

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD'S WORD

Of all the great texts in the Bible that deal with God's Word, Second Timothy 3:15—4:2 is probably the most comprehensive of all of them (unless Psalm 119 is the exception). In this text alone, God made at least 10 affirmations about His Word.

God's Word is simple.

Paul said that Timothy knew God's Word "from a child," implying its simplicity. In one of the few recorded prayers of Jesus, we read where He said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight" (Matthew 11:25-26). David stated that God's Word "gives understanding to the simple" (Psalm 119:130), and that "The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple" (Psalm 19:7).

Our text even says that "the Holy Scriptures...are able to make you wise." How comforting and wonderful it is to know that anything a person must know to make it to Heaven one day has been revealed through God's Word in plain, simple, and unmistakable language.

God's Word is knowable.

Paul said that Timothy "knew" God's Word, implying its knowability; throughout the Bible it declares its knowability. Jesus once said that God's Word is the truth (John 17:17) and that we can "know the truth" (John 8:32a). Jesus also said, "If anyone wants to do [God's] Will, he shall know concerning the doctrine..." (John 7:17a). Paul said, "by revelation [God] made known to me the mystery (as I wrote before in a few words, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)..." (Ephesians 3:2-4). In fact, Peter said that it's "through the knowledge of the Lord" that we have "escaped the pollutions of the world," after which he went on to say that "it would have been better for" us "not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from" it (Second Peter 2:20-21).

Here are some interesting analogies to show that the truth, God's Word, can be known: to affirm that truth can't be known, as some affirm, is like saying that . . .

- It's food that can't be consumed/digested (First Peter 2:1-2).
- It's a sword that can't be wielded (Ephesians 6:17).
- It's a lamp that doesn't burn (Psalm 119:105).
- It's a mirror that casts no reflection (James 1:23-25).

God's Word is holy.

Paul said that Timothy knew the "holy" Scriptures, implying its holiness. God is holy (First Peter 1:16), and His Word shares in His nature! Paul once wrote, "I make known to you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached by me is not according to man, for I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:11-12).

Since God's Word has God as its source, it's spoken of as "the Word OF God" throughout the Bible (e.g., Luke 8:11-12, Romans 10:17, Titus 2:5, Ephesians 6:17, & Hebrews 4:12).

Since God's Word is holy as He is holy, it must not be profaned; rather, it must be held in reverence: David once wrote, "My heart stands in awe of Your Word" (Psalm 119:161).

Since God's Word is holy, we can't afford to trifle with it; God has never permitted man to trifle with anything holy. Moses, for example, had to take his shoes off when he stood on the holy ground

where God delivered to him His Word (Exodus 3:5). God means exactly what He says and says exactly what He means, and the examples of Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1-7) and Uzzah (Second Samuel 6:1-11) emphasize this very vital point: they died for trifling with God's Word. Though wicked as he was, Balaam spoke wisely when he said, "I cannot go beyond the Word of the Lord my God, to do less or more" (Numbers 22:18).

Since God's Word is holy, sharing in God's very nature, we can conclude that God and His Word are inseparable. One can't separate the Master from His mandates, the Christ from His commands, the Lord from His legislation, the prophet from His proclamation, nor Jesus from His judgments. The incarnate Word and the written Word are inseparably joined, and "what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matthew 19:6); so, accordingly, Jesus said, "If you love Me (the incarnate Word), keep My commandments (the written Word)" (John 14:15).

God's Word is powerful.

Paul said that Timothy knew the Scriptures "which are able," implying its great power. The Bible has many references affirming its great power. Paul said that the Gospel of Christ "is the power of God to salvation" (Romans 1:16).

He also said that "the message of the cross is...the power of God" (First Corinthians 1:18). Again Paul said that "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds" (Second Corinthians 10:4), and one of those weapons is the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17). And, of course, we can't overlook Hebrews 4:12 which says that "The Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

God's written Word is no less powerful than His spoken Word! In Genesis 1 we read nine times where it is says, "And God said"; and when God spoke for something to happen, it happened. Indeed, "The worlds were framed by the Word of God" (Hebrews 11:3), and "By the Word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water" (Second Peter 3:5).

We need to have faith in the ability of God's Word, because it has the power to accomplish every moral and spiritual change necessary in the hearts and lives of men: God's Word has the power to...

- convert (Psalm 19:7)
- spiritually resurrect (Psalm 119:50)
- give light (Psalm 119:105)
- give understanding (Psalm 119:130)
- liberate (John 8:32)
- cleanse (John 15:3)
- sanctify (John 17:17)
- convict (Acts 18:28)
- save (Romans 1:16)
- produce faith (Romans 1:17)
- reconcile (Second Corinthians 5:19-20)
- beget (James 1:18)

Then in the familiar and comprehensive passage of Romans 1:16-17, Paul wrote, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.... For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'" This text says the Gospel is . . .

- "power"
- exclusive power: "the power"
- divine power: "of God"
- soul-saving power: "to salvation"
- universal power: "to everyone"

- conditional power: "who believes"
- revealing power: "for in it is the righteousness of God revealed."

God's Word is soul-saving.

Paul said that Timothy knew the Scriptures which are able to make one "wise for salvation," implying its exclusive power to bring about the salvation of mankind. Cornelius was to call for Peter who would tell him words by which he and his house could be saved (Acts 11:13-14). James said that the Word "is able to save" our "souls" (James 1:21). Paul wrote to the Corinthians, saying, "I declare to you the Gospel...by which you are saved..." (First Corinthians 15:1-2). And, as just mentioned, Romans 1:16 declares that "the Gospel of Christ...is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes...."

Actually, the Greek tenses in Second Timothy 3:15 teach that God's Word keeps on saving. David stated, "Your Word have I hidden in my heart that I might not sin against You" (Psalm 119:11). Even Jesus used the Scriptures to keep Him from yielding to Satan's personal temptations to sin (Matthew 4:1-11). John told us that, because of the Word of God, the child of God doesn't continue habitually living the old life of sin that was characteristic of him before he became a child of God (First John 3:9). A mother once wrote in the flyleaf of her son's Bible as he was leaving home, "This little book will keep you from sin, and nothing but sin will keep you from this little book."

Since God's Word is His exclusive soul-saving power, we can readily reach the following conclusions. Firstly, we don't need to expect a direct operation of the Holy Spirit in the process of converting us or in aiding us to remain a Christians, and secondly, we must preach the Gospel! As the old song says, "Where sin has gone, God's grace must go! The Gospel is for all!"

God's Word is written.

Paul said that Timothy knew the "Scripture," implying its written form. The word "scripture" is Latin in origin, having reference to the "act or product of writing" (Webster). This is why Paul could say that he "wrote...in... words" so that we could read and understand (Ephesians 3:3-4).

As we said earlier, just because it's in written form doesn't mean that God's Word is any less powerful than His spoken Word; according to His usage of God's Word in written form, Jesus certainly believed in the power of it, which is why He used the repetitious statement, "It is written" (Matthew 4:1-11) when He was battling Satan's temptations.

One really important point to consider is that the very fact that God's Word is in written form indicates that it's meant to be read and studied! Otherwise, why place it in such a form?

In its sacred pages, we're constantly admonished to read the Word (Colossians 4:16, First Thessalonians 5:27, Revelation 1:3, & Nehemiah 8:3ff, et al). Jesus expects no less of us, for He once asked, "Did you never read in the Scriptures..." (Matthew 21:42)?

God's Word is inspired.

Paul said that Timothy knew the Scriptures which were given "by inspiration of God," implying its word-for-word presentation to its writers. The Bible is verbally inspired. Jesus promised the apostles that what they spoke would be inspired in this manner: "When they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak, for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you" (Matthew 20:19-20). And not only did He assert the verbal inspiration, but He also insured verbal indestructibility: "Till heaven and Earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all be fulfilled" (Matthew 5:18). If the Bible is not verbally inspired, then how do we account for the fact that the writers of it sometimes wrote things they didn't even understand (e.g., First Peter 1:9-11)?

The word "inspire" means "breathe," the very bodily act necessary to speak; so it means, "God-spoken." Jesus endorsed the entire Bible as being inspired of God. In Luke 24:44 He endorsed the Old

Testament as being inspired: "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." In John 16:13 He endorsed the New Testament as being inspired even before it was written: "When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you [the apostles] into all truth. For He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will tell you things to come."

The Bible claims inspiration for itself. Over 2,000 times biblical writers spoke of the origin of their messages as "Thus saith the Lord" and other such phrases; in the prophets alone such expressions occur 1,300 times. Then our text, of course, claims that the Bible is inspired.

Since the Bible is the Word for Word inspired revelation of the Will of God, we must...

- Obey every command in it, regardless of how foolish it may seem.
- Trust every promise of it, regardless of how impossible it may seem.
- Fear every threat of it, regardless of how unwise it may seem.
- Believe every account in it, regardless of how impossible it may seem.

God's Word is profitable.

Paul said that Timothy knew the Scriptures which are "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, [and] for instruction in righteousness." In Jeremiah's day, "The prophets prophesied by Baal and walked after things which do not profit" (Jeremiah 2:8); how different it is when one walks after the precepts of God.

- God's Word is profitable for doctrine, because it teaches us in all matters pertaining to life (Second Peter 1:3).
- God's Word is profitable for reproof, because it corrects every false doctrine originated and taught.
- God's Word is profitable for correction, because it sets straight every crooked path pursued.
- God's Word is profitable for instruction in righteousness, because it teaches us in any and all particulars that are right and necessary.

God's Word is sufficient.

Paul said that Timothy knew the Scriptures which were given "that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." The sufficiency of God's Word is one of the recurrent teachings of the Bible. Jesus told the apostles that the Holy Spirit would teach them all things (John 14:26) and guide them into all truth (John 16:13). Jude spoke of "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (verse 3).

God's Word is so self-sufficient that it strongly forbids any addition, subtraction, or modification to it (Revelation 22:18-19). Accordingly, there are some things we need not expect: since God's Word is complete, full, final, and sufficient, we need not look for...

- any subjective experience
- any further revelations
- any miraculous demonstrations
- any direct operation of the Holy Spirit on mankind.

In fact, a firm and unswerving belief in the Bible's sufficiency automatically takes care of many of the current false doctrines existing outside and inside the church.

God's Word is to be preached.

Paul said that Timothy knew the Scriptures which were to be preached: "Therefore, I charge you before God and the Lord...preach the Word" (Second Timothy 4:1-2a). There are 3 factors included in preaching.

There's "the method," that is, "preach." God's Son was a preacher (Matthew 4:17), and it's through this great method that God's Word is made known (Titus 1:3), men are drawn to Christ (John 6:44-45), faith is produced in the heart (Romans 10:13-17), and souls are saved (First Corinthians 1:21). So we should be able to perceive why Paul said, "Woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel" (First Corinthians 9:16).

There's "the message," that is, "the Word." Yes, the Word and the Word only, is to be the message of the preacher's proclamation (First Corinthians 1:21). The world is in need of the pure, simple, beautiful, and unadulterated Gospel of the Lord.

There's "the manner," that is, "convince, rebuke, and exhort." We should convince alien sinners of their sinful state, rebuke those who sin yet know better, and exhort or uplift the downhearted and discouraged. These are the various means we should use as we declare the Word or the message to this "mess" age!

Conclusion

In Second Timothy 3:15—4:2, Paul so beautifully and concisely, yet comprehensively, affirmed that God's Word is simple, knowable, holy, in written form, powerful, soul-saving, inspired, profitable, self-sufficient, and to be preached.

So this passage constitutes one of the classic texts in The Sacred Volume concerning its own wonderful characteristics; so may we, as never before, love, respect, read, study, memorize, obey, live, and teach "God's Word"!

[Wendell Winkler, 1978]

[Adapted/Revised by Tony Denton, July 1990. ASiteForTheLord.com]