

2 Timothy 3:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

Analysis

That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works. This verse states Scripture's ultimate purpose. "That the man of God may be perfect" (hina artios ē ho tou theou anthrōpos, ἵνα ἄρτιος ἦν ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ ἄνθρωπος). "The man of God" (ho tou theou anthrōpos, ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ ἄνθρωπος) is technical Old Testament phrase for prophet or servant specially called by God (Deuteronomy 33:1, 1 Samuel 9:6, 1 Kings 17:18). Paul applies it to Timothy and, by extension, all Christian ministers and believers—those belonging to God, set apart for His service.

Scripture makes this person "perfect" (artios, ἄρτιος)—complete, capable, fully qualified. This isn't sinless perfection but spiritual maturity and competence. Artios describes something whole, lacking nothing necessary. Additionally, "throughly furnished" (exērtismenos, ἐξηρτισμένος)—fully equipped, completely outfitted. Perfect passive participle indicates completed action with ongoing result: Scripture has equipped and continues maintaining that equipped state. The purpose: "unto all good works" (pros pan ergon agathon, πρὸς πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθόν). Every good work, without exception—Scripture sufficiently equips for complete Christian living and ministry.

This verse establishes Scripture's sufficiency. Nothing beyond Scripture is necessary for Christian faith and practice. Tradition, reason, experience may illuminate but cannot supplement Scripture's authority or completeness. Roman Catholicism errs by adding tradition; mysticism errs by seeking new revelations;

rationalism errs by subjecting Scripture to human reason. Scripture alone is sufficient because God's breath is sufficient. Those who claim additional revelation or authority beyond Scripture implicitly deny its sufficiency. Paul's affirmation directly refutes such claims: Scripture thoroughly furnishes believers for everything God requires.

Historical Context

The sufficiency of Scripture became central Protestant doctrine during the Reformation. Roman Catholic Church claimed Scripture plus tradition; Reformers insisted Scripture alone (*sola scriptura*). This verse proved crucial: if Scripture thoroughly furnishes unto all good works, additional authoritative tradition is unnecessary. Contemporary challenges continue: liberal theology elevates human reason and experience above Scripture; charismatic extremism seeks new revelations; progressive Christianity subordinates Scripture to cultural values. Against all such errors, verse 17 stands: Scripture is sufficient. God has said everything necessary; we need nothing more.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. Do you live as though Scripture is sufficient for all aspects of Christian faith and life, or do you functionally rely more on other sources?
2. What 'good works' is God calling you to, and how are you allowing Scripture to thoroughly furnish you for them?
3. Where might you be tempted to seek authority beyond Scripture—tradition, experience, contemporary culture, new revelations—and how can you return to scriptural sufficiency?

Interlinear Text

ἵνα	ἄρτιος	ἢ	ό	τοῦ	θεοῦ	ἄνθρωπος	πρὸς	πᾶν
That	perfect	may be	G3588	G3588	of God	the man	unto	all
G2443	G739	G5600			G2316	G444	G4314	G3956
ἔργον	ἀγαθὸν	ἐξηρτισμένος						
works	good	throughly furnished						
G2041	G18	G1822						

Additional Cross-References

2 Timothy 2:21 (Good): If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

Ephesians 2:10 (Good): For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

2 Corinthians 9:8 (Good): And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

1 Timothy 6:11 (References God): But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

Hebrews 10:24 (Good): And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

Titus 2:14 (Good): Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Acts 9:36 (Good): Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.

Titus 3:1 (Good): Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work,

Nehemiah 2:18 (Good): Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work.

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