

Making The Man of God Complete

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After Paul had spoken of Timothy's youthful experience with what he called the "sacred writings," taught to him "from a babe" by his grandmother Eunice and his mother Lois (2 Tim. 1:5), he told him to abide in the things which he had already learned and had been assured of, knowing of whom he had learned them (2 Tim. 3:14-15). His source was reputable. All sources are not. But Timothy had gone to the right fountain of information from the beginning. Everyone does not necessarily do so. Timothy did. We need therefore to draw a most important lesson from the wonderful example, so heartily commended by Paul the Apostle. Prior to commenting upon this recitation, however, let us cite from the Word of God itself the text which concludes his discussion of these matters:

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works," (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

We may draw three most important points from this passage directly:

1. All Scripture Is Given By Inspiration of God. The subject of this sentence is "all scripture." Since in the context already (v. 15) he had noted his interest as only in the "sacred scripture," this generic reference to "all writing" is defined as having to do with only those books which may be viewed as "Scripture." These are solely those books esteemed by the Jews to be of divine authority. Thus, all sacred scripture is described as having been "given by inspiration of God." The works of Plato, Aristotle, Shakespeare, etc., may be "inspired" in the sense of having been the product of profound human inspiration and perspiration, but the books of the Bible are different. Likewise, the written works of other religions, which may even be esteemed by them as sacred writings, are purely of human

origin. Once again, the books of the Bible are different. They are "inspired," the text explains, "of God."

The Greek terminology is very helpful in appreciating precisely how this inspiration works. The word is *theopneustos*, which literally means "God-breathed." Technically the term "inspired" is incorrect, for it assumes "inbreathed," and is often used to describe the men who wrote scripture as "inspired." The passage itself says that the books of the Bible are "God-breathed," that is, they are the fruit of the breath of Almighty God, not the inspiration of men.

The idea of God directing the men who wrote scripture is found in 2 Peter 1:20, 21. Here God is defining the product of their work, the books, as "God-breathed," i.e. the very breath of God.

Therefore Timothy, and those of our time also who read and study the Bible, can know that our time is well spent. We are not ruminating upon the words of mere men, but the very words of God, "breathed out" by Him.

2. All Scripture Is Profitable. Profit may be derived from spending time with the books of the Bible. We may gain some information about matters of historical interest and about the ancient cultures of the Fertile Crescent, Egypt, Greece and Rome. But these are merely incidental to the main thrust of Scripture. The Bible was written to be "profitable" for Timothy and for us.

The ASV translates the relevant portion of v. 16, revealing that it is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness." Clearly then, God breathed out his Scripture that we might be profited in the areas of teaching, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. If the people of God are to function as a group directed by God in every age, then some such literature must guide them in the areas of teaching, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. This is precisely what the Bible claims to be. Our interest in the language, history, cultures of the ancient Near East, etc., are purely peripheral as we study the Bible. This book provides us with spiritual guidance which is

"profitable."

3. That The Man of God May Be Complete. Here the ASV rendering of the word *artios*, is preferable to the King James "perfect." The person who understands the scriptures, who has them at his disposal when needed and necessary, is fitted appropriately for the occasion. You will appreciate the apostle's meaning perfectly if you are doing a job which requires a wrench which is "metric" but all you have is a set of wrenches in American "inch" format. They will not work. You do not have the right tools to do the job. Or, if you are trying to reach into a close space with a crescent wrench, when what you really require is a ratchet with an extension. You just cannot do the job. You must have the right tools! Paul says that in sacred Scripture we are supplied with the tools that fill our tool box up, supplying us with just the right appliance for every occasion of need.

There is a problem, though. Too few of us have learned to use the tools with which we have been supplied. We have all we need. It is just that some of us have not learned to use the tools we already have. Let's all of us work on this predicament to rectify it. Read and study your Bible regularly!

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