

## Why We Believe the Bible

It is Inspired

2 Timothy 3:12-4:2

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<sup>12</sup> Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, <sup>13</sup> while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. <sup>14</sup> But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it <sup>15</sup> and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. <sup>1</sup> I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: <sup>2</sup> preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 2 Timothy 3:12–4:2 (ESV)

I want to ask you some questions this morning about what you believe. Don't answer me out loud, but just think through how you would answer the following questions:

- Do you believe that stealing and lying are wrong?
- Do you think that it is sinful to kill someone?
- Do you think that sexual activity should be reserved only for the confines of marriage?
- Do you think that marriage should only be between a man and a woman?
- Do you think that a Christian can marry a non-Christian?
- Do you think that Jesus Christ really died on a cross over 2,000 years ago?
- Do you believe that people can be saved from their sins?

These are all very important questions, and I'm really curious how you would answer each question. But there is one question that is underneath all of these questions. It is the question underneath all other questions: **Do you believe the Bible?**

You see, underneath questions about salvation, ethics, and morals is the foundational question about where our beliefs actually rest or where they come from. In other words, the question is not merely *Is lying wrong?* I think there is another question: *How do we know that it is wrong?* Underneath our beliefs about salvation, ethics, and morality is what we believe about the Bible.

Today we are starting a four-message mini-series on Why We Believe the Bible. Between this Sunday and Labor Day weekend, we are going to look at a number of key subjects that are central to our belief in the Bible. My aim through this series is to strengthen your belief in the Bible such that you love the Bible more, read the Bible more, memorize the Bible more, talk about the Bible more, and obey the Bible more.

Over the last number of years, we have used the month of August to focus our attention on one particular theme, to encourage you to join a Small Group, and to give you some resources. We are doing something similar this year. There are openings right now in Small Groups, and we are recommending the book *One to One*, where you can learn how to study the Bible with another person or in your Small Group.

As a part of this focus, we will be privileged to have Dr. John Piper back with us on August 26-28 (Friday night, Saturday until noon, and at all three services on Sunday), and he will be teaching on the self-authenticating nature of the Bible and how to read the Bible supernaturally at our LIVE Forum. It is a very special opportunity to be taught by Pastor John, so please mark your calendar and plan to be here.

I also want you to know that I'm interrupting this series on August 21, when I will preach a message entitled "**Ethnicity, Authority, and the Gospel: Biblical Perspectives on our Culture Divisions.**" My aim is to share some thoughts and insights from God's Word about what has been happening in our culture over the last year as it relates to the racial tensions and concerns for men and women who are serving in law enforcement.

This is going to be a great month together before we launch into our new series on 1 Peter, and I want to encourage you to come every Sunday with the expectation that you are going to take one step in your spiritual journey as it relates to the Bible. And while you are at it, don't forget that this is a time of year that people start looking for a church, so be intentional in inviting someone to come with you to worship.

### **Troubled Times and an Inspired Word**

I'm sure that I don't need to convince you that we are living in troubling and challenging times. It feels to me that everywhere I turn right now, there are major and concerning issues. Internationally, politically, culturally, morally, and spiritually, it seems as though very little is normal and typical. I find myself shaking my head a lot right now and wondering what will happen next.

On the pastoral side I'm hearing about new challenges at work, difficult conversations with people in the community, relationship struggles within families, and an increasing weariness for those who are called to follow Jesus. We live in troubled times.

Yet this is a great time to be a Christian! The things that we have trusted in or perhaps put our hope in, are being shaken, and this is happening not just a personal level but at a societal level. The beauty of this kind of moment is that it presses us to consider what our confidence, trust, and hope truly rely on. The instability of our lives causes us to ask "What is my foundation?"

And 2 Timothy 3 answers that question by showing us that **in troubled times God's people need an inspired Word**. So let's unpack this text and see why an inspired Bible is so important.

### **The Context of the Word**

This particular text has a context that we need to understand in order to see the significance of what is being said here. 2 Timothy is a very personal letter from the apostle Paul to Timothy, his disciple in the faith, who was likely pastoring the congregation in the city of Ephesus. It is believed that Paul wrote the letter from his imprisonment in Rome and as he anticipated his death. Paul sensed that the ending of his life and ministry were at hand (see 4:6-7).

Additionally, there is evidence that there was increasing persecution of the church under the reign of Nero, and there were people inside the church who were creating divisions and leading people astray. 2 Timothy 3 begins with a simple statement that “in the last days there will come times of difficulty” (3:1). Ungodliness, divisiveness, political pressure, and an increasingly hostile culture were part of the reality that Paul and Timothy were facing.

Paul desperately wanted Timothy to be a godly and persevering pastor in the midst of this threatening context. This young pastor was special to Paul, and he wanted Timothy to remain faithful. Paul wanted Timothy to persevere in his godliness and faithfulness.

In verse 12, after rehearsing his persecutions, Paul sets the broader context for Timothy’s ministry. In other words, Paul is reminding Timothy about the culture in which gospel-loving people are called to live. Notice how Paul explains what Timothy and all followers of Jesus should expect.

First, Paul identifies that his experience of opposition is not unique to himself and his ministry, nor is it unique just to those who are pastoring churches, in Timothy’s case. Paul expands the scope to include all who desire to live godly lives, and he says that persecution is their normal experience. Paul is merely affirming the words of Jesus, who told His disciple not to be surprised when the world hates them (John 15:18-25) and to rejoice when they were persecuted (Matt 5:11-12).

The apostle Peter said it this way in 1 Peter 4:12-13:

*<sup>12</sup> Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. <sup>13</sup> But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. 1 Peter 4:12–13 (ESV)*

Paul and Peter are saying something that we need to hear, namely, that cultural opposition is the normal context for those who are followers of Jesus. Times of difficulty are typical, and the followers of Jesus will face challenges. We ought to be surprised when resistance and opposition is *not* present, and we might even ask ourselves if the consistent absence of conflict means that we have become too comfortable with the culture or the culture too comfortable with us. All who desire to live godly lives will be persecuted. The context here is filled with opposition for anyone who follows Jesus.

Second, in verse 13 Paul explains even further that this opposition will come at the hands of specific people who are a part of the unraveling of culture. There will be evil men, the kind who are described in verse 2 as lovers of self, lovers of money, people who are proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy . . . And they will be imposters, the kind of people who creep into households and lead people astray. What’s more, these people will only get worse. Their actions and sinful behavior will not remain static. They will “go on from bad to worse.” And their actions will not only be deceiving to others; these evil people will be filled with self-deceit. They will be fully convinced that what they are doing is justifiable or maybe even right.

Now, I highlight all of this not to depress you or to give you some kind of dystopian view of our culture but to help you to see where Paul takes Timothy in the midst of this challenging view of the world and ministry. How does he encourage him? Where does he point him? As I’ll show you in a minute, he points

Timothy to the inspired Word of God. Paul acknowledges the difficulty of the moment, and he anticipates it getting worse. And yet he points him to what is more foundational to Timothy's life than the culture or the challenges that he is facing. He encourages, comforts, and motivates Timothy by pointing him to the Scriptures. In troubled times godly people need an inspired Word.

One of the things that I hope happens to you over the next few weeks is that you start running to the Bible more often than you are right now. I hope that you start to see the Bible as a refuge from the world around you, the fears that run through your soul, or the doubts that are within you. I hope that when a friend is hurting or your spouse is struggling or someone in your Small Group is weary, that your first step is toward the Bible. Over the last few months, I've been doing a lot of reading and trying to get a sense of where our culture is headed and where we are going. And while there is nothing wrong with that *per se*, I have found my times in the Word to be a ballast for my soul. My heart is hungry for the Bible because nothing else will satisfy.

### **The Continuation in the Word**

We have jumped ahead a bit in the text, and you know where I'm headed. But notice what Paul immediately says next to Timothy. In verses 14-15 he exhorts Timothy to continue in what he has learned and what he has believed and in the confidence that he has had in the Word of God. In the midst of difficult and dark days, Paul reminds Timothy about his personal journey.

The word "continue" is an important word in this text. It is the same word that Jesus used in John 15:4 when he said, "Abide in me." It means to maintain a particular position, to stay committed to a particular activity, or to remain in a certain posture. So one of the ways that Paul encourages Timothy is by encouraging him to not move or change from what he has come to know from his past.

Paul reminds Timothy what he learned, what he firmly believed, and from whom he learned it. Paul takes Timothy back to his spiritual roots, and he links Timothy's past beliefs to the people from whom he learned it. I think that Paul is connecting himself to Timothy's endurance. In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul charged Timothy that what he had heard from Paul he must also entrust to others. Continuing in the Word involves remembering the past and the people God used.

Additionally, Paul identifies the importance of Timothy's childhood. He reminds Timothy that it was through his childhood that he became acquainted with the sacred writings. In 2 Timothy 1:5, we learn about Timothy's grandmother and mother who were women of great spiritual faith. Paul takes Timothy back to this spiritual heritage to encourage him to continue in the Word and to not be crushed under the pressure of the culture. Paul reminds Timothy that he understood his need of salvation ("wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ") because of this godly influence in his life.

Do you find it interesting that Paul talks this way to Timothy? I think it is very instructive. You see, one of the ways that we are encouraged in persevering and in faithfulness to the Word is by being reminded about the people who were so spiritually influential in our lives. Part of God's plan to help people remain faithful under pressure is to unite us to other followers of Jesus, especially when we are young in the faith and as children.

I am so thankful for faithful parents, Sunday School teachers, youth leaders, pastors, and college pastors who taught me the Bible and lived it before me. They believed that the Bible was the very word of God, and the influence of their lives is part of the foundation of my life and ministry.

Kevin DeYoung, in his book *Taking God at His Word*,<sup>1</sup> says this about how this principle worked out in his life:

*Before chucking the faith you were taught as a child, think about those from whom you learned it. I went to a middle-of-the-road Christian College where the religion professors were often liberal. I saw many of my classmates have their faith deconstructed and never built up again in a healthy way. When people ask me why I didn't go down the same path, the best answer I have – besides the grace of God – is that I trusted my parents and my upbringing more than my professors. I had doubts as a college student. There were questions I didn't know how to answer. But what kept me anchored was confidence in what I had learned as a child and in those from whom I learned it . . . Parents and pastors aren't perfect, not even the really good ones. Paul is not saying our mentors must be followed at all costs. But here's the point, and it's very appropriate for teens and twenty-somethings who like to question every authority except their own: before you leave behind what you used to believe about the Bible, consider who taught you to believe what you used to believe about the Bible.<sup>1</sup>*

So if you were privileged to be raised in a Christian home, you should thank God for imperfect parents who valued the Bible. If that wasn't your experience, I'm sure that you can think of people who God used in your life to help you grow in grace, people who loved the Bible and helped you to love the Bible. Having those people in your life are part of what it means to continue in the Word.

If you are discipling someone, or if you are serving in children's ministry or in youth ministry, I just want to thank you, because you are a very important part of building the confidence of children, teenagers, and new believers. One of the reasons why we are emphasizing more discipleship-oriented relationships is because we believe that the application of the Word – life-on-life – is part of God's plan to grow us into maturity and to keep us faithful to the end. One of the reasons I would encourage you to consider serving in Next Generations this fall is because of the critical role that you play in establishing young hearts in the Scriptures. By the way, we still have many needs in North Indy and at Fishers, and I would ask you to consider how you can be a part of preserving the faith of the Next Generation. Finally, one of the reasons why I think it is important to have children in worship services is because they need to taste and see a large group of people who love the Bible, sing the Bible, and obey the Bible.

Continuing in the Word was not something that Timothy was to do in isolation. Continuing in the Word was rooted in all the people who poured the Word into his life.

### **The Authority of the Word**

In verse 16 we get to the reason why I chose this text: the issue of inspiration. This verse, along with verse 17, help us understand the reason why Paul would point Timothy back to the Scriptures. This is the

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<sup>1</sup> Kevin DeYoung, *Taking God at His Word – Why the Bible is Knowable, Necessary and Enough, and What That Means for You and Me*, (Wheaton: Crossway, 2014), 114-115.

foundation of the Christian life and persevering in the midst of an increasingly hostile culture. In troubled times godly people need the inspired Word.

As you look at verse 16, you'll notice that it says "breathed out by God." The Greek word in for breathed out is *theopneustos*. It is the combination of the word for God and the word for breath or blow. It is designed to capture the same kind of creative and authoritative power as we find in Genesis when the Bible indicates that God created by speaking (see Gen. 3:3). In other words, the same God who powerfully created the world, is the same God who breathed out his Word. Therefore, Paul's main point in using this word is to identify that the Word of God has a divine origin. The source of the Bible is God Himself.

Therefore, to say that the Bible is inspired means that it is more than just an "inspiring" book or a book that has the ability to inspire people. Inspiration means more than God dictating a book word-for-word. And it is more than just a "human product breathed into by the Divine Spirit, and thus heightened in its qualities or endowed with new qualities."<sup>2</sup>

Inspiration means that divine revelation was produced through the instrument of human authors. It means that different authors, in unique time periods and with unique messages, spoke, and what they wrote was, by God's design, His revelation to mankind. Inspiration does not mean that God dictated the Bible, although there are a number of sections which record the actual, dictated words that God spoke. To be inspired means that God moved upon those who wrote such that they wrote the word of God.

2 Peter 1:20-21 talks about inspiration in the same way:

*<sup>20</sup> knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. <sup>21</sup> For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

Now in context, 2 Timothy 3 is referring to the Old Testament. That is the Scripture with which Timothy would have been familiar. But we learn in a number of other places in the New Testament that the New Testament writings were considered scripture as well. Peter called the writings of Paul Scripture in 2 Peter 3:16 and Paul believed that he was communicating the Word of God in 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

Therefore, to say that the Bible is inspired means that it is authoritative. It carries the weight of divine authority because it comes from God Himself.<sup>3</sup> God breathed out His words to mankind.

*Every book, every chapter, every line, every word – all of it is breathed out by God. Not just the theological parts. Not just the memorable stuff. Not just the parts that resonate with us. All of it – history, chronology, philosophy – every truth the Bible affirms ought to be taken as God's truth. Every word in the Bible is in*

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<sup>2</sup> Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Press, 1940), 296 as cited in Kevin DeYoung, *Taking God at His Word – Why the Bible is Knowable, Necessary and Enough, and What That Means for You and Me*, (Wheaton: Crossway, 2014), 117.

<sup>3</sup> DeYoung, 118.

*there because God wanted it there. And therefore we should listen to the Bible and stick with the Bible and submit ourselves to the teaching of the Bible because it is God's Bible.<sup>4</sup>*

Remember those questions that I asked you at the beginning of this sermon? Well, everything about our ethics, morals, and belief in salvation is rooted in our belief in the Bible. Underneath our lives, our faith, our sexuality, and our actions is the authority of God's Word. Since the Bible is God's word, it means that it has the authority, the right, and the power to direct our lives. To submit to the Bible is to submit to God. What you believe about the Bible is foundational to everything else in life and even eternity.

So let me ask you: Is that how you view the Bible? What role of authority does it have in your life? Do you allow it to shape your understanding of yourself, the culture, and your actions? Let me give you an example: If the Bible tells us that only believers in Jesus can be married (1 Cor. 7:39), what would you do if you were falling in love with someone who is not a Christian? And what if they never became a Christian? Now that is only one question, and I could add many others. But what you think about the Bible and its authority really matters in that moment.

What's more, Paul points Timothy toward the Bible in the midst of great difficulty and growing persecution because it is the basis of his hope, and the pressure of a wicked culture can really test you if you truly believe the Bible. When the culture turns against you, or if you are the only Christian in your fraternity, or at work, or in your group of friends, that is when you need to be reminded that we don't just have a Bible; our entire life is built on the Bible.

In fact, Paul says as much in the second half of verse 16 and 17. He tells Timothy that the inspired Word is "profitable" or useful. The God-breathed words have divine authority in them, and therefore they are helpful in the following ways:

- Teaching – the Word is able to instruct people in who God is and in their need for the gospel
- Reproof – the Word of God shines a light on the wrong path and on doctrinal error
- Correction - the Word of God is about to redirect people in what they think and how they act
- Training – The Word of God is able to help people to keep growing and moving along in their godliness
- Completely equipped – The Word of God provides the spiritual resources that we need for everything that God calls us to do.

What a gift we have in the Scriptures! We have the revelations of God to mankind. We have the divinely-given resource by which we can know how to live and shape our lives. We have a book from God that tells us the truth about ourselves, our sin, and our Savior, and it points us toward obedience.

The Bible is so central that the preaching of it is to be central to the mission of the church, especially in the midst of challenging days. Just listen to Paul's words:

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

*<sup>1</sup> I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: <sup>2</sup> preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 2 Timothy 4:1-2 (ESV)*

Whatever season of life or challenge of culture, the Word of God is the hope of the world. Why? Because it is breathed-out from God. It is inspired. It is the authoritative Word from God Himself.

So, if you are not yet a follower of Jesus, can I just invite you to explore the teachings of this book? Start with the gospel of John and learn about the life of Jesus. John tells us in 20:31 that these things are written so that “you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” Maybe you are ready even today to put your faith in Jesus.

If you are a follower of Jesus, can you just thank God right now that he has given you the sure foundation of the Bible? Would you point your heart toward gratitude, maybe even holding your Bible and saying, “Thank you, God, for this glorious Word.”

Maybe you have started to doubt the authority of God’s Word. Maybe it has shown up in ways where you have begun to take your own authority as greater than God’s authority. Maybe God is revealing that to you even now. Why not repent and turn right now? Why not come forward after this service and ask someone to pray for you?

Finally, in the midst of all the changes, difficulties and uncertainties in life that are happening right now, isn’t it great to know that the followers of Jesus have their lives built on the divinely given Word of God? So let’s be people who saturate our minds, our hearts, our homes, and our conversations with the Word. Let’s be the kind of people who really love and trust the Bible because it is God’s Word.

And let’s not forget that in troubled times, God’s people have an inspired Word from God. Love the Bible, read the Bible, pray the Bible, sing the Bible, obey the Bible, and believe the Bible. It is the Word of God.

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