



“But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them,” II Timothy 3:14.

The True Guide to Conduct

Lesson Aim: To increase our appreciation of the inspired Scriptures as God's standard of human conduct.

L510. Date: April 1964. **Text:** II Timothy 2:7-18; 3:14-17.

Topic: Bible; Conduct: Of Believers; Ethics.

INTRODUCTION—The Word of God is the sufficient rule for Christian faith and practice. His Word has been given to men in a written form by a divine process called inspiration. Inspiration is the action of God by which the Holy Spirit gave through men clearly and faithfully that which He wished to communicate, but from the human side that communication came forth in language such as the men themselves would naturally have chosen. The very words of the inspired writers were selected of God so far as was necessary to insure the correct transmission of thought, though they did not deviate from their own natural vocabulary.

The Word of God is today commonly called the Bible. The English word **Bible** comes from the Greek words **biblos** and **biblion** which mean “**book**.” “The Bible is not merely a book, however. It is THE BOOK—the Book that from the importance of its subjects, the wideness of its range, the majesty of its Author, stands as high above all other books as the heaven is high above the earth.” —William Evans.

Today's study aims “to increase our appreciation of the inspired Scriptures as God's standard of human conduct.” Since the theme over this quarter of study is regarding Christian behavior (ethics), this lesson will stress that whatever a believer does he must do in the light of God's word. This inspired (God-breathed) message is the standard by which men will be judged in the last day, John 12:48. It behooves each person to make sure he lives according to that Word while here in the world. If this study creates a

spirit of reverence, a desire to study, and a humble obedience to the Scriptures, it will have accomplished its purpose.

EXPOSITION

I. THE NATURE OF THE SCRIPTURES, 2:7-14.

1. The Scriptures can be truly understood only by spiritual illumination, verse 7, "The Lord give thee understanding in all things," has been the prayer of many teachers of the Word. The Bible is composed of many types of literature. It is prophecy and history, poetry and prose, classic and common. Yet, it is more than this. It is also God's word. It cannot be understood fully if studied as any other book of history. Its message is only partially received if studied only for its literary beauty and value.

The Bible is God's word. To be understood aright, it must be interpreted by its Author, the Holy Spirit, II Corinthians 2:13. **"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto Him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned,"** II Corinthians 2:14. The work of the Holy Spirit which reveals the truths of God to a student of the Scriptures is called "spiritual illumination."

Spiritual illumination is essential to an understanding of the Word. The divine revelation from God must be interpreted by a divine action on the mind of man. A mere intellectual approach will acquaint one with the facts of the Bible, but a sight of the perfection of God and penetration into His word is possible only by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised the Spirit would guide believers into all truth by His teaching of the things of God, John 16:12-15. Thus man understands things about God which he could never know otherwise. How blessed to study with such a teacher! Approach the Word with faith and the prayer, "Lord, show me your will and I will do it." The Holy Spirit becomes your teacher and you discover new joys and deeper insights into the Word.

2. The Scriptures bear testimony of Christ, verse 8. He is the heart of the Bible's message. The effective witness is one who resolves to **"know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ,"** I Corinthians 2:2. God will bless the preaching and teaching of all religious truth which finds its center in

Jesus. Jesus, Himself, once said, **“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me,”** John 5:39. The Bible cannot be taught without bearing witness to Jesus Christ.

All the Bible testifies of Jesus. To discouraged and doubting disciples Jesus **“expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself,”** Luke 24:27. (How wonderful it would have been to have heard Him!) Jesus Christ is the Seed of the Woman in Genesis, the Passover Lamb in Exodus, the atoning Sacrifice in Leviticus, the Star in Numbers, the True Prophet in Deuteronomy, the Captain of the Lord's Host in Joshua, the Deliverer in Judges, the Kinsman Redeemer in Ruth, and the eternal King in Samuel. Just so, the New Testament speaks of Him. He is a King in Matthew, a Servant in Mark, the Son of Man in Luke, and the Son of God in John. Yes, all the Bible bears witness to Jesus. As was said of the Gospel according to John, so it could be said of all the Bible, **“But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name,”** John 20:31. If any man studies the Bible without being led closer to Jesus, he has missed the central message of it.

3. The Scriptures cannot be controlled nor destroyed by men, verse 9. Enemies of the truth have often sought to destroy it. Christians have been persecuted and imprisoned; churches have been razed; Bibles have been burned. Yet the forces of evil have not stamped out God's Word to men.

It appeared that the Kingdom had suffered a great defeat when the Apostle Paul was imprisoned. For two years he was a prisoner in Caesarea and for two more years a prisoner in Rome. Yet, he wrote from Rome, **“But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear,”** Philippians 1:12-14. Even though he was an “ambassador in bonds” while in Rome, he made known the mystery of the gospel, Ephesians 6:18-20. Luke pictures a number of people seeking out Paul in Rome that they might hear his message and that he preached the kingdom of God and things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ to them all, Acts 28:30-31. The preacher may be put into prison and the Bible may be burned, but the Word of God is not bound. When heaven and earth have passed away His word will still be enduring, Matthew 5:18.

4. The Scriptures inspire to sacrificial service, verses 10-13. There is no news like the Good News about Jesus. Paul was willing to suffer personally

the degradation of imprisonment for such a gospel. It is no burden to bear hardship and toil if there is the assurance of eternal glory beyond.

“In so many cases did the early converts to Christianity find it necessary to draw comfort from the most basic truth of the gospel that an oft-quoted part of the liturgy of the early church came to be: **‘It is a faithful saying, For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him,’** 2:11. To die with Christ is to do what the ancient psalmist described as walking ‘through the valley of the shadow,’ Psalm 23:4. Death for those in Christ is not a blind alley but an open thoroughfare to God's upper kingdom.” — O. A. Trentham.

God is morally self-consistent. Whatever man's attitude—faithful or unfaithful—God always abides faithful. He will not accept excuses or look lightly upon rebellion and sin. The teachings of the Bible, the example of Jesus and the unchanging nature of our God calls us to sacrificial service.

“If we suffer (endure), we shall also reign with him,” verse 12a.

5. The Scriptures are profitable to all who hear, verse 14. Someone has wisely observed, “The Holy Spirit rarely speaks in a climate of controversy.” Therefore, Paul warns against striving “about words to no profit.” Such “word battles are sham battles. Time is too important and the need is too great for the workman to deplete his energies by useless arguments.

Not only are such discussions fruitless but they usually work harm “to the subverting of the hearers.” Idle controversy has often worked widespread harm. Much talking does not edify, but degenerates. Zeno has observed, “We have two ears and one tongue that we may hear much and talk little.” James warns those who would be teachers that such a position would bring to them a more severe judgment, James 3:1.

While useless controversy is of no profit, the true word of God is of great profit. **“Buy the truth, and sell it not”** (Proverbs 23:23), is the scriptural admonition. The pure word of God is more precious than gold and sweeter than honey, Psalm 19:10. He who has it in his heart possesses a great treasure indeed.

II. THE STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES, 2:15-18.

1. Study the scriptures in obedience to God, verse 15a. Because He knew the contribution the Bible would make to our spiritual lives. God commanded that it be studied. His Word is as a sword, a shield, a light, a guide. It offers direction, protection, and encouragement. It is as much necessary to our well being as is the food we eat, Matthew 4:4. It builds us up in the faith. It keeps us from sin when it is hidden in the heart. There is no

wonder God commanded His children to study the word.

“Study” expresses eager striving. It speaks of diligent thought and earnest preparation. It has a suggestion of making haste. Kenneth S. Wuest translates the word, “bend your every effort.” These ideas show that God is not just encouraging “daily Bible reading” though that is important, He calls for a devotion to the Scriptures like the school student pursues his text books. Diligent and earnest thought are demanded. The Bible cannot be studied like one reads the daily paper. Prayer, concentration, and dependence upon the Holy Spirit are necessary. How much actual study time have you given the Word this week?

2. Study to become an approved workman, verse 15. Kenneth Wuest translates this verse thus: “Bend your every effort to present yourself to God, approved, a workman unashamed, expounding soundly the word of the truth.” Only by study of the Word of God can one expect to stand approved of God. The man approved of God is the one able to “rightly divide the word of truth” as a capable workman.

The word translated **dividing**, or **handling** (2:15 ASY) originally meant “to cut straight,” as a farmer who drives his furrow straight or a tailor who scrupulously cuts the cloth according to the pattern. Timothy, therefore, was to take the gospel and cut straight through its meaning without irrelevant wandering, and present the straight truth of God. “The proper handling of the Word of Truth, according to Paul, is to study it, personally appropriate it, and preach the straight truth of it.” — A. C. Trentham.

To be “approved unto God” we must have the knowledge, confidence and courage to walk on a straight line for the truth. Moreover, this is to be done as a “workman.” No amount of Bible knowledge pleases God if there is no work performed for His glory. One outstanding Baptist pastor has said, “I never visit just for a social call. Wherever I go I'm there to tend to my Lord's business.” Just so, all our study and effort is invested with the desire for Divine approval, not for personal gratification.

3. Study to remain loyal to the faith, verses 16-18. There is a great danger in an “intellectual” approach to religion. Such unhallowed and empty discussions (“profane and vain babblings”) are sure to lead on to ungodliness. Vain talk will result in vain deeds. Spiritual insight into the truths of the Scriptures will deepen one's dedication to the faith. Shallow discussions will draw one away from the faith.

During all the time of man, there has been an effort to progress on to “higher” (?) religion. The many religious cults in the world today are the result of man's efforts to dig down into the truths of God without the spiritual illumination which the Holy Spirit gives. Unaided intellect is as

helpless to dig into the deep things of God as it was unable to build the tower of Babel unto heaven.

It is wrong, therefore, to study the Bible for the sake of argument. When it is studied reverently and prayerfully, the Spirit becomes the teacher and guides the student into all truth. A Spirit-taught knowledge of the Word produces strong Christians dedicated to the truth. Oh, for more time to spend with the Spirit over the Word!

III. THE PURPOSE OF THE SCRIPTURES, 3:14-17.

1. The Scriptures are intended to give an authoritative message from God, verse 14. In his past life Timothy had been instructed in the Scriptures. Now he is exhorted to continue without deviation in the things learned. Why? Assuredly not because Paul just wanted to keep Timothy as his own disciple. Timothy must not deviate from the truth delivered because this truth is God's own message.

God has spoken in many ways. Signs, dreams, visions, angelic messengers, human messengers, and even audible voice, have been used of God to communicate His message. The most blessed revelation of all, however, was in the person of Jesus Christ, Hebrews 1:1-2. Though He used different ways, it was God's message which was revealed. Timothy, like multitudes of others, had recognized it as God's message and not as the word of men. This message was written down by selected men and this became the authoritative message of God to men. God gave an inspired book that it may record His message.

“For this cause also we thank God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe,” I Thessalonians 2:13.

2. The Scriptures are intended to give instruction unto salvation, verse 15. Timothy had been reared in the God-fearing home of his mother Eunice and grandmother Lois. They were women who revered God and prized His word highly. From the time young Timothy could understand anything, they began instructing him in the Scriptures. Like many children today, the lad was taught to sing Bible songs, enjoy Bible stories, and know Bible truths. It is no wonder that he came to trust Jesus as Saviour in early life and later became companion to the Apostle Paul. His instruction began in infancy (“a babe”) and continued as he grew older.

The Bible reveals Christ, John 5:39. Robert Tuck has written, “It is a good thing to drill the young mind in a knowledge of the word of God and to

store it with memory texts, but care should be taken to show how all Scripture reveals Christ and leads to Christ.” One can know much about the Bible and be unsaved, but if his heart is open, what he knows will assuredly lead him to Christ.

Since the Scriptures are “able to make thee wise unto salvation,” what a tragic mistake parents make when they do not saturate the lives of their children in Bible facts. A child is never too young to be taken to God's house. He is never too young to become accustomed to hymns of the Christian faith. As soon as he can understand anything at all, he may be taught to reverence God. This type of instruction will lead to his salvation. What greater blessing could any parent ask than this?

3. The Scriptures are intended to give a true message from God, verse 16a. **“All scripture is given by inspiration of God . . .”** In contrast to the teachings of the imposters, Christian faith rests solely upon the authority of an inspired word of God. In fact, “all scripture” is inspired of God and bears the mark of Divine authorship. One version has this passage, **“Every scripture 'inspired of God is also profitable . . .”** This puts the verb in the wrong place, however, for 'it should read, “Every (all) scripture IS inspired of God . . .” There is no reasonable basis to doubt the inspiration of the Bible.

Observe again that ALL Scripture is inspired of God. This means the Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, is God-breathed. It means the various portions of each Testament (law, history, poetry, prophets in the Old Testament; biography, history, epistles, prophecy in the New Testament) are inspired. There are no “degrees of inspiration” so that some part is more inspired than another. It is all God's word. It has all come by the direct intervention and revelation of the Holy Spirit. It is all profitable. This is why it behooves every Christian to read all the Bible. As the poet said, “You will kneel in very rapture when you read the Bible through.”

4. The Scriptures are intended to produce mature Christians, verses 16b-17. The Twentieth Century New Testament translates verse 16 in these words; “Every Scripture is God-inspired and is helpful for teaching, for refuting error, for giving guidance, and for training others in righteousness.” Kenneth Wuest's Expanded Translation has it, “Every scripture is God-breathed, and is profitable for teaching, for conviction, for improvement, for training with respect to righteousness.” This is how the Scripture works. It teaches; it reproves (refutes error); it corrects (gives guidance); it instructs in righteousness.

CONCLUSION—The Bible is the pure and unadulterated Word of God. It was given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It has been preserved

pure through the ages until this generation. It is God's guide to the doctrines. His children should believe and the manner of life they should live. This Book should be studied to be wise, believed to be saved, and obeyed to be holy. **“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto the children . . .”**
Deuteronomy 6:6-7a.

QUESTIONS

1. What does the first sentence of the introduction to this lesson mean?
2. What is the derivation of the word, **Bible**?
3. Why must the Holy Spirit help us understand the Bible?
4. What is the central theme of the Bible?
5. Why should Christians study the Bible?
6. What does “inspiration” mean?