

THE CANON

THE LESSON: 2 TIMOTHY 3

Let's take a look at this book we call the Holy Bible. It is a collection of 66 books of scripture used in Christian churches. The first part of it, the Old Testament, was originally written mostly in Hebrew and these are the Jewish scriptures, sacred to both Christians and Jews. These 39 books include the books of Moses or "the law", historical books, wisdom books, and prophetic books. These writings are what Jesus and the apostles were referring to when *they* talked about scripture. These were the writings that were used in the worship of Israel, in synagogues and in the temple.

The second part of the Bible, the New Testament, was originally written in Greek, and these are the Christian writings. There are 27 books, and they include the Gospels (which tell the story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection), the Acts (which tells about the early apostolic ministry), the epistles (which are apostolic letters written to early churches and Christians) and the revelation of John (a prophetic or apocalyptic book).

What we refer to as the "canon" of scripture is that collection of books – both Old and New Testaments – which the early Church came to agree upon as the authoritative group of holy writings for Christians.

It became necessary early in the development of the Christian Church to make clear what the true teachings and scriptures of the Church were, because many false teachings were cropping up. So, largely in response to these false teachings (or *heresies*), we came to have both a canon of scripture and the creeds of the Church.

The Bible has been passed down to us through centuries of generations of believers, and translated into hundreds of languages (including many translations into English). Christians believe that God was intimately involved through the Holy Spirit in inspiring the words of scripture and in preserving them. We believe that this collection of writings contains God's revelation to us, telling us about where we come from, who God is, how we can be in a right relationship with him, how he wants us to live, and much, much more!

+++

In the New Testament, in the epistles section, there are two letters written by the Apostle Paul to a young Christian leader named Timothy. Let's take a look at an excerpt from the second letter that describes the importance of scripture.

AT-HOME CHALLENGE

At home, find a quiet space and spend some time slowly re-reading the words of 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

"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."

Ask God to use his holy scriptures to do each of these things for you: teach, reproof, correct, train in righteousness, complete and equip for good works. Don't rush through it, but spend a bit of time with each word, seeking God regarding how he might want to lead you.

- AND/OR -

THE CANON

Take some time to pray through this collect, pausing to reflect after each phrase.

Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen. (COLLECT FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT, BCP PAGE 97)

2 TIMOTHY 3: **GOD-BREATHED**

¹⁴But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.