

Christian Discipleship & The Word to God

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[0 : 0 0] Let's turn back now to Paul's second letter to Timothy and chapter number 3. We can read at verse 14. 2 Timothy 3 at verse 14.

But as for you, continuing what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make it wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

All Scripture is breathed out by God 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.

Now, the Scottish Bible Society, they appoint a date every year to celebrate the Bible.

It's a worthwhile thing to do. I'm sure as the people of God, we celebrate the Bible every day, and so we should. But having a day set apart by the Scottish Bible Society, it gives an opportunity to churches to reflect on the Bible and its significance.

[1 : 1 7] It is, as we know, it is the Word of God. It is the gift of God to us. And when we think of the influence of the Bible itself and reflect on the fact that it is reckoned that over 5 billion copies of the Bible have been sold, that it continues to endure in every generation, we understand that there is something really special about the Word of God.

And alongside of that, there is also the most translated work in history. So it's worth thinking about the Bible. And I want us to do so this evening as to reflect on these verses.

When we think of Paul writing to Timothy, we see very much that Timothy was the child of Paul. We see that he loves him very much because of his relationship with him.

And we see also that Paul is concerned about Timothy. We see in the first chapter, we see that he's concerned about him because he seems to be very timid, because his faith seems to be wavering, because he just doesn't seem to be very strong.

So Paul is concerned about Timothy at the very beginning of this letter. And he wants to reactivate or to stir up his faith, to make him strong and to be ready to go from Paul himself as he moves on.

[2 : 4 5] And as we read into the next chapter, we see that Paul's time of departure has arrived. He's ready to leave the world. And he sees Timothy as succeeding him and following his work.

And because of that, he is especially concerned because he wants Timothy to be ready to do so.

And the current context, we see at the beginning of the chapter, his concern is because of the challenges of the day, because of the fact that the Word of God is ignored, because of the fact that the Word of God is abused and opposed, and opposed in some cases by those who represent the Christian community to which Paul was writing.

And Paul is concerned about Timothy, that because of these challenges to the gospel itself, that Timothy will not be able to take over from him and to take up the mantle.

And so Paul wants to encourage Timothy to continue. And that's basically how verse 14 begins. As for you, continue in what you have learned.

Consistency, perseverance, getting on with the work is really important. And time after time, we are called upon in the Bible to continue and persevere simply because we know that we face challenges every day of life as the children of God.

[4 : 1 6] And you will have your challenges, and others will have theirs, and I will have mine. But in order for us to continue to follow the Lord Jesus, we need to be encouraged.

And so, against that background this evening, we want to look at these verses and to think of Christian discipleship and the Word of God.

I want to think, first of all, that we see in these verses self-examination. It's always a great exercise to think about ourselves, to look into ourselves, and to see what is going on there.

And Paul wants to encourage Timothy to do so. Again, at the beginning of verse 14, But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have believed, knowing from whom you have learned it. If Timothy pauses for one minute and examines his own heart, he knows that going back to a particular time in his life that has been the passing on of knowledge, the learning of something that he didn't learn before, he is in a different place to where he was before.

[5 : 31] Self-examination with regard to what Paul is doing here is to enable Timothy to think about what God has already done.

And for you and for me, that's surely so simple and surely so important, as we go forward in seeking to follow the Lord Jesus, that we actually stop and listen to what God has already done.

Because unless we realize that, we are probably going to go along the wrong path. Unless we realize that, we are going to be discouraged. We need to pause and think of what God has already done.

And with regard to Timothy, it is with regard to what he has learned. There has been knowledge passed on to Timothy down through the course of his life.

There is the handing over of the teacher to the pupil. There is the binding relationship between Paul and Timothy and between others and Timothy. And through that relationship, information has been passed to Timothy and he has learned.

[6 : 47] There is the sense of that intellectual process where information has been passed to him. And through that process, he is now in the place where he holds certain truths and certain facts.

And especially, Paul wants to remind him that much of the knowledge that he has and much of the information that he has gathered, that it is information that he has learned from the sacred writings. From the writings that God has put in place and set apart, they are sacred because they belong to God, they contain the power of God, they contain the light of God, they contain everything that comes from the presence of God where the sacred things are.

And the sacred writings have the knowledge of that great God who is invisible to us, but in the sacred writings of the Old Testament, as we understand these words, in the sacred writings of the Old Testament, Timothy has learned certain things.

He has learned what God says, what God does, what God promises, what God will yet do.

[8 : 13] And when we analyze Timothy's life, we can see that he gathered that knowledge in two particular ways. He gathered it, first of all, from family religion.

And that's so powerfully important. That as parents, that we teach our children that they learn the Bible. And by learning the Bible in their very earlier years, shaping their thinking, filling their minds with the information that God has given to us.

And when we read the beginning of this letter, that's the way in which Paul addresses Timothy. He wants to remind him of your sincere faith.

And he goes on to speak about the faith which first dwelt in your grandmother, Lois, and in your mother, Eunice, and now, which I am sure dwells in you.

The faith that Timothy has, he learned it in his family, in the family example, in the family passing down of the information, so that in the covenant of God, faith passes from one generation to the other.

[9 : 35] the importance of the learning that we receive in our families and in our homes.

And I'm sure, perhaps to varying degrees, all of us here together this evening, we understand what that means. We sat on our father's and mother's knees, and they spoke to us the Bible.

We listened to them, I say, taught us the shorter catechism. We listened to our mothers as they asked us the mother's catechism. We learned about faith around the fireside.

No gadgets. Nothing to get in the way. Nothing to hinder the conversation. the openness of sharing the gospel in our homes and in our families.

And we need to encourage each other to do so, especially in the generation in which we live, where our children are filled with information from the parallel universe out there.

[10 : 43] We need to ensure that we are filling their minds with the truth of God. Timothy had learned through family religion.

He had also learned from the gospel. And that gospel that is represented by the apostle Paul. Of course, the New Testament wasn't written in the form that we have when Paul was writing to Timothy.

But Paul was the apostle of Jesus Christ. And he reminds Timothy in the first chapter of the pattern of sound words that Paul gave to him.

That you heard from me. And that same pattern of words he has entrusted to Timothy so that Timothy will follow the teaching of the apostle Paul.

And we don't need to ask too much of what would Paul's focus be in his teaching of Timothy and his teaching of others. We read his own conversion and we read his letters and if we can say it with all respect, he was obsessed with the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

[12:02] He would have been teaching pure gospel to Timothy. Filling his mind with the importance of the Lord Jesus. Arising out of the Old Testament scriptures.

Showing him this is that. This is what God spoke through the prophets. Here it is. It happened in Bethlehem. It happened on Calvary's cross. It happened on the empty tomb.

This is that. Paul bringing Timothy's learning is the information that he had in his mind bringing that into the gospel era and filling his mind with a sense of the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ through faith in his name.

The gospel. And here we are tonight reinforcing and building up the basic information that we were shared as children.

Continuing to have the gospel building up on that basic information. Filling our minds with the truths about the grace of God in the oppression of the Lord Jesus and giving us that sense of belonging not just to a father and a mother and a grandmother or a grandfather who had faith but belonging to this great God who was their God and who spoke this and did that to confirm to a lost world that in the oppression of Jesus there was salvation there was new life there was all that God had promised to do.

[13:43] Is it not the case that that's how our lives are shaped and packed? Family religion family Christianity gospel preached to us and there we have these powerful influences.

There is the self examination that leads Timothy to focus on these aspects of his learning. And God is asking you and me tonight to think of these very same things to look back at life and to see how God has flooded your mind and flooded your life with the teachings of the Bible and the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ and giving to you such a bank of knowledge that you should be able to take that knowledge and to act on that knowledge and do secondly what we see Timothy did.

Because you see he had all the information it was passed to him through all these channels but as well as that he was asked to examine himself with regard to his faith.

Continuing what you have learned and have firmly believed. These are the truths that you were persuaded were through.

Persuaded were the word of God. Persuaded were the word of God for you and the grace of God for you. You firmly believed.

[15:37] And it's the image not of someone who is active in what's happening. It's the emphasis on the fact that this believing this faith that came into Timothy's experience was something in which he was passive because it was the gift of God and the new life that God gave to him and the fruit of that is firmly believing all that he had learned.

And that's so like the gospel of Paul that he speaks in his letters. We were dead and we are alive.

We are an old creation, we are a new creation. we are created in Christ Jesus for good works.

There is the fingerprint of God that brings us into new life. It's his work. We are born again and then we firmly believe the gospel.

And we believe that that gospel in the following verse is the gospel which is able to make us wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

The wisdom of God as we have it in the gospel. The only successful way of arriving and reaching at God's salvation.

[17:02] And time after time the whole idea of salvation in the New Testament is not so much about salvation now but the salvation that will be completed at the end of time.

There is that future aspect of it. And when Timothy came to be persuaded of the truths of the gospel because of the hand of God upon his life in that moment he was wise for salvation today and he had a hope and a salvation that would be perfected at the return of Christ and all through faith in Christ Jesus.

He had knowledge and he had experience and there is no faith without experience.

And it's a simple test perhaps but a simple process tonight for you and I to pause and examine ourselves.

Do we have the knowledge and do we have the faith? Do we have the learning and do we have the experience? And can we say in our heart of hearts tonight that we firmly believe?

[18 : 27] believe? And it might seem a waste of our time doing so but I reckon that at different times in our lives we overlook the simple things.

We forget who we are. We forget what God has done and because of that we wander aimlessly. And if we are going to go through a process every morning of this kind of self-examination to remind ourselves of where we are and whose we are and what God has done then the day would be far clearer before us.

The day would be less filled with anxiety but more filled with purpose. Self-examination. Will you? Can you? Are you able to go back and to think and to look into your heart and be able to say yes. I learned that in the gospel but yes I learned what it is to be born again and to have a love and an interest in what I had learned that simply could not be there apart from the work of God himself. The self-examination the importance of family religion the importance of the gospel if he is going to continue steadfast and faithful on Paul's departure.

[20 : 02] But secondly if there is a need for self-examination there is a need to think of supremacy and that is to need to think of the supremacy of the Bible.

Bible it's not enough to learn the Bible. We need to understand what the Bible is as well as what it says.

And as surely as Timothy has been dependent upon his family and upon Paul there is a far greater and more important reason why he should learn and hear and listen to the Word of God.

And that is in verse number 15. Verse number 16. All Scripture is breathed out by God.

All of Scripture. The whole of the Bible. It's not that the Bible contains the truth but the Bible is the truth that is the Word of God.

[21 : 12] All of the Bible. All of it together and each individual part of it. All of Scripture is breathed out by God.

It's not inspiration. Timothy was to be inspired by what Paul was doing and saying.

We're inspired to do something because we're influenced from the outside. We can be inspired in so many different ways in our faith and also in our lives in the world.

Inspired by the example of others to go and do something. This is not inspiration. God didn't give us the Bible because he was inspired from any external influence.

Not even the greatest of our need. That wasn't his inspiration to do it. He simply breathed it out. God breathed and his word was verbalized.

[22 : 26] I can walk along the street on a frosty winter evening. I can breathe and I see my breath.

My breath is the product of the functioning of my organs. It shows what's happening on the inside. Everything on the inside is working. Here is the life I'm breathing out.

And in some ways part of what Paul is saying here is that that's what happens. When God breathes out the scripture, he breathes out what's going on inside of himself.

The secret of his own mind, his purposes and his plans. Everything that he has for this world that's going on in his mind from before the world ever was, he breathes that out.

And here then we have the word of God. And when we think of the word of God, breathed out in that way, it brings us surely to consider of the great love of God who loved us before the world ever was, that in his love now he breathes out his whole inner being.

[23 : 45] And we have it in the pages of Scripture, all of Scripture. And the breathing out is not something that is there to describe the nature of the Bible, but to describe where the word of God has come from.

He breathes out and it's there. And Peter in his own writings makes the distinction that there were those who were prophets and they were guided, they spoke from God carried along by the Spirit of God.

They were inspired to write what they wrote. They were doing that corresponding the breathing out of the Word of God from God himself.

And the breath of God, which we see time after time in the Bible. we see Job, for example, saying that it was the breath of God that gave him life.

The writer of Hebrews tells us that the Word of God is living and active. That Peter in writing his first epistle speaks about the way in which we are born again by the living and abiding Word of God. [25 : 17] it is the breath of God that we have in the pages of Scripture. And this is designed to heighten Timothy's appreciation of the sacred writings with which he is so familiar, and to heighten his thoughts with regard to the Word of God, and to realize the significance of that Word as it is God Himself speaking into his life, breathing into his life, with all the power and the authority and the grandeur and the glory and the otherness and all of the perfections of God behind this Word that makes it solemn, and that makes it a Word that he must not only learn, but listen to and put into practice in his own life.

All Scripture is breathed out by God. Must we not all confess that we come to read the words of this book so often and we don't treat them in any different way to reading any other book?

we so often fail to realize the glory and the power of the Word of God. That when we read this Word that the breath of God should strike our faces, that the breath of God should touch our hearts, that we would sense the movement of God toward us every time that we read this Word.

the breath of God, the Spirit of God. We need that help to do so. But what a great transformation in your life and in mine.

If when I take up my Bible the first thing in the morning and I read it and I feel the breath of God and the breath of heaven in my face and my heart, how is that going to change my day?

[27 : 32] How is it going to change my life? Because everything that there is in the pages of the Word of God, because of that, they are important. They need to be listened to and need to take care of what God is saying.

Feeling the breath of God touching our lives. Do you know what that is like? Perhaps it's a rare experience.

If we're going to be honest, all of us, it's a rare experience. And we could try and explore why is it a rare experience. But the point is, it should be a regular occurrence.

Because this is our confrontation with God. It's our confrontation with His power. And especially, it's our confrontation with all that there was in His mind and in His heart before ever the world was.

All scripture breathed out. Let's go home tonight and let's in our closing worship of the day as we open our Bibles.

[28 : 44] Let's pray that we will sense and feel the breath of God going through us. To remind us that when we read this word we are in the presence of God.

And it is the living and abiding word of God that does not ever change. All scripture is breathed out. It's supreme.

It has supremacy because it is the breath of God. And along with that Paul wants to drive home the second characteristic about this word.

It is all scripture is breathed out by God and profitable. So many things in life are a waste of time.

And we spend so much of our time in things that are a waste of time. We're drawn along by the culture and the world in which we live as Paul was afraid Timothy would be.

[29 : 53] We are drawn along and we are so mixed up in our thinking and we don't see the value of what God has given to us.

This is profitable. It has its benefits and it has its value. It has its value first of all because of the way in which it is breathed out by God.

And to think of the way in which Paul is speaking about value. He speaks earlier on with regard to godliness in the first epistle. He speaks about the way in which while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way.

He's making comparisons. Bodily exercise is valuable but godliness is much more valuable.

valuable. There's another comparison we can think of to think of value and that is the way in which Peter speaks of the ransom price by which we are saved.

Not with things like silver and gold, valuable things, precious things, not like things like silver and gold but with the precious blood of Jesus, something that is far more valuable, something that is far more special, something that has incomparable value.

[31 : 23] And Paul wants Timothy to come to this word, to recognize that it's supreme because God has breathed it out and to recognize it also because it has value that cannot be compared, value that is beyond anything else in life.

It is the most precious thing. If I'm going to go to the stock exchange and I'm going to trade shares or do whatever, if I go along there, I want to ask certain questions.

I want to know the value of something and I want to know its reputation. I want to know its potential to earn and to grow in the future.

I'm mentioning the value of the thing. That's not important. It's of little value because it's little value in the sense of purchasing it and it's got no potential for something better in the future.

So I'm not having that. But if I see something that is declared to be valuable and precious and I see its potential for the future, then that's what I want to invest in.

[32 : 39] And Paul here wants Timothy to do something like that with the word of God. There's so much stuff going on around Timothy here. But Paul wants him to do all of these comparisons, to do all of these measurements and to come down firmly with a conclusion that there is nothing that can compare to the word of God because of its value and of its benefit.

God's love of God. And both things together, they will reshape our lives, they will redirect our thinking, our thinking about ourselves, our thinking about the world, and our thinking about where we are going.

What's valuable for yourself this evening? what's the most valuable thing? Is it something that you're seeking and hungering after apart from the word of God?

But can you honestly say that as much as all of these things have importance in life, when it comes to the word of God, here is the greatest, most precious thing that I have in life.

Of course, that includes the Lord Jesus, my Savior, but in this context, it's recognizing the value, the supremacy of the Bible.

[34 : 06] It's the word breathed out by God. And when we come to that conclusion, we were thank God for those who taught us.

We will thank God for the gospel, but we will come to thank God that those who taught us and those who preached the gospel to us, that they brought us to this treasure of the word of God that brings me actually face to face with God himself.

The self-examination the supremacy of the word of God. And just summarizing in closure, the sufficiency of the word of God.

That's how Paul finishes this chapter. all scripture is breathed out by God 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.

And we can summarize these four things as things that were a real challenge to Timothy in the day in which he lived. There is the need for teaching, for ongoing learning to understand what God is saying.

[35 : 31] There is the need for reproof because there are those who are opposing the truth. The reproof is what points out the error is there.

The correction is what puts something in its place that brings everything once more in line with the Bible, aligns life and thinking and living in terms of the Bible.

And there is training in righteousness, living the life of the people of God, living the life of faith, living the consistent life that Paul wanted Timothy to live.

And the Bible is sufficient for all of these things in the design of God, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

if there is one complaint that we all have with regard to being called to be disciples of the Lord Jesus, being called to serve the Lord, is that we are so incomplete.

[36 : 43] We simply don't have what it takes to serve the Lord. And at one level, we have to acknowledge that because it is true, and it's the truth.

But what Paul is reminding Timothy of here is that because of the Word of God, because it is breathed out by God, and because of the value that it has, then, Timothy, you should not feel incomplete.

Because in God's design, this Word of God, this Bible, is in order to equip you for every work into which I have called you. And the person who is most aware of that incompleteness and of that inability is the person who is going to come to appreciate fully the completion, the perfection, the equipping of God that enables us to serve Him.

And tonight, as we close, let's not not go from here, with a sense of the struggle, with a sense of our inability, with a sense of we cannot do it, but let's go from here, determined to rediscover the riches

of the Word of God, and by doing so, to learn that the places in which we find our weakness is most, it's a place where God will give us strength.

And so we can go on serving, and we cannot go from here and say we can't, but we can go from here and say we can, because God enables us to do it, and we can serve because He is equipping us day by day as we search the Scripture church, and learn what it is to have faith, to live by faith, learn what it is to challenge error, and to live in accordance with the truth.

[38 : 57] May God help us in that way, to live the life of Christian discipleship, recognizing the true value of the Word of God, and to be strong, because God has breathed out this Word to ensure that we are saved, and that we have strength, and that we can serve Him, and that ultimately, we can dwell with Him in the glories of the eternity that is to come.

May God bless His Word to us. Let us pray. Most gracious God, we bow before You, we acknowledge our need of You, and our indebtedness to You. We are so thankful tonight that we have Your Word.

We can think of it as a window, we can think of it as a mirror, but help us, Lord, also tonight to think of it as Your breath, and help us to receive it with that life that You are able to communicate, and grant to us help in receiving life from Your Word, and grant to us help day by day in living in accordance with Your Word, in our daily lives, we do ask.

So help us, we pray, and hear us, and bless Your Word. we ask these things for Jesus' sake.

Amen. Our closing psalm is psalm number 25.

It's in Sing Psalms on page number 29, and we're singing at verse 4. Psalm 25, page 29, at verse number 4.

[40 : 27] O Lord, reveal to me Your ways, and all Your paths, help me to know, direct and guide me in Your truth, instruct me in the way to go.

We sing from verse 4 to verse 9, to God's praise. verse 5.

And start me in the way to go. You are my Savior, and my guide.

All day I hope in You alone remember Lord, your love and grace, which from past ages You have shown.

Do not recall my sins of youth or my repelious evil ways.

[42 : 18] Remember me in Your great love for You, O Lord, our good always.

ways because the Lord is just and good. He shows His paths to all who sleep.

He guides the meek what is right and teaches them His holy way.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore. Amen. a vi excuse for Jesus Christ, you do not fail.