

Bible Sunday

2 Timothy 3 v 10 – 4 v 5

Context:

God is invisible to the naked human eye. Paul puts it this way towards the beginning of his first letter to his young protégé Timothy: “Now to the King eternal, immortal, **invisible**, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever, Amen.” (1 Timothy 1 v 17), and again, towards the end of the same letter: “God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, **whom no-one has seen or can see.**” (1 Timothy 6 v 15-16). So, God is invisible – you won't sit next to him on the 57 bus or stand behind him in the checkout queue in Aldi. So, that means, if we are to know him at all, we are totally and utterly dependant on God taking the initiative to reveal himself to us, making himself known to us. The good news is this is exactly what God has done. He isn't playing hide and seek – he has made himself known – and in our study today Paul, writing a second letter to Timothy in Ephesus, tells us how God did it. So, let's dig in!

Observation:

1. What does Paul remind Timothy of in 3 v 10-11?
2. What sobering truths does Paul declare in 3 v 12-13?
3. What command does Paul give to Timothy in 3 v 14 and why?
4. What is the source of Timothy's learning according to the beginning of 3 v 15?
5. What is the function of Scripture according to the second half of 3 v 15?
6. What stunning fact does Paul declare at the beginning of 3 v 16?
7. How does Paul further unpack the function of Scripture in the rest of 3 v 16 and 17?
8. On what basis does Paul give Timothy his solemn charge in 4 v 1?
9. What is the charge as outlined in 4 v 2?
10. Why is this charge so important according to 4 v 3-4?
11. What duties does Paul lay on Timothy in 4 v 5?

Meaning:

1. Later in this passage Paul draws attention to the importance of Scripture as the primary means by which God has revealed his truth to the world. So, why do you think Paul first points Timothy to the example of his life in 3 v 10-11 and what does this list tell us about Paul's life and character?
2. To which Christians do *you* look for examples of biblical truth lived out in the real world? How does it make you feel knowing that others may be looking at you for inspiration and example?
3. Do you think Paul is exaggerating in 3 v 12-13? To what extent is his statement true?

4. We read in 2 Timothy 1 v 5 about the faith of Timothy's grandmother Eunice and his mother Lois who were clearly followers of Jesus. It was probably therefore these two women who taught Timothy the Scriptures from the time of his infancy (3 v 15). What does this tell us about the importance of parents and grandparents teaching the Bible to their children and grandchildren? What are the joys and the struggles of doing this well?
5. The phrase Paul uses in 3 v 16, 'God-breathed', literally means 'breathed out or exhaled by God'. So Paul isn't saying the writers of Scripture were inspired, like an artist or a poet, but rather that God *breathed or spoke out* the very words we read in the Scriptures. What does this tell us about the unique significance of the Bible and what should our response to it therefore be?
6. We know that the Bible was actually written by human authors (Matthew, Isaiah, Moses, Jeremiah etc), and the Bible doesn't read as though God dictated it to them verbatim (with a few honourable exceptions, such as the 10 commandments for example). So, how do we hold these two truths together – that God spoke all the words of Scripture so that each and every word is true AND that human authors wrote Scripture, but not by verbatim dictation from God?
7. Paul tells us what the purpose or function of Scripture is in 3 v 15-17. How have you experienced this in your own life and how have you seen it in the lives of others?
8. Why do you think Paul lays on such a solemn basis for his charge in 4 v 1?
9. In light of what we have already read in 3 v 10-17, what do you think Paul means by his command: 'Preach the Word' in 4 v 2?
10. What do you think he means by: 'be prepared in season and out of season.'?
11. Why do you think Paul tempers the command to correct, rebuke and encourage, with the addition of the words: 'with great patience and careful instruction' in 4 v 2? What are the dangers of doing one without the other?
12. To what extent and in what ways do we see Paul's warning in 4 v 3-4 being played out today? Why do we sometimes have 'itching ears' rather than accepting the truth as God has revealed it in Scripture?
13. What do you think it means to 'do the work of an evangelist' (4 v 5)?
14. Why might preaching the word and doing the work of an evangelist bring trouble, hardship and persecution?

Application:

1. In what ways might I better prioritise the importance of the Scriptures in my own life?
2. If the Bible is God's word, why do Christians differ so much in their interpretations of it and how might we handle situations where Christians disagree on the meaning of the Bible on fundamental issues?

Pray:

- Thank God for the Bible – for those who wrote it and those who and preserved it.
- Ask God to help you to better prioritise the Bible in your own life.
- Ask for God’s grace to unite the church despite disagreements on how the Bible should be interpreted.