**The Collect and the New Testament Reading appointed for the 18th Sunday after Trinity**

Almighty and everlasting God,
increase in us your gift of faith
that, forsaking what lies behind
and reaching out to that which is before,
we may run the way of your commandments
and win the crown of everlasting joy;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**A Reading is taken from the Second Letter of St Paul to Timothy,**

**chapter 3, verses 14 - 17**

Continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of,

because you know those from whom you learned it,

and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures,

which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful

for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

***Pause for Thought…***

 ***ALL Scripture,*** teaches Paul, ***is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God***

***may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.***

The Bible is there ***to teach us*** – to help us to learn about our God, our humanity,

God’s story of salvation for the world, and our part in that story.

It’s there ***to rebuke us*** sometimes – to show us where we’re going wrong to and to invite us

to change our ways.

***It corrects us*** – shows us how to do better and be better.

***It trains us in righteousness*** – in that combination of goodness and justice which God longs

to see in his children.

And the aim of all this is not to squeeze us into some strange unnatural shape by trying to live

our lives according to the Bible’s design, but to help us to become complete, richly human beings, reflecting God’s image in and to the world.

And how is the Bible able to do all this?

Because it is ***God-breathed***…

It is literally *inspired* – literally, *breathed into by God*.

The Bible has living breath in it – and that breath is the breath of God himself.

In both Hebrew and Greek the words for breath and spirit are exactly the same,

and the inspired, in-breathed Holy Scriptures are filled with the power of God the Holy Spirit

for all who read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them.

This book – the Bible – is like no other. It is totally unique.

It is living and active and its content has the power to change lives and change the world.

But we have to **let** it change us.

We have to **let it**

teach us,

rebuke us,

correct us

and train us in righteousness.

**And we can’t do that *unless we read it for ourselves*…**