

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man (Greek: *Anthropos*) of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16).

In last week’s update we focused on the reason the wilderness generation did not profit from the word which they heard. The reason is that the word they heard was not mixed with faith (Heb. 4:2). The thing which that generation failed to gain was entrance into the land which God promised their ancestors. The land is a type of the rest which is given to us in Jesus Christ (Matt. 11:28). This rest is finally attained when God’s people enter into heaven. That is the ultimate promise for those who believe in Jesus Christ.

This, however, is not the only way in which the word of God profits us. 2 Timothy 3:16 contains a list of benefits that are bound up with the word of God. In this verse, Paul is writing about the supreme value of the Scripture. He emphasizes two aspects of Scripture. First, he asserts that “All Scripture is inspired by God.” This is a classic statement which supports the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture. The expression “inspired by God” is translated from the Greek word, *Theopneustos*, which literally means “God-breathed.” To say that the Scripture is God-breathed is to speak of the creative, life-giving breath of God. The same concept is found in the creation account in the first two chapters of the Book of Genesis. The Psalmist captures the idea when he confesses: “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host” (Psa. 33:6). The doctrine of divine inspiration confirms that God is the source of Scripture.

Since God is the source of all Scripture, it follows that the entire Bible is profitable or useful in a variety of ways. Paul mentions four of these ways. First, he says that all Scripture is profitable for “teaching.” The word teaching is also translated in the New Testament as doctrine or instruction (see Matt. 15:9; Eph. 4:14; 1 Tim. 1:3; Titus 1:9). Teaching involves the impartation of information. The chief function of the Church is to teach the Bible. *The Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly* affirms that the Scriptures teach principally what we ought to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of us.

The second way in which all Scripture is profitable is for “reproof.” We should be careful to note the order in which Paul lists these words. Sound Bible teaching includes the aspect of reproof. This involves refuting error and rebuking sin. Paul’s exhortation to Timothy is often cited in the context of the need for preaching the word. He exhorted the young pastor to “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season.” But the second part of this verse is usually ignored: “reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction (2 Tim. 4:2). Hendriksen is exactly right: “Warnings, based on the Word, must be issued. Errors in doctrine and in conduct must be pointed out. False teachers must be exposed” (cf. 1 Tim. 5:20).

The third way in which Scripture is profitable is for “correction.” This is the other side of rebuke. If rebuke stresses the negative aspect of teaching, correction emphasizes the positive side. Scriptures not only warn us to leave the wrong path, but they also direct us to the right or straight path.

The fourth way, according to 2 Tim. 3:16, in which Scripture is profitable is for “training in righteousness.” To train in righteousness is to grow in our life such that we become more Christlike. The word “training” is translated from the Greek word (*paideia*), which is related to the upbringing of children, who need direction, teaching, instruction, and discipline. As in child rearing, Christian growth entails both nurture and correction.

Since Scriptures are profitable for our growth in Christlikeness, it means that we ought to make it a priority in our lives. We must sit under sound Bible teachers. Like the Bereans, we should “receive the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

HYMN: BREAK THOU THE BREAD OF LIFE (Mary A. Lathbury, 1841-1913)

Mary A. Lathbury, talented artist and writer, became associated with the famous “Chautauqua Movement” in 1877, when she was hired as an assistant to Dr. John H. Vincent, secretary of the Methodist Sunday School Union. She spent the summer of her 35<sup>th</sup> year at the assembly grounds on the quiet shores of beautiful Lake Chautauqua in the Finger Lakes region of western New York. One day as she and Dr. Vincent were standing by the lake watching the sunset, the Methodist Bishop asked her if she would write a hymn to be used by the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle. Miss Lathbury agreed and began to think of a possible theme. As she meditated about the blessing that had been received at the summer conference, she related the thought to the multitude that had been fed with bread on the hillside by Galilee. Thus came to life the words which Christians have come to know and to love. (Taken From *Stories of the Christian Hymns* By Helen Salem Rizk).

1. Break Thou the bread of life, dear Lord, to me,  
As Thou didst break the loaves beside the sea;  
Beyond the sacred page I seek Thee, Lord;  
My spirit pants for Thee, O living Word!
2. Bless Thou the truth, dear Lord, to me, to me,  
As Thou didst bless the bread by Galilee;  
Then shall all bondage cease, all fetters fall;  
And I shall find my peace, my all in all.
3. Thou art the bread of life, O Lord, to me,  
Thy holy Word the truth that saveth me;  
Give me to eat and live with Thee above;  
Teach me to love Thy truth, for Thou art love.
4. Oh, send Thy Spirit, Lord, now unto me,  
That He may touch my eyes, and make me see:  
Show me the truth concealed within Thy Word,  
And in Thy Book revealed I see the Lord.