

Inspired

2 Timothy 3:14-4:5

Introduction

During my recent travels I have been listening to the audio version of "For Whom the Bell Tolls," a novel written by Ernest Hemingway and published in 1940.

- It tells the story of Robert Jordan, a young American volunteer attached to a guerrilla warfare unit during the Spanish Civil War.
- As a demolitions expert, he is assigned to blow up a bridge during an attack on the city of Segovia.

I am about halfway through the book – far enough to know that Robert Jordan has a major dilemma on his hands.

- He has a job to do – one that will require help.
- The job must be done in about 24 hours.
- But he is not sure who he can trust.

Know who you can trust is key.

Two weeks ago I began a new sermon series titled "I am Convinced." In that first sermon I shared with you some of the results from a nationwide poll that CONVINCED me of the need to remind all of us of the essential truths of our Christian faith. I AM CONVINCED of the things I will be sharing from now to the end of November.

Today our text in 2 Timothy highlights the importance of Holy Scripture. We read that:

- Timothy had been taught the Word of God from the time he was a child.
- Timothy's grandmother and mother had faithfully taught him the Old Testament Scriptures.
- Timothy was to continue to stand firm in what he had been taught.

The importance of standing faithfully in the words of Scripture is the core reason our denomination, the North American Lutheran Church, came into being. If you go to the front page of the NALC website, you will read:

As we celebrate more than fifteen years together, we look forward with enthusiasm and expectation. Our journey began with **a clear commitment to the Bible's authority** and the urgent call to mission. Now, we eagerly embrace the opportunities ahead, confident in God's guidance and presence.
(www.thenalc.org)

As a congregation, we were so thoroughly convinced that we went through a painful separation from our former denomination because it no longer held this view. We were CONVINCED.

As he writes to young Timothy, the Apostle Paul made several important statements about the Scriptures – things about which Timothy and all of us need to be CONVINCED:



#1: They are the Holy Scriptures

Look at verse 15:

... how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures ... (2 Timothy 3:15)

The word for “holy” here literally means “the sacred letters.” Some scholars think Paul is saying that young Timothy learned his Hebrew alphabet by spelling his way through the Old Testament Scriptures.

When something is “holy” we understand it to be “set apart for sacred use.” The Bible is different from every other book—even books about the Bible—because it has been set apart by God for special sacred uses.

- As Christians we are called upon must treat the Bible as the special book it is. It is NOT like every other book.
 - It is not on the same level as “For Whom the Bell Tolls.”
- When I read the Bible I move into Holy Ground and I meet the Holy God.

#2: They lead us to salvation

The other half of verse 15 says:

... and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 3:15)

We are not saved by reading the Bible, but by reading the Bible we learn to trust in Jesus Christ who is revealed in the Bible. And it is through Jesus Christ we are saved.

In the Bible

- You realize that you need a Savior.
 - It functions like a mirror that shows us how filthy we are because of the sin in our lives.
 - It teaches us that the consequences of those sins is condemnation – or in other words, eternity in hell.
 - It also makes it clear that a lost sinner cannot save himself.
- In the Bible you also discover God's wonderful remedy for the sinful mess we are in.
 - Christ died for our sins!
 - If we trust Him, He will save us.
- In the Bible we also find helps the spiritual food to nourish us that we might grow in grace and serve Christ.

#3: They are inspired

Verse 16:

All Scripture is God-breathed... (2 Timothy 3:16)
That phrase "God-breathed" is how we try to communicate the idea of inspiration. It basically means that God is the author of the Bible. In other words:

God divinely influenced the human authors of the Scriptures in such a way that what they wrote was the very Word of God.

Jesus said as much when Satan was tempting Him in the wilderness:

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (Matthew 4:4)

Satan consistently tries to make us believe that the Bible is not God's final on any subject. The first temptation in the Garden of Eden was prefaced with Satan's question:

Did God really say ..? (Genesis 3:1)

As Christians we must be convinced that whatever the Bible says is true – that it is the inspired Word of God.

#4: The Scriptures equip us for service

Verse 16-17:

... is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The Scriptures ...

- What is right (teaching)
- What is not right (rebuking)
- How to get right (correction)
- How to stay right (training in righteousness)

A Christian who studies the Bible and applies what he learns will grow in holiness and avoid many pitfalls in this world.

APPLICATION

When I was ordained 44 years ago, Bishop Raymond Waldfogel asked me to affirm this statement:

I believe that the Holy Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is the inspired Word of God; that it contains the only true way to our salvation; that every true Christian is bound to acknowledge and receive it with the influence of the Spirit of God as the only rule and guide ... (United Brethren Confession of Faith)

That's the amplified version of the Lutheran wording:

Sola Scriptura (Scripture alone)

I am going to close with two statements that I believe with all of my heart to be true. I hope when you hear them, you will quickly say, "Yep. That's true indeed."

Statement #1: Tom Brodbeck is convinced that the Bible is the inspired word of God.

Statement #2: Tom Brodbeck wants me to be convinced of that, too.

Martin Luther once rejoiced:

It is a miracle how God has so long preserved His Book! How great and glorious it is to have the Word of God! (Martin Luther)

And with that let the congregation say, Amen.