

Scripture makes us wise for salvation

Paul does not write 2 Timothy 3:10–17 from a life that has become easier through faithfulness. He is a prisoner, and later in the letter he speaks of his approaching death. Timothy has seen the pattern: truthful teaching, patient love and costly endurance belong together. What will enable this younger worker to continue when persuasive voices offer another way? Paul brings him back to the Scriptures he has known since childhood and to the Saviour those writings make known.

That setting gives familiar words fresh weight. Paul's statement about Scripture coming from God belongs in a letter urging a real person to remain faithful. As you prepare, follow his reasons rather than lifting the statement out on its own. We want learners to understand why they can receive Scripture, whom it directs them to trust, and how its instruction shapes the life that follows.

Estimated reading time: 18 minutes

Scriptures: 2 Timothy 3:10–17

Focus statement: God gives Scripture to make us wise for salvation through Christ and equip us for faithful living, so we should learn and continue in its teaching.

What learners should understand: Explain inspiration and two uses of Scripture without equating biblical knowledge with salvation.

MEMORY VERSE

¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness,

2 Timothy 3:16, CSB

Read Paul's counsel inside a costly life

Read 2 Timothy 3, then return to verses 10–17. Notice the change from the deceivers in verses 1–9 to Timothy in verse 10, and the renewed appeal to him in verse 14. Read 2 Timothy 1:5 and 2:8–10 for his background and the Gospel Paul serves. Then read 4:1–5 to see where this preparation leads: Timothy must proclaim the word patiently, even when people prefer something easier to hear. Read the main paragraph again, asking how its commands and reasons belong together.

The memory verse is 2 Timothy 3:16. Keep verse 17 beside it while you study. The list of Scripture's uses has a purpose: God equips His servant for good work. The classroom reads the whole of 3:10–17 in three sections. You will explain salvation through Christ from verse 15 and supply the death-and-resurrection connection plainly; no learner should have to infer the Gospel from the word *salvation* alone.

Paul writes as an imprisoned servant of Christ, conscious of approaching death (4:6–8). Timothy is his fellow worker, entrusted with teaching others. The letter does not offer a technique for avoiding opposition. It calls Timothy to steadfast service in dependence on the grace found in Christ. False teaching is a danger because it changes what people believe and how they live. Paul therefore joins his instruction with the pattern of a life shaped by faith, patience, love and endurance.

Timothy had known the sacred Scriptures from infancy. His grandmother Lois and mother Eunice are named as women of sincere faith in 1:5. Their teaching mattered, but their faith was not inherited automatically. Nor does Paul make an early Christian upbringing the entrance requirement for receiving Scripture. Some learners have heard the Bible for years; others are opening it for the first time. Both need to hear its message, understand its claims and turn to the Christ it announces.

Three generations appear in Timothy's story: Lois and Eunice, then Timothy. Acts 16:1 identifies his mother as a Jewish believer and his father as Greek. It does not establish that his father shared that faith. These details help us recognise the patient teaching behind Timothy's ministry without inventing a picture of a uniformly believing household. God's word reached him through people whose faith had become visible in their lives. In our class, the same word can welcome someone whose first serious encounter with it is today.

The controlling message is: **God gives Scripture to make us wise for salvation through Christ and equip us for faithful living, so we should learn and continue in its teaching.** The three movements follow Paul's reasoning. First, Timothy must continue amid pressure (verses 10–14). Then Paul identifies Scripture's saving purpose (verse 15). Finally, its divine origin explains its authority and usefulness in forming faithful service (verses 16–17). We move from the need to continue, to the One in whom salvation is found, to the instruction that equips those who serve Him.

Psalm 19 has already led us from God's good instruction to our need for cleansing. Paul now names Scripture's saving purpose explicitly: faith in Christ Jesus. We are asking what God's written word is able to do, and how its authority belongs with that purpose. The following lesson will show Paul explaining the Creator and risen Jesus to people in Athens who do not begin with Timothy's knowledge of Scripture.

Follow the reasons for continuing

1. Faithfulness continues amid pressure — verses 10–14

Paul begins with what Timothy has followed. Teaching comes first, but conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love and endurance follow closely. Truth is meant to form a life. A person may speak impressively while using others harshly; Paul's example gives Timothy reason to recognise the difference. The teacher's manner matters because the message concerns the Lord who saves and forms His people. Our patience with an uncertain answer should agree with the truth we are teaching about His grace.

Antioch, Iconium and Lystra are more than names in a list. Acts 13–14 tells of opposition, expulsion and an attack at Lystra in which Paul was stoned and left for dead. Acts 16 later places Timothy in that region, with a good report from the believers in Lystra and Iconium. These accounts help us understand why Paul can refer to a life Timothy knows. They do not tell us that Timothy watched every event, so we should not turn him into an eyewitness the text has not supplied.

When Paul speaks of the Lord rescuing him, read on to 2 Timothy 4:6–8 and 17–18. He expects death, yet trusts the Lord to bring him into His heavenly kingdom. Rescue cannot therefore mean guaranteed escape from every injury or execution. The Lord's faithfulness reaches beyond the immediate outcome. That connection lets us teach endurance honestly while still offering substantial hope.

Verse 12 states honestly that godly life in Christ meets persecution. It does not tell us that every disagreement is persecution or that suffering makes an interpretation correct. A teacher may be challenged because they have misunderstood a passage or treated someone badly. Those possibilities require humility. Equally, we must not promise learners that trusting Christ guarantees popularity, comfortable circumstances or success at school. Paul prepares Timothy to remain faithful when the truth is unwelcome, with patience and love still intact.

The deceivers in verse 13 are themselves deceived. Error is not safely contained in a clever public performance; it harms those who spread it too. Against that movement, Paul tells Timothy to continue in what he has learned and firmly believed. This is thoughtful perseverance in trustworthy teaching, not an instruction to refuse all questions. Timothy knows the people who taught him, and Paul immediately points to Scripture as the substance of that learning. Human reliability matters, but it does not replace God's word as the authority.

For the class, define *continue* as keep learning, trusting and living by what God teaches. Continuing includes returning to a passage when an earlier understanding needs correction. The second movement is needed because perseverance must have an object and a purpose. Paul does not simply say, "Hold tightly to your own ideas." He explains how the Scriptures Timothy knows direct him to salvation through Christ.

2. The Scriptures point to salvation through Christ — verse 15

The sacred Scriptures Timothy knew from infancy were the Old Testament writings. Their story, promises, sacrifices and prophetic hope lead towards God's saving work fulfilled in Jesus. They are not a collection of disconnected predictions or secret codes. The God who created, judged, promised and rescued is making His purpose known across a connected history. Later apostolic testimony explains Christ's fulfilment. Reading a passage in that unfolding story protects us from making every object an invented symbol for Jesus.

Paul's phrase about wisdom for salvation describes what these writings are able to give. Salvation means God's rescue from sin and its judgement, bringing us into life with Him. The means of receiving it is faith in Christ Jesus. Knowing the books, remembering verses and respecting a teacher are good opportunities for learning; none is the Saviour. A learner who can quote accurately may still be relying on being good enough. A newcomer who struggles to find a page can nevertheless hear the Gospel and trust Christ.

The passage itself does not retell the crucifixion and resurrection because Paul is writing within the Gospel he and Timothy share. We must supply that background for learners who do not yet know it. Jesus is God's Son, truly human. He gave His life for sinners and rose bodily from the dead. He receives those who turn from sin and rely on Him. In 2:8–10, Paul has already joined the risen Christ with the salvation he proclaims. Scripture's saving wisdom has this person and His work at its centre.

When we say the Bible points to Christ, we are not setting the written word against Him. It is through this testimony that we hear who He is and what He has done. Nor is faith a reward for finishing enough Bible reading. God uses His word to bring the good news to us; we receive the Saviour it announces. That order gives hope to a learner who knows little and correction to a teacher who has begun to treat knowledge as a personal achievement.

Now the third movement follows. If these writings direct us to salvation and faithful life, why should we receive their instruction rather than choose whichever sayings suit us? Paul names their source. Their usefulness is grounded in God's own speaking, not in our finding every sentence immediately appealing.

3. God's word equips His servant — verses 16–17

All Scripture is inspired by God. The CSB footnote describes the expression as "breathed out by God". Paul is speaking about the origin of Scripture, not merely an uplifting experience in its reader. God spoke through human writers, with their real words, settings and literary forms. Inspiration does not require us to pretend a poem is a scientific diagram or a letter is a collection of isolated slogans. Faithful reading receives the kind of communication God has actually given.

The four uses belong together. Teaching tells us what is true. Rebuking exposes what is wrong in our beliefs or conduct. Correcting shows the way back towards what is right. Training in righteousness forms a continuing pattern of life that agrees with God. These are useful explanations of Paul's terms, not four sealed compartments into which every verse must fit. A single passage can teach and correct together. The emphasis is Scripture's ample usefulness, rather than a requirement to label every sentence with one category.

Think of an ordinary situation in which someone has passed on an unfair accusation. God's word can show what truthful speech is, expose the excuse that "everyone was saying it", guide an honest correction and train the person to check before speaking again. These are connected forms of help. Naming four uses is only the beginning; learners should be able to explain how one passage may teach and correct at the same time. The activity uses fictional situations so that the class can reason carefully without naming someone who has done wrong.

Verse 17 gives the purpose: the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. Timothy is immediately in view as God's servant entrusted with ministry. The passage also teaches the church why Scripture is useful for forming faithful service. Explain *equipped* as made ready for the work God calls us to do. It does not mean that one reading makes a person morally perfect or removes the need for practical skills, wise counsel and continued learning. It means God's word supplies the truth and direction His servant needs.

Notice the relationship to verse 15. Salvation through faith in Christ comes before the description of good work. The works are the life for which God equips His people; they do not pay for forgiveness. A person cannot change Paul's argument into "Do enough useful things and God will accept you." Grace brings sinners to Christ, and grace teaches them to live differently. This relationship must remain clear when you draw the lesson together.

Saving wisdom and a life equipped to serve

God has not left His servants to invent their message or judge truth by popularity. He gives Scripture and uses it to lead people to Christ and form faithful service. His authority is joined to His goodness: the same word that exposes our wrong offers saving wisdom and direction. We may therefore receive correction with hope. A rebuke from Scripture is not evidence that the Bible has failed to encourage us; it may be the help we most need.

The Lord who sustained Paul is faithful amid suffering. Paul does not present Him as a means of arranging a trouble-free life. God's saving purposes remain trustworthy when a servant is weak, opposed or unable to see a quick result. Let this steady your preparation. We teach carefully because the truth matters, while asking God to do the work that our explanations, confidence and printed materials cannot produce.

People need both rescue and instruction. We can learn many things while resisting the truth, as the earlier chapter warns. We can also be deceived while feeling certain. Being willing to reopen a passage is therefore part of humility, not a betrayal of conviction. A teacher who says, "I misunderstood that; let us look again," can demonstrate respect for Scripture. The correction acknowledges that God's word has authority over the teacher as well as the class.

Timothy's early learning shows the value of patient nurture, but the class must not become a comparison of homes. Do not ask who has believing parents or who was taught as an infant. Give everyone the context they need today. Questions about unfamiliar words are welcome. A confident answer is an opportunity to ask for a textual reason, while a hesitant learner may point to the relevant phrase and let you help them explain it.

The paragraph's saving centre is explicit: wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. We need this wisdom because sin is more serious than missing information. We are accountable to God, and our good actions cannot undo our guilt. The Scriptures make His promised rescue known; the apostolic Gospel announces that Jesus died for sins and rose again. The Son who saves is the One in whom Paul endures and to whom Timothy must remain faithful. His grace answers the need that Scripture exposes.

Call learners to turn from sin and rely on Christ, rather than inviting them to prove themselves by knowledge or performance. Those who trust Him should welcome the word that forms their new life. The connection to good work is therefore grateful dependence: we listen, receive correction and practise what is right because the Saviour has shown mercy. We do not earn His welcome by completing the task. A quiet learner may consider this honestly without offering a public profession or repeating a prayer after you.

Inspiration and authority. Scripture comes from God and therefore governs our beliefs and lives. The human writers were not removed from the process; God worked through them to give His word. Our conviction concerns the truthfulness of what Scripture actually teaches, read according to context and literary form. A character's lie recorded in a narrative does not become a command to lie, and a poetic comparison does not require the same reading as a historical statement.

Sufficiency and interpretation. Scripture sufficiently reveals what we need for salvation and faithful obedience to God. It is not an exhaustive handbook of every practical subject. A teacher may need help understanding a difficult passage, and a learner may need another explanation. That does not transfer authority to an expert. Helpful interpretation serves the text and remains open to correction by it. Prayerful dependence on the Spirit belongs with careful study, not in place of it.

The Bible we read includes the Old and New Testaments. Timothy's childhood Scriptures were the former; the completed Christian Bible includes the apostolic witness to Christ. Verse 16 affirms the divine source of all Scripture, but it does not by itself list the books or answer every question about how they were recognised, copied and translated. Distinguish that larger subject from the claim Paul makes here. We can give an honest first answer without pretending one paragraph proves every step of a complete argument.

Questions worth thinking through

Does the Bible's authority make my reading of it infallible?

No. God is truthful; we can misunderstand Him. Read the paragraph, identify who is speaking and why, and test an explanation against the surrounding argument and wider Scripture. When two explanations differ, ask what each can account for in the text. Listening carefully does not mean treating every interpretation as equally sound. The teacher should help learners give reasons and be willing to correct an unsupported conclusion.

Does being equipped mean believers will always succeed?

No. Paul includes persecution in this very paragraph. Good work can be faithful and costly. Equipment concerns readiness to serve God, not guaranteed marks, wealth, health or approval. Do not use hardship to blame a learner's Bible reading or faith. If a question involves danger or harm, follow the church's actual safeguarding procedures rather than offering a verse as a substitute for protection.

What if a learner says they are unsure whether Scripture comes from God?

Let them state the question without treating honesty as disruption. Explain Paul's claim clearly and invite them to consider its reasons and the Christ to whom Scripture bears witness. Distinguish explaining a text's claim from answering every objection to it. Keep a substantial further question for a supervised conversation where it can receive proper attention. Do not demand agreement as the price of being welcomed in the class.

Let this truth shape your own response

- When has a familiar verse become a slogan in my teaching? What does its paragraph actually say?
- Do I rely on knowing Christian answers, or on the Christ those answers should lead me to?
- Where am I resisting correction that I readily expect others to receive?
- Would a newcomer hear patience and hope in the way I answer a question?
- Can I explain why good works follow salvation without becoming its price?

Thank God for speaking and for the salvation found in His Son. Ask for a teachable heart, faithful understanding and patient speech. Pray that learners will hear Christ's invitation and receive the instruction that leads to good work. Ask the Spirit to help you serve without measuring His work by confident answers or an easy class.

Bring the passage into the room

This is lesson 2 in *A Christian Worldview: God's Truth for All of Life*, within *How God makes himself known*. Psalm 19 showed creation's witness, God's trustworthy instruction and our need for cleansing. Here we follow Scripture's saving purpose through faith in Christ and its work of equipping His people. Next, Paul's encounter in Athens shows how the truth about God shapes a conversation with people who do not share that understanding.

Choose before printing. Select one illustration and either activity A or its replacement B. Before the class in the Lesson gives the exact teacher pages, student copies, props and any cutting for each route. The lined notes page is optional and private. Read those directions and rehearse your chosen route; you do not need to prepare both alternatives.

The first illustration uses *Correction can be a gift*; the alternative is *A closed book and an open book*. The Lesson gives the words, question, biblical connection and limits for each. Select the one that helps this group follow the passage. An illustration serves the explanation within the teaching, rather than creating another activity.

The reinforcement choices ask learners to explain their reasons: classification with reasons or cumulative oral explanation. Use the main task or its replacement, leaving room for the complete memory verse, an understanding check and prayer. Read the classroom directions and prepare only the materials for the route you choose.

Ready to teach

State the controlling message and the response you will invite. Identify one misunderstanding or pastoral caution you must handle carefully.

Close this article and explain the three movements with their verses. Explain how verse 15 leads to Christ's saving death and resurrection, then why verse 17 does not teach earned acceptance. Answer the question about interpretation in a calm sentence. Rehearse the actual classroom questions and material changes. If explanation grows too long, reduce additional reports and the deeper question while preserving the passage, Gospel and final check.

Sources and further study

Read 2 Timothy 3 with 1:5; 2:8–10; 4:1–8. Acts 13–14 gives the history behind the named persecutions. For the Gospel's account of Christ's saving work, read 1 Corinthians 15:1–4. Keep these connections grounded in their own contexts.

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