

2 Timothy 3:14-4:5

As for you, continue in the things you have learned and about which you have become convinced. You know from whom you learned them ¹⁵and that from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the man of God may be complete, well equipped for every good work.

4 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus, who is going to judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom: ²Preach the word. Be ready whether it is convenient or not. Correct, rebuke, and encourage, with all patience and teaching. ³For there will come a time when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, because they have itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in line with their own desires. ⁴They will also turn their ears away from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

⁵As for you, keep a clear head in every situation. Bear hardship. Do the work of an evangelist. Fulfill your ministry.

Faithful

I.

The school no longer exists. It merged with another and the buildings were sold to another organization. Perhaps the buildings have been sold more than once since then. Thanks to the miracle of Google Earth, I can show you this picture.

In those days it was one of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod's preparatory schools, like Michigan Lutheran Seminary and Luther Preparatory School are today. It was called Northwestern Lutheran Academy, and it was in Mobridge, South Dakota. The building and grounds were much more well-kept back then.

I walked through those doors, right below the cross. Inside was a set of stairs. Climbing to the second floor, I went into the first classroom on the left side of the hallway and sat down. I was only there for a visit. It was like the open houses we hold for people here at Holy Trinity Lutheran School to come and see what we are all about. There, in that classroom, I listened to a teacher who changed my life. I don't remember who the teacher was, or even what subject was being taught. It was there that I was introduced to a Christian classroom for the first time.

To be sure, there had been Sunday School classes in my past, and Catechism instructions from my pastor. They certainly taught me God's Word. God was in every classroom in this school in a meaningful way. Listening to subjects from a Biblical perspective was something I had not known about. There wasn't a Lutheran Elementary School in my town, or within nearly 100 miles. Growing up, I didn't really understand they existed, even though my mother had taught in one before she was married and moved to a town with no school.

I think I was only in that classroom for about 30 minutes. I'm sure I might have visited a few others, as well, but that was the most memorable. Those few minutes was all it took for me to want to go to a school like that and learn from teachers like that. That teacher is one of the reasons I stand here in this pulpit today.

II.

"As for you, continue in the things you have learned and about which you have become convinced. You know from whom you learned them ¹⁵and that from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:14-15, EHV).

Timothy had strong convictions because of his teachers. Of course, sometimes one's convictions can be strong, but wrong. Teachers can lead their students down false paths. How is the student to know the difference?

Examine the evidence, Paul said. Timothy was to note the strong moral character of his teachers. He should look at their sterling reputations. Even more importantly, he should note the

source of their teachings—the Holy Scriptures.

One of Timothy's teachers was Paul himself but, long before Paul came around, Timothy had learned about God's plans and promises concerning salvation from the Old Testament. Paul said that Timothy's instruction had begun from infancy, with his mother and grandmother; they had used Scripture to teach him about God's love for him.

Paul started with the information Timothy already had and built on that. He taught him about Jesus, and how Jesus had fulfilled all those plans and promises God told his people about in the Old Testament.

There is a lot of secular literature available. There are epic tales from long ago authors like Homer and Virgil. There are literary giants like Shakespeare. Holy books from a dozen or more religious philosophies exist for you to choose from. Not only are there these holy books, but hundreds of authors who claim to have the right approach to help you dissect and understand your chosen religious path.

The Bible is different from all the rest. It's author is God. People served as scribes to write the things down; God even used the styles and backgrounds of each of them to record his words. But, Paul said: "All Scripture is God breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16, EHV).

There was a purpose for all that God directed to be written down. "The Holy Scriptures... are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15, EHV). Jesus is the central focus of the Scriptures. All the Old Testament points ahead to him. The sacrifices, the orders of worship they were directed to use, the festivals—all were designed to point to the need for a Savior so that people would recognize him when he came.

Peter once wrote: "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12, EHV). No one can be saved without knowing and believing in Jesus. It's pretty important that the tool of Scripture would be used to teach others this life-giving message.

III.

One way or the other, you learned this life-giving message of salvation in Christ Jesus alone. Did you have the privilege of going to a school just like the one down the hall? Are you one of the lucky ones who gets to come to these hallowed halls every day to listen to teachers in Holy Trinity Lutheran School?

Perhaps you were like me, or Timothy; you didn't have the option of attending a Lutheran Elementary School when you were young. You might have learned about Jesus from your parents, or some Sunday School teachers. Maybe you came to faith in Jesus later in life.

No matter *when* you learned it, each of us is directed to *use* God's Word. "All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the man of God may be complete, well equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17, EHV). The Bible is the Holy Book that has the very words of God himself. They are to be used for every aspect in life, from learning, to being corrected or correcting someone else, to understanding the way to live a God-pleasing life.

No one alive has *finished* learning God's Word, but the fact that you have come to know Jesus means that you are equipped for every good work. Be *thoroughly* equipped by continuing your study of that Word on a daily basis.

Paul says: "Preach the word. Be ready whether it is convenient or not. Correct, rebuke, and encourage, with all patience and teaching" (2 Timothy 4:2, EHV). It isn't just Timothy, or other full-time pastors and teachers, that Paul is speaking to—it is every believer. After all, people of every time and place need to hear God's Word.

You will face opposition from time to time. At times it has been fashionable to be a Christian. In the frontier days they would have tent revivals. An "anxious bench" was placed in the front row. Unbelievers would be placed there while believers prayed over them, making them "anxious" until they would convert. In that culture it was convenient to speak about Jesus; it was popular, at least

in some places.

Is it convenient to speak God's Word today? Whether it is or not, it is no less necessary. At Holy Trinity it is our goal to speak God's Word in its truth and purity, whether culture deems it convenient or not. We aren't going to put someone on an anxious bench in the front row to pray for their conversion. Whether you are a life-long Christian or new to the faith or just hearing about Jesus for the first time, every one of us has sins to be repented of. It is important that your sins make you anxious.

That's not a popular concept. By nature, no one wants to hear that the bad things they have done separate people from God. They don't want to be reminded of the fact that God is a righteous God who judges sin severely. They only want to hear about the loving God. They don't want to squirm in the pews.

"For there will come a time when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, because they have itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in line with their own desires" (2 Timothy 4:3, EHV).

Sound doctrine includes things in God's Word which rebuke us for our sins. The message of forgiveness in Jesus isn't so sweet if you don't think you need it. If you are convinced that God is so loving that he just overlooks all the bad things you have done, you get the impression that daily repentance is no longer necessary. You might take your faith for granted and, in so doing, lose it.

Sound doctrine includes things that don't fit very well with popular culture. Sound doctrine conflicts with what people *want* to hear. People want to pick and choose what they will listen to, as if God's Word is a menu at a fast food restaurant, and they can pick the menu items they like, while ignoring the rest.

Almost always *false* doctrine gets started when someone makes a misstatement and then defends it to the point that there is no backing down. When that false doctrine develops a following, many are led astray. Today's itching ear disease often urges us to agree to disagree about what the Bible says for the sake of unity.

Nothing in Scripture is unimportant. There is no point of false doctrine that does not threaten a person's faith. *Sound* doctrine doesn't leave room for falsehood. Anything that deviates from God's Word is unacceptable. That's what Paul is saying. That's what *God* says.

"They will also turn their ears away from the truth and will turn aside to myths" (2 Timothy 4:4, EHV). The world's fastest-growing religions turn aside to myths, which sidestep the truth of Scripture. It's more tempting than ever to agree to disagree, just to get along. Itching ear disease hasn't gone away.

IV.

"As for you, continue in the things you have learned and about which you have become convinced. You know from whom you learned them" (2 Timothy 3:14, EHV).

That's why Holy Trinity Lutheran School exists. We want to keep on teaching God's Word in its truth and purity. For more than 60 years we have done this as a congregation and school, and we still do it today.

Our teachers remain faithful to God's Word so their students can learn what being faithful looks like. Follow in their footsteps. That doesn't mean that everyone will become a pastor or Lutheran teacher. It *does* mean that Paul encourages every single one of us to be faithful to the Lord Jesus for the rest of our lives. Be faithful by living the things you *have* learned, and *continue* to learn. Be faithful to God's Word, and to your Savior, Jesus. Amen.