

# Faith's Wisdom

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] We are going to return to our theme of the last number of Sunday mornings, faith. We looked at faith as a great gift, a true and a wonderful and a free gift in our first study.

Then we looked at the fact that faith is a gift from God given to us through Jesus that we recognised and looked last week at the commitment that was involved in that, that there was a commitment to putting a trust and faith in Jesus Christ and accepting that gift just like any relationship of love but with Christ Jesus it is a unique relationship but nonetheless still one that requires a deep and a real commitment.

And today what I would like to look at, I would like to kind of follow that on by looking at the wisdom behind faith and living in a wise way the walk and the life of faith and then next week God willing that we look at warnings that we have to avoid pitfalls in the life of faith. So this morning I would like to look at the importance of being wise in our Christian walk and in our Christian faith and in verse 15 of chapter 3 of 2 Timothy on page 1197 we have these words which says, Paul speaking here to Timothy says, and you have from infancy, you have known the holy scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. So the two themes are kind of linked together in that one verse, wisdom and faith. So they come together and it goes on to speak about scripture being God breathed and we will mention that later on.

So I want us to look at some examples that are given to us here. Examples are not a good word but it is going to be the word I am going to use to begin with anyway. Examples that are given to us here that help us to be wise in our salvation, in our walk of faith. Now the first one is Jesus Christ. Now I know that it is not right simply to call him an example because he is much, much more than that for us. He is a redeemer, he is our saviour, he is the giver of the gift of life to us, he is the one who gives us the Holy Spirit who breathes in us but nonetheless I am using that and I will explain a little bit more about Jesus Christ as we go on. But also Paul himself as an example for us to follow in our Christian faith and then also other Christians. So that is what I am going to look at for a few minutes this morning in terms of being wise in our Christian lives and living a life of faith in the way that God wants us to. We have looked at the gift and we have looked at the commitment that is involved.

I want to look at Jesus Christ particularly to begin with and that verse that we read in 15 and interestingly do you see what is the next verse? You have this encouragement to look to Jesus Christ, the person, the Son of God, a redeemer and the very next verse is without any kind of introduction or without any kind of formal link is all Scripture is God breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the man, the person of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. So you have got that amazing link between the two and that is what I am going to focus on for a few moments. Jesus we know is far more than merely our example, he is our redeemer but we recognise that in him we need to be focused. We need our Christian lives, remember I used the illustration last week of the picture of the famous person that we met years ago and he is on the wall and we refer back to that and how I was saying that that is not a good example of what it is to be a Christian. We do not look back to an event that happened a few years ago and think back and it becomes a fading memory but rather it is like that famous person who comes and lives in us. We know that is true with Jesus that we have the Holy Spirit living in us, God the third person of the Trinity lives in us and with us so we have a relationship, an ongoing relationship with Him and so here we are told to focus our faith in our lives and to be wise in our salvation by remembering Jesus Christ through faith in Jesus, having our faith in Jesus Christ and then it goes on to speak about

[ 4 : 52 ] Scripture. Now I would like to focus on that link this morning and I want you to come with me. I want you to come with me to John chapter 1, this is a very famous passage of Scripture, many of you will know it, John chapter 1, verse 1 and 2, okay, in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. He was with God in the beginning so the word was with God then it says he so it gives him personality, it gives the word personality and then in verse 14 we have that explained, the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. So we've got here John describing Jesus Christ as the word, okay, the word that was in the beginning that was with God that was God and this word became flesh and made his dwelling his tabernacle among us. So it's a description, it's a picture of Jesus Christ we have and it's a picture of him as word which means and which reminds us that the Jesus Christ we know has been revealed to us through his word. It is a communicated revelation. We wouldn't know Jesus if we didn't have the Bible. We could know Jesus without the Bible but he's chosen to give us his word, a declarative word to explain to us and to express to us and to reveal to us who Jesus is and that's hugely important for us to remember that. The Bible is not only God's word, it is the revelation of Jesus Christ. The Bible is all about Jesus from beginning to end. It's a redemptive story with Jesus at the middle, with the cross right in the middle of the Bible because it looks forward to him and then it looks back to him. So it's more than just a book about Jesus as well, isn't it? It's a living word. It's a living word. It's a word that is given to us as we recognize and see and know from Scripture. It is a living word and that is tremendously significant because it reminds us that it is a relational word to us. Hebrews chapter 4 and we'll just keep... there's one or two verses just to note today. Hebrews chapter 4 and verse 2 reminds us... no it doesn't. I thought I'd got the wrong message about it. No it's not. It's a different verse that I've written down here. But we know it's the living word of

God that we have for us. It's God breathed, all Scripture is God breathed. It's useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. So it's a living word, God breathed into His word. Now for you, if Scripture is only a religious history lesson, if it's only moral rules by which to live your life, if it's only nice stories about God working in people's lives, even if it's only for you a theology that attracts and tests your mind and your thinking and your philosophical considerations, then that may be why you struggle and why I struggle as a Christian. If we lose sight of the fact that what we have in God's word is more than all of that. We have the breath of God, by God, from God for us.

And it's living and active. It's a living word and it's an active word, the word of Christ for our lives. And we've looked at Christ as the one who gives us grace and faith and a great relationship, a great friendship He is. And we've seen that that's the core of our faith, a friendship with this great living God through Jesus Christ. Now as you're your greatest friend as a Christian, it's significant for you then to spend time in His company, isn't it? Do you struggle with the friendship? Are you struggling with your faith? When I struggle with my faith, is it because we are failing to spend time with Him that we're not listening to Him from His living word and we're not speaking to Him through prayer? Sadly, I just have an old, old message that our Christian lives are founded on a relationship where the word is central and where prayer is central. I'm afraid I have no new revelations and insights on that and that for us we will find no quick step and no quick direction towards a relationship that is powerful and living with Jesus Christ unless we are soaked to a degree in His word which is living and active and are speaking to Him. And no one else can do that for you as a Christian. It's a living word that is interactive with us. How do we read the Bible? I wonder how we read the Bible? Alright, if we read the Bible, do we read the Bible? Do we simply read it as a book with religious information? Do we read it superstitiously because we think then maybe a block of concrete wouldn't fall on us during the day if we've read our Bible in the morning? Or do we read the Bible as a ritual because we brought up to read the Bible and we think that's what Christians should do, read the Bible? Or do we read it as the message of a friend, the great friend, the Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ? Do we listen when we read His Word? Do you see the verbs that are used here? The Scripture of God's God-bred useful fault for teaching, rebuking, correcting, training, and righteousness. So we have this amazing interactive word where God is speaking to us through Jesus Christ in a relationship and He's wanting to get, He wants us to be disciples and He wants us to follow Him. And I think sometimes, how do you, I wonder how you read the Bible? Do you read the Bible and then pray and go into your daily work? Or sometimes do you think, okay, what do I need from God today?

What are the issues that I need to face up to? What sins are in my heart that I need to be dealing with before God? And how can He guide, what guidance am I looking for? And having prayed through these things, then do we open His Word? Because we've spoken and we've asked, we've worshipped and we've prayed, but we've also interceded and asked. And then do we open His Word then for guidance? Is that how we read His Word? Looking for something?

Because He's living and He loves us and He's given us His Word and He says, look, search here for what I'm saying. So it's not just about knowing about God, which is very important, and knowing how He would want us to act and live in certain situations, which is also important.

[13:07] But sometimes it will be specifically a word from God in a living and active way, God breathed for our day, for that day. It's a little, for me, it's a little bit like the difference between learning in a classroom, which is very important, the theory of something, whatever it might be, learning that theory, and you learn something from that, don't you? The theory of something. I'm not going to say what theory because that depends what you're studying. But then going out and learning on the ground, you know, on the job learning, you know the difference between an apprentice learning in a classroom and an apprentice learning on the job. You know the difference is adrenaline, is that you need to get your learning right when you're on the job. And it's much, you know, if you make mistakes, it's much more obvious because you're on the job and you're learning and you need to know and people learn quickly, very much in that apprenticeship situation, I think. And sometimes they'll learn, obviously, what they've been taught in theory. So I'm not decrying theory, please don't think I'm decrying theory. Only a little bit. But the importance of both together, isn't it? We do need to learn and know about God. But also it's the difference between knowing about what He is and then living that in our daily lives and the significance of that. Because what does He say? We've seen the verbs that He's equipping us, He's teaching us, rebuking us, teaching us. So that the man I've got, the person I've got, may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. So the reason we take God's word is not to know just about God for the sake of it, so that we can say we know more about God. The reason we have this living interactive relationship with God through His word is so that we might be transformed, equipped to serve Him. That's the walk of faith, isn't it? That we are walking as disciples following Jesus and doing life His way. One of the dangers is always for us as Christians to be brilliant theologians but miserable Christians. You can be a brilliant theologian, theoretically, and a miserable Christian because you don't let that knowledge break into your heart and transform your life so that we can remain knowledgeable, a bit like these guys that He speaks about from the Old Testament, who were people who were opposed to the truth but they were always trying to come to a knowledge of the truth but never managing to come to the truth in their own lives. Always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth. And we acknowledge the truth by letting it change our hearts.

So it's moving from that place where on a Monday morning we open the Bible, we've said a prayer, we read the Bible, we close the Bible and we walk into our workplace and we remain bitter or we remain self-righteous or we remain unloving and we immediately speak careless and hurtful words to someone and we keep that unforgiving spirit towards someone who's done us wrong. That is when we fail to allow God's living word to transform us in our walk of faith. So when we are wise unto salvation, that we have faith in Jesus Christ which is immediately linked in therefore to His word as a living and active word for us. And by faith we have taken that. And I think that's a hard journey for us. It's a battle, it's a struggle, it requires submission, it requires time, it requires energy, it requires effort from us. How often have we taken a passage, just closed it and said, I didn't make anything of that. But I've done it. I've read the Bible for today so things will be fine. But we need to take the minds God's used as. It's heart and mind, isn't it? He says heart and mind is both and, not either or, but we take them both and we allow Him to transform us and equip us for service in His kingdom. And He does that and He enables us. His Holy Spirit loves to cooperate with the word. Brilliant. He loves it, it's His word and He loves to cooperate with that word. But the reality is of course that there's a cost involved in that moving back because it means allowing Him lordship in our lives.

So we are to learn from Jesus Christ and from our ongoing relationship with Jesus Christ through His word. Now the word is undermined today, the Bible, it's regarded as untrustworthy from lots of different circles. You'll hear that and you'll maybe begin to think that yourself. But we recognize it as it's a self-attested word of God is given to us that speaks to us about Jesus and by faith we recognize it as His living word for us. God breathed for us today so we can take it and apply it to our lives. So we learn from Jesus Christ.

And I say also that to be wise in our lives of faith and wise to salvation, we can learn from for example the apostle Paul. Look at verse 10. When Paul is speaking to Timothy, he says, you however know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings, what kind of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Listeria, persecutions I endured, yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.

So we recognize that Paul is an example for us as well in order to be wise Christians. He's part of the foundation of the gospel message. He's part of the foundation of the kingdom of God. If you look up Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 20, Paul says there again, consequently you're no longer foreigners, naïve, fellow citizens with God's people, members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ, Jesus is the head cornerstone. So we have this apostolic foundation, this teaching that we're given by the apostles, which is part of God's word, and also the character of God's apostles as these individual people lived out their lives in obedience to Jesus Christ. And Paul recognizes that in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 verse 1, he says, follow my example as I follow the example of Christ. So Paul there says, you know, follow me as I follow Christ.

[ 20 : 21 ] And that's a foundational truth and a reality for us that we can follow the example of Paul as he gives not just advice to Timothy but to us as well. Follow him because in his life of faith, his life of faith was Christ centered, wasn't it? Follow my way of life, my purpose, my faith, my patience, my love. Everything in his life was focused on is what we're looking at tonight again, our identity being in Christ. His identity was in Christ and he had this Christ centered motivation. Now you don't just need to be an apostle to be like that. He also, we can see, we recognize he loved people because he speaks about enduring, about loving, about patience. And all these things are related to really his ongoing relationships with people. He stuck with them. He stayed among them. He wasn't self obsessed in any way. There was problems everywhere he went with people but he was patient and he was loving and he was enduring for the sake of Jesus Christ. He had time for people. That walk of faith, that life of faith that he had that being wise to salvation was the putting into practice and we'll maybe spend more detailed time looking at these things when we look at the fruit of the Spirit in the walk of faith over the next number of weeks and months, weeks anyway. And also in this life of faith he endured under suffering. Isn't that part of the theme we've been looking at, the cost of commitment? Is it just for you, is it just to be a big, large kind of marshmallow double bed that you just kind of float around in, everything's going to be easy? Do we expect that there will not be for us suffering in our lives when there's nothing in Scripture to give us that indication? The suffering is temporary. It is to perfect us and prepare us for the crown of righteousness that we will receive but nonetheless it's part of the reality. But you say Jesus loves me and

God's my Father. My Father would never let this happen to me. Of course but our earthly fathers don't know our hearts. Our earthly fathers don't know what we need to transform us to make us like Jesus. Our earthly fathers don't know our spiritual addictions that separate us from Jesus Christ and Jesus wants to break them because he loves us. Addiction is never easy to break in our kind of balanced and nice lives. We recognize the difficult addictions are to break for people. We have spiritual addictions to be broken. We have internal battles to face of an unbelieving world to stand up against. We know one day he will wipe away the tears.

So we follow in wisdom the lives of people like Paul who was an apostle. But lastly and very briefly we also see that we're encouraged to follow the example of other Christians.

In verse 14 Paul says to Timothy, but as for you continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of because you know from whom you've learned it and how from infancy you have known the holy scriptures which are able to meet you wise and so on. And if you look back at chapter 1 and verse 5 Paul refers to the people that he'd learned from. I have been reminded of your sincere faith which first lived in your grandmother, your granny and then your mother, your grandmother Louis and your mother Eunice and I am persuaded now lives in you also. So here Paul is encouraging not only to focus on Jesus Christ through his word through the holy scriptures which are living and active, not only to be wise by following the example in teaching and lives of Paul and the apostles as they imitated

Christ but also learning from other Christians who have been a good example to you. In Timothy's case his grandmother, his granny and his mother, family and friends. Now isn't that significant and important that God encourages us? Maybe some of the young people here they're just moving away from home and the last thing they want to do, they may be thinking about Christian things, thinking about letting go of Christian things, they're Christian upbringing and all of that. It's the time to set free, it's the time to let go. But listen not only to Christ, listen not only to the apostle from the word but think about your, more immediately your flesh and blood, your Christian parents have prayed for you and encourage you to go to church and encourage you in your Christian faith or encourage you to become Christians.

[ 25 : 58 ] Think about what they have said, it's so easy for us to rebel against that, so easy to reject not just our family but the wider Christian family, the church, to ignore their good advice.

Now that's an interesting thing isn't it? It presupposes that the Christian church can advise one another, that they can warn, that they can encourage, that they can take someone aside and say, hey wait a minute, is this a right, do you really think this is good for your Christian faith, for you to do that? Is it good for you to walk down that road?

I know you want to go there but Christians who love one another will have this great concern to share truth and to share Christ with one another. So maybe that we learn from one another in our Christian families and as children learn from our parents and as parents learn from our parents if they were Christians and consider them and think about them but also learn from our Christian families, be accountable towards one another, value what they can do for you and what you can do for them and develop in this place good Christian friendships, people who will encourage and teach and lead you in the right way. Because the question is generally in terms of our salvation, who are we listening to? Who's your guide? Who are you listening to in your daily life? Who's advice do you take? Who do you ask for guidance? Are you looking? First and as a way of life are you looking to Jesus Christ as a Christian? He is your first port of call. The danger we get into so often is because we make all the decisions ourselves and then when everything's just in a total mess we cry out to God for help and look to Him. But it's at the end of the road and He's seen at the beginning of our lives and at the beginning, as a mindset, be those who recognize that wisdom comes through faith in Jesus Christ which we know through

Holy Scripture and learn from the apostolic teaching and the examples of Paul and learn from other Christians. A great kind of gradation downwards and significance maybe and an authority but nonetheless significant and maybe that we are wise to salvation. And if you're not a Christian, can I challenge you to consider the truth of Scripture not just as a holy book of the Christian faith or not even just as an amalgamation of stories true or otherwise, but as the redemptive, as the story of man's need, humanity's need before God from the very beginning to the very end with Christ Jesus on the cross crucified and risen Savior as the one who is a redeemer and the only one who can give you spiritual life and hope for eternity. I mean, let's bow our heads and pray briefly. Heavenly Father, we thank you for who you are and we ask that we would let Scripture speak in our lives. Forgive us for the presumptions we so often make about the Bible and leaving it as even as Christians to accumulate dust in our bedside cabinets or somewhere that has just not seen. Forgive us for opening the book like we would open any other book. Forgive us when we fail to listen for what you're telling us directly, maybe on any given day as we open Scripture.

And help us not just to be theoretical in our understanding of the Christian faith, but may we be those who are learning as we live our lives and clearly needing day to day guidance for living life to the full, for being forgiven, for guidance, for hope, for a future, for the perspective that God has intended us to live with. So continue then to be with us today in our worship and in our fellowship together. May Christ be honoured and glorified and bless us as we come together tonight also to worship God for Jesus' sake. Amen.