

Time of Grace Ministry
You Can Trust the Scripture
October 30, 2011
2 Timothy 3:10-17

I've got a little question for you today and I'm absolutely serious – do you have any unpaid parking tickets?

I'm a city guy. My family and I live in the city and I've got to tell you, I love it. In fact, we live in a very historic neighborhood. The neighborhood was laid out long before the automobile so the houses are very close together. In fact, the squirrels don't even have to flex their thigh muscles when they jump from one roof to the other. What that means though is there's no alley behind our house and because the houses are packed so close together, there's no room to get a driveway in and of course, no garage. There was no need for a garage back then; they had one common horse barn on the block, probably like a livery stable. What that means is we're all street people when it comes to parking. Just about everybody on my block has to park on the street. I don't mind. In fact, it means I don't have to shovel out a big driveway when it snows. But one thing you learn if you need to park on the street on a daily basis is there are parking regulations and there are – oh, I want to get angry at them, but I can't get too mad at them. My enemies are in little white Jeeps cruising around the city looking for cars that they can ticket. See, there are parking regulations and if you do not observe the parking regulations, there will be a little love letter from the city on your windshield when you come out in the morning. And one by one, my family and I have had to discover all of the parking regulations that will bring you tickets and its twenty-five bucks and up.

It doesn't make any difference if you think you were in the right. If you go and argue about it a nice lady will listen to you tell your whole story. You can rant all you want; she doesn't mind. She goes through it all day. She's paid to listen to upset people ranting about their parking tickets that they think were unjust. And she'll tell you, "Well, we'll set an appointment for you in municipal court." And after you've hung around and waited in line and blown an afternoon, she'll say, "Ten weeks from now we can make an appointment for you." So you think, "Well, forget it. I've already blown half a day of work. What am I going to do?" So you just pay it and be done with it. Honestly, that's my advice to you – just pay the ticket. If you get ticketed in my town, just pay the ticket and be done with it; grumble all you want.

But see, here's the deal, I can't get too mad at my enemies in the little white Jeeps. They're just doing their job. In fact, there is an actual city ordinance, a real city law behind every one of those tickets. If I'm parked too many inches from the curb, there's a law about that. If I'm too close to the crosswalk, there is a law. In other words, there's authority behind those annoying tickets.

Now I don't want to waste anymore of your time talking about parking tickets. What I really am interested in is this concept of authority behind what we do and say. Is your belief system just based on opinion like, "What's your favorite restaurant?" Or when you communicate things about God can you speak with authority? Can I speak to you today with authority? Let's talk about that.

I've got a little Scripture reading to dig into with you today to work on that concept because it is very, very important. It has always been important. It is as much, or more, important today as ever because the majority of your fellow Americans do not believe what I'm about to tell you or maybe they've never heard it. Most people today that you know believe in relativism; that is, there are no absolutes of right or wrong. Every individual kind of crafts his or her own truth system and then you work with that. And so your own set of rights and wrongs only exist in a little bubble right around you as an individual. And that means you can say, "You're free," "We're tolerant," "You can believe whatever nonsense you want, just don't try to put your nonsense on anybody else."

Now if God had never spoken, I suppose that's where we'd be. But in fact, God has indeed spoken and he cares enough about you and me to transmit his word to you and to me intact. There was a time when he didn't, when he spoke and counted on word of mouth to transmit it. I think that's one of the reasons why he allowed people to live so long like in the days of Methuselah. He let people live nine centuries so that they could guarantee transmission of the message. There's a lot less chance of getting it garbled as it goes from father to son, mother to daughter, and so on if great-great-great-great-great-grandpa and great-great-great-great-great-grandma are still around saying, "No, that's not how it was. It was like this." It's like message control.

But now in a time when we live three score years and ten, and not much more than that as Moses said, more than that and you're struggling and then you die. God arranged for his word to be written down. We call that – the Latin word for writing is *scribere* – the *scripturas* means "something written" and so the Scripture is God's written word. And he has given to all of his royal priests his written word. But many of God's royal priests did not have that written word. They weren't allowed to have it. And even if they could they were often illiterate. And in the days before the printing press, the copies of the Bible were so expensive they couldn't have afforded it anyway. And what happened in the middle years of the New Testament era, what we call the Middle Ages, the church of God morphed into a very bad place where it went off the rails in two extremely important respects.

One is that people who wanted to know, "Am I good with God?" were driven to depend on their own performance, their own works and deeds and they were taught less and less to have complete faith in the blood forgiveness of Jesus Christ, won on the cross and given to people by faith. The other is the source of your information. Instead, they were directed to the organization of the church itself for all their answers. And the ordinary Christians who lived in Europe and the Middle East at that time were not encouraged to be in God's word on their own; they were taught to depend on their pastors.

Now having a good relationship with a pastor – I hope you trust me – that's all a good thing, except that you've got to make sure that I'm in the right place in the scheme of things. If I'm up here and the word of God is here and I correct the word of God when I don't like what it says, then I am the lord and master of the word and that's an inversion that unfortunately the church has gotten itself into. It needs to be like this: That any spiritual leaders' value to you is not in arranging and adapting God's word to fit your authority, but the reverse; that whatever gives us authority to communicate things to you is derived from the Bible.

The reason that there are Bibles in your pews and the reason we encourage you to have your own well-worn copies in your home is because you as royal priests are honored to communicate directly with your God. You may pray to him directly and you can allow him to speak to you directly through his written word. And when you read the Bible, it's as though you are feeling the breath of the Holy Spirit on your cheek. He is talking to you personally and you need to be in it. The concept that regular, ordinary people can be entrusted to read, understand, interpret, and believe the word all by themselves, assisted by but not controlled by people in the church, is a reformation idea that did not always exist.

Have you ever thought what a privilege it is, what a gift it is, to have God's word for us in writing? To be able to tap into his divine authority directly? What a gift! I know I don't appreciate it enough and probably, you don't either. It wasn't always so. There was a time when having a Bible was actually illegal. Do you know the story of William Tyndale? He was an Englishman who lived about the time of Martin Luther; born in the late 1400s. He went to Oxford and Cambridge and was just a brilliant man; a genius. He mastered six languages and he had a burn to bring the word of God to the English people. Not in Greek or Hebrew or Latin, but in the language they spoke.

Now there were some existing English translations of the Bible around the year 1500, but they were really old sounding, as though you were reading Milton or Shakespeare. You know how tough that is to get through. And if you've ever been to a Shakespeare play, you know that some stretches of dialogue go completely over your head because you're not sure what they're talking about; the language has changed so much in all that time. The same thing was true of God's word in English and Tyndale had a passion to bring it in the dialect that the English-speaking people were talking at that time. And he, unfortunately, was persecuted because the government and church, which were together in those days, viewed him as a subversive threat. They wanted total control of the message and didn't want ordinary lay people to have a piece of that action.

So he had to flee for his life and he escaped to the continent. He went to Germany for a little while and then ended up in Belgium in the city of Antwerp. But some spies outted him. He was discovered, put into a castle dungeon in Brussels, had a brief trial for heresy and then he was tied to a stake, strangled, and then his dead body was burned as a public example to anyone who would dare to try to connect people to the authority of God by sidestepping the authority of the church. He's a hero of anybody connected with the Reformation.

Now there was a time when God's word was spoken orally to people when there was no written Bible. And in all the years before Moses, for instance, those thousands of years, God's communication was verbal. But starting with the time of Moses in 1500 B.C., he instructed Moses to write his words down. He chiseled his first words on those tablets of stone, but then instructed Moses to write using the technology of the day. And ink on papyrus was the way in which the Bible was recorded for you and for me into posterity. And there are many hundreds, even thousands, of manuscripts of the Bible behind the printed Bible that we have in the English language today.

I'd like to go with you to the apostle Paul. He's old now, as we meet him in our Bible study today from 2 Timothy. He's at the end of his ministry. Second Timothy might well have been

the last book that he wrote. He's in prison and he's weary. Not only is he full of years, but he hurts because of all the times that he's been beaten and perhaps even had bones broken. His body aches but his heart is happy because he is bringing authoritative revelation and passing it on to Timothy and the other younger pastors that he has God's authoritative word to transmit to.

And so from a prison cell he wrote this – he wanted Timothy to be strong and to use Paul's example. He said, "You, however, know all about my teaching, way of life." There's a list of nine things: "Teaching, way of life, purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, and sufferings – what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them." So he didn't shrink from holding himself up as an example. "Be like me!" He said that without bragging. He just said, "You've now seen me act out for you what you can expect and what your ministry will be like. You will have great joys as you and I have, but you will also encounter intense opposition. Expect it. That doesn't mean something's wrong with you or that God's power has ended or he has given up on you or hates you now. Expect it." He says in verse 12: "Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and imposters will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived."

Man, I'll tell you, that's our world! Our world is crazy. Nobody knows what truth is anymore. When truth is relative, anybody's truth is as good as anybody else's. So if my truth is that any uppity woman in my home I can beat if I want to teach her a lesson, if I think that's truth than I can justify marital abuse, spousal abuse, family abuse. And I can say, "Don't you dare come in here and try to tell me what to do because this is right for me." If somebody thinks that having sexual relations with a child is a beautiful thing who can say no, who can say it's wrong? When all truth is relative there are no backstops anymore. That's the world we live in, where there are no lines or limits anymore. Everything's open for negotiation, everybody's notion of truth is relative. Things are going from bad to worse and we're living in it right now.

Paul writes: "But as for you, Timothy, continue in what you've learned and have become convinced of because you know those from whom you learned it." Like, "I've earned the right to share this with you because you could see I wasn't into this word of God proclaiming business for the money." He's broke. "I wasn't in it for the power." How powerful is a prisoner in chains? He gave up having a family. Paul never allowed himself to be married, stayed chaste and single his whole life, no kids, never held a child of his own in his arms. He gave it up as a self-sacrifice for the gospel's sake and then used that as an example to Timothy. "Not that you can never get married," he said, "in fact you should all be married because of all the immorality in the world. But my example should show you that I was not in it for personal gain." But even more importantly, "From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." That's a massive statement!

Scriptures are God's written word. Timothy had a Greek father, his dad was a pagan. I don't know if he ever came to faith but his mother, Eunice, was a Jewish woman who was a believer and his grandma, Lois, taught him to know the word of God. In those days we would have called it the Old Testament Scriptures. From the time not just when he was grade school age, but from infancy, as soon as he was born they were singing and talking to him about the wonderful God that they worshipped, about the Messiah who was going to come and redeem the world and how Israel was giving the world a Savior, that he was part of a grand design to bring salvation to the

world through their tribe. “You’ve known the holy Scriptures since you were a baby and they’re able to make you wise for salvation.” In other words, they have the power you need. They not only have the information you lacked by birth, they not only tell you facts, but they have power to build faith, the faith that you need to grasp it. They were able at Timothy’s time and they are still able today to make you wise for salvation and the reason you need that is because you’re not born with that knowledge. You’re born only with the knowledge of sin. You don’t need to read the Bible to know there’s sin in human people. If you look around you at the world you live in you will see a violent place, a place where the strong tyrannize the weak. A place where the greedy go for all they can and rip other people off without caring a bit. Do you know how many arrests there were just in District 5 in our city, at police station number five in Milwaukee? Do you know how many arrests took place in a twelve-month period, August to August? Fifteen thousand. Fifteen thousand!

Has your life been touched by crime, violence, abuse, neglect? Think of the people you know who’ve been hurt by other people. If every woman who’d been sexually assaulted or abused would all scream at once we’d all go deaf. This is the world we live in and you’re part of it! The guilt you feel in your heart, the crummy, self-loathing feelings are there on purpose to remind you that the same evil that drives rapists and murderers is present in your heart, as well. You know about sin. You know about human evil, it’s everywhere. What you don’t know by nature is God’s rescue plan from that evil. And the written Scripture is God’s communication tool to get you what you need. First of all to tell you what happened – that God’s Son loved you enough to become incarnate, take on your human body, live your human life, subjected himself to every law of God and man that you are underneath, and obeyed them all perfectly in your place. He offered himself as the Lamb of God, a sacrifice for human sin, announced pardoned upon all of you and then gives you the power to believe the message that you need to be saved by God’s grace through faith. That power comes from the Bible which is able to make you wise. In other words, you don’t need any other sources of revelation. It’s sufficient; it will get you where you need to be. But only the Scripture has that information and authority to say, “This is what happened, this is the truth. This is the meaning of Jesus Christ. Here’s the reason you can trust it. Trust it with your life. Trust it with your soul as you head into Judgment Day.”

Why? All Scripture is what? Say it. [God-breathed]. Say it louder. “All Scripture is God-breathed.” It’s like God-spirited. That’s the word behind “breathed.” He blew his Spirit into it. The content and wording was controlled by God. That’s where the word “inspiration” of the Scripture comes from, that God breathed into its pages the very ideas he wanted you to know, with his information and his authority so that you can trust it with your life. It’s all God-breathed. That makes it useful for “teaching” so you know what to believe. For “rebuking,” so you can tell yourself and somebody else when he or she or you are wrong. You’ve got a standard, an incorruptible standard, an absolute standard, a worldwide, universal standard for knowing right and wrong, whether it’s politically popular or not.

“Correcting” means not only criticizing bad behavior, but laying out positive examples of how to live. “Training in righteousness,” why? “So that men and women of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” In other words, not only so you’ve got something to cover your nakedness on Judgment Day, but that you have power and guidelines in this life. You know how to think and act in your important mission time on this earth so that you can carry out your personal mission, the reason for which God has placed you here.

So just two “so whats” in summary. This is why you can have confidence in what God tells you in the Bible because though God used human authorship, he steered and guided every one of the men and women whose voices you will hear in the Scripture and put it together in a package that will give you what you need to know about who he is, what he’s done, who are you, how you relate to God with this faith thing and your forgiveness in Christ. Then what do I do with it now? How do I live and what will the grand judgment be like? What kind of experience should I anticipate when I get there?

So I say this for two reasons. One, to build up your confidence but secondly, to give you encouragement to treat the Bible with the respect it deserves. And not as a piece of furniture, not as an antique that you look at and say, “Yeah, that’s a beautiful old thing. Yeah, I sure like my Bible, look at it – nice and shiny and when you open it the binding cracks. We put our family tree in there and carry it on and someday I’ll give it to my kids and the binding will crack when they open it, too.”

Your Bible is intended to be a working document for you to be in. And what a crime it would be if people like William Tyndale who was strangled and burned at the stake so that the heirs of his sacrifice would just say, “Oh yeah, it’s just a Bible. Just a book. Yeah, I might m read it now and then or I’ll go to church and Pastor Jeske will explain something and that will be enough for a while.” This little thing we do here for twenty-five minutes is just a little snack. Be in the word! As an heir of this precious gift, God has given it to you for your own encouragement, but also so that you have something to say to the fearful, desperate, dying fools all around you. Think of how many people you know who are muddled in their head about what’s waiting for them on Judgment Day? Think of how many people you know who do not have a rock solid confidence in God’s unconditional love and forgiveness. How will you know what to say if you are not confident of the message, if you haven’t been in it yourself?

And so on a day that celebrates the inheritance and the gift of an understanding and receiving of the written Scripture to us, let me give you all the encouragement I can muster to be in the word yourself, to carve out the time, do whatever you have to do to get into God’s word to the point where you know what you’re talking about and no longer have to be part of this relativistic, wishy-washy kind of religious philosophizing that goes on today. Where you can simply say, “This is how it is because there’s authority behind this, the authority of the Scriptures, “Which are able to make you wise for salvation in Jesus Christ.” This is our great legacy, this is our mission. Say, “Amen.”

Let’s pray together, shall we? Dear Lord, as we think about authority we are grateful to be able to hear your voice directly. Thank you for speaking to us. Thank you for writing to us so that we know for certain who you are, what you’ve done, and what you’ve said. How we fit into your divine plans. Let us have the grace of your Holy Spirit to love and respect and read your holy word. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

For Time of Grace, I’m Pastor Mark Jeske, reminding you that every day is a day of God’s grace for you.



Grace Notes

Guides for Personal Bible Study

You Can Trust the Scripture

2 Timothy 3:10-17: You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Points to Ponder

- All of Scripture, not just part, is “God-breathed.” What does this say about how we read what it says?
- God directed the very words of Scripture. How does this give us confidence as we share what it says with others?
- **Read 2 Timothy 3:15.** Was Paul serious about saying “from infancy?” Really? Can babies have faith?
- Google “William Tyndale” and read the heroic story of the first man to translate the Bible from its original Greek and Hebrew into the English language of his day.
- We all need mentors and role models. Paul did not hesitate to cite his positive example to build Timothy’s confidence. Who can you be a spiritual role model to?

The Bottom Line

The written Scripture provides unique and irreplaceable benefits to us. It has authority—Scripture is God’s last word and trumps all human reason, tradition, and hierarchies. It has power—Scripture is able to make us wise for salvation. It shows us our sin and then shows us the Savior from that sin. It provides guidance—Scripture provides wisdom to help us live our lives and carry out our ministries for God’s glory.

You can dig deeper into your Bible by reading more about these truths from the lesson:

- **God’s Word Is Truth!** Psalm 119:160; John 8:32; John 14:6; John 17:17; 2 Timothy 2:15
- **God Speaks to Us!** Proverbs 4:20-22; John 6:63; John 12:48; John 14:10; John 16:13; Hebrews 1:1,2
- **God’s Wisdom!** Job 12:13; Luke 21:15; 2 Timothy 2:7; James 1:5; James 3:17
- **God Guides Us!** Psalm 32:8; Psalm 119:105; Proverbs 3:5,6; Romans 1:19; 1 John 5:20