Description: Many ask: what is the Bible useful for? Why do we need it? II Timothy 3:16-17 gives us the answers and this article looks at them.

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**II Timothy 3:16-17: the usefulness of the Bible**

Why do we need the Bible? What is it useful for? Here is what the Bible itself, in II Timothy 3:16-17 tells us:

**II Timothy 3:16-17**

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

The first piece of information given in above passage of II Timothy 3:16-17 is that the Bible is indeed profitable, useful. What is it useful for? “For doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” Let’s now take each of these one by one.
1. For doctrine

The first thing that II Timothy 3:16-17 tells us the Bible is useful for is for doctrine or teaching. This is especially important since when it comes to God, people usually follow the teachings of their traditions or the teachings of what the society considers as "the right source of religious information". Hence, for many the teaching about God comes from the priest, the family, the school etc. There is no problem with any of these sources if they teach what the Bible teaches. Unfortunately, often this does not happen in which case the teaching that is received through these sources, though it may be religious and sincere, it is also WRONG because it is not in agreement with the teaching that God gives in the Bible.

An example of the Bible used for teaching is the subject of salvation. The answer that the Bible gives to this topic is very clear:

Romans 10:9

"That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

Also: Ephesians 2:8-9

"For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, NOT of works, lest anyone should boast"
Can it be stated clearer that to be saved what you need is not good works but to believe that Jesus is Lord and God raised him from the dead? If your school, your pastor, your family supports something else, whose teaching are you going to follow? The teachings of the Bible or the teachings of the various men, whoever they are? I prefer the teachings of the Bible, for only the Bible “is profitable for teaching” (II Timothy 3:16-17).

2. "For reproof"

Except for teaching, II Timothy 3:16-17 tells us that the Bible is also profitable for reproof and correction. This means that the Bible is able to show us whether we are wrong and where we are wrong. Therefore, if I believed that salvation is given by works, or by believing plus some good works, or by I do not know what else except by believing that Jesus is Lord and God raised him from the dead, what I would need is reproof and correction. The above passage of Romans 10:9 is again useful for this purpose since, if I didn't believe what it says, it tells me that I'm wrong by stating the right. Thus it teaches me, it reproves me and it corrects me and all these in one and the same passage. Another example is Ephesians 4:31:
Ephesians 4:31

"Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice."

If I'm bitter, wrathful etc. the Bible tells me that this is wrong. And do you know why is it wrong? Not because the society or the moral system of the world defines it as wrong but because GOD in His Word defines it as wrong. To find what is wrong or right you do not need to know and to follow the world's system of morals. What you do need to know and follow is the Word of God.

3. "For correction"

The third thing that according to II Timothy 3:16-17 the Bible is useful for is correction. Correction is always a necessary complement to any reproof. With the reproof we see where we are wrong, while with the correction we know what is the right thing to do. In the case of Ephesians 4:31, that we saw above, it is enough to go one verse further to receive after the reproof, the correction. Thus Ephesians 4:32 tells us:

Ephesians 4:32
"And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you"

All these that the Bible is profitable for i.e. teaching, reproof, correction make it profitable for instruction in righteousness or, as the Greek reads, for training in righteousness.

4 "that the man of God be perfect, thoroughly equipped for every good work"

The reason that God gave the Bible, which is useful for all these things, “is that the man of God be PERFECT”. This means that you cannot be perfect but only by applying what the Bible says.

The passage of II Timothy 3:16-17 also tells us that the Bible was given that the man of God be "thoroughly equipped for every good work". The good works that are meant here are not good works that YOU have "prepared" for God. For God the only works that are really good are the "good works that GOD prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). To be ready or thoroughly equipped for these good works what you need is God's textbook: the Bible.

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