

Brent Alderman
P.O. Box 2060, Annapolis, MD 21404
240.818.3053
brent.alderman@capitolcom.org

THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE BIBLE (2 Timothy 3:16,17)

As I walked into Room 153 for our weekly 8:00 a.m. Bible study last Thursday morning, I noticed a book on the conference table. It was a book published by a religious group in Texas that apparently had been mailed to every Maryland legislator. I flipped through a few pages and read the misleading message that characterizes the entire book – that Jesus Christ spoke to a man in prison and he related the words to us. This session, we’ve been discussing the book of Philippians, also written by a man in prison who claimed to be receiving inspired words from God. One huge difference is that Paul actually was inspired by God to write Scripture and Mr. Jeffs was not. Another big difference is that Paul was in jail for preaching the true gospel of Christ, but Warren Jeffs is serving a life sentence for child sexual assault. The book this group mailed to you is full of devastating error.

The verses I would like to point us toward now are very instructive about the Bible and why we can trust it as God’s message to us.

*2 Timothy 3:16, 17 – All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, **that the man of God may be complete**, equipped for every good work.*

These notes are taken largely from a study written by a colleague of mine, Paul Meinsen of Capitol Commission Missouri, for a series he taught in 2010.

SUFFICIENT FOR TEACHING

The book of 2 Timothy is Paul’s instruction to his young disciple in ministry, Timothy. In chapter three, Paul warns Timothy that difficult days are ahead; days in which there will be much rebellion and sin toward God (3:1-6), false teaching and deceptions (3:7-9), and persecution of followers of Jesus (3:10-13). In spite of these things, though, Timothy is exhorted by his mentor to continue in the things he had been taught and in turn, teach them to fellow believers (3:11-4:5).

In our first verse, 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul instructs Timothy that the Scriptures are the very words of God, and they are profitable, sufficient for being taught. In other words, “What is Timothy to teach? The Scripture!” He is not to teach the

writings of Socrates, Plato, or the Jewish traditions. He is not to give discourses on his ideas, thoughts and opinions. Instead, Paul restates in 4:2a—“Preach the Word.”

The minister of God is not to center on and explain the musings of his own mind or favorite philosopher but the very God-breathed oracles of God. It is the Scripture that is profitable for teaching. A minister is failing in his duties if he does not teach God’s Word to the people God has brought to him. Only the Scriptures are sufficient in the instruction of God’s people.

SUFFICIENT FOR REPROOF

When one is taught in the profitable teaching of the Scripture, he will be ready to recognize and respond to false teaching when he sees it. For example, someone says “Jesus was a good man and teacher but is not God.” Is that true or false? Why? The Scripture is profitable in recognizing false teaching and wrong ideas. It alone is sufficient to give answers to these and other questions and philosophies.

A benefit closer to the heart is when one is taught in the sufficient teaching of the Scripture, he or she will be ready to recognize and respond to sin in his life. How do you know if what you are doing, saying or thinking is right or wrong? The judgment of society and culture? Your friend’s thoughts? Your own heart? Jeremiah wrote, “**The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it?**” (Jeremiah 17:9) The only sure standard is the inspired Scripture, for it is the inspired Word of our Creator and Redeemer who tells us what is right and what is wrong.

Please read closely: Christians have no right, in themselves, to tell the adulterer, liar, thief, or gossip that they are living in sin. Their only basis for stating such things comes from the Scripture. Believers have the obligation (which again comes from the Scripture) to inform people that their lifestyles are sinful in the eyes of God and to call them to repent and be reconciled to God, to be forgiven through faith. This is the gospel message—again coming from and solely based upon the teaching of the inspired Scripture.

SUFFICIENT FOR CORRECTION

Paul paints a couple of word pictures here in the word translated “correction.” The first is the restoring of something to its original and proper condition. We’ve all seen this in the restoration of cars, furniture, and buildings. That which is in bad shape is made new again.

The second word picture is setting something up after it has fallen over. Again, this can be observed in everyday life—especially if one has children. After something is knocked over or falls on its own accord, it is righted and made to stand again.

Scripture is sufficient for reproof, showing where people stumble and fall, but it is also sufficient for restoring or setting these same people back up. In the Scriptures the Creator's plan of restoration and reconciliation is revealed. It is the Bible that informs us that we are fallen and how God sets us back up, making all things new (2 Corinthians 5:21).

It is in the reading, believing and obeying the Scripture that one remains upright (Psalm 119:9, 11, 30). But when the believer does fall (and all do), it is God’s Word that teaches, *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9).

SUFFICIENT FOR RIGHTEOUS TRAINING

Baseball is currently in spring training; everyone getting ready for the season. But one will not see any of the players or teams practicing with shoulder pads and football helmets or doing tackling drills or kicking field goals. That equipment and those exercises would do the players no good. In fact, it could possibly do them much harm.

In the same way, the Christian looks to the Scripture to be fully trained in righteousness or in right living. This word for training is also found in Paul’s teaching for fathers in Ephesians 6:4 - *“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but **bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord**”* The believer would be foolish and would do much harm to his or her life if he trained with a workout of differing philosophies and worldviews. Paul writes that the inspired Scripture is profitable and sufficient to be trained in to live a life that is pleasing to God.

SUFFICIENT FOR EQUIPPING

This is the logical outcome for the believer who has been instructed, reproofed, corrected and trained in the Word of God. It is the inspired Scripture that equips and makes “complete” (2 Timothy 3:17). Paul sets this equipped person in opposition to those back up in 2 Timothy 3:7 who are always learning but never able to come to the

knowledge of the truth. When the people of God set their hearts upon the Word of God to study it and apply it, they come to a knowledge of the truth and are able to do the things which God has redeemed and called them to do.

And this is the purpose for which God redeemed men and women—to do good works so His name may be glorified. Paul writes in Ephesians 2:8-10, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.**”*

CONCLUSION

Our passage ends with a promise and guarantee. If one depends on this inspired revelation from God, allowing the Holy Spirit to use it to change him from the inside out, he will be complete. He will lack nothing when it comes to spiritual matters.

The other undeniable truth is that if God’s Word makes a person complete, then it is in itself **complete**. This is where Warren Jeffs and many others have erred through the years. One cannot add to the Bible. It is God’s complete message. It is all you need. No other word will finalize God’s revelation. He is not continuing to reveal Himself in this way.

It is true that the Bible is not sufficient for understanding nuclear science or doing brain surgery, but it was not written for those purposes. The Scripture is God’s written revelation of Himself to mankind. In it, He also reveals what He has done and why He has done it. Through this revelation we find that all mankind has sinfully rebelled against our Creator. And through this revelation, we also find what God has done to reconcile His people back to Himself.

Paul’s instruction to Timothy, as well as to all pastors and to all believers, is to hold fast, teaching and obeying the Word of God. For this written revelation is sufficient for the life of one who desires to live a life pleasing to God, abounding with good works, filled with peace, contentment, forgiveness and purpose.

BIBLE STUDY

Legislators and Staff (During Session)

Thursdays, 8:00 a.m.

Room 153 House Office Building