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Surely Not by Bread Alone- The Use of Inspiration Derived from 2 Timothy 3:16

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LIBERTY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

Surely Not by Bread Alone- The Use of Inspiration

Derived from 2 Timothy 3:16

Submitted to Dr. Martin Sheldon,

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the completion of

2020 RLG N 490-D01 LUO

Research and Scholarly Capstone

by

David Hightower

May 4, 2020

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Introduction

In 2018, a poll was conducted revealing that One-third of U.S. adults believe in a higher power of some kind, but not in the God of the Bible.¹ With nearly half of Americans living in this disbelief, the resolve of believers and their trust in Scripture must stand fast. Questions like, can what has been written by men be respected as revelation from God? Also, why should anyone trust the Bible to direct their personal affairs? Unsaved humanity requires an informed response.

The meaning and use of Divine inspiration can be an anchor to that response. For it to do so, a question must be answered. The question is, what makes the Bible credible for the direction, correction, guidance, or anything else it offers? To answer this question is the purpose of this research. It is to make clear why the biblical message can be trusted and justify the believer's faith in Scripture for guiding the conduct of humanity by a focused study of 2 Timothy 3:16. Detailed establishment of the passage will concentrate on key words that provoke thoughtful insights to the benefit of the reader.

An exegesis of 2 Timothy 3:16, will provide the reader with enough material for discussion why the Bible is relevant today and can likewise anchor one's own belief. Both believer and non-believer alike can benefit. The believer can benefit, as a member of the body of Christ, a confidence in the illuminating the word of God. The believer can boldly approach important matters such as explaining the severity of sin, the strength and reliability of messianic prophecy, and God's plan of redemption. The non-believer can profit by recognizing the Divine Author's intentions and, likewise with confidence, respond to God's unwavering plan that leads the way to salvation. The value of this research offers additional credibility to Scripture for all

¹ Dalia Fahmy, "Key findings about Americans' belief in God," *Pew Research Center* (April 25, 2018), accessed April 15, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/04/25/key-findings-about-americans-belief-in-god/>.

Christian dogma. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to confirm that Divine inspiration can be used to justify the use of Scripture from an exegesis of 2nd Timothy 3:16.

Defining 2nd Timothy 3:16

Establishing the Historical Setting

Understanding the setting 2 Timothy 3:16 was written in, adds to the importance to the examination of the text. Authorship of the letters to Timothy are mildly disputed, but generally accepted as having been authored by the Apostle Paul. With its destination Ephesus, it is most likely that Paul wrote 2nd Timothy from Rome during his second incarceration around 64-65 A.D.² Second Timothy is also identified as part of a trilogy of letters that have been traditionally referred to as the Pastoral Epistles which concerned itself with Timothy and Titus and their care of Christians. As one author put it of the letters, “all three deal with pastoral matters involving the care of souls and the orderly conduct of God’s people in the church as well as in the world.”³ The value of these letters for spiritual guidance to pastors cannot be overstated.

However, more recent scholars have distinguished that the letters to Timothy and Titus were addressing them in a unique capacity. Andreas J. Köstenberger and his co-authors note,

While Timothy and Titus are often viewed as paradigmatic (lead/senior) pastors of local congregations, it should be noted that the role of these two men was not technically that of a permanent, resident pastor of a church. Rather, Timothy and Titus were Paul’s apostolic delegates who were temporarily assigned to their present locations in order to deal with particular problems that had arisen and needed special attention.⁴

Now Paul’s words become more poignant.

² D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *Introducing the New Testament: A Short Guide to Its History and Message* (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2010), 113.

³ Walter A. Elwell and Robert W. Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 317.

⁴ Andreas J. Köstenberger and Scott L. Kellum and Charles L. Quarles. *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2016), 717.

They are Paul's instructions to his special delegates, set toward the closing of the apostolic era at a time when the aging apostle would have felt a keen responsibility to ensure the orderly transition from the apostolic to the postapostolic period. As such, they contain relevant and authoritative apostolic instruction for the governance of the church at any time and place.⁵

Paul's letters are befitting for the time and transition they represent. They are not just letters to pastors; they represent apostolic instruction to his delegate missionaries *working a mission*. The mission to carry on what is referred to as the sub apostolic period. They possess a unique gravity about them as they give instructions to build upon and go beyond the work that had already been done.⁶

Establishing the Canonical Context

With the incarnation of Christ, the new message and mission enters humanity.⁷ The kingdom has arrived, and events are placed in motion to advance its purposes. The letters to Timothy and Titus are essential as they comprise the pastoral care needed for believers for their retention and the advancement of the kingdom.

Moving specifically into 2nd Timothy, several issues emerge crucial to the movement. The acknowledgment of Paul and his impending martyrdom is a topic, also he gives warnings that there will be continued opposition against sound doctrine. However, regardless of this, the gospel cannot be compromised, nor will its advancement occur without cost.⁸

In the midst of this, 2nd Timothy 3:16 is located in a section of Paul's letter charted by Köstenberger that centers around three themes; first, Paul's understanding of the latter-day

⁵ Köstenberger, 717.

⁶ Ibid., 735.

⁷ Mark 1:15, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."
All Scripture has been taken from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise noted.

⁸ Introducing the New Testament: A Short Guide, 114-115.

apostasy (3:1– 9), second, his encouragement for Timothy to stay focused, (3:10– 17), and third, closing with charging Timothy to specifically continue preaching the word (4:1-8).⁹

Establishing the Translation

The Greek rendering of 2nd Timothy 3:16 is “πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος καὶ ὠφέλιμος πρὸς διδασκαλίαν, πρὸς ἔλεγχον, πρὸς ἐπανάρθωσιν, πρὸς παιδείαν τὴν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ” which by *The English-Greek Reverse Interlinear New Testament New American Standard Bible* translates to “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.”¹⁰

For expediency however, our focus will be on establishing the first half of the passage where various reputable versions address it differently. The reason, Kevin Smith points out is, “The opening words of 2 Timothy 3:16 are notoriously problematic. πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος has been the subject of endless discussion.”¹¹

The *Common English Bible* (CEB) opens the passage with, “Every scripture is inspired by God...”¹² The *English Standard Version* (ESV), renders, “All Scripture is breathed out by God...”¹³ The *New American Standard Bible* (NASB) also offers, “All Scripture is inspired by God...” but includes an annotation that reads “God-breathed.”¹⁴ The *New International Version* (NIV) translates, “All Scripture is God-breathed...”¹⁵

⁹ Köstenberger, 742.

¹⁰ Randall Tan, *The English-Greek Reverse Interlinear New Testament New American Standard Bible*. (Digital, Logos: Lexham Press, 2009). All translations from Greek to English are accomplished through this source unless otherwise noted.

¹¹ Kevin Gary Smith, “A Grammatical Exposition Of 2 Timothy 3:16-17” *Conspectus* 09:1 (Mar 2010): 95.

¹² *Common English Bible* (CEB). (Common English Bible, 2011).

¹³ English Standard Version (ESV) (Crossway Bibles, 2016).

¹⁴ *New American Standard Bible* (NASB) The Lockman Foundation, 1995. The full annotation reads “2 Timothy 3:16 Lit God-breathed.”

¹⁵ New International Version (NIV) (Biblica, Inc., 2011).

Unlocking the Text

Establishing Key Words

For our understanding, the following are identified here as key words primarily because they have been problematic in understanding the text. They have been used in ways that have cast a misdirection away from the focus of the passage or by their underestimated contribution to the overall interpretation.

“Every” or “All” is translated from the word $\pi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$, *pas*, which means every; all.¹⁶ For now, either word choice is acceptable as they both are adjectives for Scripture and make the point that what was written may or may not apply to the totality of what they describe, namely, Scripture.

“Scripture” is translated from the word $\gamma\rho\alpha\phi\acute{\eta}$, *graphē*, which means writing; written; scripture.¹⁷ Smith clarifies this usage, “Although in extra biblical Greek it could refer simply to a piece of writing...in the New Testament it is a technical term for ‘sacred scripture.’”¹⁸ This is consistent with its numerous uses within the New Testament.

“Profitable” is translated from the word $\acute{\omega}\phi\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\iota\mu\omicron\varsigma$, *ōphelimos*, which means useful; beneficial. Certain translations prefer the term ‘profitable.’ It is a key adjective in the passage.

Establishing Theopneustos

As noted earlier, it can be seen from the various biblical translations, the use of derivatives or variations of “inspired by God” and “God-breathed.” This leaves room for the imagination. ‘Inspired’ suggests that God influenced the thoughts of the writers; ‘God-breathed’ suggests influence as well, but possibly a stricter ‘thus saith the Lord’ dictation by God

¹⁶ Tan, $\pi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$.

¹⁷ Ibid., $\gamma\rho\alpha\phi\acute{\eta}$.

¹⁸ Smith, 97.

experienced by Moses. Or it could mean something anywhere in between. Both wrestle with the adjective “θεόπνευστος” or “theopneustos,” which is only used once in the New Testament.

“Theopneustos” is translated from the word θεόπνευστος and “is a combination of the noun θεός (‘God’), the verb πνέω (‘to breath [out]’), and the adjectival suffix -τος.”¹⁹ When attaching theopneustos to the rest of the passage, Smith acknowledges that although “Every God-breathed scripture is also profitable” is *grammatically conceivable*, it puts the reader in an *awkward position* that makes the usage overly complex.²⁰ What complicates the text is that this rendering can bring into question *which* scriptures are God-breathed and which are not. Then, equally problematic is that *only* the God-breathed scriptures are also profitable. Was this what Paul was getting at? Since there is no indication that bringing suspicion on Scripture was Paul’s intent, the biblically fluent “Every scripture is God-breathed and profitable,” is a better rendering of the text without ambiguity and provides *a strong lead into the actual function of the text*.

Michael Graves explains the nature of God-breathed words, “If Scripture is inspired by God, it must be useful...If Scripture is inspired by God, it cannot be deceptive.”²¹ So how does God protect the integrity through human writers? Archibald Alexander recounts that theologians have recognized *superintendence*, *suggestion*, and *elevation* as the three types of inspiration.²² They inherently protect God’s message.

Alexander notes that superintendence is when the writer of Scripture recalls an event but gets an assist by the Holy Spirit to assure the recollection is free from a forgetful error.²³ He continues by explaining the uniqueness of the suggestion type of inspiration.

¹⁹ Smith, 99.

²⁰ Ibid., 100.

²¹ Michael Graves, *The Inspiration and Interpretation of Scripture: What the Early Church Can Teach Us* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2020), 20.

²² Archibald Alexander, *The Truth, Inspiration, and Authority of Scripture* (Ashland: Lexham Press, 2017), 146.

²³ Ibid., 147.

But as the chief object of inspiration is to communicate truths before unknown, the inspiration of suggestion is requisite in all such cases; as when the prophets were inspired to predict the revolutions of empires, or to communicate a message from God to a whole people, or to an individual, the ideas must of course, have been immediately suggested by the Holy Spirit.²⁴

Elevation is equally exciting and unique as minds are "...wonderfully elevated above their common level, so that the conceptions are more vivid and sublime, and expressed in language more appropriate and striking, than would have naturally occurred to them."²⁵ Psalms and Proverbs are excellent representations of this specific activity by the Holy Spirit.

Establishing Function

Excellent understanding is unlocked by zeroing in on the function of the scripture. Here Smith leads us into that function masterfully.

Paul's own emphasis, however, is on the rest of the passage. The inspiration of scripture was not disputed. Paul's aim was not to assert the inspiration of the scriptures, but to elucidate the value of the inspired scriptures. In his opening assertion, the stress falls not on θεόπνευστος ('God-breathed'), but on ὠφέλιμος ('useful'); not on God's inspiration of the scriptures, but on his intention for them.²⁶

With the priority of function established, the reader can relax the emphasis on theopneustos. How God communicated Scripture, either by influence or dictation, is no longer the prominent issue here. That God was involved in the process is the highpoint in the matter, there is no need to be bogged down by overemphasizing it.

Establishing Some Meaning

So then, what do these parts mean up to this point? Note that "All Scripture" incorporates a vast array of *modes* of communication. *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary* explains in detail.

²⁴ Alexander, 147.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Smith, 100.

Taken as a description of “all Scripture” (as in 2 Tim. 3:16), inspiration must necessarily encompass such diverse modes of revelation as words audibly spoken or dictated by God and written down by humans (i.e., dictation: “the LORD said to Moses,” “thus says the LORD”), words spoken by angels, texts in which a divine or angelic voice is entirely obscured by the voice and identity of the human author (e.g., the letters of Paul), and, in the vast majority of cases, texts that are essentially anonymous, invoking no human author or divine author in particular.²⁷

Regardless of the mode, approach, and various authors, “all Scripture” individually and collectively originate from God. With the entirety of Scripture included, believers can go deeper into “God-breathed.”

Edward Young makes an interesting case that replacing *theopneustos* with “inspiration” rather than using “God-breathed” is misleading. His argument, “This would mean that the Bible is a body of writings into which *something* had been...breathed. Some *quality* of divinity, we may suppose, had been breathed by God *into* these writings which rendered them distinct from other writings.”²⁸ The case he is making is that Scripture is a combination of words like any other form of communication. Or simplifying this, words are just words first, even God’s. With humans, our spoken words are generated from *our* breath. With God, His Word is generated from His Person. The point could be made is that Paul is comparing a very personal human process (speech) to the very personal authorship of God to all Scripture. Scripture relays more than an influence, more than thoughts inspired by God, they relay God’s direct thoughts. Young brings home this directness, “What Paul is declaring is the Divine origin of Scripture. Some apparently think that there is no need to make such an assertion at this point, but it is precisely

²⁷ Tremper Longman III, ed., *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013), 974.

²⁸ Edward J. Young, “The God-Breathed Scripture: Scripture—God-Breathed and Profitable,” *Grace Journal Volume: GJ* 07:3, (1966): 7 (*italics mine*).

this truth which undergirds the following truth, namely, that all Scripture is profitable. If the Bible is not divine, then we cannot be sure that all of it is profitable.”²⁹

But Paul’s witness is that Scripture is undoubtedly divine communication, which makes it useful. *The Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* concurs that the Bible is useful as it “...forms the structure, content, and authority for the development of doctrine.”³⁰

Establishing Emphasis

As readers proceed into the remainder of the text, attention should be given to emphasis. The word *πρὸς* or “for” creates tension. Edward Goodrick describes its use “in a rather striking manner” as it is a preposition of purpose repeated four times, “for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training.”³¹ Paul is rhythmically drumming purpose by its usage. Goodrick joins in, “Paul is telling Timothy to look at each one separately to see each use to which he is to put the *graphē*.”³² By establishing this timbre, Paul orchestrates this section of the text to bring tension to what is important. A helpful question that frames this tension is what is more important to Paul here; where Scripture came from, or what it accomplishes for humanity that exercises it? The propositions of purpose lead to the answer.

Establishing Five Purposes

“Teaching” or “doctrine” is translated from *Διδασκαλία*, *didaskalia*, which means discipline, training.³³ Josh McDowell brings out the benefits, “This enables us to *understand* who we are as humans in relationship to God, *what* constitutes right from wrong, and *how God’s way* is meant to bring resolution to the physical, relational, social, moral, ethical, economic, and

²⁹ Young, 8.

³⁰ Chad Brand and Charles Draper and Archie England. *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. (Nashville, Tenn: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 722.

³¹ Goodrick, Edward W. “Let’s Put 2 Timothy 3:16 Back in The Bible,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25:4 (1982): 485.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Tan, *Διδασκαλία*.

environmental problems of life.”³⁴ High praise should be given to God’s doctrine, to His worldview that is a necessary understanding for holy living.

“Reproof” is translated from ἐλεγμός, elegmos, which means reproof.³⁵ Kent Hughes writes that once doctrine is known, there will surely be reproof and he goes further, “Those true to the Scriptures cannot escape this duty.”³⁶ With the new worldview comes reproof from old to new motivations and behavior. Such is the way of progressive sanctification.

“Correction” is translated from ἐπανόρθωσις, epanorthōsis, which means improvement, correction.³⁷ Charles Swindoll writes that “Correction...builds upon reproof. It means “restoration” or ‘reformation.’ Whereas reproof reveals our sinfulness or foolishness, correction shows us how to straighten out what we’re doing wrong.”³⁸

“Training” is translated from Παιδεία, paideia, and can also mean discipline, training.³⁹ Swindoll adds a nice touch in reminding us how training avoids trouble.

An instructor cannot teach merely by correction, pointing out where the student has gone wrong. That’s like trying to drive by looking in the rearview mirror. Training shows the correct way to behave before mistakes are made.⁴⁰

Kent adds assurance of improvement, “It straightens us out,” he adds, “God’s Word is useful in a practical way. Those who accept its reproof will begin to find their lives straightening out.”⁴¹

³⁴ Josh McDowell, *God-Breathed: The Undeniable Power and Reliability of Scripture*. (Uhrichsville: Barbour Publishing, Inc., 2015), 73 (italics mine).

³⁵ Ibid., ἐλεγμός.

³⁶ Kent R. Hughes, Bryan Chapell, *1-2 Timothy and Titus (ESV Edition): To Guard the Deposit*. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 217.

³⁷ Tan, ἐπανόρθωσις.

³⁸ Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*. (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 2014), 241.

³⁹ Ibid., Παιδεία.

⁴⁰ Swindoll, 241.

⁴¹ Hughes, 217.

These first four words position the practitioner for success. Goodrick details, “It is the basis for the doctrine one teaches, it forms the words of rebuke to those who know better and the words of correction to those who do not, it guides people in their ethical living.”⁴²

2nd Timothy 3:16 concludes with “training in righteousness.” “Righteousness” is translated from Δικαιοσύνη, dikaiosynē. Righteousness can be used as a legal forensic term or an ethical term that denotes morally correct conduct or character.⁴³ In this case, Paul is referring to the ethical form that represents the concept of bearing a correct relationship with God and others.⁴⁴ It is the point of all the doctrine, reproof, correction, and training. Righteousness, our correct status, conduct, and character with God and others, is a vital component in the progressive sanctification process set out by God for all believers.

One Final Note and Application

2nd Timothy 3:17 adds additional meaning to the application of the study. It would be a serious omission to not include it since the two verses literally create a full sentence. The scripture in its entirety reads, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”⁴⁵

The pursuance of God’s righteousness prescribed for humanity is the purpose. Therefore, care must be given to secure that righteous lifestyle. This means to observe and reproduce, by way of the Spirit, the unique worldview, motive, actions, and attitudes prescribed by Scripture in one’s own life. Our motivation? It is the assurance by God that this lifestyle can produce good

⁴² Goodrick, 485.

⁴³ Merrill C. Tenney and J. D Douglas, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2011) 991.

⁴⁴ Collins, Raymond F., *I & II Timothy and Titus (2002): A Commentary*. (Louisville: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2013), 265.

⁴⁵ 2nd Timothy 3:16-17.

work that pleases and glorifies His name. Only in the study and practice of the Word, can humanity achieve the self-actualization that is secured and hidden in Christ.⁴⁶ Therefore, Christians should read, absorb, then practice.

Interestingly, the nature of the verse and what it sets out to do, creates a circular faith-growing experience. Ultimately, the purpose of the verse overall is to point out the profitability of Scripture. But to do so, it takes the reader on a journey through Scripture's function which leads to Scripture's purpose; the righteousness expected by God. Such an understanding of purpose can only be supplied with assurance from the Scripture's Author. And believers can have this assurance because God breathed these words into existence which starts the circle again that they are profitable etc., etc. One can start at any point and follow it around in a circle towards greater confidence and faith in God's word. Practicing the truth of God's word validates and invigorates greater trust.

For the believer to take anything less than a robust approach to the application of Scripture to their life violates that trust in God's word. It becomes problematic. It becomes a startling silent testimony that states, "The effort to observe obedience is not worth the trouble."

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to produce a confirmation. That being, that Divine inspiration can be used to justify the use of Scripture. The exegesis of 2nd Timothy 3:16 was enlisted to fulfill that purpose. Though the louder voice of function and purpose strongly justifies the use of Scripture for application to one's life, God's breathed-out words, in subtleness carries with it, power. The truth. The truth that declares, surely, man does not live by bread alone.

⁴⁶ Colossians 3:3b, "...your life is hidden with Christ in God."

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