

A Child of Faith

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[0 : 00] Now we're going to read two parts of Scripture. We're going to read, first of all, in 2 Timothy. 2 Timothy chapter 3, from verse 14 to 17.

That's our first reading this morning. And just before the, well, there's going to be a sermon, then a psalm, and then the baptism.

And just during the psalm, if someone would like to bring the children back in for the baptism service. We're going to read, first of all, from 2 Timothy 3, as you see on the screen there, 14 to 17, where Paul's writing to the young man, Timothy.

But as for you, continue in what you've learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you've been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you 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.

[1 : 21] And then in Luke's Gospel, Luke chapter 18, Luke 18, and we're going to read from verse 15 to 17. Now they were bringing even infants to Jesus, to him, to Jesus, that he might touch them.

And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to him, saying, Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.

Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it. We'll be obviously considering what Jesus said there in the moment, in the context of baptism, but particularly we want to go back to the passage we read in 2 Timothy 3, 14-15, where very much we see Timothy as a child of faith, and we want to explore that theme, to bring it to our present-day application.

What about our children, church children, children that are baptised in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit? And we want to explore then the instruction that our children are given, instruction or teaching in the things of God.

And that teaching that brings true knowledge, knowledge that matters, knowledge that counts, knowledge that brings a child to know not just the name of Jesus, but Jesus as his Saviour.

[2 : 57] Because knowing Jesus brings wisdom, wisdom that matters. These three points, these three headings that we're going to look at more closely as we explore this passage, because we're doing it obviously in the context of the baptism of little Ernest in a short time.

Baptism of any child is important. It's a very special occasion in the life of any congregation. Of course, important very much in the life of any family that presents the child for baptism.

I suppose I've already explained to the children, we'll maybe go a little further in that explanation about what we're doing in the act of baptism. But let me just say right at the start, I say this all the time we have a baptismal service because it is important to emphasise this.

Baptism doesn't guarantee salvation. It's not some kind of, you know, waving a magic wand over a child's head. It's not a sort of incantation, you know, somehow says, well, that child automatically is going to become a Christian.

No. But what we are saying when a child's been presented for baptism, that we see in the case of a believing parent or parents such as Des and Katrina, it's their desire for their child to be converted.

[4 : 21] And it's their desire, the true hope that when God in his grace has mercy on that child, that child will be converted. The child who's been presented for baptism, that when God touches that child in his grace, that child will be converted.

Now, we're going to see in the water, as we said, sprinkled in an earnest head, that sign, that sign of God washing away sin. And that will happen when God works in his providence, in his time, when in God's providence, a work of faith is worked into that child's heart.

But also remember, it's a sign, but it's also what we call a seal. In other words, it's a guarantee. In the old days, when you had these seals that expressed the guarantee that whatever was in a particular document was sure and true, and the water that's put in there, and it's a seal, it's a guarantee that when he does give his life to the Lord Jesus, he will know salvation.

As we said, there's nothing magical in the water. Baptism doesn't guarantee salvation in itself, but it's that sign and it's that seal that points to the grace of God in converting sinners.

And of course, converting sinners through the Lord Jesus Christ. Because remember, Jesus was baptized. Jesus was baptized in the Jordan to identify with sinners, even though Jesus knew no sin. [5 : 52] So we might say this also, you know, we live in a day and age when probably a very tiny, tiny percentage of children are now baptized. We're living in a so-called brave new world that counts, you know, these sacraments, like the sacrament of baptism, saying, oh, well, it's just some kind of superstitious relic from the past.

But no, this is a great privilege. This is a special occasion. It's a sacrament. It points to the Lord Jesus Christ. It's a privilege for you this morning, you who are going to witness this act of baptism. It's a privilege because you are witnessing this child being baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And it's not only a privilege, it's a joy to see young parents bringing their child in this particular act of baptism.

Because they are going to give a public affirmation of their commitment to bring up their little boy in the nurture and the instruction of the Lord.

And so they have a responsibility. And we do have a responsibility. We've got a responsibility to pray for that young family. Now, I'm sure as many of you know, in a few weeks' time, Des, Katrina and Ernest are going to be leaving us.

[7 : 16] They're going to go back to Northern Ireland and we're going to miss them an awful lot. But that doesn't mean to say somehow they're beyond our radar, as it were. It doesn't mean that we stop praying for that young family.

It doesn't mean to say as soon as they board the ferry at Strunrar, that's it. No. Continue. We'll continue to pray for them. We'll continue to pray for Ernest, Des, Katrina, in their life as a believing family.

Ernest is going to be baptized in this particular church building. He's going to be baptized in the presence of God and the presence of each one of you. But it's for you and me to remember him and to pray for him and to bring them, the family before the throne of grace.

But what about the lessons that we learn here that really motivates us to pray for a family, a believing family? What's it that we see in Scripture that motivates, well, us to remember Christian parents?

And they bring up their children in the nurture and instruction of the Lord. Well, it's what we read here in this passage in 2 Timothy chapter 3.

[8 : 33] Because Paul's written this very personal letter to this young believer. And he's written about, as we see there, instruction. Instruction that impacts. But as for you, verse 14, continue in what you've learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it.

Now, there's no doubt that Timothy, this young man Timothy, that he learned so much about the Lord Jesus from Paul. Paul was his mentor. Paul instructed this young Christian, instructed him in the gospel.

He nurtured his faith. He encouraged him. But read this passage again. But as for you, continue in what you've learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it.

That word whom actually is plural. It's more than one person. And there's no doubt that other people taught Timothy as well. We go back to the first chapter of this letter and we're told that in fact two generations of believers taught Timothy.

His grandmother, Lois, and his mother, Eunice. They undoubtedly instructed their grandchild and their child in the one true faith.

[9 : 50] And of course, that teaching, that instruction took root in the heart of Timothy. At a very early age, he heard of Jesus.

He heard of who Jesus is. He was taught the truth of Jesus. He was shown the way of Jesus. But yes, as we said, Paul very much taught Timothy.

And of course, the Holy Spirit moved in Timothy's heart. Timothy was gifted faith to believe in the Lord Jesus. But the human responsibility of other generations, this was part of God's great plan to

give knowledge of the truth that saves.

That knowledge that others give, even to young children, even to this young man, Timothy. And of course, we can never, ever presume salvation on anyone.

But of course, we can say this at the same time, say this, that God delights to see Christian parents raise their children in the way of truth.

[10:56] And even teaching them at an early age what it means to know Jesus and to love Jesus as their Savior. And for those of you who parent a young child, or you've got nieces, nephews, grandchildren, you have a responsibility as well as parents to instruct these children in the way of the Lord.

That's why we read Luke 15, let the little children come to me and forbid them not. These are the words of Jesus. Jesus. And it's a joy to see generation after generation, even here this morning, to see generations following the Lord and bringing their children to know the Lord.

And so, we pray for the young couple who are bringing the little boy for baptism this morning. But pray for the grandparents as well. Pray that, you know, through the generations that Ernest has been blessed with, that he will come to know the name of the Lord Jesus and that he'll be a willing learner of truth.

That he'll believe in the one whom his parents have believed in, his grandparents have believed in. And I say with delight, both sides of the family, grandparents on both sides, knowing the Lord Jesus as Savior.

And you see, the Word of God tells of that blessing of generations. Psalm 100, that's what we sang in Psalm 100. Read the words, for the Lord is good, his steadfast love endures forever and his faithfulness to all generations.

[12:36] You who believe in the name of the Lord Jesus, will give thanks even now. Thank God for the generations that have come before you. Thank God for a mother or a grandmother or a particular godly influence in your life of a previous generation.

A person whom God placed in your life at just the right time, at just the right moment. God giving you these older generations, maybe most of whom are now in glory, but God placing them in your life to show you and tell you and instruct you in the name of the Lord Jesus.

And it's really wonderful, even now in the quiet of your heart, just look back in your life and trace the hand of God, whether in your own life or maybe in the life of another person.

Just trace the hand of God through generations. It's truly a wonderful exercise just to think upon and to meditate on previous generations whom God has placed in your life or indeed in the life of someone else.

And you might even say this, that, you know, the sacrament of baptism, even the sacrament we're going to exercise this morning, testifies to the reality of the truth of God blessing through generations.

[14:01] Now for Timothy, here, this young man, Timothy, he sat under the instruction that matters, that counts. He was instructed in the things of truth, these things that truly matter.

He learned from others what truly matters in life. And that learning under the Word, that learning of the Word and from the Word of God, that gave Timothy a true foundation in his life.

And you know, we're living in a day and age, of course, when there's instruction that draws our children so far away from that important grounding in the truth of the Gospel.

And of course, it means how important it is for parents such as St. Katrina to ground a little one in the instruction that counts. And to do it, and not to be ashamed to do it, but to teach, teach the little ones about God, about God the Creator, about God who sent His one and only Son to die for us. Teaching at home, teaching at Sunday school, teaching in church, teaching, teaching about the one way of salvation. Because Ernest, I know, is going to be taught at home for his very life's sake.

[15:26] Because it's that teaching that protects from the spirit of age. Pray then for all the little ones that you've already seen this morning in church here. Pray that they'll be taught the things of truth, that they'll be instructed in what truly impacts their life for their eternal good.

Because what Christian parents will teach their children, what we teach, even in the context of church, what we teach is knowledge.

Knowledge that counts. Because as Paul wrote to Timothy, from childhood you've been acquainted with the sacred writings. Of course, we've already mentioned that our children are instructed and not just, of course, in home.

And there's so much excellent teaching that happens in the world. Our children go to school, they're going to learn all these different subjects that they learn, which is wonderful. In what we call God's common grace, our children are blessed to receive teaching in so many aspects of the world around them.

And blessed even from non-Christian teachers, as I certainly have been in my past. But there's a teaching that you can't give.

[16:44] And that's the teaching of Scripture. That's the teaching of God's Word. And that can only come from those who love the Lord and who love His Word. And that means that our children here have to be grounded early on in the Word of God.

The Bible, the Old Testament, the New Testament. And of course, Timothy, we're told, was taught from the sacred writings and at his time that was the Old Testament. But what's instructive for us here this morning is that Paul tells us here that Timothy was taught from childhood.

From childhood he was acquainted or he knew the sacred writings. And this very particular word that Paul uses for childhood really tells us that at the very least Timothy was an infant.

He was a very young boy when he learned God's Word. A very young child. He was, we might say, an infant who was capable of learning. And whether it's an infant of 2,000 years ago or whether it's an infant in the 21st century, nothing's changed.

Nothing's different. We've got to do exactly the same as happened with Timothy as for the present day and give our children that solid foundation of truth.

[18:04] Because the teaching of Scripture is not just any kind of teaching. This is the breathed out Word of God as we read there in 2 Timothy 3. And you know, we live in an age when our little ones have great access.

Well, children's Bibles, children's storybooks, little books that give a child's perspective if you like on God's Word. They're there, they're out there, they're available.

And so use that material. Give it to your little ones. Show them and tell them the knowledge that counts. And as a church, of course, we've got a responsibility in that respect.

As we said, we've got children out now just now at Sunday school. Or even children at an older age sitting even in the service listening to the Word of God proclaimed. These are opportunities that our children have.

And of course, we can expand on that. We can think of our youth camps, rallies, big free rally and so on. And each one of us who love our children, you impart to them that knowledge that counts.

[19:17] And do so as they grow up, as they grow from infancy to childhood to teenage years. Well, so that the wisdom of Scripture is fulfilled.

We read in Proverbs 22, 6, Train up a child in the way he should go. Even when he's old, he won't depart from it. Let's pray that, you know, little ones such as Ernest there, that they'll be trained as they listen and read and listen to the Word of God as they learn to read God's Word, as they learn to understand it in a language that they can understand.

And, you know, pray with them and pray for them. Let them know about Jesus. And acquainted, as Timothy was acquainted with the sacred Word of God.

And as the more they listen to the Word of God, the more we pray that they love that Word. And they'll not be ashamed of that Word when they grow older. Because they're going to enter into a world and become part of a generation that we older ones know very little about.

They're going to experience pressures that certainly of a other generation knew very little about.

And so how important it is for Christian parents to give that knowledge that counts, that knowledge of God, that knowledge of Scripture, that knowledge that's knowledge of truth.

[20:50] And we pray that that knowledge as they learn, that they'll absorb, that they'll keep in their hearts and that they'll know that Word that truly gives wisdom.

It's the wisdom that Paul wrote to Timothy about us. We read further in verse 15. We read it, well, read again from childhood. You've been acquainted with the sacred writings, verse 15, which are able to make you wise for salvation, wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

This is really where we come to the nub of the matter. You see, Timothy wasn't instructed in the Word of God just to fulfill some kind of cold exercise, some kind of detached learning experience. Timothy wasn't instructed in the Word of God as he was instructed in other aspects of life, to train him in his developmental years.

you know, he wasn't taught this, he was taught, you know, to read, to write, to count, or so on. Timothy was taught the sacred Word of God in order to gain wisdom, in order that he would know that change in his life.

[22 : 07] You see, God's Word is no ordinary writing. You see, God's Word is powerful. God's Word has power to change minds.

It's got power to change human hearts. It's got power to change human affections. It's got power even to change the human intellect. And of course, it's that power that's accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit.

As we said, the Spirit that gives faith to believe in the Lord Jesus. And let's be frank here. Reading God's Word alone and knowing Scripture alone, that won't save.

but through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. As that Word is read, as that Word is absorbed and believed, salvation will be given.

And so it's so important that we bring our little ones to Scripture and that their eyes will be opened, that their minds will be opened and that they'll know where true wisdom's found. Because they're going to be assaulted by the wisdom of the age.

[23 : 12] They're going to grow up with the world's wisdom all around them. But the wisdom that's true wisdom is seen and heard and read and followed where?

In the Bible. God's Word. And of course, applied by faith. Faith. Faith for salvation. Of course, that really brings us to the ultimate question, doesn't it?

Do you want your little ones? Do you want the little ones around you? Do you want them to be saved? Do you truly want them to know salvation? Is it our heart's desire as a congregation to see Ernest Alistair Scott and all the other little ones we've seen today?

Do you want them truly to be converted? What about the children that have passed through this church over the years, over the decades? Do you want them to come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus?

Are some still not saved? Continue to pray for them. Pray for the prodigals. Pray that they'll know the Lord Jesus as Savior.

[24 : 23] Keep them. Keep them before the throne of grace. These are covenant children whom the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit was given at baptism. So don't lose heart.

Don't falter in your pleading for them at the throne of grace. Pray that they'll, yes, return to the Lord or turn to the Lord and return to the Lord. And that they'll come through faith, faith in the Lord Jesus to know that power, that power of salvation delivered and saved.

Because we ask that question that's given rhetorically in Scripture, is the arm of the Lord too short that it cannot save? No, it's not too short that it can't save.

Even our little ones, even children that have grown up and are still outside the kingdom, the arm of the Lord is not too short that it cannot save. I pray that it's our true longing, even this service, giving you that renewed longing to see young lives transformed by grace and through the instruction of God's Word.

And maybe even again, this service has been that incentive to you who know the Lord, to be the more diligent to pray for little ones, even children that have grown up through the congregation and use every opportunity that God gives you to instill in them that wisdom that matters.

[25 : 50] It's not indoctrination. I hate that word, but that word has so many negative undertones. It's not indoctrination when you teach them and instruct them the way of truth.

It's teaching that shows where true wisdom lies. You don't refuse to teach children the core essentials of life because that's for their own good.

Of course you don't. Well, how much more can you not refuse to teach children what truly matters, what's truly essential for their eternal welfare?

See, Timothy, even as an infant, Timothy was given a good foundation. He was given a good foundation in the wisdom that really matters and that endured in his life and has endured unto all eternity.

But there's another child, another child for whom the foundation of wisdom was laid at an early age. That child was Jesus.

[26 : 54] It was in Jesus' human nature. Jesus developed and all the human faculties necessary for his growth and his body and his mind. Luke tells us, Luke tells us in chapter 2, Luke tells us about Jesus.

And the child grew, the infant Jesus, the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And if that's the case with the sinless Son of God, well, for children such as the little one we're going to baptize this morning, the one we're going to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, pray that that little one and all little ones who are baptized, that they grow strong in the Lord and that they'll be filled with that wisdom from above and that they'll know the joy of the Lord when they and when he, when all whom we love and they give their life to the Lord Jesus and know his love eternally.

Amen. And let us pray. Our Lord, our God, our Heavenly Father, you who have brought us to this point in the life of a young family, even in this life of a congregation, in this congregation, this point in time when we come to baptize the little boy in the name of the eternal God.

Lord, bless, we pray. Bring to mind, Lord, we ask, all that is to be done for your name's sake, for the glory of your name.

Hear us, Lord, as we commit now this act that you have given to us to perform for the sake of his life, for the glory of your name.

[28 : 46] Lord, we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. in.