

God's Word is useful for Teaching (2 Timothy 3:14-17 and Matthew 16:21-28)

21-Jan-2024

2 Timothy 3:14-17

¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵ and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Matthew 16:21-28

Jesus Predicts His Death

²¹ From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

²² Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"

²³ Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. ²⁶ What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

²⁸ "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

Sermon: God's Word is useful for "Correcting"

Please have your Bibles opened at **2 Timothy 3** – starting at verse 16 – then we'll look at Matthew chapter 16

There's an **outline** – if you'd like to take some notes.

Let me **pray** first...

Intro (2 Timothy 3:14-17 and Matthew 16:21-22)

This morning we are continuing with a **4-part series** throughout January on the **usefulness of God's Word**.

We're basing this series on our NT reading from 2 Timothy 3 where in **v16** it says:

[Slide 1-v16]

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

So, for the 4 Sundays in January - we're looking at how **God's Word** is **useful** for:

1. Teaching
2. Rebuking
3. Correcting
4. Training in righteousness

In week 1 – we saw that **God's Word** is useful for **teaching** **[Israelites taught their children]**

Last week – we saw that **God's Word** is useful for **rebuking** **[Saul/Paul]**

This week – then – we're looking at **God's Word** is useful for **correcting**

[Slide 2-Correcting]

“Correcting” means “*to put right an error or fault or to tell someone they are mistaken*”

In our second reading from Matthew 16 – Jesus has to tell one of His disciples – Peter - that Peter is mistaken in his thinking

We pick up the story in v21 [\[Please turn there now\]](#)

Where Jesus explains to His disciples that **He must go to Jerusalem** – where He will suffer at the hands of the religious leaders – and that He **MUST be killed** and on the third day be raised to life.

Peter – always the **outspoken one** – doesn't hear the bit about Jesus being raised to life on the third day – Peter only hears that Jesus must be killed – and so in v22 – **Peter tries to rebuke Jesus** – not the **wisest move** – to rebuke the Son of God

Peter tells Jesus “*Never, Lord! This shall never happen to you*”

We can understand Peter's emotions here – his friend **Jesus** – who teaches the most amazing things – and performs miracle after miracle – and who stands up to the religious leaders and ties them in knots – says He's going to get killed.

That doesn't fit with **Peter's thinking** – **He sees Jesus as the Messiah King** – who has come to put Israel back where it belongs – Peter sees Jesus as a military King –

like the OT hero King David – Peter thinks Jesus will kick the Romans out of Israel once and for all!

But **Peter's thinking is ALL wrong** – and needs to be corrected.

[Slide 3-Heading]

How God's Word Corrects (Matthew 16:23-28)

[Slide 3A-Save]

So, my first point this morning is – ***God's Word corrects the wrong thinking about God's plan to save us***

Look at v23

Jesus turns on Peter and says ***“Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns”***

“Get behind me, Satan” is a **confronting statement** to Peter

Only a few verses earlier (v16) – Peter had correctly identified Jesus as the **Messiah**, the Son of God

And in v17 – Jesus had praised Peter for being so correct – and for receiving this revelation from God Himself

Then in v18-19 – Jesus had even said Peter will be **instrumental in building Jesus' church**

I'm sure Peter would have felt pretty good about himself at that point – but sometimes **pride comes before a fall!**

Now here in v23 - Jesus is saying **Peter is like Satan!**

It's like one minute **Peter is speaking as a messenger of God** – and the next minute **Peter is speaking as a messenger of Satan**

Why the turnaround?

Well – because Jesus knew there was a **satanic purpose** behind Peter's words that **Jesus' must not die!**

Understandably Peter didn't want **Jesus to suffer and die**

But **Peter had it completely wrong** – Jesus hadn't come to defeat physical enemies and armies – but **to defeat the spiritual enemies of sin and death.**

Peter misunderstood God's plan – that Jesus – who was perfect and sinless – **had to be the once and for all sacrifice for sin** – so that people don't have to die for their sins to be forgiven – Jesus takes their place.

Peter saw, Jesus the Messiah, as the **embodiment of power and strength** – instead of seeing, **Jesus the Messiah, as the suffering servant King!**

Peter doesn't realize it – but by telling Jesus that He can't die – **Peter is going against God's will and purpose for His Son Jesus** - and in effect - **Peter is trying to tempt Jesus away from His Mission Plan** – that's what Satan tried to do in Luke 4:1-13 - Jesus is saying to Peter ***"you're thinking the same as my adversary (Satan)"***.

We can be a bit like Peter – can't we – and **argue with God** and **argue against His will** – when we do - we're also **not thinking like God** - **we're thinking like Satan!**

Sometimes Satan uses people closest to us, even people who love us to unwittingly try to tempt us away from doing God's will.

We are in a constant spiritual battle.

How did Jesus repel Satan's temptations – when tempted back in Matthew 4?

Jesus used **God's Word**

We must do the same?

If we want to know the mind and will of God; we must go to His Holy Word. Then we can say to those who want to tempt us – NO – that's not in God's Word!

[Growth Groups]

Also, Peter hadn't even thought about the fact that Jesus said – He would be raised to life on the third day – which Jesus had to do to prove that - He had the power even over life and death.

Something – even Satan – hadn't bargained for – Satan thought Jesus' death was the end – and Satan thought He'd won a victory by getting rid of God's Messiah – but Jesus' death was all part of God's plan – and death wasn't the end – it was the beginning of a new life [which all believers in Jesus can have] leading to eternal life.

(pause)

[Slide 3B-Follower]

My second point – *God’s Word corrects the wrong thinking about being a follower of Jesus* (v24)

If Peter’s **was rocked by Jesus’ rebuke** in v23

V24 – must have come as another bombshell.

Jesus says *“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me”*

Let’s consider three phrases in this verse

1st phrase – *“Deny themselves”* – In Greek **deny** here means *“to forget one’s self; lose sight of one-self and one’s own interest”*

We’re not talking about **giving up chocolate or sugar for Lent**

We’re not talking about **denying ourselves a Sunday Roast** – and eating cheese and apples and giving the cost of the Roast to the poor. Even though that’s **good thing to do**.

To **deny self** – is the exact opposite of what Peter was telling Jesus to do. Peter was saying to Jesus *“you’re too good to die, we won’t let it happen”*. Peter’s motivation was admirable – he thought Jesus needed protection.

Jesus is saying - to be His disciple – means **abandoning self-preservation**. To deny self is saying *“what happens to me in fulfilling God’s will is an irrelevant issue”*.

To follow God’s will – Jesus was to die on a Roman Cross, with all the injustice and agony that entailed – but if that fulfilled the Father’s will – then die on a Cross -

He must and would do!

Self-preservation was not an issue.

The will of God – is not **open for change or correction** - as Peter suggested.

If - to fulfil God's will – we are to **leave the security of our home and go to some far away mission field with all its difficulties** – then that is what it takes (e.g. Mick Alley – Kenya)

If - to fulfil God's will – we **stay locally with family and friends in a familiar culture** – that is fine too.

To live in relative poverty or wealth is an irrelevant detail - it's WHO - is running our lives that matters

The goal is that at all times, in all circumstances, and at any cost, we become the means by which God is able to do His work and fulfil His purposes, irrespective of any personal implications to ourselves.

This sounds tough, demanding and unreasonable. And it is! But it is also a **gateway to true freedom**.

Because at the bottom of so many of our problems – is the faulty attitude that we have about our self. Inside we're always saying "what about me?"

If we adopt the attitude of self-denial – that it's not about "me" – we will face less issues and can focus on what's really important – and that's God's will for us.

It's still not going to be easy – but we will have the right attitude towards God and - we will have made Jesus the Lord of our life.

2nd phrase – **"Take up their cross"**

Again, **this is what Peter was telling Jesus not to do.** Peter told Jesus that the cross “*shall never happen to you*”

But Jesus says – not only will He have to go to the cross and die – but every person who identifies with Jesus must “*take up their cross*”

We might hear people talking about their aches and pains and saying “*well – that’s my cross I have to bear*”

But that’s not what “*taking up your cross*” is.

The Cross for Jesus was the ultimate expression of His obedience to the will of His Father.

Just before Jesus’ arrest and crucifixion – Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane: “*Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.*” (Luke 22:42)

There’s no question Jesus went willingly to the cross, but He did not go waltzing to the cross, whistling a tune, as though it was easy. He went in great anguish.

To take up the cross is to live our life in utter obedience to the Father, irrespective of the circumstances.

The disciples may not have fully understood what Jesus was saying – but living under Roman rule – every once and a while **they might see a man carrying a cross down the road,** hounded by soldiers and a mocking crowd. They knew one thing about that man – **He would never come back along that road. He would die on the cross, he was carrying.**

For us – taking up our cross – **is to abandon OUR plans and commit to the Lord’s plan.**

Jesus is NO false recruiter.

3rd phrase – “***Follow Me***”

When Peter tried to change Jesus’ mission – he forgot for one moment – that **Jesus is the leader and Peter is the follower.**

To **follow Jesus** is to commit each day – and each situation in our life – to Him – to trust Him to be totally competent in leading us – even if it doesn’t make sense – as Peter thought!

(pause)

[Slide 3C-Our life]

My third point – **God’s Word corrects the wrong thinking about our focus being on our life here on Earth**

If v24 was hard enough

Then Jesus hits the disciples with **another doozy in v25:**

“For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it”

The principle here is that **we give our lives away to Jesus** and **He gives His life away to us.**

It’s like **our old life must die with Jesus on the cross** – and then **we gain a new life with Jesus** – where we are filled with the Holy Spirit – and this new life in Jesus – **goes on into eternal life in Heaven.**

Think about Peter for a minute.

If Peter was to go on living his life, his way, with his agenda, he was free to do so.

Jesus would not twist his arm or force him.

Jesus is a **Shepherd** not a **sheep dog**.

We are not hemmed in and driven, but follow Jesus out of love and implicit trust in Him.

If Peter chose to go down his own path, there may be all kinds of measured successes **but he would end up with empty hands**. Having kept his life, he would lose it.

But if Peter would lose his life for Jesus, dump his agenda and give himself away to Jesus and follow Jesus; this life might deal some rough blows, **Peter might even die on a Roman cross**, but he will have found life in its true fulness, not only filled with God himself, but a life that will never end.

As Jesus goes on to say in v26

What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?

Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?

We can be the richest or most powerful and influential person in the world – have everything at our feet – but if we don't believe and follow Jesus – our soul won't be going to Heaven. We will literally have the whole world – but lose our soul.

(pause)

I pray we can see that these words from Jesus – which are God's Words – **changed Peter's life** – and these words **can change us too** – if we dare to take them on board.

God's Word Corrects our Thinking and Misconceptions Today

[Slide 4-Heading]

God's Word continues to correct our thinking and misconceptions today – so to finish up then – let's briefly look at **5 common examples of wrong thinking/misconceptions** – which God's Word corrects. [We might use these to help someone else – even ourselves]

[Slide 4a-praying]

1. #1 - People say – “***What's the point in praying because God is distant and doesn't answer anyway***”

But James 4:8 says: ***Come near to God and he will come near to you.***

And Philippians 4:6 (CEV) says – ***Don't worry about anything, but pray about everything.***

And in Jeremiah 29:12 God says - ***Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.***

[Slide 4B-Good Enough]

2. #2 People say – “***If I'm good enough I'll get to Heaven***” – But Romans 3:23 says ***no one is good enough*** - ***for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.***

And Ephesians 2:8-9 explains we get to Heaven by God's grace [free gift] in sending Jesus and through our faith in Jesus' death and resurrection – and not by anything we DO.

Any good works we do - are purely - a response in thanksgiving and obedience because we are saved by Jesus

[Slide 4C-many ways]

3. #3 – People say – “***There are many ways and many religions to Heaven***” – for example “***working our way to Heaven by doing good***” or following “***Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and so on***” – but in John 14:6 - Jesus outrageously claims:
“I [JESUS] am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”

[Slide 5a-Hell]

4. #4 – People say – “***There’s no such place as Hell***” -but in Matthew 10:28 Jesus warns – “***Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell***”
And in 2 Thessalonians 1:9 – Paul warns those who do not believe in the Good News (Gospel) of Jesus – ***will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might***
 (See also Matthew 25:41 and Revelation 20:15)

[Slide 5b-Church]

5. #5 – People say – “***You don’t have to go to church to be a Christian***”
Yet Jesus gave His disciples the job of building the church (body of believers) in Matthew 16:18-19 – and Jesus made the church – the vehicle - to spread the Good News of Jesus’ death and resurrection (when He gave the **Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-20**).

Why would Jesus bother to set up the church as the vehicle to spread the Good News – if He didn't intend people to be part of it?

And the writer of Hebrews in Chapter 10:24-25 says the church is also designed to spur each other on - and - encourage one another - ²⁴ ... let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

So, people will say “you don't HAVE to come to church do be a Christian” – but the Bible shows “you should WANT to come - to thank and obey Jesus – and to encourage fellow Christians”

Let's pray...

Father God, we thank you for your Word – and that it is useful for correcting our thinking and behaviour.

Help us to be diligent in reading your Word – and making corrections in our lives.

Help us to have opportunities to share your Word with others – so more people can come and follow Jesus. In His Name, we pray. Amen.