

**THE ORIGIN, NATURE, AND PURPOSE OF SCRIPTURE: AN EXEGETICAL
STUDY
OF 2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17**

**JACQUES BIHOZAGARA
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DECLARATION

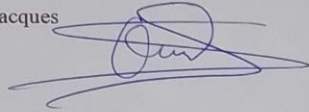
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation titled “The origin, nature, and purpose of scripture: an exegetical study of 2 Timothy 3:16-17” is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgment is made.

I further declare that I have properly acknowledged all external sources of information and assistance used in this dissertation. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other academic award. I have abided by all relevant ethical guidelines in conducting and reporting this research.

BIHOZAGARA Jacques

23/08/2024



APPROVAL

APPROVAL

This dissertation titled "The origin, nature, and purpose of scripture: an exegetical study of 2 Timothy 3:16-17" submitted by Bihozagara Jacques has been reviewed and approved by:

Rev. Canon Professor Edison Kalengyo Muhindo

Signature: Edison Muhindo Kalengyo

Date: 23/08/2024

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to Almighty God, whose divine revelation has enlightened my understanding and affirmed the Bible as the authoritative Word of God. Through diligent study and reflection on its teachings, I have come to appreciate its profound influence on my academic pursuits and personal faith. This dedication acknowledges the foundational role of Scripture in shaping my scholarly inquiry and underscores its enduring relevance in guiding my research endeavours.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the authority and sufficiency of Scripture through a detailed exegetical study of 2 Timothy 3:16-17. The research seeks to answer critical questions regarding the source, nature, role, and purpose of Scripture within the context of Christian theology. By employing the commentary method, this study offers a verse-by-verse analysis, integrating both historical and literal contexts. Special attention is given to the Greek adjective “Πᾶσα,” which is pivotal in understanding the divine origin and authority of Scripture. Through a comprehensive examination of secondary sources and a library-based approach, this research synthesizes doctrinal insights with practical applications, demonstrating the timeless relevance of Scripture. The findings underscore the foundational role of Scripture in guiding the beliefs and practices of the Christian community, affirming its inspiration, inerrancy, and authority. The dissertation concludes with a summary of key issues identified in the exegetical study and explores their implications for contemporary Christian thought and practice.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

RSV: Revised Standard Version

NIV: New International Version

GNB: Good News Bible

ESV: English Standard Version

ASV: American Standard Version

NRSV: New Revised Standard Version

UCU: Uganda Christian University

cf: Compare

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and motivation for the study

2 Timothy 3:16-17 stands as a pivotal passage in the Bible, offering a comprehensive insight into the origin and nature of scripture. This passage underscores the foundational purpose of scripture in Christian faith and practice, affirming its divine inspiration and utility for teaching, correcting, rebuking, and training in righteousness. This passage presents a clear and concise statement about the origin, nature, and purpose of scripture, making it an ideal subject for detailed exegetical study and theological reflection. Examining this passage within its historical and literal context offers insights into how early Christians understood scripture's origin, nature, and purpose, and holds practical implications for how Christians today understand and apply scripture in their lives.

However, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 is not without its challenges. The evolving views on the inspiration and authority of Scripture, particularly within the context of modern philosophical and theological movements, present significant challenges to traditional understandings of the Bible. From the rise of anti-supernatural philosophies in the 20th century to the contemporary acceptance of same-sex marriage within some Christian denominations, the interpretation of Scripture has become increasingly diverse and, at times, contentious. These developments have led to the marginalization of orthodox perspectives on the nature of Scripture and its divine authority, threatening the foundational beliefs of many believers.

This study aims to assert the divine origin, nature and purpose of scripture. It will critically focus on the opening phrase, “Πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος” (All scripture is God-breathed), which lays the foundation for understanding the origin and nature of scripture. Subsequently, the four prepositional phrases—“πρὸς διδασκαλίαν” (for teaching), “πρὸς ἐλεγμὸν” (for reproof), “πρὸς ἐπανόρθωσιν” (for correction), and “πρὸς παιδείαν τὴν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ” (for training in righteousness)—will be examined to understand the purpose of scripture.

1.2 Research questions

The primary objective of this research is to conduct a thorough and nuanced examination of the meaning and importance of 2 Timothy 3:16-17. This study will address the following research questions: one, what is the origin and nature of scripture in 2 Timothy 3: 16 embodied in the phrase

“Πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος? Two, what is the purpose of scripture as expressed in the four prepositional phrases in verse 16b: “πρὸς διδασκαλίαν”, “πρὸς ἐλεγμὸν”, “πρὸς ἐπανόρθωσιν”, “πρὸς παιδείαν τὴν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ”

1.3 Research objectives

The main goal of this research is to explore the meaning and significance of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and to understand its various complexities. To achieve this, we have specific objectives that we need to address: one, it will examine the origin and nature of the scripture by analysing the controversial first three words, “All scripture is God-breathed” (Πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος) in verse 16a. Two, it will examine the four prepositional phrases in verse 16b that describe the purpose of scripture: “πρὸς διδασκαλίαν”, “πρὸς ἐλεγμὸν”, “πρὸς ἐπανόρθωσιν”, “πρὸς παιδείαν τὴν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ”

1.4 Research thesis

The study of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 argues that every scripture is God’s breathed, and sufficient for all matters of faith in the triune God.

1.5 Research value

The Word of God is the ultimate source of inspiration, authority, and guidance for our Christian faith and way of life. Being grounded in these divine teachings is not only essential but also sufficient for experiencing a fulfilling and purposeful existence. Let us embrace the power of these teachings and live our lives according to the will of God.

1.5 Literature review

In this academic literature review, a comprehensive examination of the high view of Scripture throughout the early 20th-century church history is presented. This review affirms that scripture is considered God-breathed, authoritative, infallible, inerrant, useful, and sufficient. In essence, these perspectives collectively affirm that what the Scriptures say, God says.

The review begins by highlighting the Bible's claim for itself, asserting that every word, including its tenses and numbers, is inherently true as it is inspired by the Holy Spirit and originates from God, who is incapable of falsehood (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18). Consequently, the Bible possesses ultimate divine authority in all matters it addresses, whether historical, scientific, or spiritual, encompassing both the Old and New Testaments.

Moreover, the earliest fathers of the church, including Clement of Rome, Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus, affirmed this full inerrancy view. Clement of Rome, for instance, emphasized the divine origin of Scripture, citing the Holy Spirit's words in Psalms and encouraging readers to heed them¹. Justin Martyr echoed similar sentiments, stressing that the prophetic utterances are not from the inspired men themselves but from the divine Word that moves them.² Irenaeus further supported this stance, asserting that the Scriptures are perfect as they were spoken by the Word of God, Christ, and His Spirit³. Origen argues that the Scriptures, including the law, the prophets, the Gospels, and the writings of the apostles, were directly given by God⁴.

In medieval times, prominent figures such as Augustine and Thomas Aquinas staunchly upheld the belief in the divine origin of Scripture. Augustine, for example, emphasized this divine origin by highlighting the prophetic nature of Scripture, citing the example of the Prophet who declared, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."⁵ Augustine argued that the prophets, inspired by the Spirit of God, predicted future faith, thereby underscoring the divine revelation inherent in Scripture. Similarly, Thomas Aquinas affirmed the divine origin of Scripture, asserting that God is the author of Scripture.⁶ He argued that divine revelation is necessary for humanity's

¹ Clement, Pope, I. *The First Epistle of St. Clement to the Corinthians.-The Second Epistle of St. Clement to the Corinthians*, 1719.

² Clement, Pope, I. *The First Epistle of St. Clement to the Corinthians.-The Second Epistle of St. Clement to the Corinthians*, 1719.

³ Lyons, Irenaeus Of. *Against Heresies*. CreateSpace, 2012.

⁴ Origen. *On First Principles: Being Koetschau's Text of the De Principiis*, 1966.

⁵ Hippo, Augustine Of. *The Confessions*. New City Press, 1990.

⁶ Aquinas, Saint Thomas, and Catholic Way Publishing. *The Summa Theologica: Complete Edition*. Catholic Way Publishing, 2014.

salvation, as it contains truths that exceed human reason.⁷ Aquinas emphasized that while human reason can uncover certain truths about God, divine revelation is essential for ensuring the certainty and accessibility of these truths for all. He emphasized that acknowledging God as the author of Scripture is fundamental to the Christian faith. Aquinas also discussed the limitation of divine revelation to the canonical books, stating that faith is based on the revelation given to the apostles and prophets who wrote the canonical books. He emphasized the importance of these books, stating that he firmly believed that no author of these books made any error in writing.⁸ Aquinas's recognition of the canonical books as the authoritative source of divine revelation reflects his commitment to the divine origin and authority of Scripture.

The Reformers, including Martin Luther and John Calvin, played a significant role in reaffirming the divine origin of Scripture as the infallible and inerrant Word of God in its original manuscripts. Luther, in his works, emphasized the divine nature of God's word, stating that it contains the entirety of God Himself.⁹ He argued that the Scriptures are not the product of human imagination but are spoken through holy and devout men by the Holy Spirit.¹⁰ Luther firmly asserted that the Scriptures, though written by men, are not of human origin but from God, and therefore, they must be regarded as truth without any doubt or questioning.¹¹ Moreover, Luther emphasized the infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture, stating that to deny or belittle any part of God's word is to blaspheme against the entirety of God.¹² He believed that Scripture is consistent and harmonious, leaving no room for doubt regarding its truth and certainty. Similarly, John Calvin affirmed that Scripture has its origin in God, stating that it has come down to humanity directly from the mouth of God.¹³ He argued that Scripture should be revered in the same manner as God Himself, as it is

⁷ Aquinas, Saint Thomas, and Catholic Way Publishing. *The Summa Theologica: Complete Edition*. Catholic Way Publishing, 2014.

⁸ Aquinas, Saint Thomas, and Catholic Way Publishing. *The Summa Theologica: Complete Edition*. Catholic Way Publishing, 2014.

⁹ Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works: Sermons I- . Vol. 55 -*, 1959.

¹⁰ Reu, M. *Luther and the Scriptures*, 1982.

¹¹ Reu, M. *Luther and the Scriptures*, 1982.

¹² Martin Luther, *Works*, 1967.

¹³ Calvin, Jean. *The Institution of Christian Religion*, 1574.

entirely from Him and contains no mixture of human elements.¹⁴ Calvin emphasized the necessity of firmly believing in the certainty of God’s word, as any doubt or misgiving undermines its authority. Calvin also stressed the infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture, asserting that unless one is firmly convinced that every word of God is sacred and inviolable truth, the authority of Scripture will be weak or non-existent.¹⁵ Both Luther and Calvin’s views on the divine origin, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture were foundational to the Protestant Reformation and continue to influence theological discussions on the nature of Scripture to this day.

The post-Reformation orthodox view, particularly emphasized by proponents like the New Testament writers, upholds the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and its constituent books, as the very Word of God. They assert that what the writers of Scripture said, God said. This affirmation extends to every aspect of Scripture, including doctrine and history, which God has guaranteed to be infallible, necessitating that the verbal expression of these elements must also be infallible.

Central to this view is the belief that the Holy Spirit was actively present throughout the process of Scripture’s composition, guiding the writers’ faculties and ensuring errorless expression of God’s intended thoughts.¹⁶ This divine influence, known as inspiration, is seen as essential for understanding the nature of Scripture.¹⁷ It is important to note that this view holds that only the original autographic text of Scripture was inspired, not the common text we have today.¹⁸ Therefore, any error alleged in Scripture must be demonstrated to have been present in the original text to be considered valid.

Carson, in his essay on Scripture and canon, posits that the words of Scripture are equated with the words of God, highlighting the intrinsic divine authority of Scripture. He emphasizes that if a corpus of literature is included in “Scripture,” it must be deemed “God-breathed” and treated accordingly, thus affirming the divine origin and authority of all Scripture.¹⁹

¹⁴ Urquhart, John. *The Inspiration and Accuracy of the Holy Scriptures ... Third Edition*, 1930.

¹⁵ Calvin, Jean. *The Institution of Christian Religion*, 1574.

¹⁶ Archibald Hodge and Benjamin B. Warfield. *Inspiration*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008, 29

¹⁷ Archibald Hodge and Benjamin B. Warfield. *Inspiration*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008, 22-23

¹⁸ Archibald Hodge and Benjamin B. Warfield. *Inspiration*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008, 37

¹⁹ Carson, Donald A. *Collected Writings on Scripture*, 2010, 18–21

Similarly, Fee argues for the divine origins and total usefulness of Scripture, particularly emphasizing its inspiration by God. He asserts that every Scripture inspired by God is profitable, indicating its divine origin and practical value for Timothy's ministry. Fee's perspective aligns with a traditional understanding of Scripture's divine inspiration and authority, emphasizing its sufficiency for various aspects of Christian life and ministry.²⁰

Towner's argument revolves around the divine inspiration and practical utility of Scripture. He asserts that every part of Scripture is inspired by God, imbuing it with authority and making it valuable for teaching, convicting of sin, correcting, and training in righteousness. This divine inspiration equips believers thoroughly for every good deed, emphasizing the practical application of Scripture in various aspects of Christian life and ministry.²¹

Knight's argument focuses on the nature and origin of Scripture, particularly highlighting Paul's assertion that "all scripture is God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16). He argues that this statement indicates that Scripture is essentially God's word, carrying His authority and message. Knight emphasizes the comprehensive usefulness of Scripture, suggesting that its authority extends to all aspects of one's life before God.²²

Lane's arguments on 2 Timothy 3:16-17 affirm Scripture's authority and usefulness. Γραφή (Scripture) primarily means the Old Testament in the New Testament. Θεόπνευστος (God-breathed) emphasizes divine origin, highlighting Scripture's authority. Πᾶσα γραφή (all Scripture) likely refers to every part of the Old Testament, stressing its divine inspiration. While γραφή mainly denotes the Old Testament, it may also include the gospel message. Θεόπνευστος can be understood as "all God-breathed Scripture," emphasizing its divine origin and usefulness for teaching and training. Scripture is profitable for guiding believers in doctrine and behaviour, equipping them for every good work.

The classical Liberal view considers the Bible as containing, rather than being, the Word of God, subject to human reasoning and criticism.²³ Harry Emerson Fosdick argues that the traditional

²⁰ D.Fee, G. *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus (Understanding the Bible Commentary Series)*. Baker Books, 2011, 279–280

²¹ Philip H. Towner. *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006, 55–71

²² Knight, George W., III. *The Pastoral Epistles*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992, 651–659

²³ Schneider, Laurel C., and Cassie JE Trentaz. *Making sense of feminist theology today*. Religion compass 2, no. 5.

ideas of inspiration which imply equal value, inerrancy, and infallibility in the teachings, statements, and ideas of Scripture are irreconcilable with the facts presented in the Bible. Fosdick suggests that the inspirations of God are not “stereotyped and mechanical,” implying that they are dynamic and not limited to rigid, literal interpretations. He advocates for a more nuanced understanding of inspiration that allows for the complexities and diversity found within the Bible.²⁴ Neo-orthodoxy rejects the idea of an infallible Bible, viewing it as a witness to God’s revelation rather than the revelation itself. In this statement, Karl Barth argues against the idea that the Word of God is limited to or dependent on the Bible. Instead, he asserts that the Bible is dependent on or tied to the Word of God. This implies that the Bible is a human witness to the divine Word, rather than being the Word itself. Barth emphasizes that the Bible’s authority and significance come from its relationship to the living Word of God, which transcends the text.²⁵

Furthermore, recent developments within the Church, such as the Church of England’s approval of same-sex marriage²⁶ and Pope Francis’ endorsement of blessings for same-sex couples,²⁷ highlight the urgent need to reaffirm the traditional understanding of marriage and the authority of Scripture. By conducting a thorough exegesis of 2 Timothy 3:16-17, we will reinforce the doctrine of inspiration and authority of Scripture, providing a solid foundation for addressing these contemporary challenges.

The reviewed literature highlights a consistent view across different eras of the church, from the earliest fathers to the Reformers and beyond, affirming that Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit

2008, 788-803.

²⁴ Fosdick, Harry Emerson. *A Guide to Understanding the Bible: The Development of Ideas Within the Old and New Testaments*, 1941.

²⁵ Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics; Volume 2, the Doctrine of God, Part 1, Edited by G.W.*, 1957.

²⁶ The Church of England. “Prayers for God’s Blessing for Same-sex Couples Take Step Forward after Synod Debate | the Church of England,” n.d. <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/press-releases/prayers-gods-blessing-same-sex-couples-take-step-forward-after-synod-debate>.

²⁷ “Declaration Fiducia Supplicans on the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings (18 December 2023),” n.d. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_ddd_doc_20231218_fiducia-supplicans_en.html.

and originates from God, making it inherently true and possessing ultimate divine authority in all matters.

My study, focusing on the authority and sufficiency of Scripture in view of 2 Timothy 3:16-17, aligns with this literature by emphasizing the divine origin and authority of Scripture. Both my study and the literature assert that Scripture is inspired by God, making it authoritative and trustworthy in matters of faith, history, and doctrine. Moreover, my study seeks to reaffirm the traditional understanding of Scripture's authority, particularly in light of contemporary challenges such as the acceptance of same-sex marriage in some denominations. By conducting a thorough exegesis of 2 Timothy 3:16-17, I aim to provide a solid foundation for addressing these challenges and reaffirming the timeless truths of Scripture, which is consistent with the historical belief in the divine origin and authority of Scripture as highlighted in the literature.

1.6 Research methodology

This research is a detailed exegetical analysis based on secondary sources and is library-based. I will employ the commentary method. The commentary method proceeds verse by verse, presenting exegetical observations as they relate to the text. The research will integrate literal and historical context, preliminary analysis, literal analysis, and verb analysis, and exegetical synthesis, doctrinal and practical significance.

CHAPTER II. CONTEXT OF 2 TIMOTHY

2.1 General Background

The opening verses of 2 Timothy establish the writer as the apostle Paul and the receiver as his disciple, Timothy. This epistle was written while Timothy was still in Ephesus (1:18; 4:9) and provides a glimpse into Paul's circumstances during his imprisonment in Rome (1:8), where he awaited his impending death (4:6–8, 16–18). Bruce agrees that this epistle was composed during Paul's second Roman detention, following his release from his initial imprisonment in AD 62 (Acts 28)²⁸ and following his fourth missionary journey, during which he wrote 1 Timothy and Titus, Paul was imprisoned once more under Emperor Nero around AD 66-67.²⁹ Thus, 2 Timothy was likely written after this period, with some placing its composition as late as AD 67. Eusebius, an early church historian, suggests that Paul was executed at some point during Nero's reign, which concluded in AD 68,³⁰ even though severe persecution began in 64 AD.³¹ Given the context and Paul's impending death mentioned in the letter (4:6-8), it is plausible to date the composition of 2 Timothy to AD 64-65³² though Guthrie suggests a slightly later date.³³

Unlike his previous house arrest in Rome, where he resided in a rented house (Acts 28:30), Paul's second imprisonment confined him to a cold dungeon (4:13) and subjected him to harsh treatment, including being shackled like a common criminal (1:16; 2:9). His friends faced difficulties in locating him (1:17), indicating the severity of his confinement. Despite these hardships, Paul remained steadfast, recognizing that his mission was fulfilled and his life was nearing its end (4:6-8).

The primary message of the passage is clear: Paul consistently encourages Timothy to stay faithful and resolute in preaching the genuine gospel throughout the letter. In 2 Timothy 3:14—4:2, Paul's

²⁸ Bruce, F. F. *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000.

²⁹ Bruce, F. F. *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000.

³⁰ Of, Eusebius Caesarea Bishop. *The Ecclesiastical History*, 1965.

³¹ Bruce, F. F. *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000.

³² Kelly, J. N. D. *Pastoral Epistles*. A&C Black, 1963.

³³ Guthrie, D. *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*. InterVarsity Press, 2015, 123-126.

central message is clear: Timothy is urged to persist in the teachings he has learned and firmly believed (3:14), having been instructed by reliable sources and nurtured in the Old Testament context (3:15; cf. 1:5). Paul directs Timothy to preach the gospel (4:2), affirming that his ability to do so stems from the divine origin of the message (3:16a) rather than human sources. Because it is God's word, it is valuable for Timothy's ministry in Ephesus (3:16b), equipping him for every good work as a servant of God (3:17). In contrast to the false teachings of Jewish myths and human doctrines (Titus 1:14), which are ultimately demonic (1 Tim 4:1), Timothy's message is divinely inspired and thus beneficial.

2.2 Historical Context

Paul penned the letter of 2 Timothy while imprisoned in Rome under harsh conditions. He notes that many have deserted him during this trying period, and others are occupied with different responsibilities (1:15; 4:9–12). Amid these challenges, Paul's recollection of Timothy's genuine faith and commitment is particularly moving (1:3–5). Knowing his death is near (4:6–8), Paul offers a final exhortation to Timothy, urging him to remain steadfast and asking for one last visit before his execution (4:9). Although Paul anticipates his death soon, the exact timing is uncertain, prompting him to ask Timothy to bring his books and parchments (4:13), indicating his intent to continue studying and writing until the end.

Paul's imprisonment during the writing of 2 Timothy differs significantly from his previous house arrest in Rome, as described in Acts 28. This time, the conditions are much harsher, with Onesiphorus having to search diligently to find Paul (1:17). Paul is imprisoned as a serious criminal (2:9), which is reflected in his lack of embarrassment about his chains, his urging Timothy not to be ashamed (1:8), the abandonment by the Asian Christians (1:15), and the desertion of Demas, one of his close companions (4:10). Additionally, the presence of Luke, a physician (4:11), and Paul's request for a warm cloak (4:13) indicate the harsh conditions of his imprisonment, particularly with the approach of winter.

Paul's acknowledgement of his impending death (4:6–8, 18) indicates his awareness that he will not be released. This distinct historical context, along with years of Roman imprisonment and interactions with his guards and the local populace, may have shaped both his thoughts and

expressions.³⁴ Writing to an individual, likely a close friend, Paul's purpose is not primarily to teach but to encourage, recalling past experiences (3:10–11) and appealing for personal and gospel allegiance in the face of suffering (1:6–14; 2:1–13; 3:10—4:5). Paul is confident that the gospel work will continue after his death, having spent years proclaiming it.

Paul provides Timothy with valuable pastoral advice to guide him and the congregation in Ephesus. He instructs Timothy to resist false teachers (2:14–19) and to avoid youthful passions and disputes, instead cultivating Christian virtues that will enhance his pastoral leadership (2:22–26). Paul warns that the times are dangerous, with religious deceivers ready to mislead the unsuspecting (3:1–9). However, Timothy can counter this threat by following the apostolic example, adhering to sound teaching, maintaining faith, and focusing on the Scriptures (3:10–17). Paul concludes with a powerful exhortation for Timothy to faithfully proclaim the Christian message, even when people are unwilling to listen (4:1–5). He also shares details about his own situation, sends greetings to some believers in Ephesus, conveys greetings from Luke, his only companion, and gives Timothy instructions for his journey to Rome, which Paul hopes he will undertake (4:6–22). Paul requests that Timothy bring Mark and some of his personal belongings (4:11–13). It remains uncertain whether Timothy arrived in time for a final meeting with his beloved mentor before Paul faced execution and received the heavenly reward he eagerly anticipated (4:8).

2 Timothy is profoundly personal, making it suitable as a final letter to a dear friend and fellow worker. Paul encourages Timothy to stay faithful, using his own life as a model. He urges Timothy to follow through on actions he himself has demonstrated, emphasizing the continuity and legacy of his ministry.

2.3 Literal Context

The genre of 2 Timothy shares similarities with a farewell discourse, a category that includes significant speeches or letters of departure found in the Bible, such as those by Moses (Deut.1:1-

³⁴ Mounce, William D. *Pastoral Epistles*. Paternoster, 2000, 53-75

5; 4:1-9; 5:1-22; 9:7-29; 11:1-32; 26:16-19; 29:2-15; 30:1-10), Joshua (Jos. 23–24), David (1 Ch.28–29), and Jesus (Jn.14–16). Key aspects of farewell speeches typically involve the speaker’s declaration of their impending departure, instructions to adhere to God’s commandments, forecasts about future occurrences, words of encouragement and guidance for those who remain, and urges to remember the speaker’s teachings. When approached with these features in mind, 2 Timothy aligns with this genre, offering Paul’s final words to Timothy as a spiritual father, transcending specific circumstances and serving as enduring guidance for Timothy’s life and ministry.

Towner often categorize 2 Timothy as a farewell discourse, recognizing it as Paul’s last letter.³⁵ Traditional elements in such speeches typically include Paul's announcement of his imminent departure, directives to uphold God's commandments, forecasts about events following his exit, words of comfort and advice for those who will continue after him, and reminders of his teachings. These themes are prevalent throughout 2 Timothy, underscoring Paul’s wish for Timothy to hold fast to these teachings throughout his life and ministry. Readers of 2 Timothy are invited to join Paul in his reflective state as he reminisces about his experiences and delivers his final messages to Timothy.

After discussing Timothy’s response to opponents and their heresies (2:14—3:9) and condemning false teachers and their eventual downfall, Paul refocuses on Timothy. The remaining part of the letter emphasizes encouragement, consistent with the tone of 2 Timothy 1:3—2:13. Paul urges Timothy to recall their shared experiences, reflects on his own spiritual background and the influence of the Old Testament and the Gospel, and maintains the strong eschatological theme introduced in 3:1–5. Paul exemplifies faithfulness, anticipating the crown promised by the Lord, which is also intended for Timothy (4:8).

This theme is emphasized five times in the passage: Timothy has been taught and is convinced of the truth found in both the Old Testament and the Gospel (3:14); he has known the Old Testament (“holy writings”) from his youth (3:15); “Scripture” is divinely inspired and thoroughly prepares Timothy for ministry (3:16–17; 4:5); he is instructed to preach the word consistently (4:2); and his

³⁵ Philip H. T. *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006, 512-518.

message represents the authentic, sound teaching that opposes the myths of false teachers (4:4). Although Paul uses different terms to refer to the Old Testament and the Gospel, they together represent God's message and should be understood as a unified whole. Timothy's ministry is rooted in Scripture, which includes both the Old Testament and the Gospel message.

David W. Chapman divides 2 Timothy into ten sections: the introduction (1:1-2); gratitude for Timothy's genuine faith (1:3-5); an appeal for courageous perseverance in ministry, part 1 (1:6-14); examples of faithfulness and unfaithfulness (1:15-18); an appeal for courageous perseverance in ministry, part 2 (2:1-13); Timothy contrasted with false teachers (2:14-26); a description of the false teachers (3:1-9); an appeal to adhere to Scripture and Paul's example (3:10-17); the final charge (4:1-8); and the conclusion (4:9-22).³⁶

2.4 Themes in 2 Timothy

The central themes of 2 Timothy are centred on the idea of suffering and endurance in the Christian life. These themes emphasize the importance of staying faithful in the face of challenges and false teachings and are grounded in the power of the gospel and the Scriptures. Some of the key themes in 2 Timothy include: i) Enduring suffering is a normal aspect of the Christian journey, as reflected in passages 1:8, 12; 2:3, 9; 3:11-12; 4:5, 14-18. ii) Christians are called to respond to suffering by persisting in their faith, relying on the strength of God as detailed in 1:8; 2:1, 11-13; 4:1-8. iii) The gospel serves as the foundation for a Christian's ability to endure, as outlined in 1:9-11; 2:8-10. iv) The Scriptures wield the power to save and sustain, as shown in 2:15; 3:15-17; 4:1-2. v) True believers will persevere, and those who do may not have genuinely converted, per 2:11-13, 19; 3:14; 4:7, 10. vi) False teachings pose a grave threat and must be addressed firmly, as seen in 2:16-18, 23-26; 3:1-9; 4:3-5.

³⁶ Crossway. *ESV Study Bible (EBook)*. Crossway, 2008.

CHAPTER 3. MESSAGE OF 2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

Study Text:

“[16] Πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος καὶ ὠφέλιμος πρὸς διδασκαλίαν, πρὸς ἐλεγμὸν, πρὸς ἐπανόρθωσιν, πρὸς παιδείαν τὴν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ, [17] ἵνα ἄρτιος ᾖ ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ ἄνθρωπος, πρὸς πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθὸν ἐξηρητισμένος.”³⁷

*“[16] All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, [17] so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*³⁸

3.1 Preliminary analysis

3.1.1 Textual Criticism

Verse 16 logically follows the argument that has been building, reinforcing the claim about the supremacy of Scripture (v. 15b) by highlighting their divine origin and practical value. The initial phrase of this verse, “All Scripture is God-breathed” (NIV) or “All scripture is inspired by God” (NRSV), has garnered significant attention as a key doctrinal assertion regarding the inspiration of Scripture. The question of Paul’s meaning in those first three words hinges on several smaller questions; because of the amount of interest in this text, it will be helpful to work through the issues in some detail.

Firstly, the opening phrase is problematic for at least three reasons. (a) The Greek adjective πᾶσα can be translated as either “all” or “every,” depending on whether it modifies a collective noun or a noun referring to individual items.³⁹ (b) Addressing this issue involves understanding the meaning of the second word, γραφή, which in this context could be interpreted as “a scripture.” (i.e., a specific text within the Old Testament) or possibly refer collectively to “Scripture” as the whole of the (presumably) Old Testament Scriptures. (c) Complicating the interpretation further is the question of the relation of the adjectives, θεόπνευστος (“God-breathed”) and ἐλεγμὸν

³⁷ Holmes, Michael William. *Greek New Testament: SBL edition*. Thomas Keene, 2010.

³⁸ 2Timothy 3:16-17

³⁹ Gk. πᾶς (fem.); thus “all” in Matt 3:15; 28:18; Acts 1:21; 2:36; Rom 11:26; Eph 2:21;

(“useful”), to the preceding “every [all] scripture [Scripture],” caused in part by the omission of a verb. A form of the verb “to be” (εἶμι) is assumed, but since it is unexpressed it is somewhat uncertain whether it takes both adjectives as its predicate, or just the last one.⁴⁰ The second adjective will be in the predicate position: “. . . is profitable.” θεόπνευστος, however, might be understood as an attributive adjective modifying γραφή (“every [all] inspired Scripture is useful . . .”), or as a predicate adjective coordinate with “useful” (“every [all] Scripture is inspired and useful . . .”).

This lack of clarity results in the following four basic interpretive alternatives:⁴¹

- (i) “All Scripture is inspired by God [interpreting this as referring to the entire Old Testament as a unified collection].”⁴²
- (ii) “Every [text or passage of] Scripture is inspired by God.”⁴³
- (iii-iv) “Every/all inspired Scripture is also useful . . .”⁴⁴

The degree to which these differences yield significant differences in meaning varies, with (iii-iv) perhaps being open to the most dramatic implications. In any case, deciding between the options will require an analysis of the details.

We begin with the meaning of γραφή, in verse 15 the terms γράμματα (“letter”) and γραφή, (“writing, text, scripture”) are not interchangeable. They do, however, share the tendency to express a range of meanings. In general, γραφή denotes something that has been written.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ A form of the verb “to be” (εἶμι) is assumed, but since it is unexpressed it is somewhat unclear whether it takes both adjectives as its predicate, or just the last one.

⁴¹ His possibility that something other than biblical writings is included in the scope of the reference is too remote to consider (as Marshall, 792, points out, γραφή in the New Testament must refer to Scripture in some sense).

⁴² NIV; NRSV; GNB; REB; Knight, George W. *The Pastoral Epistles*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2013, 445; Simpson, 150-51.

⁴³ G. Schrenk, TDNT 1:754; Kelly, 202; Hanson, 151-52; B. B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1948), 134. For the predicative sense of θεόπνευστος, which is expressed in (i) and (ii), see also Quinn-Wacker, 753; Guthrie, 175-76; Lock, 110; Jeremias, 61; Kelly, 203; Oberlinner, 148-49

⁴⁴ Dibelius and Conzelmann, 118; Barrett, 114; REB; E. Schweizer, TDNT 6:454; Brox, 261

⁴⁵ Gk. γραφή (H. Hübner, EDNT 1:260-64; G. Schrenk, TDNT 1:749-61); it also applies in some cases to the process of writing, but that is not relevant here

With the biblical writings as our context, the term in the singular would normally refer to a passage or text within a book (1 Tim 5:18).⁴⁶ Ordinarily, the plural takes the meaning “the Scriptures,”⁴⁷ but the singular is not used to refer to a book of the Scriptures.⁴⁸ Gal 3:8 and 22 are texts sometimes cited as instances in which Paul employs the singular about the whole of the Scriptures.⁴⁹ However, the singular term in 3:8 is easily identified with the specific Old Testament text Paul subsequently adduces to prove his point; 3:22 may seem a broader reference, but given Paul’s technique in Galatians (and elsewhere), and given his normal tendency (along with other New Testament writers) to distinguish between the singular and the plural, he is more likely to be referring to the implications of the texts he has employed than to the entire body of the Old Testament Scriptures.⁵⁰

Even if Galatians 3:22 uses the singular to represent the whole, the context of 2 Timothy 3:16 still needs to clarify its specific meaning. It is important to note that Paul has referenced specific Old Testament texts and stories in the immediate context (2:19; 3:8-9, 11; cf. 2:7; 4:14, 17-18) for correction and instruction (see v. 16b), and has mentioned the entirety of the Scriptures in the plural in verse 15. Therefore, the singular γραφή in 3:16 most likely refers to a particular passage or text within the Old Testament Scriptures (primarily the Septuagint in this case).⁵¹ The scope of this reference is indicated by the term that comes before it.

The decision to translate the adjective πᾶσα as “all” or “every” depends on the interpretation of γραφή, whether the singular refers to a specific text or passage of Scripture or to the entirety of the Scriptures. There are no other instances of the phrase πᾶσα γραφή in the New Testament to offer

⁴⁶ 4 Macc.18:14; Mark 12:10; Luke 4:21; John 7:38; Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:8; Jas 2:23; 1 Pet. 2:6; etc.

⁴⁷ Cf., however, 2 Pet 3:16, where the plural (τὰς γραφάς) denotes passages of Scripture without referring to the whole Old Testament.

⁴⁸ Quinn, Jerome D., and William C. Wacker. *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000, 767. As Marshall points out (citing Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.45), 791, the term ἡ βιβλος would normally be used to indicate a “book” within “the Scriptures.”

⁴⁹ Esp. G. Schrenk, TDNT 1:753-55; Quinn, Jerome D., and William C. Wacker. *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000, 767.

⁵⁰ Marshall, 791; E. de W. Burton, *Galatians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1921), 160, 196; but cf. R. B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 106-7.

⁵¹ See also Marshall, 792; Oberlinner, 147; cf. Johnson, 423.

additional guidance (see 2 Peter 1:20). Given the interpretation of γραφή mentioned above, option (ii) is the preferred understanding. This interpretation means “every [text of] Scripture.” Rendering “πᾶς” as “every” highlights that each individual part of the Old Testament originates from God. As stated by Ellicott, “Every separate portion of the Holy Book is inspired, and forms a living portion of a living and organic whole”⁵²

The scope is broad, encompassing every text of “Scripture” without omission. The only consideration is whether this includes not only the Old Testament but also writings from the early church that were already in circulation,⁵³ however, this seems unlikely. If the whole of the Scriptures is thus included within the scope of the statement, what then is the difference between (ii) and (i)? There is in effect no difference in the scope of the material covered (which is important for the extent to which inspiration applies); the difference lies entirely in the way in which the Old Testament is envisaged. To adopt a distinction applied by Johnson, Paul considers the Old Testament in terms of its function and usefulness (and its relevance to the church’s situation) rather than its nature or essence,⁵⁴ and his use of it in the course of the drafting of this letter almost certainly shaped his reference to Scripture here.

Consequently, he conceives of it as “useful” text by text, as it were, which is precisely how it is employed in this letter and elsewhere, with the understanding that paradigms discovered in the Old Testament texts (the Exodus story, the Abraham narratives, the story of Korah’s rebellion, the Servant Songs, the Psalms, etc.) bear directly on God’s people in the present when properly interpreted. Paul may have wanted to emphasize that divine inspiration applies evenly to all texts, passages, and stories of the Old Testament, in response to the false teachers’ potential overemphasis on certain passages and underemphasize on others.

If πᾶσα γραφή, were to mean “the Old Testament as a whole,” which seems less likely, the question of the syntax of the clause would be moot; for it would make no difference whether one said “the whole of the Old Testament, which is inspired,” or “the whole Old Testament is inspired,” since the reference to Scripture would conceive of it as a whole, not in parts. But in the case where the

⁵² Spicq, Ceslas. *Notes De Lexicographie Neo-Testamentaire: Supplement*, 1982,787

⁵³ Spicq, Ceslas. *Notes De Lexicographie Neo-Testamentaire: Supplement*, 1982, 787-88.

⁵⁴ Johnson, 423

reference to the texts of Scripture is distributive (“every [text of] Scripture . . .”), the ambiguity in the syntax holds the potential for rather significant variance in meaning.

Again, the function of the first adjective, θεόπνευστος, is either predicative (coordinate with ὠφέλιμος; “. . . is inspired by God and useful”), or attributive (“Every passage of Scripture that is inspired [or “every inspired passage of Scripture”] is useful”). The solution to the syntactical problem cannot be obtained on strictly grammatical grounds. The pas + noun + adjective combination yields examples of both attributive and predicative readings.⁵⁵ Drawing on context, some interpreters have argued that since the statement is really about Scripture’s “usefulness,” “inspiration” is just a thought that is tagged on to the reference to Scripture (as an attribute), or that the term γραφή requires an attribute (as in the case of “holy writings” in v. 15).⁵⁶ But neither of these points is sufficient to overrule the clear direction in which logic points. The attributive meaning is unlikely given the presence of the conjunction “and” (kai) between the two adjectives, “inspired kai useful.” If attributive, the sense must be “every inspired Scripture is also useful.” However, this comment would be entirely unnecessary unless it implies that some Scripture might not be inspired. The likelihood of the latter possibility might be greater for second and third-century Gnostics, but it is too remote even to consider in the case of Paul or a Pauline student. Something verging on a denial of inspiration for parts of the Old Testament might have been the case with the opponents,⁵⁷ but that only confirms that the author would not have divided the pie with an attributive adjective here. Once again, considering the intentional and distributive way Scripture is understood, the logical conclusion is that Paul intended to affirm that divine inspiration applies uniformly, text by text, to the entire Old Testament. Both adjectives should be seen as descriptions of “every [text of] Scripture.”

3.1.2 Translation

The translation analysis of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 using the Revised Standard Version (RSV), English Standard Version (ESV), New International Version (NIV), and Good News Bible (GNB):

⁵⁵ For attributive, see 3:17; 4:18; for predicative, see 1 Tim 4:4; 3 Macc 3:29 (the latter example is the closest parallel, though still not exact, to 3:16; see discussion in Marshall, 793). See Acts 17:26 for both uses.

⁵⁶ Dibelius and Conzelmann, 120; Barrett.

⁵⁷ Pace Marshall, 793

Revised Standard Version (RSV): “All scripture is inspired 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.”

English Standard Version (ESV): “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.”

New International Version (NIV): “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

Good News Bible (GNB): “All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for right living, so that the person who serves God may be fully qualified and equipped to do every kind of good deed.”

Translation Analysis:

- All four translations convey the central idea that Scripture is inspired by God and has practical utility for teaching and guidance in righteousness.
- The RSV and ESV use the phrase “inspired by God” or “breathed out by God,” while the NIV and GNB use the term “God-breathed,” emphasizing the divine origin of Scripture.
- The NIV and GNB include a broader range of uses for Scripture, such as rebuking, correcting, and training, highlighting its comprehensive nature.
- The NIV emphasises the outcome of being “thoroughly equipped for every good work,” while the GNB focuses on being “fully qualified and equipped to do every kind of good deed.”

While there are slight differences in wording and emphasis, all four translations affirm the divine inspiration and practical usefulness of Scripture for the believer’s life and conduct.

3.2 Verb analysis of 2 Timothy 3: 16-17

3.2.1 Lexical analysis of 2 Timothy 3:16-17

V16a “Πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος”

“All scripture is God-breathed”

The question remains, what is the meaning of θεόπνευστος (God-breathed)? The term, formed from the two words θεός (“God”) and πνεο (“to blow, breathe on”), does not occur elsewhere in the biblical writings; and since it is found elsewhere only in later writings,⁵⁸ it has been suggested that Paul coined it.⁵⁹ It is commonly translated as “inspired” (e.g., Vulgate, inspiration), however the NIV’s translation of “God-breathed” more precisely captures the etymology of the compound word (θεός, “God” + πνειν [aorist πνευ (ς)-], “to breathe” + the verbal adjectival suffix -τος) and its implication of Scripture’s divine origin. This term indicates not how Scripture is inspired but rather its source. As is typical with words ending in -τος, it is used in a passive sense (“Scripture is God-breathed”) rather than an active sense (“Scripture emits God’s breath,” i.e., is inspiring)⁶⁰ Warfield’s argument on this matter appears to have gained near-universal acceptance. Paul continues by discussing how Scripture applies to Timothy’s life. Even though not explicitly mentioned, the underlying statement is that, since Scripture is from God, it is inherently true, and because it is true, it is consequently beneficial.⁶¹ The most similar scriptural passage is 2 Pet. 1:20–21, which states: “Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (NIV).

The model for the formation of this term can be seen in similar terms such as τηροδιδακτος (“taught by God”; 1 Thess. 4:9),⁶² an adjective describing the result of God’s action on people,

⁵⁸ Gk. θεόπνευστος; see E. Schweizer, TDNT 6:454-55; Dibelius and Conzelmann, 120; G. Schrenk, TDNT 1:758; Spicq, TLNT 2:193-95 for discussion of later (all post 100 C.E.) occurrences of the term.

⁵⁹ Archibald Hodge and Benjamin B. Warfield. *Inspiration*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008, 245-96.

⁶⁰ See Robertson, Grammar, 157–58, 1095; Moulton, Grammar 1:222.

⁶¹ See Warfield, Inspiration, 245–96; contra Cremer, Lexicon, 730–32

⁶² See G. Bertram, TDNT 3:123; E. Stauffer, TDNT 3:121

and various compounds based on πνεο and πνοη (e.g., Acts 9:1).⁶³ The process envisaged, which gives to the texts of Scripture this character, is almost certainly not to be understood in the strict sense as divine dictation, despite instances of dictation in the Old Testament and the development of this view in Rabbinic Judaism.⁶⁴ Rather, more on the order of Philo's conception of the process of Scripture's inspiration,⁶⁵ God's activity of "breathing" and the human activity of writing are in some sense complementary (cf. 2 Pet. 1:21).⁶⁶

Paul's choice of words here is intended to highlight the authority of the Old Testament, emphasizing its divine origin and indicating that it can be confidently applied to present-day circumstances. However, it's important to interpret the Old Testament within the framework established by Paul's gospel, rather than the twisted interpretations of his adversaries. The view of Quinn that this perspective on Scripture is somehow at odds with (or transcends) a Pauline view (which Quinn characterizes with the Spirit-letter antithesis; cf. 2 Corinthians 3)⁶⁷ fails to account for the fact that this functional view of Scripture (text by text, or as a whole) corresponds precisely with the view of the instructional relevance of the Old Testament expressed in Rom. 15:3-4; 1 Cor. 9:10 and 10:6, 11 immediately following Spirit-filled adaptations of Old Testament texts to the respective communities (cf. 2 Tim. 2:19; 3:8).

16b “καὶ ὠφέλιμος πρὸς διδασκαλίαν, πρὸς ἐλεγμὸν, πρὸς ἐπανόρθωσιν, πρὸς παιδείαν τὴν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ,”

“And is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,”

⁶³ E.g., for the verb Luke 12:55; John 3:8; 6:18; Acts 27:40 (Acts 9:1; ἐμπνέω); for the noun, Acts 2:2; 17:25 (of breath given by God); cf. Gen 2:7 (LXX). See Quinn-Wacker, 769.

⁶⁴ See the discussion in E. Schweizer, TDNT 6:453-55; and E. Sjöberg, TDNT 6:382-83, for the distinction made between the divine dictation of the law and the inspiration of the prophets.

⁶⁵ The seminal study is that of H. Burkhardt, *Die Inspiration heiliger Schriften bei Philo von Alexandrien* (Giessen/Basel: Brunnen, 1988); see also Marshall, 794.

⁶⁶ This complementarity can also be seen in Old Testament descriptions of “the Spirit coming upon” a prophet (Num 24:2); cf. the description of the prophet as ὁ πνευματοφόρος (lit. “the one who bears the Spirit”) in Hos 9:7.

⁶⁷ Quinn, Jerome D., and William C. Wacker. *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000, 769

As Scripture is divinely inspired, it greatly benefits Timothy in his duties in Ephesus and in his ministry as a whole. Paul does this with four prepositional phrases that each employ the same preposition (πρὸς; here indicating purpose). Repeating the preposition is not a strict requirement of Greek grammar, but it helps to list the items and highlight their individual significance within the overall description: “useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (NRSV; cf. NIV, “useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness”). Although these functions could broadly apply to Christian ministry and congregational life, the language in the adjacent instructional passages (2:24-25; 4:2) strongly indicates that Timothy’s primary responsibility to address opposition constructively is the main emphasis.

The items are arranged with care, but we will consider the way in which Paul delineates the “ὠφέλιμος” (usefulness) of Scripture before exploring that arrangement. The subsequent list closely resembles the one in 2 Timothy 4:2. According to various passages in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim.4:6, 13, 16; 6:3), and by extension to every “person of God” (v. 17), it is essential to be rooted in Scripture, as it prepares individuals for every good work.

First on the list is the general term “teaching” (διδασκαλίαν). The Greek word in question can denote either the content of teaching⁶⁸ or the act of teaching itself.⁶⁹ Here, it specifically denotes the activity of teaching, although the content (properly interpreted texts of Scripture; 3:8-9; 2:19) is also implied. As the foundation of Christian instruction, Scripture’s primary role within the community is in teaching (Rom.15:4; 1 Cor.9:10; 10:11). The term ἐλεγμός, meaning “reproof,” involves convicting false doctrine, with Scripture serving as the standard and pattern of truth (1:13).⁷⁰ Timothy is instructed to safeguard it (1:14) by using it to expose sin. Paul shifts his emphasis from doctrine to behaviour, highlighting that Scripture is valuable for correcting inappropriate actions.⁷¹ Positively, Scripture is valuable for “Παιδείαν,” which involves training someone in righteousness by offering not just the content of belief but also guidelines for

⁶⁸ I.e., the gospel and attendant doctrine, ethics, etc.; Titus 1:9; 2:10; see 1 Tim 1:10.

⁶⁹ See 1 Tim 4:13; Rom 15:4.

⁷⁰ the only reference in the New Testament; cf. BAGD 249, and its verbal cognate in 1 Tim 5:20 and 2 Tim 4:2

⁷¹ (Ἐπανόρθωσις, “correcting,” occurring only here in the New Testament; cf. BAGD 283; MM, 229; H. Preisker, TDNT 5:450–51).

behaviour. In Greco-Roman culture, Παιδείαν was a central concept aimed at achieving virtues such as self-control, piety, uprightness, and seriousness, all of which were considered essential for “civilization.”⁷² It encompassed not only education or instruction but also the corrective aspect of discipline (cf. Heb.12:5, 7, 8), contributing to the character's positive development. With the inclusion of the phrase “in righteousness,” referring to the visible aspect of Christian behaviour (2:22), it emphasizes the role of Scripture in shaping observable uprightness in conduct.⁷³ The term παιδείαν clearly refers to education (see 2:25). The Old Testament is also effective in providing believers with an ethical framework for visible conduct in both community and society. Δικαιοσύνη, or “righteousness,” is viewed not only as a gift but also as a virtue to be pursued (cf. 1 Tim 6:11; 2 Tim 2:22), with the Pastoral Epistles particularly stressing this pursuit due to their practical focus.

The arrangement of the four elements analysed follows a chiasmic structure, with an A-B-B-A pattern.⁷⁴ The four prepositional phrases can be grouped into two categories: The first part emphasizes doctrine (“orthodoxy”) while the second part focuses on behaviour (“orthopraxy”). These concepts are presented in a chiasmic structure: (a) Scripture provides positive instruction in doctrine, and (b) it rebukes deviation; likewise, Scripture (b') corrects improper behaviour, and (a') it educates in upright conduct. Spicq understands these phrases as follows: (a) Scripture is the only true source for pastoral and doctrinal teaching, (b) it is the most powerful tool for refuting false teachers, (c) it not only addresses the errors of false teachers but also helps improve their condition, and (d) it is vital for training Christians in genuine virtue.⁷⁵ The sequence is just as applicable in evangelistic situations, although Paul does not clearly differentiate between addressing opponents

⁷² Gk. παιδεία. See Towner, *Goal*, 110; G. Bertram, TDNT 5:602; S. C. Mott, “Greek Ethics and Christian Conversion: The Philonic Background of Titus 2.10-14 and 3.3-7,” *NovT* 20 (1978): 31-32; Quinn-Wacker, 770-71. Cf. Titus 2:12 and discussion Gk. Παιδεία. See Towner, *Goal*, 110; G. Bertram, TDNT 5:602; S. C. Mott, “Greek Ethics and Christian Conversion: The Philonic Background of Titus 2.10-14 and 3.3-7,” *NovT* 20 (1978): 31-32; Quinn, Jerome D., and William C. Wacker. *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000, 770-71. Cf. Titus 2:12 and discussion

⁷³ Gk. ἄρτιος (only here in the New Testament). Quinn-Wacker, 771, suggest that the term might have the sense of speaking adequately for the need (citing Homer, *Iliad* 14.92; *Odyssey* 8.240); see further Spicq, TLNT 2:18; G. Delling, TDNT 1:475-76. For “prepared, ready,” see Johnson, 421.

⁷⁴ Towner, *Goal*, 163. See G. Schrenk, TDNT 2:210; Barnabas 4.11, 13.

⁷⁵ Spicq, Ceslas. *Notes De Lexicographie Neo-Testamentaire: Supplement*, 1982.

and engaging with pagan unbelievers. In either case, the gospel confronts prevailing beliefs, seeks to enlighten listeners about sin and the need for transformation, and encourages growth in godliness.

V17 “ἵνα ἄρτιος ἦ ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ ἄνθρωπος, πρὸς πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθὸν ἐξηρτισμένος”

“So that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

This verse should not be seen as an addition to illustrate the outcome of verse 16b. The term “ἵνα,” which translates to “so that,” marks the final purpose of Scripture’s divine inspiration. Since Scripture is both inspired by God and truthful, it offers the vital content and direction necessary for Timothy, Christian leaders, and all believers to be thoroughly equipped and capable of carrying out every good work, such as teaching, reproving, correcting, and training in righteousness. The wordplay Paul uses is difficult to capture in English. He emphasizes that Scripture makes a person of God competent (“ἄρτιος”) and then reinforces this idea with a related verb (using a perfective preposition) to highlight that Timothy is fully equipped (“ἐξαρτίζειν”). The emphasis here is on the sufficiency of Scripture to provide the knowledge and direction required for Timothy’s ministry, aligning with Paul’s belief that the Old Testament was written to instruct believers (Rom.4:23–24; 15:4; 1 Cor.9:9–10; 10:11).

The main question for interpretation is illustrated well by comparing the NIV translation of the subject of the purpose clause, “the man of God,”⁷⁶ with the NRSV translation, “everyone who belongs to God”. The implication of the latter translation is that the statement of Scripture’s usefulness is here applied to all believers. Arguments in support of this view include: (a) the expression “τοῦ θεοῦ ἄνθρωπος” is not limited to Christian leaders; (b) the central concern of the passage is that the power of the Scriptures has salvation as its goal, which applies to all; (c) the final result of the whole process in v. 17 is “every good work,” which is too general in scope to be limited to ministry as such.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Gk. ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ ἄνθρωπος; G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament: Volume XIV* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1974).

⁷⁷ Marshall, I. Howard, and Philip H. Towner. *The Pastoral Epistles*. A&C Black, 2004.

However, while what is said about the potency and usefulness of Scripture, as well as the activities specifically mentioned, may be applied in principle to all believers, the following point suggests that Paul had Timothy specifically in mind. The crucial issue is the intended meaning of the designation “τοῦ θεοῦ ἄνθρωπος,” and context must have the last say. It is true that the expression “man (better, “person” = ἄνθρωπος) of God” may describe any believer, in the Old Testament, the term is used exclusively for Moses and the prophets who follow in his footsteps, appearing more than thirty times (see on 1 Tim 6:11). We have observed how Paul has already established a link between Moses’ authority /ministry and his own as he has challenged the opponents (2:19; 3:8-9). When this link is combined with the fact that the primary issue within the discussion of the Scriptures relates to their functionality or use (see above – indicate where above), It appears much more likely that the term “τοῦ θεοῦ ἄνθρωπος” is used in a specialized or technical sense in this context (see also 1 Tim. 6:11).⁷⁸ Points (b) and (c) can be accepted, provided it is recognized that although salvation and good works are applicable to all believers, this discussion specifically addresses Timothy. This means that while these matters concern both those engaged in ministry and ordinary believers, “good works” in Timothy’s context may include ministerial activities.

Therefore, Paul’s logic aims to prepare Timothy for assuming the apostolic ministry, particularly with respect to dealing with opposition and effectively using Scripture. The different applications of Scripture (v. 16b) first equip the τοῦ θεοῦ ἄνθρωπος to be capable, proficient, or complete—fully prepared for the task. Here, “full outfitting” or “completion” (ἄρτιος) should be interpreted based on the purposes served by Scripture and the required resources for the current objective.⁷⁹ The term "full outfitting" or "completion" (ἄρτιος) should be interpreted in connection with the capabilities of Scripture, and the resources necessary for the τοῦ θεοῦ ἄνθρωπος to fulfil their role. This general statement is then defined further by a play on the word ἄρτιος. The wordplay is executed by the addition of a participial phrase employing a cognate verb ἐξηρτισμένος (from exartizō) that repeats the thought of proficiency or completeness just uttered and links it to an appropriate action (equipped for every good work). There is little difference between the adjective

⁷⁸ Marshall, I. Howard, and Philip H. Towner. *The Pastoral Epistles*. A&C Black, 2004.

⁷⁹Gk. ἄρτιος (only here in the New Testament). Quinn-Wacker, 771, suggest that the term might have the sense of speaking adequately for the need (citing Homer, Iliad 14.92; Odyssey 8.240); see further Spicq, TLNT 2:18; G. Delling, TDNT 1:475-76. For “prepared, ready,” see Johnson, 421.

ἄρτιος and the related verb (so the NIV has combined the thoughts: “so that all God’s people may be thoroughly equipped”). The wordplay merely stresses where Paul wants Timothy (and the church) to focus specifically on the actions in verse 16, aiming for verse 17.

In these letters addressed to Timothy, the term “good works” reflects Hellenistic moral concepts (which the church has adapted) to describe the visible aspect of Christian life as service (2:21; see 1 Tim 2:10). This term is broadly defined and can encompass various actions. Ministry is seen as a positive endeavour (1 Tim 3:1), and the details of what constitutes "good work" can be determined based on the situation.

By concluding the argument in this manner, Paul skilfully redirects the conversation toward Timothy, focusing on his role in facing opposition and conducting ministry. The discussion highlights the use and significance of Scripture. Just as Paul has dealt with challenges to his authority through Old Testament texts, Timothy needs to carry out his ministry with confidence and expertise. Each Old Testament text has been empowered by God with the authority and capability to accomplish His intentions. Paul's use of Scripture serves as a guide and model for Timothy to continue the apostolic ministry (3:10, 14).

3.2.2 Grammatical analysis of 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Based on the above explanation, below is a syntactic structure of 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

“[Πᾶσα γραφή] [θεόπνευστος καὶ ὠφέλιμος] [πρὸς διδασκαλίαν, πρὸς ἐλεγμὸν, πρὸς ἐπανάρθωσιν, πρὸς παιδείαν τὴν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ], [ἵνα ἢ ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ ἄνθρωπος ἄρτιος, πρὸς πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθὸν ἐξηρτισμένος].”

This structure shows how the various components of the passage are connected syntactically, with the main clause (“πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος καὶ ὠφέλιμος”) at the beginning, followed by a series of prepositional phrases describing the purpose of Scripture, and concluding with the purpose clause (“ἵνα ἢ ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ ἄνθρωπος ἄρτιος, πρὸς πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθὸν ἐξηρτισμένος”) indicating the intended outcome of Scripture’s usefulness.

3.3 Literal analysis of 2 Timothy 3:16-17

3.3.1 Genre analysis of 2 Timothy 3:16-17

2 Timothy 3:16-17, is a segment of the larger section, the encouragement given to Timothy stands in contrast to the wrong teachings (3:10-4:8). It can be interpreted independently and is situated within a warning about the “difficult times” characterizing “the last days,” where people will abandon sound doctrine (4:3-4), and wickedness will be rampant. Paul’s instruction to Timothy in this context is to stand firm in the truths he has known since childhood, truths grounded in “the sacred writings” (v.15), which refers to both the Old Testament and the Gospel message. Verses 16-17 elaborate on the significance of “the holy writings” in Timothy’s ministry, emphasizing their divine origin, purpose and sufficiency for training in righteousness.

3.3.2 Structure analysis of 2 Timothy 3:16-17

The structure analysis of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 reveals a logical and progressive flow of thought within the passage. The main assertion in verse 16 is that “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness” (NIV). This assertion is followed by a purpose clause in verse 17, stating that Scripture is given “so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (NIV). The passage employs a parallel structure, highlighting the comprehensive nature of Scripture’s usefulness in the believer’s life. This is seen in the fourfold use of Scripture for “teaching”, “rebuking”, “correcting”, and “training in righteousness”. Additionally, a chiasmic structure is observed, emphasizing the central importance of Scripture being “God-breathed.”

- A. All Scripture is God-breathed (θεόπνευστος)
- B. Useful for teaching (διδασκαλία)
- C. Useful for rebuking (ἐλεγμός)
- D. Useful for correcting (ἐπανόρθωσις)
- C’. Useful for training in righteousness (παιδεία)
- B’. Thoroughly equips for every good work

The passage progresses from discussing the nature of Scripture to its purpose and concludes with the intended outcome of Scripture—thorough equipping for every good work. Throughout, the

passage maintains unity and coherence, with each element contributing to the overall message of the importance and efficacy of Scripture in the believer's life and ministry.

3.3.3 Rhetoric analysis of 2 Timothy 3:16-17

The rhetorical analysis of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 reveals several persuasive and rhetorical devices used by Apostle Paul to convey his message about the origin, nature, and purpose of Scripture. This passage is a masterful example of Paul's use of ethos, logos, and pathos, structured in a way that reinforces its theological and practical significance.

Establishing Credibility (Ethos)

Paul begins by establishing the divine origin of Scripture: "All Scripture is God-breathed" (3:16). This statement immediately positions Scripture as authoritative, not merely human wisdom but as something that emanates from God Himself. By claiming divine inspiration, Paul enhances his own credibility as a messenger of this truth. His role as an apostle and teacher is underlined by the divine authority he attributes to the Scriptures.

Logical Argument (Logos)

The logical structure of the passage is clear and compelling. Paul presents a sequence of purposes for Scripture, each logically following from its divine origin: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (3:16).

Teaching: Because Scripture is divinely inspired, it serves as the ultimate source of truth and instruction.

Rebuking: The authority of Scripture allows it to identify and correct errors.

Correcting: It provides a means to guide believers back onto the right path.

Training in righteousness: It systematically educates believers in living according to God's will.

The phrase "so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (3:17) logically concludes that if Scripture fulfils these roles, it thus fully prepares believers for their ministry and daily lives.

Emotional Appeal (Pathos)

While Paul's argument is primarily logical, there is an underlying emotional appeal. The term "God-breathed" (Greek: θεόπνευστος, theopneustos) evokes a sense of divine presence and intimacy. The concept that the Scriptures are directly inspired by God can evoke feelings of reverence and awe in the reader, enhancing their appreciation and respect for the sacred texts.

Parallelism and Structure

Paul uses parallelism effectively in this passage, with the repetition of the phrase "useful for" (Greek: ὠφέλιμος, ophelimos) to describe the functions of Scripture. This repetition creates a rhythmic and emphatic structure: "...useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (3:16). This parallelism not only emphasizes the multifaceted utility of Scripture but also aids in memorization and reinforces the importance of each function.

Purposeful Structure and Climactic Conclusion

The passage is purposefully structured to lead to a climactic conclusion. After listing the various uses of Scripture, Paul concludes with the statement: "so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (3:17).

This concluding statement summarizes the ultimate purpose of Scripture, providing a powerful and comprehensive ending that underscores its transformative power. The structure logically and rhetorically builds up to this final point, making the argument cohesive and compelling.

Inclusion

Finally, the passage employs an inclusion, framing the entire message with references to Scripture. It begins with "All Scripture is God-breathed" and ends with "thoroughly equipped for every good work" (3:16-17). This framing technique highlights the centrality of Scripture in Paul's argument, reinforcing its significance and the completeness of its role in the life of a Christian.

Conclusion

The rhetorical analysis of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 demonstrates how Paul uses a combination of ethos, logos, and pathos to persuade the reader of the authority, usefulness, and transformative power of Scripture. By grounding each point directly in the text, this analysis reveals the depth and

effectiveness of Paul's argument, ensuring that the conclusions are firmly rooted in the passage itself.

3.3.4 Exegetical Synthesis of 2 Timothy 3:16-17

In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Paul unequivocally declares the divine origin and absolute authority of Scripture to Timothy. He stresses that all Scripture is "God-breathed," a term he coined to convey that it is not merely inspired but actively infused with the breath of God Himself. This divine inspiration is not a passive or distant concept; it is a living, dynamic force that imparts divine authority to every word of Scripture.

Paul elaborates on the purpose of this divine inspiration, explaining that Scripture is not a mere collection of writings but a deliberate and purposeful tool for "teaching," "reproof," "correction," and "training in righteousness." These functions are not optional additions to Scripture but integral components of its transformative power. They are the tools by which believers are shaped and moulded, guided towards righteousness, and "equipped for every good work."

Furthermore, Paul stresses the ultimate goal of Scripture: to fully equip believers for every good work. Whether one sees oneself as a person of God in need of equipping or a believer seeking growth and maturity, the message remains clear and unwavering: Scripture is not just a helpful resource but an indispensable and authoritative guide for the journey of faith.

In conclusion, Paul's message to Timothy (and to all ministers and believers) is resoundingly clear: Scripture is to be the cornerstone of our lives and ministries. Despite the challenges of opposition and the allure of other teachings, Scripture stands as the true, authoritative, and all-sufficient source for "teaching," "reproof," "correction," and "training in righteousness." It is a timeless and unchanging message that transcends generations, reminding us of the power, sufficiency, and transformative nature of God's Word.

3.3.5 Summary of key issues in the exegetical study of 2 Timothy 3:16-17

In our detailed examination of 2 Timothy 3:16-17, several key issues have emerged, which are crucial for understanding the passage and its implications for contemporary theological discourse:

The divine inspiration of Scripture: The phrase “All Scripture is God-breathed” (πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος) underscores the divine origin of the entire corpus of Scripture. This inspiration implies that Scripture is not merely human words about God but the very words of God, carrying His authority and truth. The Greek term *theopneustos* (θεόπνευστος) highlights that Scripture is breathed out by God, affirming its divine source and trustworthiness. This concept underscores the doctrine of verbal plenary inspiration, which asserts that every word of Scripture is divinely inspired and, therefore, infallible and authoritative in all matters of faith and life.

The Sufficiency of Scripture for Teaching: The text highlights that Scripture is “useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.” This comprehensive utility demonstrates the sufficiency of Scripture in equipping the Christian for every aspect of life and ministry. The term “useful” (ὠφέλιμος - *ōphelimos*) suggests that Scripture is not only beneficial but also adequate for guiding moral and spiritual conduct, making it a complete guide for faith and practice.

The Role of Scripture in Spiritual Formation: The passage indicates that Scripture’s function is to thoroughly prepare the believer “for every good work.” This phrase points to the formative role of Scripture in shaping the character and conduct of believers, aligning them with God’s will. The emphasis on “every good work” (πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθόν - *pan ergon agathon*) suggests that there is no aspect of the Christian life where Scripture does not have authority and relevance.

The Authority of Scripture: Implicit in the text is the understanding that Scripture holds ultimate authority in matters of faith and practice. This authority is derived from its divine origin and sufficiency. The comprehensive scope of Scripture’s usefulness underscores its normative role in guiding the beliefs and behaviours of the Christian community.

The Applicability of Scripture: Finally, the passage highlights the timeless nature of Scripture. It remains relevant and applicable across generations, providing guidance that transcends cultural and historical contexts. This is seen in its function in preparing the believer for “every good work,” suggesting that its teachings are perennially valid and applicable in all circumstances.

CHAPTER 4: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF 2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17 TO THE CONTEMPORARY AUDIENCE

4.1 The Theological Significance

The Bible's Authority is derived from its Nature as the Word of God. The assertion that "The Bible's authority is derived from its nature as the Word of God" is a foundational belief within Christian theology. This statement carries profound implications, not only for doctrine but also for the practical life of believers. To understand this fully, we must explore the concepts of divine inspiration, inerrancy, and self-authentication, the role of the Holy Spirit, the final authority of Scripture, and its implications for Christian living.

Divine inspiration of Scripture: At the heart of the Bible's authority is its divine inspiration. Paul asserts that the Bible is "God-breathed," meaning that God, through the Holy Spirit, guided human authors to write words that convey His will and truth without error. This inspiration is emphasized in key biblical passages such as 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." Additionally, 2 Peter 1:20-21 states, "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." These passages affirm that the Holy Scriptures are God's witness to Himself and deny that the Bible is merely a record of human religious experiences. They assert that the Scriptures originate from God Himself, giving them an authority that is intrinsic and not derived from human sources. This authority extends beyond spiritual or religious matters, underscoring that scientific hypotheses cannot disprove the Bible.

Every Scripture, without exception, originated from the divine mind of God, not from the limited perspectives of humans. This fundamental truth emphasizes the unparalleled authority of Scripture, as it is not merely a product of human wisdom or insight, but a direct revelation from the Creator Himself. Believers hold firm to the conviction that every part of the Bible is inspired by God, carrying with it the full weight of divine authority, to be revered, obeyed, and followed faithfully. Peter further affirms the scriptural nature of Paul's letters, stating, "Speaking of this, as he does in

all his letters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their destruction, as they do with the other scriptures” (2 Peter 3:16).

When believers receive the Word of God, they are not merely receiving the words of men, but the very words of the Almighty, which actively work in them to transform their hearts and minds (1 Thessalonians 2:13). The teachings contained within the Bible are not human ideas but are God’s own words, making obedience to the Scriptures tantamount to obedience to God Himself. This divine origin of Scripture, being “God-breathed,” means that it holds ultimate authority in all matters of faith and practice (Matthew 4:4), serving as the final standard by which all beliefs and actions should be measured. It stands as the unerring, unchanging, and infallible guide for the Christian life, providing wisdom, guidance, and truth that transcends human understanding and endures through all generations.

Inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture: The Bible, because of its divine origin, is considered to be without error and incapable of leading people astray. Inerrancy refers to the fact that the Bible, in its original form, is completely accurate in all that it teaches. Infallibility means that the Bible cannot mislead people, especially in matters of faith and practice. These qualities are crucial for the Bible’s authority, as they assure believers that it is a reliable and trustworthy guide. If the Bible contained errors or could lead believers astray, its authority would be compromised. Paul confirms that all of Scripture, in each of its parts, is given by God and refutes any suggestion that the Bible contains errors or inconsistencies (3:16). The inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture are fundamental doctrines that arise from its divine inspiration. Because the Scriptures are inspired by God, they are completely accurate in all their teachings (Psalm 19:7; Proverbs 30:5). They present a flawless and unblemished reflection of God’s truth and will. This divine quality ensures that the Scriptures are not prone to failure or mistake in fulfilling their purpose of revealing God’s will and truth to humanity (Psalm 119:160; Numbers 23:19). Every word and teaching within the Scriptures is reliable and trustworthy, serving as a steadfast guide for belief and practice. This assurance of inerrancy and infallibility instils confidence in believers, knowing that the Scriptures are not only inspired by God, but are also completely reliable and trustworthy in all matters of faith and life. As such, the Scriptures are the ultimate authority and standard of truth, to which all human wisdom and knowledge must yield.

Self-authentication of scripture: The Bible's authority is also supported by its self-authentication. Throughout Scripture, there are numerous claims of divine origin and authority. Isaiah 55:11 states, "So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." Similarly, Psalm 119:89 declares, "Your word, Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens." These verses, among others, assert the Bible's divine origin and its enduring, unchangeable nature. The consistent internal witness of the Bible to its own divine origin reinforces its authoritative nature. Peter affirms that the written Word is identical with God's revelation in the person of Jesus Christ and denies that the Bible's authority is dependent upon the experience of the readers (2 Peter 1:20-21).

The Role of the Holy Spirit: The role of the Holy Spirit is crucial in understanding the Bible's authority. The Holy Spirit not only inspired the authors of Scripture but also works in the hearts and minds of believers to illuminate and interpret the Scriptures. John 16:13 promises, "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come." This divine illumination ensures that believers can understand and apply the teachings of the Bible, making its authority a living reality in their lives. The Holy Spirit's guidance guarantees that the authority of the Bible is not merely an abstract concept but is actively experienced by believers as they seek to follow God's will.

Scripture as the final authority: Given its nature as the Word of God, the Bible stands as the final authority in all matters of faith and practice. This principle is foundational for evangelical Christianity, meaning that all teachings, traditions, and doctrines must be evaluated in light of Scripture. The example of the Berea Jews in Acts 17:11 exemplifies this principle: "Now the Berea Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true." By examining the Scriptures to verify the Apostle Paul's teachings, the Berea's demonstrated the supreme authority of the Bible. Paul affirms that Scripture is the final authority in faith and practice and denies that church creeds or councils have authority equal to or greater than the Bible.

The Bible stands as the living Word of God, not merely containing fragments of divine truth, but wholly embodying the very words of the Almighty. This truth underscores the belief that every part of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, is God's direct communication to humanity, devoid

of human error or influence (2 Timothy 3:16a). It is not a compilation of human thoughts or opinions interspersed with divine messages, but a cohesive and divine revelation that speaks with singular authority to all generations. This profound reality is echoed in 1 Thessalonians 2:13, where believers are commended for recognizing the Scriptures not as the mere words of men, but as the true and living Word of God, actively working in their lives. This recognition elevates the Bible from being a mere book to being the very voice of God, guiding, instructing, and transforming the lives of those who heed its message. As such, the Bible is not to be taken lightly or treated as a mere human document but embraced as the infallible and authoritative Word of God, deserving of our utmost reverence, obedience, and devotion.

The sufficiency of Scripture is a cornerstone of the Christian faith, as it is described as “useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). This declaration signifies that Scripture is not only authoritative but also fully adequate for all aspects of life and godliness (Psalm 19:7-9, 2 Peter 1:3). It provides everything necessary for the believer to grow in faith and live a life that honours God. This belief affirms that the Bible contains all the essential teachings and guidance for faith and practice, offering a complete and comprehensive framework for a person’s spiritual life and growth. The Psalmist declares, “The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple” (Psalm 19:7), emphasizing the perfection and reliability of God’s Word. Furthermore, the warning in Revelation 22:18 underscores the completeness of Scripture, stating, “I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book.” This warning highlights the finality and sufficiency of Scripture, indicating that nothing should be added to or taken away from its teachings. In conclusion, the sufficiency of Scripture is not merely a theological concept but a practical reality that guides and sustains the Christian life. It stands as the ultimate authority and guide for believers, providing everything they need for spiritual growth, maturity, and godly living.

The purpose of Scripture is profound and multifaceted, aiming to “thoroughly equip” the servant of God for “every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). This indicates that Scripture is not merely a theoretical or abstract collection of teachings but a practical and applicable guide for the believer’s life. It is intended to be applied in every aspect of life, leading to a life that is pleasing to God and beneficial to others. The Word of God is described as living and active, sharper than any double-

edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). This imagery emphasizes the transformative power of Scripture, which penetrates deep into the inner being of individuals, exposing and correcting attitudes and behaviours that are contrary to God's will.

Furthermore, Scripture is not merely a collection of ancient writings but a timeless and relevant source of wisdom and encouragement for believers (Romans 15:4). It provides examples, teachings, and principles that are applicable to every generation, guiding believers in their walk with God and their interactions with others. The ultimate purpose of Scripture is to mould believers into the image of Christ, equipping them to live out their faith in a way that reflects the character of God and brings glory to His name. As such, Scripture is not to be merely studied or memorized but to be lived out in the daily lives of believers, transforming them from the inside out and empowering them to impact the world for Christ.

4.2 The practical significance

Trust in the Authority of Scripture: Acknowledge that the Bible is not just a collection of human writings but is divinely inspired. This means that every word of Scripture is trustworthy and carries the authority of God Himself. Therefore, make it a priority to read, study, and meditate on the Word of God, trusting that it contains the truth that you need for life and godliness (Psalm 119:105). In a world where relativism threatens to diminish the authority of God's Word, it is essential to uphold the Bible as the inspired and authoritative guide for our lives. Practically, this means setting aside regular time for reading, studying, and meditating on Scripture. It involves engaging with the Word of God not as a mere intellectual exercise but as a personal encounter with the living God. As we immerse ourselves in Scripture, we should do so with a humble heart, ready to receive God's guidance, comfort, and wisdom for every aspect of our lives. Moreover, we should be vigilant against the subtle influences of relativism that seek to undermine the truth of Scripture. This requires discernment and a firm commitment to uphold the Bible as the ultimate standard for faith and practice, even when it contradicts popular opinions or cultural norms. By prioritizing the Word of God in our lives and rejecting the heresy of relativism, we can experience the transformative power of Scripture and live as faithful Disciples of Christ in today's world. Believers are called to submit to its teachings, recognizing that it is God's authoritative revelation.

This means that all other sources of authority—such as church traditions, personal experiences, and cultural norms—must be evaluated in light of Scripture. The Bible’s authority stems directly from its nature as the Word of God, and therefore it stands above all other sources of guidance.

Trustworthiness of Scripture: The Bible’s infallibility provides believers with a foundation of complete trust. It offers reliable teachings on doctrine, morality, and the nature of God. The Psalmist confirms this trustworthiness, stating, “The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous ordinances endures forever” (Psalm 119:160). This verse emphasizes the importance of maintaining confidence in Christian truths, especially amidst competing voices of authority. In our rapidly changing world, the call to adhere to Scripture’s teachings is more crucial than ever. The Bible is not a mere collection of suggestions but a life guide, offering timeless wisdom and moral direction. Aligning our beliefs, values, and decisions with its principles, even when they conflict with popular culture, is vital (Proverbs 3:5-6). This submission shapes our worldview and actions, leading to choices that honour God and reflect His values. Amidst moral relativism and individualism, adhering to Scripture establishes a firm foundation for purposeful living. It helps navigate ethical dilemmas, make wise choices, and foster a deep relationship with God. Therefore, let us not see the Bible as a historical document or a set of stories, but as the inspired Word of God that guides every aspect of life. By obeying its teachings, we experience God’s transformative power, bringing glory to Him. In a world that values self-reliance, humility, and teachability are often overlooked virtues. Allowing Scripture to correct and rebuke us is crucial in our faith journey. This involves being open to the Holy Spirit’s conviction as we study God’s Word, and being willing to change our beliefs and behaviours accordingly (Hebrews 4:12). In a culture of self-reliance, Scripture’s correction challenges us to acknowledge our need for guidance from a higher authority. It reminds us that God’s Word, not our opinions, is the standard of truth. By humbly accepting Scripture’s correction, we grow and align with God’s will, better navigating the complexities of our world.

Guidance for Life: The Bible’s teachings provide comprehensive guidance for every aspect of life, including personal conduct, relationships, worship, and ethical decisions. Passages like Psalm 119:105 highlight this guidance: “Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.” The Bible illuminates the way for believers, helping them navigate life’s complexities in a manner that honours God.

Spiritual Growth: Scripture is instrumental in the spiritual growth and sanctification of believers. As they read, study, and meditate on the Word, the Holy Spirit uses it to transform their hearts and minds, conforming them to the image of Christ. Hebrews 4:12 emphasizes the dynamic power of the Word: “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” In today’s fast-paced world, where distractions abound and pressures mount, the need for spiritual growth and maturity is more pressing than ever. The Apostle Paul’s exhortation to “seek training in righteousness” from Scripture (Romans 12:2) is as relevant today as it was in his time. To seek training in righteousness means recognizing that spiritual growth requires ongoing effort and discipline. It involves more than just a casual reading of the Bible; it requires a deep and intentional study of God’s Word. This can be done through personal study, participation in Bible studies, attending church services, and engaging in discussions with fellow believers. Prayer is also essential in seeking training in righteousness. It is through prayer that we communicate with God, seek His guidance, and ask for His help in applying the teachings of Scripture to our lives. Fellowship with other believers is another crucial aspect of spiritual growth. By sharing our faith journey with others, we can gain insights, encouragement, and accountability. Participation in the sacraments, such as baptism and communion, is also important in seeking training in righteousness. These sacraments serve as visible signs of God’s grace and remind us of our commitment to follow Christ. By seeking training in righteousness from Scripture, we open ourselves to the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. God uses His Word to shape our character, renew our minds, and conform us to the image of Christ. As we commit ourselves to regular study of the Bible, prayer, fellowship, and participation in the sacraments, we can experience spiritual growth and maturity, becoming more like Christ in thought, word, and deed.

Defence of the faith: Understanding the Bible as inspired and infallible equips believers to defend their faith against scepticism and false teachings. Recognizing that Scripture is divinely sourced and without error provides a strong foundation for apologetics, empowering believers to confidently articulate and defend the truths of Christianity. Peter exhorts every believer to be prepared to make a defence to anyone who questions the basis of their hope in Christ, stating, “But in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15).

Unity of Doctrine: Inerrancy promotes doctrinal unity within the Christian community. When believers affirm the complete reliability of Scripture, they share a common foundation for their beliefs and practices, fostering greater unity and coherence within the Church.

In today's fast-paced and uncertain world, finding purpose and direction can be challenging. However, as believers, we can find assurance in the truth that God has a plan and purpose for each of our lives. Scripture teaches us that we are "God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10). To be equipped for every good work, we must first acknowledge that God has equipped us with everything we need to fulfil His purposes. This includes relying on the wisdom and guidance found in Scripture. The Bible serves as a roadmap for our lives, providing us with the principles and values we need to make wise decisions and live according to God's will. Being equipped for every good work also means actively seeking guidance and direction from Scripture. This involves spending time in prayer and study, allowing God to speak to us through His Word and guide us in our decision-making process. As we trust in God's plan and purpose for our lives and allow Scripture to equip us, we can be confident that God will use us to bring about His purposes in the world.

In summary, the practical significance of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 is upholding its divine inspiration requires regular study, humility, and vigilance against undermining influences. Two, submitting to Scripture means aligning beliefs with its teachings, offering a solid ethical foundation in a relativistic culture. Three, Allowing Scripture to correct us demands humility and openness to change, fostering spiritual growth and alignment with God's will. Four, seeking training in righteousness involves disciplined study, prayer, and fellowship, enabling the Holy Spirit to shape us. Five, being equipped for good works means recognizing God's plan and relying on Scripture for guidance, allowing God to use us to fulfil His purposes.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

In light of the comprehensive and unequivocal declaration in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, it is evident that Scripture stands as the authoritative and inspired Word of God. This passage boldly proclaims that every word of Scripture is God-breathed, carrying the divine authority and truth that is unmatched by any human wisdom or insight. Therefore, it is imperative for believers to wholeheartedly trust in the authority of Scripture, recognizing it as the ultimate standard by which all beliefs and actions should be measured.

The authority of the Bible is inseparable from its nature as the Word of God. This divine origin assures believers of its inerrancy, infallibility, and reliability, making it the ultimate guide and standard for faith and practice. Recognizing the Bible's authority calls for a commitment to study, understand, and live according to its teachings, confident in the truth it conveys and the guidance it provides through the Holy Spirit. As the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God, the Bible stands as the final authority, offering direction, wisdom, and truth for all aspects of life. Through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, believers are enabled to grasp and apply its teachings, ensuring that the Bible's authority is a dynamic and transformative force in their lives.

The teachings of Scripture are not optional recommendations; they are divine truths that demand our submission and obedience. Furthermore, Scripture is not merely a book of principles and guidelines—it is a living and active force that has the power to correct, rebuke, and train us in righteousness. As believers, we must allow Scripture to penetrate deep into our hearts and minds, shaping our beliefs, values, and behaviours according to God's perfect will.

In seeking training in righteousness from Scripture, we position ourselves to be fully equipped for every good work that God has prepared for us. Scripture is not just a book of theoretical knowledge; it is a practical guidebook for living a life that honours God and serves others. It equips us with everything we need to fulfil our God-given purpose and make a meaningful impact in the world around us.

Therefore, let us not take the Word of God lightly or treat it as just another book. Let us approach it with reverence, humility, and a deep desire to be transformed by its truths. May we allow Scripture to shape every aspect of our lives, so that we may be fully equipped and empowered to live as faithful Disciples of Christ, bringing glory to God in all that we do?

The belief that what the Bible says is what God says is foundational to the Christian faith, emphasizing that the teachings and instructions found in the Bible are not merely human words but the very words of God Himself. This belief underscores the divine authority and reliability of Scripture, as it is not subject to human error or interpretation but is the infallible and unchanging Word of God. Therefore, to obey the Bible is to obey God Himself, aligning one's life with His divine will and purpose (2 Timothy 3:16).

Throughout the Bible, God reveals His character, His will, and His plan for humanity, providing guidance and direction for all aspects of life. The Bible is not a collection of human ideas or opinions about God but a divine revelation of God Himself, offering wisdom, truth, and instruction for those who seek to follow Him faithfully. As such, the Bible is to be revered, studied, and obeyed, as it is the primary means by which God communicates His will to humanity.

This belief is reinforced by Jesus Himself, who affirmed the authority and reliability of the Scriptures, stating, "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). He also declared, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4), highlighting the essential role of Scripture in the life of the believer. In conclusion, the belief that what the Bible says is what God says is not just a theological doctrine but a practical reality that should guide and inform the life of every believer. It is a source of wisdom, comfort, and guidance, leading believers to a deeper understanding of God and His will for their lives.

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ANNEX

Bihozagara Jacques

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
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
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