

## By Scripture Alone: 2 Timothy 3:10 – 4:5

- 1) God tells us divine truth in Scripture
- 2) We share it while others still listen

It was in the mid-90s A.D. that Scripture's last book of Revelation was written by the Apostle John.<sup>i</sup> And people have wanted to have their own copy ever since. To give you an idea of how popular Scripture is, the Guinness Book of World Records tracked that more than 5 billion Bibles were sold between 1815 and 1975. By 1995, the entire Bible had been translated into 349 languages. Not to mention the thousands of languages that have at least 1 book of the Bible in their translation.<sup>ii</sup>

But this explosion of published Bibles hasn't always been the case. It first started in 1522 when Martin Luther and his translation team published the German translation of the New Testament and again in 1534 with both Old and New Testaments.<sup>iii</sup> People could finally get their own copy of Scripture with the help of Gutenberg's printing press. It was so helpful that by 1546, 1 out of every 2.5 German households had a German Bible.<sup>iv</sup> They went out in droves to buy a Bible because they wanted to see what Scripture said for itself. Because it is by Scripture alone that our Lord speaks to us. To tell us what divine truth is and how we are to use it.

Holy Scripture is the only book to have God's stamp of divine approval. The aged Apostle Paul<sup>v</sup> speaks about this to young Timothy, **"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of...how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. [For a]ll Scripture is God-breathed."**<sup>vi</sup> The truths that Timothy's grandmother Lois and mother Eunice<sup>vii</sup> taught him when he was still a suckling infant came from Scripture. And since they are found in Scripture, they are God-breathed. Every single word is there on purpose. God put them there through his servants as they wrote down God's divine truth. It is by Scripture alone that we find out become wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus who has died for our sins to be our Savior. No other book has this divine truth from God.

We need to hold on to these divine truths revealed by Scripture alone. Paul urges Timothy to do this even when faced with persecutions or deceiving lives.<sup>viii</sup> If you live a godly life as outlined by Scripture alone, you will be persecuted. We need only look in the news to see this happening in foreign countries. In our own

country, Christians are taking more and more heat when they show their beliefs outside of the walls of our homes or churches.<sup>ix</sup> We are called intolerant or ignorant when Scripture clashes with our sinful society. Satan loves to deceive us with his lies. He brings up heretical writings like the *Gospel of Thomas* or *Gospel of Judas* and tries to equate them with Scripture. You need only read through them and compare them to Scripture to see they are not God's Word. He uses the disguises of science or reason to change what our Lord says in Scripture. When you face persecutions, do you hide your faith in Scripture alone? When you hear deceiving lies, do you doubt the divine truths in Scripture alone?

When we're tempted to put Scripture aside, that's when we need to lean on it all the more. Because if we put Scripture aside, we put Christ aside. Before Luther translated the Bible into German, the people didn't know what Scripture said. Bibles were expensive since they were written by hand in Latin which only the priests and scholars could read. And they taught that salvation came by cooperating with God. People try their hardest to build on their supposed spark of goodness and God fills in the holes. But nowhere in Scripture do we see this false idea of us cooperating in our salvation. Rather Scripture teaches us that salvation comes through faith in Christ Jesus. Faith which is complete confidence in Christ Jesus. Mary's firstborn, God's own Son, who never wavered from Scripture despite all the persecutions and deceiving lies he heard. Christ who was put to death as punishment for our sins. Jesus who rose from the dead to prove that Scripture is the divine truth. It's by him alone we have salvation.

The Apostle Paul knew what it meant to live by Scripture alone. He went through beatings, stonings, and cold nights in prisons in towns like Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra.<sup>x</sup> Yet he continued to believe in Scripture alone. Because it is by Scripture alone that Paul could be confident that his salvation did not depend on his sinful track record. It depends on God and his free forgiveness which comes by Scripture alone. In the same way, stick by the divine truths that come by Scripture alone. You hopefully won't face the same persecutions that Paul did. But Satan will come at you with hardships and deceiving lies. Don't give up the salvation and forgiveness that God has guaranteed you by Scripture alone. Trust in it with all your heart and mind.

And use his Scripture as he directs us. Paul writes to Timothy, "**All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.**"<sup>xi</sup> And a few verses later, "**Preach the Word; be prepared in**

**season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.”<sup>xii</sup>** God’s Word is the only tool we need for divine matters. For it is the power of God through which the Holy Spirit works to create and strengthen faith. We use Scripture to teach ourselves and others about our Savior; to rebuke ourselves and others when we cross the line of God’s law; to correct ours and other’s behavior so we may keep on walking the narrow path to heaven; to train and encourage ourselves and others in righteousness so we may show our continual thanks to God for all he’s done for us.

But to know which areas of Scripture to do all these things requires us to study the Scriptures. As we’ve been progressing with our summer worship series, I’ve been studying up on the Reformation through Pastor Kassulke’s church history classes and James Kittelson’s biography<sup>xiii</sup> on Martin Luther. And what surprised me is how long it took Luther to publicly teach that divine truth come by Scripture alone. Luther waited until he was 34 years old to start the Reformation with the 95 Theses. Now I’m not saying that 34 is old. But for 34 years, Martin Luther studied the Scriptures before he went out teaching, training, correcting, rebuking, and encouraging others with it. When you add in translating the Bible into German by 1534, it makes sense how Luther could write volumes of scriptural works in the 29 years he lived after the 95 Theses. He knew what God promises by Scripture alone and where to look for guidance in just about any situation in life.

You and I have the same Scriptures that the Apostle Paul and Martin Luther devoted their lives to. We can study the Scriptures as they did to know what God promises by Scripture alone. But like them, there’s more to the Christian life than studying the Scriptures. We are also to be prepared to share God’s truths in season and out of season<sup>xiv</sup> – when we expect to or not.

It’ll depend on the person when those seasons will be. Pastors and Sunday School teachers expect to share God’s Word every Sunday morning. Christians can expect questions about God to come up when our President does something unexpected or a natural disaster strikes. When grandparents see their younger relations going through hard times, they can share God’s comforting truths with words of wisdom. But there will also be those situations that catch us off guard. That person on the airplane. A coworker bringing religion into the work place. The random questions that children ask. Whether you realize it or not, the Lord places countless opportunities for us to share the truths that come by Scripture alone. Sometimes they are directly presented to us. Usually they are touch points that we

can use to point people to Christ. And there's always our lifestyles which ought to be constant and silent witnesses to our faith.

Constant vigilance for the Great Commission<sup>xv</sup> is vital for Christians to keep in mind. Our time to share God's truths with sinful souls is fleeting. The Apostle Paul reminds us of this with these words **"For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths."**<sup>xvi</sup> Whatever that does not come from God is no better than a myth. Whether it has the support of science or the zeal of a million misguided souls, myths are not divine truth. They do not show us our Savior. They do not lead us to heaven. When you come across someone who does not believe by Scripture alone, we owe it to them to tell them what God says in Scripture. To show them their sin and need for a Savior. To show them how Jesus has fulfilled those Old Testament prophecies to be our perfect substitute. To show them there is complete forgiveness for everyone who believes in him. Keeping Scripture closed to them means keeping heaven closed as well. Because it is by Scripture alone that our God brings us our salvation.

God's Word has never been easier to find than nowadays. As you live by Scripture alone, keep your head in all situations.<sup>xvii</sup> Come back to the truths you have known since infancy and study the Scriptures.<sup>xviii</sup> Learn what God has done for you and believe it. For every word that comes from the Bible is true for you.<sup>xix</sup> Endure hardships as you do the work of an evangelist.<sup>xx</sup> Stand strong when Satan brings persecutions and deceiving lies your way. Go to the Scriptures for strength so that you may fight him off with the power of God. Discharge all the duties of the ministry that God has given to you.<sup>xxi</sup> Scripture promises you that you are freely forgiven of all your sins. Jesus has died so that you may live. Share this wonderful news with others by preparing yourself to witness both in season and out of season.<sup>xxii</sup> Tell them this news while they are still listening so that they too may have life eternal. Amen.

## End Notes

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<sup>i</sup> Wayne Mueller, *The People's Bible: Revelation*, Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, WI, 2009, page 2.

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/best-selling-book-of-non-fiction/>. Accessed July 7, 2017.

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.luther.de/en/wartburg.html>. Accessed July 7, 2017.

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<http://religion.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-382>. Accessed July 7, 2017.

<sup>v</sup> Armin Schuetze, *People's Bible Commentary: 1&2 Timothy/Titus*, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO, 2005, page 3.

<sup>vi</sup> 2 Timothy 3:14-16a. All Bible quotations are from the 1984 NIV revision unless otherwise noted.

<sup>vii</sup> 2 Timothy 1:5.

<sup>viii</sup> 2 Timothy 3:12,13.

<sup>ix</sup> <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/apr/5/christians-facing-increased-persecution-america-po/>. Accessed July 7, 2017.

<sup>x</sup> Acts 13:13-14:20.

<sup>xi</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16.

<sup>xii</sup> 2 Timothy 4:2.

<sup>xiii</sup> James Kittelson, *Luther the Reformer: The Story of the Man and his Career*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2003.

<sup>xiv</sup> 2 Timothy 4:2.

<sup>xv</sup> Matthew 28:18-20.

<sup>xvi</sup> 2 Timothy 4:3,4.

<sup>xvii</sup> 2 Timothy 4:5.

<sup>xviii</sup> 2 Timothy 3:15.

<sup>xix</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16.

<sup>xx</sup> 2 Timothy 4:5.

<sup>xxi</sup> 2 Timothy 4:5.

<sup>xxii</sup> 2 Timothy 4:2.