# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“The Life-Giving Word of God”**

**2 Timothy 3:14-17**

 **May 1, 2022**

What is the origin of human life? According to the second chapter of Genesis, human life began when God took some dirt, shaped it, and breathed life into it. What is the origin of spiritual or eternal life? Here we turn to the third chapter of John’s Gospel where Jesus is having a conversation with a Pharisee named Nicodemus. Jesus tells Nicodemus that in order to receive spiritual life, Nicodemus must be born again. Jesus explains to Nicodemus that he is not talking about a physical rebirth but a new spiritual birth that can only happen when the life-giving breath of God, in the form of the Holy Spirit, gives birth to this new spiritual reality.

The breath of God, a biblical image for the Holy Spirit in both the Old and the New Testaments, gives life. It gives life to human beings, both physical life and spiritual life, but it doesn’t end there. I invite you to turn with me to 2 Timothy 3:14-17

But you must remain faithful to the things you have been taught. You know they are true, for you know you can trust those who taught you. You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

Paul is writing to Timothy, his son in the faith. Timothy has been given the task of leading the church in Ephesus, and Paul writes to encourage him to stand strong. He warns him that there are some who claim to speak for God, but they are deceivers or they have been deceived into thinking their words and actions are in line with the will of God. What does Timothy need to remain focused on God’s will for him? What will guide Timothy and give him the wisdom necessary to carry out the good work that God has planned for him? Who will Timothy rely on when Paul, who is anticipating his death, is no longer available? What will instruct Timothy in living the spiritual life? Scripture is the answer to each one of these questions.

How can Scripture, the Bible, do this? What is it about these words written by human beings that enable them to be the foundation for Christian life and ministry? Paul tells us in verse sixteen: “All Scripture is God-breathed.” The translation I read from this morning says that all Scripture is “inspired by God,” but I prefer to stick with the original Greek word which literally translates “God-breathed” – *theopneustos –* a compound word using *theos*, the word for God, and *pneuma*, the word for breath. What does it mean that the Bible is God-breathed?

That the Bible is God-breathed means that all Scripture owes its origin and content to the divine breath, the Spirit of God. In other words, the human authors who wrote the Bible were guided and directed by the Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit, they would simply have been writing human words, thought of by human minds, reflecting human understanding and opinion. Through the Holy Spirit these are God’s words, conceived by the mind of God, revealing the way, the truth, and the life of God. Like Jesus who is himself called the Word of God lived out in a person, so the Bible is the Word of God written out in a text. And this Word of God is life-giving.

By believing in this Word, Paul says we are made wise for salvation. That is, we are told how we may be saved and by believing the words of the Bible to be true, we are given eternal life. By believing in this Word, we learn what is right in God’s eyes and we see what is wrong in our lives. Then, seeing what is wrong, the Word of God guides us in how to confess and repent of that wrong as we trust in the forgiveness of God to cleanse us of sin.

The Word of God is life-giving because the Spirit of God living in us, the Spirit who gave us new birth, is the same Spirit who brings the Word to life. Anyone can read the Bible, but only to those who have the Spirit of God does the Bible give life. Of course, in order to be the life-giving Word of God for me or for you, we must read it. A closed Bible gives the Spirit nothing to work with. Growth in the Christian life is a cooperative effort between ourselves and the Spirit. He has already promised to do his part. Will we do ours? Will we daily read God’s Word, think about its meaning, and allow it to change us more and more into people who not only know the truth of God but who are living it, all with the help of the Spirit? If so, the breath of God is bringing the Word of God to life within us, giving us an ongoing infusion of new life – God’s life.