

The Scriptures
2 Timothy 3:14-17

The Apostle Paul presents Timothy with powerful reasons for possessing knowledge of the scriptures. For Paul there was no doubt as to the veracity of the word of God. He unequivocally stated, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God". He reminds Timothy to continue in the things which he had learned and been assured of. In these uncertain times we all need an anchor to rest our hope upon. That anchor is Christ, and we learn of Christ through the word of God.

Paul knew the absolute necessity of bringing children up in the faith. Timothy had a mother and a grandmother who had taken great care to impart to him an understanding of the word of God (2 Timothy 1:5). In our introductory text the Apostle states "and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus". The importance of raising children in the faith cannot be overstated. What a blessing we received from our parents who took us to the services of the church! How many individuals who are faithful Christians today owe their faith to godly parents who carried them to church in their arms?

The Apostle also tells us several important things concerning the uses of the scriptures. They are profitable for doctrine. They are for reproof. They are for correction. They are for instruction in righteousness. The Christian need look nowhere else for these things. God has provided us with the very words of life. As Paul says, "that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (verse 17).

One of the most conspicuous and precious of the visible possessions of the church is the bible. It has truly been said that Christianity is the religion of a book. This does not make Christianity unique among the religions of the world. All other world religions have

their sacred books. The Moslem has the Koran; the Hindu has their sacred writings. However, as we continue to examine the basic truths of the Christian faith we must understand that the bible occupies a primary place in the life of the believer. We have begun by seeing that Jesus is the one to whom we must turn for spiritual guidance. What does Jesus say about the scriptures?

Contained in the 66 books that make up the bible are many important teachings. In the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament we find such varied writings as history, prophecy, poetry, gospels, and epistles. Men and women wrote these books over a very long period of time, yet the book is seamless and complete. The true Christian does not concern himself with arguments over supposed inaccuracies within the pages of Holy Scripture. Higher criticism has no place in the life of the believer.

Jesus was intimately familiar with the scriptures of His day. During the life of Jesus the Old Testament was the sum total of Holy Scripture. We know that Jesus' parents were very faithful to impart to Him the teachings of the Law of Moses. Jesus was described as increasing in favor with God and man (Luke 2:52) From His childhood, Jesus was accustomed to being in the synagogue for worship. While there He heard the words of the law.

During His ministry, Jesus quoted extensively from many of the books of the Old Testament. Some books seemed to be His favorites, among them Deuteronomy, Psalms, and Isaiah. Jesus looked upon the scriptures for His own comfort and strength. In the account of the temptation (Luke 4:1-13) Jesus met the first two of the temptations by saying, "It is written". When Satan asked Jesus to command stones to become bread Jesus

quoted Deuteronomy 8:3. When Satan showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their glory and offered then to Jesus if he would bow down and worship him, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:13. Satan then tried to turn the tables on Jesus by quoting scripture himself. Satan used Psalm 91:11-12 in attempting to persuade Jesus to jump from the pinnacle of the temple. Once again Jesus quoted scripture (Deuteronomy 6:16) to answer the temptation.

Not long after the temptation Jesus went into the synagogue on the Sabbath (Luke 4:16-30). It is important to recognize that Jesus went for worship because it was His custom. Once again we see the effect of godly parents in influencing future activities. While in the synagogue He read from the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 61:1-2) and proclaimed that this scripture was fulfilled that very day! Jesus knew and recognized the messianic significance of the Old Testament scriptures. He knew that he was the object and completion of the Old Testament. On several occasions Jesus made reference to aspects of His ministry that fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies (John 13:18, 17:12, 19:24, 28, 36, 37).

In John 5:37-47 Jesus further refers to the importance of the Old Testament scriptures. He condemned the unbelieving Jews of His time by saying, "You search the scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me" (verse 39). He pinpointed their spiritual blindness with the words, "For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writing, how will you believe My words (verses 46-47)?"

Truly, Jesus came to His own and His own did not receive Him (John 1:11-13). But if we receive Him through faith we receive the right to become children of God! As

John further explains, "For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

We must then understand that only through Jesus can we come to a proper understanding of the scriptures. Jesus dealt with the scriptures He had during His sojourn upon the Earth. The books of the Old Testament, from Genesis to Malachi provided the backdrop for all of His teachings. Jesus is the final authority for any appeal to the Old Testament scriptures. He is the only one qualified to interpret their meanings, especially as regards the impact of the teachings of the Old Testament upon the life of New Testament Christians.

One of the primary interpretations that Jesus placed upon the Old Testament was that the thoughts and intents of the heart meant more than physical acts. To Jesus it was the motive and not the act that determined conduct. A case in point is the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 5:17-48. In this passage Jesus consistently interpreted the Old Testament law in a way that was novel and unique. Jesus stated, "I did not come to destroy (the law), but to fulfill" (verse 17). He emphatically stressed the binding authority of the Old Testament prior to the scenes at Calvary. "Not one jot or one tittle will pass from the law until all is fulfilled" (verse 18). Jesus speaks here of the rather insignificant punctuation symbols employed in the writing of the Hebrew bible. But, Jesus said that even these punctuation marks would remain in place until all is fulfilled. Today, we understand that when Jesus said, "It is finished" upon the cross and the veil of the temple was rent in two that the Old Testament law was taken out of the way (John 19:30, Colossians 2:14).

In Matthew 5 Jesus interpreted the Old Testament law by showing that what was in a person's heart was more important than their physical actions. Jesus quoted one of the Ten Commandments, "You have heard it said that 'You shall not murder'", then He brought His point home, "But I say unto you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment" (verses 21-22). The higher moral ground of the gospel of Christ is found in the teaching that it is the motive and not the act that causes a person to sin. This should be a warning to any believers who stress the outward appearance rather than the inward motive.

Jesus quoted again from the Ten Commandments, "You shall not commit adultery" and then said, "But I say unto you that whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart" (verses 27-28). The same process is used concerning divorce and remarriage (verses 31-32), oaths (verses 33-37), revenge (verses 38-42) and loving your neighbor and hating your enemy (verses 43-48). In each of these passages, Jesus first gives the customary teaching from the Law of Moses and then reinterprets it through the phrase, "But I say to you".

Imagine the feeling of the ordinary Jewish man or woman who heard these words. As long as only the actual action resulted in sin a person could think anything they wanted. But, when Jesus interpreted the Old law in this new fashion everyone knew that their hearts would condemn them. This is the vital distinction between law and grace. Under law no one can be perfect, but under grace we receive the perfect, that is, Jesus. Our hearts must be made new and Jesus provides the means necessary.

Jesus claimed supreme authority in religious matters. In Matthew 24:34-35, Jesus spoke these words, "Assuredly, I say unto you, this generation will by no means pass

away till all these things take place. Heaven and Earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. His word is the standard of judgment (John 12:42-50), this has been ordained by God (Hebrews 1:1-2). Hear what Jesus says in Luke 24:13-27. In this account, two disciples are walking to Emmaus and Jesus secretly joins them, engaging them in conversation. This conversation quickly turns to the recent events of the death, burial, and reported resurrection of Jesus. Luke records, "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all the things concerning Himself" (verse 27). The result of this exposition of scripture was that these disciples believed that Jesus had been resurrected from the dead. "Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the scriptures to us" (verse 32)? Surely Jesus is the one we should turn to in order to have the scriptures opened to us.