

God's Word is useful for Teaching (2 Timothy 3:14-17 and Acts 9:1-9)

14-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.

Acts 9:1-9

Saul's Conversion

¹ Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. ³ As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "**Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?**"

⁵ "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. ⁶ "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

⁷ The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes, he could see nothing. So, they led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹ For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

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

Please have your Bibles opened at **2 Timothy 3 – starting at verse 14** – then we'll look at Acts chapter 9.

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

Let me **pray** first...

Intro (2 Timothy 3:14-17)

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

Last week – we saw that **God's Word** is useful for **teaching**

And we were challenged that – in order to teach God's Word – **we need to read it and know it and apply it to our lives** – and then teach others including our

children – teaching through **Scripture in Schools, Friday/Sunday Jaffa youth groups, Bible Studies and things like Christianity Explained Workshops and Membership classes...**

(pause)

This week – then – we’re looking at **God’s Word** is useful for **rebuking**.

[Slide 2-Rebuke]

Rebuking means: “*to express sharp disapproval or criticism of someone because of their behaviour or actions*”

Before we go any further – I thought I’d share some personal stuff – **to show how God’s Word rebuked me!**

[Slide 3-BLANK]

As some of you know – being of **Irish descent** – I grew up going to a **Roman Catholic primary school** and a **Roman Catholic Grammar High School**

For about a decade – I **went to mass/church every day** before school.

But in my late teens and twenties – I **drifted away from Church**

And note – I said I **drifted away** from “Church” – not Jesus!

The problem was – I had a relationship with a Church organisation – and I didn’t have a personal relationship with Jesus – nor was I encouraged to read **God’s Word**.

By the time I reached age 32 – I **found myself in a real mess**

My **marriage** had **ended** – I had great difficulty **seeing my children** – for a while

At one stage I was **living in a caravan** – then a room in someone's house in

Pennant Hills – then a granny flat in Lisarow.

Whilst all the time **holding down a decent job in IT at IBM!**

The first rebuke came from a **close friend** at work who said “***when are you going to get your life sorted out?***”

Not long after – I **heard a quiet voice calling me** – I realized later it was God's voice!

Soon after - I **met Heather**

She knew what was wrong – I was lost – lost from God – and I didn't have a **personal relationship with Jesus**

Heather's rebuke was **a lot gentler than my friend's rebuke** – but nevertheless a rebuke

So much so – that I **joined a Bible Study** at someone's home in Kincumber - so I decided I'd **better get myself a Bible**

So, I **bought a Bible** in a second-hand bookshop in Gosford – and felt quite proud of myself – **turning up to Bible Study with a Bible** – and **studying the Book of Romans** [[not the easiest book to start on for your first Bible Study!](#)]

However – I soon discovered in Bible Study – that **the Bible I bought was a Jehovah Witness (JW) Bible** (New World Translation) – and the JW Bible version **denies Jesus' deity – denies that Jesus is God and denies the Trinity!**

After that embarrassing episode - **Heather bought me a men's NIV devotional Bible** [[show Bible-it's the best gift she ever bought me](#)]

That's when the rebukes really started - page after page I saw me and my sinful behaviour - everywhere

As I read the Bible – I saw

Adam and Eve -who couldn't **even keep One rule**

Abraham – even though he showed great faith in God -he still **lied and told some Egyptians that's his wife Sarah was his sister** in Genesis 12

Then there was Jacob – **who duded his slightly older twin brother Esau** out of his inheritance - for a bowl of lentil stew

Then there were the ancient Israelites – even though they were blessed and saved by God - **they constantly whinged and disobeyed God and even turned their back on God**

I soon discovered – that the people in the bible were no better than me - yet God
forgave them – gave them second and third chances - and often used them to accomplish His purposes

I couldn't put the Bible down – I read about:

People like Moses – who was saved from death as an infant and grew up in an Egyptian palace - **but Moses killed someone and ran away - yet God still used Moses in mighty way!**

I read about - people like David – whom God chose as a King of Israel and who is described as a man after Gods own heart - but - David still managed to have an adulterous affair with a woman called Bathsheba – and then David had Bathsheba's husband conveniently killed in battle - yet David was still used by God in a mighty way and David wrote pearls like Psalm 23

Then I read about Jesus' disciples - they were often clueless and often lacked faith

As I read the Bible - it was like God was not just rebuking me of my sin but also showing me a way out - a way to a new life in Jesus

Then I came across the story of this guy called Saul – in our NT passage this morning!

[Please turn there now to Acts 9:1-9]

Here we have a massive example of a rebuke

The Usefulness of God's Rebuke (Acts 9:1-9)

We pick up the story in v1 with *Saul breathing out murderous threats against Jesus' followers...*

[Slide 4-Heading]

Just like me – **Saul's life was out of control** – but he didn't know it.

Unlike me though – **Saul knew God's Word** – he was a **Pharisee** – he **followed God's law meticulously** – and all the **Jewish traditions** passed down from generation to generation. Saul even describes himself as a Hebrew of Hebrews (Philippians 3:5) – if you had a picture-dictionary of a stellar Jew – you'd find a picture of Saul there! He was a stand out!

Saul saw how these Christians were following this man Jesus - **whom they believed was God's Messiah (God's chosen anointed one to save people)** – this was in the early days of the Church – after Jesus had ascended to Heaven

Saul thought this new way of Christianity was so wrong – **he didn't realize Jesus was really God's Messiah.**

Saul thought he was **doing God a favour** by **persecuting Christians**

And he made it **his mission** to **round up Christians** have them **arrested** and taken back to **Jerusalem** – where **many** of them were **killed**!

Saul was so zealous to stamp out Christians – he went to the **High Priest** in Jerusalem – v2 – and **asked for letters** to show the **synagogues in Damascus** in Syria – so that he could arrest anyone **who was following the WAY of Jesus in Damascus!**

Having got these letters – **Saul travelled on the road to Damascus** to continue his persecution mission!

On that road to Damascus something truly unexpected and amazing happened – **Saul was the recipient a divine rebuke!**

Look at v3 – ***suddenly a light from Heaven flashed around him***

Then came the rebuke – from Jesus

Now remember Jesus – IS - God's Word (John 1:1, 1:14) – so the rebuke is **from God**

[Slide 4a-God's rebuke convicts]

And my 1st point - this morning is – **God's rebuke convicts**

Look what Jesus – God’s Word - says in v4 – “***Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?***”

Notice – Jesus doesn’t say “***Saul – why are you persecuting my followers?***” or “***Saul – why are you persecuting my church?***”

As far as Jesus is concerned – if anyone is persecuting one of His followers – it’s like they are persecuting Jesus.

That’s because when people follow Jesus – they are **joined** to Jesus

Jesus puts it this way in John 15:5

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; part from me you can do nothing.

Jesus and His followers are inextricably and intimately joined

You hurt Jesus’ followers – and you hurt Jesus!

And look how Saul **reacts** to this **rebuke!**

Saul is **convicted** by Jesus’ rebuke immediately.

Saul immediately says in v5 “***Who are you, Lord?***”

And the reply comes back

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,”

Look what this rebuke is doing

It's questioning Saul's actions – challenging Saul's misguided zeal to round up Christians

That's what God's Word does when it rebukes – **it disrupts our paths and brings conviction** – we feel guilt for our wrongdoing

Saul immediately felt guilty of the charge – Saul realized this zealous mission of rounding up Christians was wrong – and not what God wanted at all.

You see **Saul was “religiously” doing what he thought was right.** He hadn't prayed about it or sought God's counsel

In the same way – **I was hit by a blinding light** (not physically but spiritually) – **I'd been “religious”** – **I'd followed a church organisation** – I'd religiously gone to mass daily – gone to confession – gone to communion – gone to Ash Wednesday and holy day services – do do do – **I thought I was doing the right thing** – **but my relationship was built on an organisation** – not built on a relationship with God and His Son – it was all **head-knowledge** – not heart knowledge – and so I'd walked away from that “religion” and put my faith in myself – which was like going from - dumb to dumber!

It might be worth asking ourselves the difficult question this morning? ‘Are we coming to church each Sunday – because of our relationship with Jesus, so we can thank and worship Him for saving us – or - are we coming purely because of our relationship with St. David's church family?’

The first option is – **genuine faith in Jesus** – the second option on its own is religion!

(pause)

When you read words from Jesus like **John 14:6** –

“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”.

You start to be convicted – that you don’t get to Heaven by – the do do do of religion – or by working your way there – **you get there through Jesus** – **it’s faith in Jesus** – **that is the only way to the Father in Heaven**

That’s the rebuke I got – **that’s the conviction** – I was guilty of following the wrong way – but the Good News was – **Jesus is the right way!**

And when I read in that first Bible Study – **Romans 8:31** – ***“if God is for us, who can be against us”*** – it was like **a massive light globe came one** – if I belong to God – and I’m His now – it doesn’t matter what anyone else - thinks of me – or says about me – or does to me – **I’m His now!**

The rebuke and the conviction are one thing...

[Slide 4b-God’s rebuke requires a humble response]

My 2nd point is – **God’s rebuke requires a humble response**

Look at **verses 6 and 7**

Jesus’ rebuke of Saul requires Saul to respond

He is to get up and go into the city and he will be told what to do

The bottom line is when God's Word rebukes us – **we must respond to it – we can't ignore it!**

As Proverbs 15:31-32 puts it:

³¹ *Whoever heeds life-giving correction*

will be at home among the wise.

³² *Those who disregard discipline despise themselves,*

but the one who heeds correction gains understanding.

In my case, having been given the rebuke – having seen it page after page – as I read God's Word – I couldn't ignore it!

God's Word had **humbled** me!

Even when my Dad died – just as I became a Christian – and I was angry with God -
God spoke to me and said “***you have a Heavenly Father now Paul – who will never leave you***”

Some time later when my Mum died and I felt like an orphan

God's Word told me these words from Jesus – Jesus says “***I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you***” (John 14:18)

I was humbled – and I couldn't ignore God's rebuke!

[Slide 4c-God's rebuke brings obedience and transformation]

Which brings me to the 3rd point – **God's rebuke brings obedience and transformation**

Look at verse 8 – Saul **obeyed** Jesus' command from v6 – and Saul got up – and because he could not see – he was led into the city of Damascus – just as Jesus said!

Saul remained blind for three days!

It's like the writer of Acts (Luke) wants us to see that Saul's physical blindness is pointing to another blindness Saul had – a spiritual blindness – where he'd been unable to see God's plans and purposes in sending Jesus clearly
God's rebuke does that – it **shows us our blind spots**

For me – it showed me clearly – **I'd been blind to who Jesus really is**

I saw Jesus - as an historical figure – such a lovely good man and a great teacher – who had been mistreated so badly by His own people – and by the Romans – and it wasn't fair.

All that's true!

But that wasn't the point – **Jesus had come to die for my sins on that cross** – and take my punishment off me – and take my place – and offered me forgiveness – which I didn't deserve.

I'd been blind to that – I'd completely missed that!

Instead, **I'd been busy – do do doing** - going to **mass** – and **confession** and **communion** – and **holy days** galore! And never once – **read the Bible** – or said **sorry to Jesus for my sins** – or said **thank you Jesus for saving me!**

God's Word transformed Saul's life – he became the **Apostle Paul** – and went on to **bring the message of Jesus to many Gentile (non-Jewish) cities** and he **wrote 13 of the 27 books in the New Testament!**

All because of that rebuke on the road to Damascus!

God's rebuke transformed my life too!

Because as Paul says God's Word is useful for rebuking!

But - the thing is – if we don't read God's Word – and we don't meditate on it – and we don't apply its truths to our lives – then we won't even see we are blind – we won't see the rebuke!

So, like a broken record – **I'll say again this week.**

Please read your Bible – I can give you one – if you don't have one

Please join a Growth Group/Bible Study – so you can grow in your knowledge and love for Jesus – there are sign-up sheets in the foyer.

Please consider joining our next Christianity Explained workshops or next Membership Class – so you can learn how to tell others about Jesus – so they don't miss it – like I did – for so many years! There are sign-up sheets in the foyer.

If God's word can rebuke and transform someone like me - I promise you – spending time in God's Word – will transform your life too!

Let's pray...

Heavenly Father,

We thank you that your Word is useful for rebuking us.

And we acknowledge that as our Heavenly Father, you rebuke those you love.

Help us this morning to be convicted by your rebuke

Help us to respond to your rebuke with humility and we pray your rebuke of us will prompt us to obey your Word and that your rebuke would transform our lives.

We pray this in Jesus precious name. Amen!

Benediction (Hebrews 4:12)

Let's finish with the words from Hebrews 4:12: "*For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*"

As we depart, may the transformative power of God's Word guide our steps and bring us closer to His truth. Amen.