

2 Timothy 3:14-4:5 *14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15 and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 1 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: 2 Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage-- with great patience and careful instruction. 3 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. 4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. 5 But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.*

This week I read from the most challenging book I've ever opened. This book claims and backs up the fact that you'll find no false information from its opening statement to its final word. Everything is true.

Here's the challenging part in that. It has confronted everything I've ever believed about myself. It's forced me to test the ideas I've stubbornly wanted to believe ~ and it has pointed out those which are false. It's forced me to take a closer look at my attitudes and my actions ~ and it has pointed out those which are offensive. I've cringed, at times, in the face of such honesty.

But in this book, I have found hope. I have found meaning and purpose. For I have found a Savior who rescued me from my sins, and a Father who gives me a love beyond anything else to be experienced in this world. . . a Father who has adopted me into His own family and who has invited me to live in His own home in Heaven. More accurately, then, we confess: He has found me. And in this book, He has provided me truth to cling to and guidance for living out my days in this world to his glory.

If you've got a Bible in reach, pick it up. What's in your hands? The most challenging, true, and the most important book you'll ever read. We are told: all Scripture is God-breathed. When you read the words of this book, it is God talking to you – teaching you – giving you help, direction, encouragement & comfort.

“Continue in what you have learned – the Holy Scriptures, which have the power to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” Each day find a spot and open this Book. Don't put it on the shelf for referral every once in a while in your week. It has day-in and day-out importance. Are you convinced of that? Consider...

A very interesting fact: Look at v. 15. The NIV translates the Greek word “able.” But it can just as well mean “powerful.” Our English words “dynamic” & “dynamite” trace their origins back to this Greek root: dunamai . So read with me vs.15 and note the dynamic impact when you insert “powerful” into the words: **“The Holy Scriptures are powerful to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”**

The two men in front of our eyes this morning, writer and recipient of this letter of the Bible, witness to you and me today the power of God's Word. The apostle Paul, who recorded these words here, had been in contact with the Old Testament promises from infancy. But he had formed and followed his own personal

opinions about just who Jesus was, and he certainly didn't think he was God and Savior. He had come to depend upon human tradition: his ancestry, his upbringing, and his own good works. He ignored the countless passages that pointed to Jesus as the fulfillment of the prophecies (Philippians 3:5-6). HE had zeal, but it was misguided. He was literally hellbent on destroying the Christian church, when the Lord stepped in, stopped him on his rebel way, and changed everything. He turned Paul's heart around. He brought Paul to believe in his Savior Jesus, and in him alone. So Paul became the hand that wrote words from the Holy Spirit regarding all believers: "I do not have a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith" (Philippians 3:9).

On to Timothy... The Holy Spirit wanted Timothy, along with all believers, to receive this specific encouragement that is before us today. A close-up look into Timothy's life, revealed here, tells that he had been brought to know the Scriptures from infancy. And yes, it literally says in vs.15: "from infancy." The Bible mentions the important hand Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice, who were believers themselves, had in teaching Timothy God's powerful, faith-creating Word. Think of what this says to us about the importance of daily reading and teaching God's Word in our homes to our family members - of every age.

You see, God's Word is the dynamite that blows up the wall of unbelief, which has existed in every human heart since Adam and Eve's fall into sin. **God's Word** spoken and read, and present and given in **Baptism** and in the **Lord's Supper**... these are God's tools for planting faith and keeping faith alive.

Does this not demonstrate well enough the importance to pull out your Bible & as Paul encourages Timothy: "**continue in what you have learned and become convinced of – what you know**"? The Word of God has daily value!

Also. . . consider this: This week I faced the most challenging ~ the most dangerous ~ threats I've ever encountered. So did you. Even though you're not on deployment to some "hot spot" of violence or nation-shifting instability, even though we're not living as Christians in a place like Iran... you, your loved ones and I are still facing spiritually life-threatening influences in the opinions, ideas, and beliefs of the world around us. The fact remains: many voices babble with what our itching ears **want** to hear.

You come into contact with this threat with the simple click of the mouse or the remote.

✚ Listen to the title of a USA Today article I found once online: "For True Guilty Pleasures Atonement is Not Required." This article listed things for which the **author** said we don't need to seek forgiveness from God or others. Among other things: chuckling at lewd, crude humor on TV... watching behaviors on TV we supposedly will never engage in ourselves (Cathy Lynn Grossman, USA TODAY).

✚ The secular world tends to agree. TV talk shows regularly highlight the advice of Dr. Ian Kerner, who states: "in a healthy relationship, there's nothing wrong with pornography" (The Pros and Cons of Erotica, September 28, 2010| FoxNews.com).

Do you see how we, as Christians in our world, face a daily, deadly threat? Voices challenge God's truth and our faith. We get tired of fighting our sinful desires, and we are tempted to go to sources that voice support for our sin ~ even if they are contrary to God's. How do we handle that?

Paul and Timothy lived in a worldly society that was not much different from our own. They needed this encouragement from the Holy Spirit. Timothy encountered people who wouldn't put up with sound teaching. Paul was facing death for what he believed. Paul encouraged Timothy to continue in what he had learned: The Word of God – the truth of God – is what matters.

In the verses following this section before us today, Paul expressed 100% confidence in where he would go when he died. How could he know that? He was 100% sure of the Word. He reminded Timothy that not only did the Word hold the truth of his future after his death, but the Word would strengthen and sustain his faith during his life on this earth. That's the confidence we too can each have... as we look right here [Bible].

But how can a book that was written over 2000 years ago help me with all that I face today? Read vs.16 & 17.

The Word of God is reliable and relevant. The fact that God's Word is 100% reliable is vitally important. It is not surprising that Satan has attacked that truth from the beginning. When Satan asked Eve, "Did God really say?" & "You will not surely die", he was challenging the reliability of God's Word. He hasn't stopped his challenging to this day.

The first description of God's Word in vs.16 is: God-breathed. That says... The source of all these words is God. It's impossible for God to lie. So it is all true. You can trust every statement, every promise, every word that is in this book.

There is a quote I want you to chew on. Listen to this: "People don't reject the Bible because it contradicts itself, but because it contradicts them." (source unknown)

Paul refers to people's itching ears – ears that don't want to hear God's Word, God's truth. We still have a sinful flesh, which itches to hear what **it** wants. What it desires is **always** opposite of God's will. Whenever we begin to give ear to the voices which say ...

"Guilt is out of style . . . what matters in your life is your own personal happiness: whether that happiness comes from finding guilty pleasure from books, TV shows, internet or from my personal hook-ups."

...the Holy Scriptures opens our eyes to see what's really happening: **Read v.3-4.**

The Word of God is valuable every day: for teaching, rebuking, correcting - another translation for "correcting" is "restoring" - and training. Taking all these descriptions together, what we have is Law and Gospel.

Daily we apply the Law and Gospel of God's Word. When we sin, God's word of law rebukes us. It identifies sin for what it is: rebellion against God. We are guilty. We deserve to be punished.

Then we run to hear God's Gospel message. God assures that through faith in Jesus, our sin is all washed away. That's the only way. Through faith in Jesus, we are at peace with God. Through faith in Jesus, we are heirs of heaven. God's Gospel message assures us that, when Jesus returns on the Last

Day to judge the living and the dead, eternal life in his kingdom will be the verdict for us and all who believe in Jesus as Savior.

As we remain in God's Word, we are assured over and over of these Gospel truths, and rooted and built up in them.

Continuing in God's Word also fully-equips us for life. We have the proper motive and the proper guide for our Christian lives. The Gospel gives us the ability to reject what is sinful, and to gladly follow where our God leads. The news of our Savior's gifts to us gives us the desire to fight the enemies of One who loved us so much.

In fact, the Greek word "thoroughly equipped" – at the end of vs.17 – was used to describe a wrestler sharp on all points, ready for a match.

Daily put God's Word in your hand, in the hand of your new person, the person of faith God has made you to be. His Word is the power that enables you to smash down the sinful flesh, with its evil intent.

Maybe the best way to see what this means in our lives, in practical terms, is to look at the lives of God's people recorded on the pages of Scripture. Real people – facing real challenges – remaining in what they had learned, in what God had spoken to them. That doesn't mean that they didn't sin anywhere along the way. The Bible is filled with examples of those close to his heart, who fell, who confessed, who were forgiven. This gives us comfort and hope. They found in the Lord their Savior from their sin. And equipped with that knowledge, they were also empowered to fight sin, to place their future in God, and to show love to each other.

You can read more about their lives right here [Bible] this week. As you do, ultimately it is the account of our God you are reading. So then, stand firm, and hold to these teachings. "May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word." (2 Thes. 2:16-17) Amen.