

October 19, 2025 – 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5

*“Continue in what you have learned and firmly believed.”* Paul writes these words to Timothy as an old man nearing the end of his life. Paul is in prison in Rome, awaiting execution in a matter of weeks, most likely. Unable to visit his student and protégé. But he can still send a word of encouragement and guidance to Timothy as the young pastor endures a ministry marked by opposition and hardship.

Paul knows what Timothy needs most. And it's not a new evangelism strategy. Not a new message. Not a shiny five step plan to revitalize your congregation. No, what Timothy needs is what he already has: the Word of God. *“All Scripture is breathed out by God,”* Paul writes, *“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.”*

That phrase - *“breathed out by God”* - is a really interesting one. Because it tells us that the Bible is not like any other book. The Bible lives. The Bible breathes. It speaks with the voice of the living God Himself.

In the beginning, when God made the first man, He formed him from the dust of the ground. But even with a perfect form, he wasn't alive. He was still a lump of dirt. There was no breath in him. No heartbeat. No spirit.

So the Lord God stooped down, as a potter might lean in close to his wheel, and *“breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.”* And the man became a living being. That's the first breath recorded in the Bible. The breath of God himself. It is God's breath that turns dust into a person. Dirt into a soul. Lifeless matter into a living being.

God's breath is at the core of what it means to be alive. So it's not simply a figure of speech when Paul says, *“All Scripture is breathed out by God.”* The same breath that gave Adam life gave the Scriptures life. God's breath did not stop after creation. It has continued to fill the pages of His Word.

Which means that the Bible is not a dead book. It doesn't simply contain wise sayings or helpful stories. It is the living voice of God Himself. When you read it, when you hear it read, when it is preached, God is breathing into you again.

The same breath that filled Adam's lungs now fills your ears and heart. Jesus once said, *“The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.”* His words are not just air vibrating through sound waves. They are His living breath, carrying His Spirit into the hearts of those who hear.

This also means that when we try to live without God's Word, without His Spirit, without His presence, we return to the dust from which we came. We're still walking and talking, but without God breathing life into us, we are left spiritually lifeless. We may have intelligence, emotion, energy, but we don't have life in the sense that only God can give. Apart from His breath, there is no faith, no holiness, no hope.

The world is full of people who are formed, but not alive. They have shape and movement, but no spiritual breath within them. They seek meaning in themselves. They rely on their own strength. They think they are breathing freely, but the lungs of their soul are empty. Apart from the breath of God, we remain like Adam before God stooped down: a well-formed lump of dirt.

And so, through the God-breathed Scriptures, God breathes life into you. Just as he breathed life into St Timothy. From childhood Timothy had known the Holy Scriptures, taught to him by his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. Through that Word, the breath of God had entered him.

Paul says those Scriptures *“are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”* When the Gospel of Christ crucified is proclaimed, God breathes. The Spirit enters where there was once only sin and death. Faith comes by hearing, because hearing is a sort of spiritual breathing.

Every sermon, every Scripture reading, every catechism lesson is an act of divine respiration. God breathes, and His Church lives. The same Spirit who hovered over the waters in creation hovers over the waters of Baptism, breathing new life into dead sinners. The same breath that turned dust into a living man now turns sinners into saints. Enemies of the Kingdom into children of God.

But notice what Paul says next: *“All Scripture is breathed out by God... and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.”* The Word not only begins life, like it did for Adam in Genesis. The Word also shapes the life we live.

The breath that makes you live also teaches you how to live. The Spirit who gives faith also forms that faith. The Word teaches what is true, reproves what is false, corrects what is crooked, and trains what is weak.

When you read the Scriptures, they are not only breathing faith into you. They are reshaping your life with every breath. The Word of God is never idle. It convicts, comforts, challenges, and restores. The Spirit uses it to make you *“complete, equipped for every good work.”*

Adam, once alive, needed daily breath to stay alive. We do too. The life of faith is sustained by continually breathing God’s Word into us. We don’t live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Every word breathed out by God.

And so Paul tells Timothy, *“Continue in what you have learned and firmly believed.”* The world will always tempt you to seek some new breath, some new spirit, some fresher voice. There are always teachers who promise easier truths, who say the old Scriptures are outdated or too rigid. There are always people who will say what your itching ears want to hear.

But the living Word of God does not grow old. The breath that gave life to Adam and faith to Timothy thousands of years ago still gives life and faith to you. You don’t need something new. You need the same old Word.

Just as you can’t improve upon the air you physically need to breathe in order to stay alive, you can’t improve on the air you spiritually need to breathe in order to stay alive. It’s as good as it will ever get. And has been since literally the first day of creation. When God first said, *“Let there be light.”*

So stay close to it. Breathe it in daily. Hear it in the preaching of the Word from this pulpit. Hear it in the words of absolution that I bring to you each week, promising the forgiveness of sins for all who repent. Hear it in the words of institution that I speak from this altar, as the Word of God breathes Christ’s life and salvation into simple bread and wine. Knowing that because he lives, you also shall live.

Because, one day, this body will fail. The physical breath in your lungs will leave you. The heart that beats now will be still. But the breath God gives through His Word will not fail. The Spirit who breathed faith into you will not abandon you in death. When your earthly breath is gone, His life remains.

The moment you close your eyes in this world, you will open them in the presence of your Savior. The same Lord who breathed His peace into His disciples now breathes peace into you, even in the shadow of death. You will rest in His presence, alive in His Spirit, until all is made new.

And on that Last Day, the Spirit who has made you His own will breathe again. The Lord Jesus will speak your name with that same life-giving breath, and you will live again in body and soul. Just as God once breathed into the dust and made Adam a living being, so He will breathe into the dust of your grave and raise you to everlasting life.

Then the breath of God will fill His whole creation once more. The Word that called light out of darkness will call you out of death. The Word that made you His own will make you perfect and whole. You will open your eyes and breathe again the air of the new creation, where the Spirit of God fills all things.

Until that day, like Timothy, continue in what you have learned. Don’t drift from the Word that gives you life. Let God breathe His Word into you. When you hear it read, when you pray it, when you confess it, when you sing it. For that Word is not merely ink on paper. It is the living, breathing voice of your Savior.

*“All Scripture is breathed out by God.”* And through it, the God who once breathed into Adam now breathes into you. Amen.