

Sermon Proper 24 2019

October 20, 2019

2 Tim 3:14-4:5

Grace, mercy, and, and peace to you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. This morning we meditate on the Epistle lesson previously read.

Well, as we have our reading this morning, we'll be wrapping up preaching on the epistle of Paul's second letter to Timothy. We had the first week, which reminded you to know that you have the Spirit who gives you a sound mind, a mind which is grounded in your understanding that you are a sinner, but one who has been redeemed in Christ. Last week, we had the discussion of the strengthening that comes by the grace in Christ Jesus. This week it's all about the Word. This week we hear Paul telling Timothy that this Word, this Word he has known is the God-breathed Word. This is the Word that is theopneustos. I know I've mentioned that word before because it has theos in it, the word for God, and pneuma, where we get pneumatic or pneumonia, things having to do with air, or in this case, breath, or we could understand it as spirit. This is the Word breathed out by God, the breath of God, the Spirit of God giving those words their power. This Word is inspired, it is God-spirited. In other words, where do we find the Holy Spirit? In this Word. We know He's there.

Having said that, what does Paul say Timothy should do with this word, this breath of God? He tells him, **"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."** So what's this word for? It's for teaching, reproof, for correction, and training in righteousness. In view of this I'd like to unpack that bit, to unpack that for you to understand how you can view this Word as you study it. And notice I said as you study it, not if you study it. Christians, so few of us take intense time to study the word. Sometimes we don't because we're confused by it, or because we're busy. Understand that as you look at the people we have in our congregation that are so conversant in that word didn't become so overnight. They had to study, little meal by little meal over the course of year after year. Even me. I didn't just pick this up and grasp it. I began reading bit by bit when I was fifteen, beginning more intense study in college before spending five years in seminary, four of that in the class room. This doesn't just happen. You have to take the time.

That said, what do you take the time to see? First, teaching. The Scriptures teach. In fact we can even say they teach doctrine. I've mentioned that before, but that's all doctrine is: it's teaching. There's sort of a fear of this word doctrine in our American

Church. It's OK for us to learn doctrine. We should learn doctrine. There are doctrines in the Bible. For example, I was reading an article about this idea of the usefulness of the Scriptures that Paul describes here, and the author made the point there about the book of Romans. Did you ever notice that the first 11 chapters of Romans are all doctrine? If you've ever read that and thought it was too much, it maybe has to do with the fact that we often belittle doctrine in our American Church. As I say that, I'll acknowledge that Romans is a deep book. There's a lot to it. But the way you get it is to not be afraid of it taking time to learn. Also don't be afraid of doctrine. That's the first thing Paul says here: learn the teaching. In fact, hear what Paul says to Timothy in his previous letter: **"Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching (that is, on the doctrine!). Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers."** Do you hear that, Timothy will save himself and hearers by watching himself and his teaching, his doctrine. This is important and we can stand in certainty of this word about it. Even in things that divide denominations, we can say, "Look at the words, thus sayeth the Lord. This is His doctrine." So that's the first thing. It's useful for teaching.

Second, it's useful for reproof. This goes hand in hand with teaching a bit. This reproof is to prove someone to be in the wrong. In other words, when the enemies make wrong objections about God, we can use this Word to say: "No, this resurrection of Jesus happened," or "No, God is the author of all things." We can also use it to say, "Look at these words, baptism now saves you." Or "No, Jesus said, 'this IS my body.'" In fact, this even has the connotation that we would name errors and their teachers by name. For example look the end of this book, Paul speaks of people who have misled by their teaching. Or Jesus speaks explicitly about the Nicolaitans and their heresy in Revelation. This isn't popular in our day, but we can and should do it sometimes.

That said, we can and should also use the Word to correct ourselves when we are viewing things wrongly, when we aren't sound-minded, like I talked about a couple of weeks ago. And we can do this even when the world tells us that we are wrong and should be embarrassed of the faith. We stand then on the Word. That's reproof. So there's teaching, reproof, then correction.

Here, I think the Greek is a bit helpful. The word is *epanorthōsin*. Hopefully you heard in there the word ortho. Like an orthodontist. What's an orthodontist do? He makes your teeth straight. This correction puts you back straight. It puts you back on the right course, steers your ship correctly. You could maybe think about this in a way akin to how we talk about the Law as a guide or a rule. When you think about that you can think about trying to draw a straight line with a ruler. You can see when you start to get away from the straight line, and so you stop and come back to it. And this correction from the

Word is this way. Think about it, when you align your actions with what the Word says, how often do you avoid the really hard consequences? Now when I say that, I don't mean that you'll avoid all hard circumstances. No the hardest of circumstances are unavoidable. Namely, death. We all will experience the loss of loved ones and ultimately our own suffering that leads to death. But keeping our lives straight like the Law calls us to helps us to avoid some of the things that evildoers experience that are most problematic. For example, if you don't do drugs you avoid the things that come along with that: addiction, family challenges, etc. Or if you don't gossip, you avoid the consequence that the person you're gossiping about might be hurt or mad at you. This correction puts you back to that straightness.

Last then is the training in righteousness. You teachers out there have maybe heard the term pedagogy, this is from the same root as that. It's the training that children receive to grow up into adults who are productive and good citizens. God's Word trains you in that way for righteousness. In fact, one of the things I read said it that this education, this training is "designed to produce conduct whereby [righteousness] is actualized as a sphere of life." In other words, this training shows you how to live in the world in a way that shows forth the righteousness God gives you in Jesus.

OK, having said all of that, now we have to put this in the context of what Paul says. This is great that this Word is useful for these things, for teaching, reproof, correction, for training in righteousness. And if that was all you should still sit down and study that Word for those things. Know it. Learn it, learn its doctrine, understand its reproof, its correction, grow in its training. But look at what Paul says, there's more.

As I've been talking about this letter I keep pointing out that it's from Pastor Paul to Pastor Timothy, we see that shining through here too. What's Timothy to do with this Word? Is he just supposed to read it? Is he just supposed to have his congregation study it? No! Look at what Paul says. This Word is for what? For preaching! Timothy, "**I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus...: preach the word;**"! Timothy, speak this Word to your people. Preach it! "**Be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.**" I know I harp on this all the time, but the Bible isn't just for reading. Again, read it, know it, learn it. But hear it! Hear it's preaching. It's for preaching. Why? From the comments I was reading this week, that I just mentioned: "*It is not enough that Christ has lived and died, and that He is risen. These saving facts must be proclaimed in order that they may become saving reality for individuals.*" Jesus lived and died and rose again. He did that 2000 years ago in a place 6000 miles away. And so God brings that to you now through preaching. So this Word is for preaching to make Jesus' work a reality for you, it's where Jesus comes to you and

gives you His blood, gives the payment for sin, raises you in His resurrection. God enacts in the preaching of this Word.

But look at what else Paul says there. What else does he connect this to? Look what he says there, **“For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.”**

Think about that in our times. Do you see it around us? Look at our culture. I was talking to a friend of mine who was describing working with some people who didn't want to hear the word “no.” He expressed his frustration about their sense of entitlement. Think about how this is. We like to surround ourselves with voices that tell us yes; that tell us what we want to hear. Look at how much people speak of being upset with the church for not being OK with so many things in our culture. Look at how that pricks their consciences, they turn away to something that confirms their own thoughts. Look at how you yourself bristle when there's a word telling you no. We all do it. None of us likes to hear something that strikes us like that. In fact, as I was reading this week the same source I mentioned already said that there's irony here in the accumulation of teachers to suit passions. To paraphrase it said that this accumulation of teachers appears on the surface to be a seeking of knowledge, but this actually betrays their own superficiality. They don't want anything deep. They want it an inch deep and a mile wide. Sadly, that's where many churches are in our day, especially the most popular. And I'll have to say this isn't all of them, but there are so many where the message is not deep at all. But it sure tickles ears.

But the preaching of this word, the preaching in its teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness, this preaching with its rebuke and exhortation, this preaching from the scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation, this preaching is the antidote to this. These scriptures are the antidote to this. The preaching of Jesus is the antidote to this. The preaching where God kills your sinful self with His Law, but gives to you the promise of eternal life and new creation in baptism, in absolution, in His Holy Supper through the death and resurrection of Jesus. This preaching saves you, enlivens you, gives you His Holy Spirit and makes you holy. Thanks be to God for that Word in preaching. Thanks be to God for that Word in the Holy Scriptures; the Word breathed out by Him to breathe eternal life into your ears and through that your hearts. Amen.