects. Deliverance from its guilt, its penalty, its stain, its doom, its power.

(ii) *A fashioning in holiness*: the taking of the converted man, and transforming him into "**the image of His dear Son**" as Romans 8:29 has it.

(iii) *A fellowship in His Church*: we are not saved merely for our own satisfaction, to save our own skins; we are, as old General Booth used to love to say, "saved to serve"; and Luke 1:74 justifies him. Moreover, though we are saved as individuals, one by one, we are thereupon brought into the company, the body, the fellowship, that we may each take our place, and our part, in the Church's life, and worship, and adventure, and service.

(iv) *A future in Glory*: we are not only saved from hell, but saved to Heaven - with all the joys, and blessings, and glories, and activities that that implies and includes. Salvation is not simply a negative blessing, but a something so gloriously and thrillingly positive. All which goes to show how infinitely desirable salvation is; but our point at the moment goes further than that - we say that salvation is eternally essential, "**we must be saved**" or perish: dread word, dire alternative!

Yet, that dark word comes-warning-like - in the midst of the most Evangelical Verse of all, "**For GOD so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life**", John 3:16.

Let the modernistic theologians explain how they entitle themselves to emasculate the implications of that dread word while yet retaining the full content of the other words. While dwelling, with wondering amazement, upon the Love of GOD, let us not forget the equal truth, the concurrent quality, of the Righteousness of GOD: it is the astonishing accomplishment of the Cross that, with unimpeachable justice, it succeeds in satisfying both these characteristics in its Way of Salvation.

But, in our teaching and preaching, let us not omit that "other side"; let us, in all faithfulness, proclaim the clear alternative - the pardon, or the perishing. How arresting is that phrase, in Exodus 34:7, "**and that will by no means clear the guilty**", coming as it does in such a beautiful context.

The great Scots' preacher, Dr. W. M. Clow, calls it "the dark line in GOD's face." However much the idea be disliked by present-day preachers, it is there - still there - in the Scriptures. Oh, "how guilty" we are, and how urgently true it is that "**we must be saved**."

Yes, but how? It is the primary office of the Holy Scriptures to "**put us wise**" on that - "**to make thee wise unto salvation**".

And so:

(b) It reveals what is the only way of meeting that need "**in Christ Jesus.**"

Timothy, of course, had only the Old Testament to go on. The earliest of the New Testament books was, I suppose, Paul's First Thessalonians, and if we date that at about A.D. 52. it cannot have been extant when Timothy was a little child. Still, if he only had the Old Testament to learn from, the boy had Spirit-taught teachers to instruct him in its meaning - the two devoted women, and the apostle himself.

The Old Testament showed him his need of a Saviour; and pointed to a Saviour that should come. His teachers were able to show him that in the Person of the Lord JESUS, that Saviour had come; and led him to receive Him. It was an interesting example of that remark about the Old Testament that Paul had written years before. in Galatians 3:24. "**the Law was our school-Master, to bring us to Christ.**"

From that old pedagogue was learnt:

(i) *Our duty* - that is what we ought to do, and to be. GOD's Ideal and purpose for His children. But then we learn

(ii) *Our failure* - the standard was magnificent, but man has failed to reach it; indeed. by deliberate choice, he has preferred a lower. and even an antagonistic, life. The Old Book emphasises that over and over again; and even more does it teach us, namely:

(iii) *Our weakness* - it is not only that we have not, but that we can not, reach the level of GOD's ideal; cannot, that is, of ourselves, for one other lesson the Law imparts.

(iv) *Our hope* - we ought, we haven't, we can't: we have come to a fine pass! Whatever is to be done? The situation leads us to look for deliverance outside of ourselves; and the Scriptures kindle within us a glowing hope as, by story, and by promise, and by type, and by prophecy, they point to One Who can, and shall, save.

Thus does the Law act the schoolMaster leading us to "**Christ in you, the Hope of Glory,**" (Colossians 1:27). All which Timothy got from his Bible, beginning from his tenderest years, as his teachers unfolded it.

One other thing is to be included in this saving office of the Holy Scriptures:

(c) It shows what is the part that we have to Play - "**through faith.**" GOD's part is to provide - "**God will provide Himself a Lamb**", Genesis 22:8; "**Thy salvation, which Thou has prepared,**" Luke 2:30-31. But if that sacrifice, and that consequent salvation, are to be ours, we have a part to play - "**faith**", which is the Hand of the Soul, must be stretched forth to receive; the eternal blessing, with all it contains, is for "**as many as received Him,**" John 1:12.

Now this is contrary to all human thinking. this is not the product of Reason, but of Revelation. If man were set to draw up for himself a plan of salvation, he would almost certainly build up his hope around his own merit, his own works; he would make his "hopes of Heaven depend" upon his doing the best he can; his natural instinct will rebel against the thought that "our best is nothing worth" in this matter; it is only by Divine Revelation that he will discover that "**by grace are ye saved, through faith . . . not of works, lest any man should boast**", Ephesians 2:8-9.

Rightfully, then, does the Bible discharge its Primary Office in making us, even as Timothy, "**wise unto salvation.**" Cowper, in his "Truth", speaks of a humble cottager who

" . . . in that charter reads, with sparkling eyes,  
Her title to a treasure in the skies"

We, too. in that same Charter of Scripture, are assured of that same treasure - not only for hereafter, but also for here.

And now for:

### **ITS SUBSEQUENT MINISTRY**

When the Book has brought us to "**salvation.**" it does not then desert us, and leave us to our own devices. That "**salvation**" ushered us into a new life, "**being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of GOD**" says I Peter 1:23. From that moment the same Word goes on with us into the new life, to be to us so much that we then need - "**as newborn babes, desire the sincere [unadulterated] milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby**", I Peter 2:2; "**You, young men . . . are strong, and the Word of GOD abideth in you.**" 1 John 2:14.

Evidently, the Holy Scriptures have a prominent place in the true development of our spiritual life from juvenility to maturity.

How entirely adequate the Bible is for that task; for:

(a) It is so remarkably conditioned - "**all scripture is given by inspiration of God.**" It is this "**inspiration**" which is the secret of the Bible's power, and which makes it an utterly unique book. It is no use people talking about treating it as any other book: you can't. It isn't like any other book, it is quite on its own. What is the nature of this quality? Well, the Bible itself nowhere exactly defines it, and is content just to state the fact; and we shall be wise to follow the same course. Still, there are some things that may usefully be said.

The five words, "**given by inspiration of GOD.**" are one word in the Greek, which means, "God-breathed." When you speak - your word is "you-breathed" - your breath, conditioned by the shape of your mouth, the set of your lips, the state of your teeth. the size of your throat, the strength of your lungs, and even, in some parts of the globe, by the interference of your nose. All which is a figure-only, a figure, remember. GOD's Word is God-breathed, through human instrumentality, conditioned by the shape and size and sort of the human medium.

Whatever inspiration is, it does not abrogate the personality and peculiarity of the channel. It is always GOD's breath, GOD's Word, but shaped by man's gifts and qualities - Moses and Amos are so utterly different, the style of Paul and John could never be mistaken for one another, yet each of these, and all of them, are but the vehicles of GOD's voice, GOD's message.

That rather remarkable old book by Dr. L. Gaussen, called *Theopneustia*, puts it this way, "Whether they recite the mysteries of a past more ancient than the creation, or those of a future more remote than the coming again of the Son of Man, or the eternal counsels of the Most High, or the secrets of man's heart, or the deep things of GOD - whether they describe their own emotions, or relate what they remember, or repeat contemporary narratives, or copy over genealogies, or make extracts from uninspired documents - their writing is inspired, their narratives are directed from above; it is always GOD Who speaks, Who relates, Who ordains or reveals by their mouth, and Who, in order to do this, employs their personality . . . They give their narratives, their doctrines, or their commandments, **'not with the words of man's wisdom, but with the words taught by the Holy Ghost'**." Or, to quote the more authoritative words of II Peter 1:21, "**The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved** [borne along, like a ship before the wind] **by the Holy Ghost.**"

Here is the fact, however we may explain it; and here is the reason why this Book has such power with men, and for men.

Then, too, (b) It is so widely profitable. It takes the believer in hand and guides all his footsteps, from start to finish.

(i) *His forward steps* - "**for doctrine.**" That is, his teaching: how to go on, how to progress, how to get built up, in the Christian faith. He will never make very great strides in the spiritual life unless he gets plenty of Bible Doctrine into him.

(ii) *His false steps* - "**for reproof.**" The Scripture is ever a true and faithful friend, and will not hesitate to point out our faults. Where necessary, it will unsparingly rake the conscience. Alas, how often we need it, on account of commission and omission.

(iii) *His faltering steps* - "**for correction.**" We shall here learn, not only how we have gone wrong, but how we may get right. As Psalm 119:9 says, "**Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto, according to Thy Word.**" If we are really desirous of the right way, and if we are fully prepared to tread it when we know it, the Book will set us right. "**If any man will do** [wills to do] **His will, he shall know . . .**", John 7:11.

(iv) *His first steps* - "**for instruction.**" The word is the one that would be used for the training of a child. As we have already seen in Timothy's case, so is it for every believer: he shall, through this Book, learn his first lessons "**in righteousness**", in right living. For all these purposes is the Book highly "**profitable**" - just for the simple reason that it is "**given by inspiration of God.**"

Moreover, (c) It is so perfectly effective. By "**faith**" he became "**a child of GOD**"; now he has grown into a "**Man of God.**"

How beautifully reminiscent is this phrase; what power it has to awaken a longing in our hearts. It may be a big thing to be a man of science, a man of business, a man of parts, a man of the world, a man of letters - oh, but what are these in comparison with being a man of GOD. In the light of eternal realities, who would not rather be a Moody than a Marconi, a Mary Slessor than a Madame Curie? How hauntingly beautiful is that testimony, in 2 Kings 4:9, "**Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God that passeth by us continually.**"

Something almost identical was said, in 1 Kings 17:24, about Elijah; but that was after he had raised the dead boy back to life. In Elisha's case, it was before he had done any such thing. It was the simple impression of his holy and kindly behaviour that drew this tribute - and that, mark you, from his landlady! They have a rare instinct for discovering the truth about their lodgers, and the Shunammite was no exception.

How one yearns that, as one moves in and out amongst people, the words might be used about oneself! I have been privileged to know a few about whom one would unhesitatingly use the words; but, for the moment, it is oneself that one is concerned about. Of course, I know that the phrase is a kind of official title; but the point is that evidently Elisha lived up to it - he was not only officially "**a man of God,**" but spiritually "**a holy man of God.**"

See now what Paul promises his young "**man of God**" that the Bible shall accomplish for him. It is to make him "**perfect**", and also "**thoroughly furnished.**" The word here translated "**perfect**" is not the usual one, and does not really imply what the English word suggests. Moreover, that rendered "**thoroughly furnished**" is the same word except for a certain prepositional suffix. I see that the late Dr. E. W. Bullinger has a most illuminating translation - he suggests "fitted" for the first word, and, allowing for the preposition, "fitted out" for the second.

He elaborates his ideas

(1) by an illustration from the way in which a joint is fitted to its socket - moving easily, painlessly, effectively. So, by the healthful ministrations of the Word, shall the "**man**" be exactly adjusted to his environment and circumstances: things may not always be pleasant, but he will always "fit in," knowing, as Romans 8:28 says, "**that all things work together for good to them that love God.**"

(2) A second illustration is from the way in which a ship is fitted out for a voyage - all that will be required for the journey is placed in-board, before the vessel noses her way out from the quayside.

So, as the "**man**" sets forth upon the great ocean of "**all good works**", he sails with his All -in Supplies of the Scriptures - food, sword, mirror, lamp, what-not: all these will he find his Bible to be. In the precious volume, he is fully stocked for all eventualities of life and service.

Considerations of space have forced us to give but a brief and cursory examination of what is a tremendous subject; but perhaps enough has been said to cause us to be little surprised that Paul, in considering the utmost welfare of his son Timothy, should advise him to become a thorough-going Bible man. I will only add, *Et tu quoque!*

~ end of chapter 13 ~