

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth One Verse at a Time*

The Work of the Word, Part 2

Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:16b-17

Code: 55-19

2 Timothy 3:16b17

In these days we are studying together 2 Timothy chapter 3 and we're looking at verses 15 to 17. We have been going through 2 Timothy for a number of months and we've stopped to rest a while, if you will, at verses 15 to 17 and dig a bit more deeply into their truths. And I thought this morning that it would be fitting again for us to continue our study and try as we can in the brief time we have to dig a little bit deeply into the elements that we are calling the work of the Word.

Let me read our text to you, beginning in verse 15. "And that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

There is no other place in the New Testament where the work of the Word is so concisely spoken of. And we have been noting that there are five things that the Word of God does. It provides salvation, according to verse 15...in verse 16, teaching, reproof, correction and training. And we're looking at these things which we have titled the work of the Word.

Now let me just say by way of introduction that this text more than any other New Testament text and paralleled probably only by Psalm 19 and Psalm 119 in the Old Testament affirms the absolute sufficiency of Scripture...the absolute sufficiency of Scripture when it comes to making provision for all spiritual needs. I have affirmed in our study some years ago now on Psalm 19 that the Word of God is absolutely sufficient for everything pertaining to spiritual life. And that is in essence what this text says. Scripture is able to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished, as the Authorized said, unto all good works. Scripture is sufficient. It does not need any help. That is why Jude tells us to earnestly contend for the once for all delivered to the saints faith. That Scripture which was once at one point in time delivered to the saints, the once for all delivered to the saints faith, Jude 3. We must fight for that. We must contend for that because anyone who comes along with a false belief system will do one of two things, twist, pervert, attack the Scripture or...and sometimes they do both...add to the Scripture. You can usually tell a false religious system by the fact that it comes up with new and novel interpretations of Scripture and also adds to Scripture, as if the Scripture in itself was not adequate, was not sufficient.

For example, the Mormons have decided that the Scripture is not able to stand on its own and they want to add the Book of Mormon and the Doctrines and Covenants and things like that. Christian Science wants to add Science and Health and Key to the Scriptures. And all the various cults add to Scripture the writings of the leaders of the various cults. Even the contemporary Charismatic Movement today is basically built on additional revelation. Jesus is speaking to people, you hear folks say that the Lord told them this, the Lord told them that, God told them this, the Lord spoke to them and said such and such. False systems of belief and cults usually have writings and revelations in addition to Scripture. And the underlying assumption is that Scripture in and of itself is not adequate, is not adequate.

There are, however, even within the mainstream of traditional and historical Christianity those people who question the truthfulness of Scripture. For example, a poll of Protestant clergymen recently was conducted by sociologist Jeffrey Hayden. He surveyed 10,000 clergymen of whom 7,441 replied.

The questions he asked them were questions like this, for example:

Do you accept Jesus' physical resurrection as a fact? Fiftyone percent of Methodists said no.

Thirtyfive percent of United Presbyterian said no. Thirty percent of Episcopalians said no. Thirtythree percent of American Baptist said no. Thirteen percent of American Lutheran said no. And seven percent of Missouri Synod Lutheran said no.

When asked if they believed that the Scriptures are the inspired and inerrant Word of God, 87 percent of Methodists said no. Ninetyfive percent of Episcopalians said no. Eightytwo percent of Presbyterians said no. Sixtyseven percent of American Baptists said no. Seventyseven percent of American Lutherans said no. And 24 percent of the Missouri Synod Lutherans said no.

Now if you have within the traditional mainstream of American Protestantism such disbelief in the authority of Scripture, is it any wonder why people are so susceptible to other cults and other systems of belief who add to the Bible, who twist and pervert the Bible or, I suppose, who in some cases ignore it all together? The Bible always has been under attack and that's why Jude says to earnestly contend for it. We have to contend against the cults that want to add their own revelation to it. We have to contend, in a sense, against even the Charismatics who want to add new revelation. We have to contend against those liberal people within the framework of Christian tradition who want to deny the authenticity of Scripture. We're ever and always fighting to hold on to the authority of the Word of God. And Jude says we have to earnestly fight for it. It isn't going to be an easy thing because the faith once for all delivered to the saints is under attack. The enemy ever and always attacks the Word of God. And so here we are again time after time after time defending the Word of God, showing why it is to be believed.

Now here in this text before us we have one of the great defenses of scriptural authority. The statement in verse 16, "All Scripture is Godbreathed" is a tremendously profound statement. It is not the word of man, it is the Word of God. It was breathed out by God.

But then we're looking at this second statement, "All Scripture is useful...useful, profitable," to produces these five things. According to verse 15 it can make you wise unto salvation and according to verse 16 it is profitable, or useful for doctrine, reproof, correction and training and is the only thing needed and the only thing able to make the man of God perfect, equipped for every good work.

Now, beloved, that's another statement like Psalm 19 on the sufficiency of Scripture. What this says to us is the Scripture is comprehensively sufficient to produce men of God for every good work. It knows no limitation. It has no weakness. Nothing is left out. Nothing can be added to it. Such an attempt, by the way, according to Revelation 22 winds up with a warning, if you add anything to this, so shall be added to you the plagues that are written in it. The Bible is not to be tampered with, it is not to be distorted, it is not to be corrupted, it is not to be manhandled for your own purposes and it is not to be added to.

Now let me say it as simply as I can. When it comes to spiritual life, when it comes to a person's relationship to God, the Bible is all that is necessary for proper instruction to make the man of God complete and capable of every good work. It is not the Bible plus anything. And that is why we are so committed to the systematic ongoing teaching of God's Word, because of what it does.

Now we've entitled these five things "the work of the Word." What does the Word do? First of all, remember in verse 15, it is able to make you wise unto salvation. The Word has the power to save. The Word of Christ is that which is necessary for salvation, Romans 10 says. It is the Word of God, 1 Peter 1, by which you are begotten again. It is the Word which brings the gospel. It is the Word which in the power of the Holy Spirit brings new life. It is the Word which saves. And so last time we said above all things we must be committed to the proclamation of God's Word to the lost, for the Word is able to make them wise unto salvation.

Secondly, and coming in to verse 16, he says it is useful for doctrine or for teaching. And I pointed out to you that here he has in mind not the process of teaching but the content. It is profitable to give you the necessary body of divine truth to live a godly life. That's what he's saying. The Bible provides for you what Paul calls to Timothy the deposit. It gives you the truth, the deposit of truth to be guarded, 1 Timothy 6:20 and 21, 2 Timothy 1:13. It is God's revelation of truth. And it provides for you the substance to be believed...doctrine, the body of content upon which...mark this carefully...every thought and every action is to be built. Did you get that? The Bible provides for us the body of truth upon which every thought and every action is to be built. So it is profitable for content. It gives us the truth. John 17:17, "Thy Word is truth." If you're looking for a foundation to build your life on, it is this book. It provides the principles that are to operate in the life of every individual at every point of need and demand, thought and action. It's comprehensive. Every single thing you will ever deal with in your spiritual existence is covered one way or another in the Scripture, probably many more than just one time. It is replete with instruction for life...life in the way that God has designed it.

So, it is profitable and useful to provide for you the body of divine doctrine. And as I said last time, as you study the Word of God and begin to accumulate its principles, you begin to build that strong foundation which then becomes the foundation on which every thought and every action is built. Biblical ignorance is the grave tragedy of all tragedies in the church because what you don't know you can't build your life on. So it ought to be then the pursuit of every believer to know the Word of God, to as much as is possible master the Word of God.

I remember when I was a student in seminary I came across a little book written by James M. Grey(?) who at that time was the president of the Moody Bible Institute at the time he wrote the book, long since with the Lord. The title of the little book was "How to Master the Bible." He titled it "How to Master the English Bible." And I got that little book and I devoured that little book because I had a desire in my heart to master as much as was humanly possible the Bible, not so that I could walk around saying I have all the facts, but so that I could have a foundation on which to build my life, so that there would never come in my life any issue, any circumstance that I wouldn't be ready to handle because if the foundation was down and if all the principles were there, I could draw on those principles. And in another metaphor it's like...it's like banking all the truth of God, putting it in the bank and at any given point you can draw out what you need because it's banked, it's deposited, it's in your account, in your heart and your soul and your mind. And the Scripture then is profitable as that body of doctrine on which every action and every thought is to be built.

Now let's come to the third thing and we'll go through those that remain this morning. The third work of the Word in verse 16 is mentioned reproof...reproof. The word literally means to rebuke, to confront someone with a view toward convicting them of misbehavior. It's to rebuke someone's misconduct or to rebuke false teaching, error, whatever. The Word that has such a positive ministry, building foundation, also has a negative ministry of tearing things down. The Word is not just a builder, it is something that rips and tears and shreds what deserves to be torn. The Bible has a rebuking ministry, a rebuking effect.

In chapter 4 of 2 Timothy, just a few verses after the text we're in, it says preach the Word, be ready in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort. And that's a negative ministry in a sense. That's calling people back from error. And the Word of God has that effect, it has that ministry. In fact, Archbishop Trench(?) writing about this particular word here, elegmos says it is to rebuke another with such effectual wielding of the victorious arm of the truth so as to bring him not always to a confession, yet at least to a conviction of his sin. And the idea here is that the Word convicts of sin. Yes, the Word builds a foundation of truth but that also is accompanied by the work of conviction. As you listen to the Word of God, as you read the Word of God, as you study deeply the things of God it begins to cut away the sin in your life. The first rebuking work of the Word then is toward the sin in the life of a person, of a believer. It will work on you that way.

Let me show you a text to support that thought. Hebrews 4, a familiar verse but perhaps not fully understood. Hebrews 4:12 and here the writer refers to the Word of God in terms that we're used to, the Word of God is alive and powerful and sharper than any twoedged sword. Most Sunday school kids memorize Hebrews 4:12 and rightly so. But let's look a little more deeply into it. The Word of God is alive, it is living and it is powerful, or active, sharper than any twoedged sword.

Now we're going to see the Word as a weapon. It's definitely pictured as a weapon. It then says piercing deep down into a person's soul, spirit, joints, marrow. Now the picture here is very vivid. The Word is like a huge sword which is just driven to the core of a person's being, slices right through and judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart. The Word of God then is like a sword that cuts. It cuts deeply. And most every one of us as Christians have been cut by the Word, haven't we? We've been ripped open by the Word. We came to church on a given Sunday feeling pretty good about ourselves and went away feeling terrible about ourselves. We were laid bare. We were cut open by the Word. We came thinking everything was in order and we heard a message that showed everything wasn't in order. And when we were confronted with the Word of God that morning we realized we came short of that and our sin was exposed and we were cut up. That's why, you see, a Bible preaching, Bible teaching church will never be a haven for sinners. They're not going to pile in because they don't want to get split open every week. They don't want to get cut up. Why? John 3, those who want to hold on to their sins stay away because they don't come to the light, He says in verse 20, lest their deeds should be reprov'd, rebuked. They don't want to be exposed to the cutting power of the Word of God.

And by the way, that's a good indicator in your life. Even if you're a believer you find yourself wanting to stay away from the Lord's people, wanting to stay away from the services of the church, wanting to stay away from the teaching of the Word. It may be because you don't want to get cut open. You're harboring some sin in your heart.

Now let's follow along in verse 12, the Word is alive, it's active, it's sharp, it cuts deeply and reveals the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Verse 13, "And there is no creature hidden from His sight but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." God takes His Word, cuts deep into your heart, lays you open, you're flayed, as it were, right before God's eyes. And nothing is hidden, He sees every single thing about you. We are open to the eyes of Him.

He uses a most interesting term in the Greek which was also used among the soldiers. Let me give you a little idea of how it was used. It was used to describe a criminal who had to lift his face and face the crowd as he was marched to his punishment. And the way they did that was quite interesting. A soldier held a dagger right at the chin with it just barely piercing the skin. The point of that dagger was held to force the criminal to hold his head high and his face so that every one could see him as he was paraded to his punishment.

Now you see when you turn on the television set some criminal going like this...and holding his hands over his head and ducking under his coat because he doesn't want to be seen by the television cameras. There's a certain amount of shame and guilt. They knew that but they wanted the criminal to have to face the whole wide world and the whole community to see his face so they rammed a little dagger up under his chin and made him walk with his chin up and were he to lower his chin, he would have pierced himself right through. And in a very real sense he is saying that's exactly what the Word of God does, it jams its pierced point right up under your chin and it makes you face the reality and it makes God able to see exactly what you look like. It reveals you to Him. You are open before Him. You can't hide a thing. That's what the Word will do. The Word is a reprover. The Word is a rebuker. The Word is a convicter of sin. It sifts, it analyzes, it reveals emotions, attitudes and thoughts.

And you've experienced that. As you sit down and read through God's Word and you read about something...you may be reading about love and saying to yourself, "I don't love enough, I have such a lack of love." You may be reading about bitterness and say, "That's me, I have such bitterness in my heart." You may be reading about hatred and you realize your heart is filled with that. You may be reading about pride and you say to yourself that's me, that's me, that's cutting me wide open and that's right obvious before God and now even before my own eyes. That's the Word, that's the work of the Word.

Let me tell you something, beloved, you ought to thank God just as much for the reprovng work of the Word as for the doctrinal part of it, right? You ought to be just as eager to be reprovng by the Word as you are to be instructed by the Word. You ought to be just as eager to have your sin exposed as you are to have some great truth and principle taught to you that you can apply. Why? Because if you're truly God's child, you hunger after what is right and you hunger after righteousness. An exposure of sin should be a welcome process, it's a bitter sweet experience. We can rejoice then that in the perfecting of the man of God the Word will save, the Word will teach the principles of truth and then the Word will convict and reprove and confute the sinner.

Let me take it a second step, that point. Not only does the Word reprove sin but it reproves error...it reproves error. And it would be unfair to deal with this without expressing that thought. The Word not only reproves sin in the life of an individual but it also reproves false teaching and error. If I know the Scripture, then I can recognize error. Is that not so? Because the Scripture is the test, it's the standard, it's the measure by which all teaching must be measured. And whatever it is that comes down the path and claims to be the truth needs only to be compared with the Word of God. That's why, and I say this again, beloved, that is why inevitably cults twist the Scripture and add to the Scripture because they have to mess with the standard to justify what they do. The Word of God is the standard...it is the standard. It is the plumb line against which the straightness or crookedness of anything is measured. And so those who come along with lies, with deceit and false teaching

inevitably must twist the Scripture and/or add to the Scripture to justify what they purport to be the truth. They are, says Paul, guilty of peddling the Word of God, 2 Corinthians 2:17 and 2 Corinthians 4:2 of adulterating the Word of God. They peddle it, they adulterate it. They do not properly explain it and affirm it.

So, the Bible exposes error. Let me show you this just briefly from the Old Testament. Go back to that Psalm a part of which we read earlier, Psalm 119. And Psalm 119 has so much to say about the Scripture, 176 verses and every single one of them is about the Scripture. But let me just draw to your attention a couple of them. Psalm 119 verse 99, this is a wonderful verse. I just love what this says. Psalm 119:99 says, listen to this, "I have more insight than all my teachers." What a statement. I have more insight than all my teachers. Why? "For Thy testimonies are my meditation." Verse 100, "I understand more than the aged because I have observed Thy precepts." I know more than anybody because I know Your Word. I'm way ahead of my teachers, I'm way ahead of the aged because I know Your Word.

Notice verse 104, "From Thy precepts I get understanding, therefore I hate every false way." Hey, I can recognize a false way. I know Your Word. I have understanding from Your Word. So as you build up the knowledge of the Word of God it will reprove your sin and it will expose error, that is its reproofing work. It reproves sin, it reproves error.

Now those works of the Word have to do with content. They basically have to do with content. The Word builds foundation principles by which you can live and it also cuts you open to show you your sin and to expose false teaching. Vital, vital works of the Word. Let me give you another Old Testament passage, I don't want to skip this. Isaiah chapter 8, it's just a rich statement by the prophet...

In verses 19 and 20, listen to what Isaiah writes. And, of course, he's writing to a people who have really been unfaithful to God and gotten themselves into all kinds of sin. Verse 19, "And when they say to you, Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter, shall not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?"

There's a lot of that going on today. A lot of people running around consulting mediums and spiritists and people who supposedly contact the dead and contact spirits and all of that. And that was not new...that is not new, that was old stuff going on in the Old Testament time even among the children of Israel. And he says why would you consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter? Should not a people consult their God? If you want to know an answer go to God. There's no medium and no spiritist and nothing in the realm of the dead that's got anything to say to you. Go to your God.

Notice verse 20, I love this phrase, "To the law and to the testimony." That's marching orders. To the law and to the testimony. "And if they don't speak according to this Word, it's because they have no dawn...no light, they're in darkness." Go to the Word, don't go to any of these people. You know more than all your teachers. You could be in the most erudite university in America, secular university, and if you know the Word of God you know vastly more than all your teachers. And whatever they tell you, you can discern and you can know every false way that they articulate because you know the truth. Beloved, it's a marvelous thing that God has done in reducing everything to this book. And to master this book is to master life in every dimension. And why were the Bereans in Acts 17:11 more noble than anyone else? Because they searched the Scriptures...how often...daily to see if these things were so. They didn't just buy anything coming down the pike, they searched the Scriptures. They didn't want to be carried about by the cunning craftiness of those who lie in wait to deceive. The Word of God was their standard, and it is ours as well. And we must affirm its truthfulness and we must know its truth...we must know its truth. Stay away from the people who distort the Scriptures to their own destruction, 2 Peter 3:16.

So, the Word of God then has the positive content ministry of imparting to us truth, the negative content ministry in the sense that it exposes sin and exposes error.

Now let's go from content to conduct in the last two. Paul says to Timothy it is also profitable not only for salvation, not only for teaching, doctrine, not only for reproof but for correction...verse 16, correction. Now we're going to move from content to conduct.

The Scripture not only exposes sin as to its reality, not only exposes error, but it has the ability to correct both. It has a corrective capability. The word here, epanorthosis, means literally...it's only used here, nowhere else in the Scripture so it's hard to compare its use. So taking it at its face value, exactly what the word means, it literally means to straighten up upon...to lift you up and straighten you up. What happens? The Word of God comes along, it cuts you to ribbons, it slays you, it exposes false belief, false teaching and then the Word of God picks you up and straightens you up and sets you back on your feet. It has the ability to straighten up your conduct, to thoroughly restore to an upright position, is what the word means. It doesn't just split you up and let you lie there, it puts you back together again. It imparts truth, exposes error. That basically has to do with content, but it also has the power to change your behavior, to correct the sin, to correct the wrong belief. And then it says in the end to train you in righteousness. Both those last two have to do with conduct...conduct.

That's a wonderful work of the Word, beloved. You know that's true. You go to the Word of God, what happens? You go to the Word of God and you read it and you feel conviction. I know I do. I rarely ever read the Scripture without feeling conviction in my heart. It always seems to pierce somehow into my heart. But then as I read it also gives me instruction to build me back up again. If I read in the Word of God about pride and I feel convicted about pride, I also read in the Scripture the way that I can humble myself before God and how the Spirit of God will work with my will to bring

humility into my life. And as I continue to study the Word of God, where I was torn apart I start to be built back together again. David said, "Thy Word have I hid in my heart that I might not...what?...sin." It's the Word that begins to build and strengthen and strengthen.

In fact, I can honestly say to you that through the years of spiritual growth, some of the areas of greatest weakness in my early life where the Word of God pierced most deeply and reproved me most greatly are the strongest areas now because those areas of grave weakness which the Word of God revealed to me have been the areas where I've spent the most effort trying to build strength in the power of the Spirit of God. And I believe with all my heart that there's every reason for a Christian to hope that areas of great weakness become areas of great strength. We apply ourselves to those areas. The Word of God is the tool of building. That's why we are to let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly, Colossians 3:16, because it begins to build us up. Paul writing says we are to take in the Word of God, Acts 20:32, which is able to build you up. It puts the pieces back together. You don't just come and have the Word of God fracture you and run away, you stay and the Word will rebuild you. It has that capability.

In John 15 our Lord was teaching on the vine and the branches and He made a point that I think connects to this thought. He said, "I am the true vine and My Father is the vine dresser, every branch in Me that doesn't bear fruit, He takes away and every branch that bears fruit He prunes it that it may bear more fruit." Verse 3, "You are already clean, that is pruned, because of the Word which I have spoken to you." You're a branch. In your life come a lot of these little sucker branches that zap your energy, they don't produce anything at all, they just drain the energy from the fruitful part. And the Lord comes along with a knife like any good vine dresser and whacks off those sucker branches out of your life. That's the pruning of the Word. The Word lays you bare and then the Word has a way of straightening you back up again. It will show you your sin and it will show you the path of obedience. It will show you what's wrong and it will teach you how to do what's right. It will put you back together again.

I think of Humpty Dumpty, all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put Humpty together again. That's a comment on life. That's a pretty profound fairy tale saying that once you've destroyed it, it's gone. But in God's terms, once you've fallen and crumbled, God's Word is able to pick you up and put you back together again. That's the tremendous truth of God's promise. That's the restoring ministry of God's Word. And don't we rejoice in that? "He that is taken in a fault, you that are spiritual do...what?...restore him in love." The Word has the ability to do that...the Word as I imbibe it privately, or the Word as it comes to me from a brother who comes alongside to help in that restoration process. And we all experience the rebuilding of the Word of God. Everything we need is here, the doctrine, the foundation, all the principles of life, the reproof, the rebuking that comes to us against our sin and against false teaching. And then the Scripture has the ability to correct and to put us back together and build us thoroughly restoring us to an upright position which is what that word means.

What a tremendous tremendous promise that is. We don't need to despair. We don't need to say, "Well, I'm gone, I'm done, that's the end of me." The Word of God can rebuild and restore and God is committed to that ministry by His Spirit. As you stay in the Word the first thing it does, it gives you truth. Then it begins to expose your sin. Then as you're crushed under your sin it begins to rebuild you and it rebuilds you stronger and stronger and stronger and stronger as you go along. In fact, I think it's Job, is it chapter 17? Where we read about that? Yes, "Nevertheless the righteous shall hold to his way and he who has clean hands shall grow stronger and stronger." What a wonderful thought. He who has clean hands gets stronger and stronger. As your sin is exposed and confessed and you're rebuilt, you get stronger and stronger in the process. And that's all the work of the Word. That's the work of the Word.

So, from a content standpoint, the Word provides teaching and reproof of that which is false. From a conduct standpoint, it provides correction. It starts to rebuild you after you've been reprovved. And then finally, the Word works in training in righteousness...training in righteousness. What a marvelous thought...training in righteousness.

This is the positive side of correction. It corrects you, that's dealing with your sin. It trains you, that's beginning to input righteousness. So in those four there's a little bit of a flipflop. The Word deposits the truth that trains you in righteousness, the first and fourth. The Word reprovves you, the second and then begins to rebuild you in the correcting process, that's the third term. So in those four terms you have the work of the Word...its content and its work on your conduct.

Now what does training in righteousness mean? Well, it's a vital concept and a simple one to understand. Training is the word paidion from which the Greek word paideia which is child is also...or to which that word is also connected. It means to train a child, that's exactly what it means. It's having to do with educating children. The Word is able to bring you up, that's what it means, to nurture you, to raise you, to grow you, to bring you up to maturity. This is the positive side. It's not only correcting you but it's bringing you up, it's building you up. Dealing with your faults is half of it, instructing you in what is right is the other half. So the Word takes its reprovving power and uses that to correct you, and the Word takes its doctrinal content and uses that to train you. And the process is complete.

Now the word paidion is used a number of times in the New Testament and always has to do with the idea of training up somebody, building up someone, growing a child. It does imply some times chastening. In fact, most of its uses are in Hebrews chapter 12 verses 5 to 11, let's look at those for a moment and include the idea of some chastening. Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 5, "Have you forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, My son, do not regard lightly the discipline, the training process of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprovved by Him." So reproof is a part of that training. "For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, He trains and He scourges."

There again, scourging is a part of the training. So correction is implied in the training but the term training emphasizes the positive side.

Verse 7, "It is for training that you endure, God deals with you as with sons, for what son is there whom his father doesn't train? And if you're without training of which all have become partakers, then you're legitimate children and not sons. Furthermore we had earthly fathers to train us. We respected them. Shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they that is our earthly father trained us for a short time as seemed best to them, He trains us for our good that we may share His holiness." That's it, training unto holiness, training in righteousness, same idea. "And all training," verse 11, "for the moment seems not to be joyful but sorrowful, yet to those who are being trained, or have been trained by it, it yields the peaceable fruit...there it is...of righteousness."

So, the writer of Hebrews is saying God puts every one of his children through a training process. Paul here says the training process is basically the work of the Word. It is the Word that does the training. It is the Word that builds you up, the Word that trains you properly. And that's why Paul in Acts 20:32 said, "I commend you to the Word which is able to build you up...to build you up." That's why Paul said in 1 Timothy 4:6 that Timothy was to be being nourished up in the words of the faith and good doctrine. It's the Word that builds you up. It's your food. "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." It's our food. We feed it, we eat on it.

Notice 1 Peter, a very familiar passage, really puts it into very clear terms. He says in verses 23 to 25 of 1 Peter 1, we went into this in our last study, that we have been begotten again through the living and abiding Word of God. We're saved through the Word. There's no question about that. Then in verse 2 he says, verse 2 of chapter 2, "Like newborn babes long for the pure milk of the Word that by it you may grow." So our growth, our training, our maturing is based on the Word. Like a baby grows because it eats, you grow because you eat. Like a baby needs milk, you need the Word.

Now this verse is very simple. What it's saying is in the way that babies long for milk, you should long for the Word. And you know that is the strongest, in fact that's the single desire a baby has, they want milk. They scream for milk. That's basically it. They live for that. As I've said before, babies have two things in mind, they want milk and they want you to deal with the consequences of the milk and that's about it. They live to drink the milk. And that's exactly what he's saying. In the same way that a baby is so singularly focused on the need for milk should you be singularly focused on the need for the Word so that you like that baby may...what?...may grow. It's the source of growth.

And I'll tell you something. That's not mystical. I can say it's as simple as this, folks. The time you spend every day, that time you spend every single day of your life reading God's Word is making you a stronger believer. You may not perceive it. You may not even recognize it. But it's food and it's nourishment and it's finding a place in your mind and it's nourishing your spirit.

Go with me for just a moment to Psalm 19. We have studied in detail this tremendous Psalm, but please notice what the Word of God will do. He calls it by six different titles, Psalm 19, starting in verse 7 and then going to verse 8 and 9. He calls it the law of the Lord, the testimony of the Lord, the precepts of the Lord, the commandment of the Lord, the fear of the Lord referring to worship, the judgments of the Lord...six titles for Scripture. You can look at Scripture as God's law, as His testimony of Himself, as precepts for living, as commandments to be obeyed, as instruction on worship, or as verdicts from the divine bench, but it's all His Word. And what is its character? It is perfect, it is sure, it is right, it is pure, it is clean, it is true. And what will it do for you? It will restore your soul, it will make you wise, it will rejoice your heart, it will enlighten your eyes, it will endure forever, that means it will be relevant in every age and it will produce comprehensive righteousness, the end of verse 9. That's the sufficiency of the Word of God. That's what it will do in your life as you feed on it. And that's why the Psalmist said, Psalm 42:1, "As the deer pants after the waterbrook, so pants my soul after Thee, O God." That hunger for God's Word, fellowship with Him through His Word.

And the Word then trains us in righteousness, in holiness. And what does that mean? Right things, right behavior, right conduct, right thinking, right action, right words. It's the food that makes us grow. In James 1:21 you remember when we studied James this familiar verse, "Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness," sounds a lot like 1 Peter 2:1, "in humility receive the Word...receive the Word." Basic...basic.

Well, let's go back to 2 Timothy and just kind of wrap our thoughts up. The power and the effect of the Word is tremendous. The Word is able to make you wise unto salvation. The Word is able to give you doctrine, that is to give you all the principles necessary for living a godly life and serving God to the maximum. The Word is able to reprove, that is to cut deeply into your life and reveal your sin, and also to reveal false teaching, to protect you from it. The Word then is able to pick up the pieces that it has torn apart, in a sense, and rebuild your life and also train you to Christ's likeness and holiness and righteousness. That's the power of the Word. And how successful is it? Look at verse 17, so successful that the man of God in whom the Word works may be perfect...complete, adequate, equipped for every not most but every good work.

So, beloved, when I say the Scripture is comprehensively sufficient, that's exactly what I mean. It's exactly what I mean. What else can you be but perfect and what else can you do but every good work. There's nothing left out. When someone comes along and tells you that the Bible is not adequate, the Bible is insufficient, the Bible doesn't tell us all we need to know, we need some further revelations, some further writings of some spiritual gurus, or we need the insights of the world or sociology or psychology or philosophy in order to complete our Christian pilgrimage...don't you believe it. It's all here in the book and, beloved, more than anything else, if we are to be spiritually noble we must search the Scriptures daily for therein lies our food and therein lies the tool with which

God refines us to the place of maximum usefulness. The truth is we should be like Mary in Luke 10:39, it says "Who sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word." If there's anything you need to commit your heart to as we begin a new year, it would be that no day would pass that you didn't spend time feeding your souls in the Word of the living God, that you might be all that He wants you to be.

Some of you need the Word for salvation. You've not yet come to know Christ. Read that New Testament until it becomes clear to you what it means to be saved. Some of you need doctrine. You don't have the principles. You don't know how to live the Christian life to its fullest. You haven't learned the Word of God so you know what true doctrine is. And some of you need to have the piercing sword of the Word reprove your sin and then begin to do its work of correcting that sin and instructing you so that you become mature in Christ, able to be all that He wants you to be.

Beloved, let me just say in closing that this again rehearses in my own mind and reaffirms why we do what we do at Grace Church. We will continue to study this book because there's really nothing else for us to do that can come anywhere close to this. We live in a day, I know it, we live in a day of overindulgence. We live in a day when you, for example, have literally been blasted and bombarded with so much information...in fact, Megatrend says it's the day of information, not intimacy. People want to know stuff, they don't really care about relationships. And I think that might even be true somewhat in the spiritual dimension. We have accumulated tremendous amount of knowledge and maybe in so many of us that accumulation of information has substituted with intimacy with God. I do know this, that many many Christians aren't hungry. And I have the feeling that what we've been doing is feeding on junk food. We've nourished ourselves on the cornhusks of the world and we're not hungry for the meal that God sets for us in His book. That's tragic.

Someone said to me...the other day we were talking on the phone and he said, "What are you going to do about what? What are you going to do about the apathy and the indifference in the church? What can we do about it?" And I said we can wait till it goes away, I guess, hope for a better day because it's obvious that people have so much information in their computers, so much junk, so much spiritual garbage coming in from the world around them, they have fed themselves on junk food that they've lost their appetite for the Word of God. And now when you say you're going to teach the Word of God, people sort of yawn and hohum. It wasn't always that way and it won't always be that way because the Lord somehow in some way by His grace, if Jesus tarries, I believe, will restore the appetite of God's people for God's truth. But nonetheless, we continue to do what's right. I mean, there are lots of ways to get a crowd, the primary one is not to teach the Bible. But we defy that in a way, don't we, this morning? God bless you for your appetite for His book. I hope it goes beyond today. I hope you still have it this evening at six and tomorrow when you're day begins and the hunger of your heart wants to reach out for the book and spend some time in it. Let's pray together.

Thank You, Father, for clear truth. Thank You for Your expression of love to us in the treasure of Your book. May we say with David, "O how I love Thy law." May it be our delight. May we meditate

on it day and night so that our way may be prosperous and we may have good success. Father, make us aware that we need every day to feed on the living Word, to nourish the soul. Help us to stay away from the junk and not feed ourselves on that which is no food at all, but takes away our appetite for what is. Keep our minds pure and devoted to you and your truth for Christ's sake. Amen.

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