

2 Timothy 3.14 – 4.5

¹⁴As for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, ¹⁵and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

4 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I solemnly urge you: ²proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favourable or unfavourable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching. ³For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, ⁴and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths. ⁵As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully.

John 5.36b–47

³⁶Jesus said to the Jews, ‘The works that the Father has given me to complete, the very works that I am doing, testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me. ³⁷And the Father who sent me has himself testified on my behalf. You have never heard his voice or seen his form, ³⁸and you do not have his word abiding in you, because you do not believe him whom he has sent.

39 ‘You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf. ⁴⁰Yet you refuse to come to me to have life. ⁴¹I do not accept glory from human beings. ⁴²But I know that you do not have the love of God in you. ⁴³I have come in my Father’s name, and you do not accept me; if another comes in his own name, you will accept him. ⁴⁴How can you believe when you accept glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the one who alone is God?’

⁴⁵Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; your accuser is Moses, on whom you have set your hope. ⁴⁶If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. ⁴⁷But if you do not believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say?’

Trinity 22, Sunday 27 Oct, 2024 – Bible Sunday
(2 Timothy 3.14 – 4.5; John 5.36b–47)

*May I speak in the Name of the Father and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit, Amen*

Today is Bible Sunday, a Sunday the Church sets aside as a special day for an important subject - a bit like All Saints (next week) or Remembrance Sunday following.

Perhaps it's no surprise that the Church of England celebrates the Bible. Because *having a Bible in your own language* was a main goal of the Reformation (500yrs ago) when this Church was reformed.

Now you might think having a Bible in English was a good thing – but the Church at the time was against it – regularly burned Bibles and the people who read them.

It was William Tyndale (among others) who translated the Bible into English (his statue by the Thames) but he was arrested and executed, with support from the then Bishop of London. Fortunately, the current Bishop now supports Bibles in English and Bible Sunday.

On this Bible Sunday - I want to make 3 points:

- First, the Bible as an historic wonder;
- Second, the Bible points to God but is not God;
- Third, the Bible as personal dynamite.

So 1st, the Bible as an historical wonder....

The Bible is one of the biggest subjects in the world (& I'm tackling it in 10mins). More has been written about it, over a longer period, than about any other subject?

The Bible we know was agreed by Bishops in the 4thC (e.g. Sinai Bible, in Greek, in the British Library). Jerome then translated it into Latin and it was the most copied medieval text, mostly in Latin for the next 1200yrs.

That was until Martin Luther & William Tyndale in the 16thC translated it into German and English, exploiting the modern printing press – so that today, 500 years later, most people can get a Bible in their own language.

(That said, Bible Societies still work hard (translating & promoting, a member here has family connections translating the Bible into an Indonesian language. Many remember closed countries, smuggler Jim Powrie).

Many translations make the Bible different from other holy texts, and yet the text itself has hardly changed. (dead sea scrolls, Isaiah; Bible manuscripts notes).

Since the birth of the Church in the 1stC - Christians have had a kind of obsession with the Bible: reading, copying, distributing it (starting with Paul's letters; and even today as we process Gospel as a sign of respect).

So my 1st point is 'the *Bible is an historic wonder.*'

2nd point is the Bible *'points to God but is not God'*.

Although an historic wonder, the book itself is not God. It is a library telling a story of a people and their God. For example: one early character is Jacob - who wrestled with God – got a new name Israel - and had 12 sons who became 12 tribes – the Israelites.

Another story-line in the Old Testament was that a messiah, a redeemer, a saviour would come in history.

In today's Gospel, Jesus says he is that messiah – who the Scriptures point to. This was a difficult message to hear for the God-fearing Pharisees. Jesus said, *'You search the scriptures because you think in them you have eternal life; but it is the scriptures that testify about me – yet you refuse to come to me to have life'*.

The Bible points to God but is not God. It can be read by people who don't believe in God; it can be read by God-fearing people - like the Pharisees or Christians who get it wrong – or interpret it badly.

I say this because many have misused the Bible (given it a bad name) by interpreted it badly with horrible results. *Lord we repent where we have done this.*

Ideally, Christians should read the Bible (OT & NT) believing it not only informs us of the Israelites and their God, but also tells us what God is like – and crucially, *it allows God to speak to us today in unique ways.*

So my 2nd point is the Bible points to God, but is not God.

Now my 3rd point is the Bible is personal dynamite.

This is my favourite point. It picks up on the idea that *'the Bible allows God to speak to us in unique ways'*. If the Bible **is** personal dynamite – how can we ignite it?

Well, the first spark for this dynamite is education. St Paul says in *'v14 as children you learned & have known the sacred writings for salvation in Jesus'*. We thank God for parents, godparents, grandparents, Sunday school teachers, teachers, children and youth workers, who have taught **us** - we are blessed to have been taught and we bless those who teach these things.

A 2nd spark to ignite this dynamite is to read the Bible for ourselves: Paul says *¹⁶All scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, correction, training in righteousness, so everyone who belongs to God may be equipped for every good work'*. To get equipped for every good work, we must read the Bible for ourselves. *There are lots of resources.* E.g. Bible in a Year: Within weeks *'you are different'*. Just this week, reading Ps 32 with friends, after a bad day, my spirit was lifted.

A 3rd way to ignite this dynamite is to apply it. The Bible is not always easy. St Paul says *it is useful for **training** in righteousness.* We may need to wrestle with it - over many days. One way to apply it is by asking 3 questions of the text: *What did it mean then? What is the principle? & How might I apply it today?*

So my 3rd point is the Bible is personal dynamite.

So where does this leave us on Bible Sunday.

My first goal was to communicate the Bible as an amazing book. The fact that we have such accurate account in our own language is *an historic wonder*.

My second goal is to highlight a risk or two in the Bible. One risk is that the Bible points to God but is not God. Bible knowledge is not an end in itself – God is the end we pursue. Another challenge, is to read it carefully, not using it as a way of controlling or condemning others. Reading it wisely by *asking what it meant then? what principle is it teaching? and how do I apply it today?*

Finally, and the main point of Bible Sunday, is to encourage you to read the Bible. Do get into the habit of reading or listening on an App: Pray as You Go; Time to Pray; Lectio 365, or Daily Prayer, Church or England.

If all scripture is inspired - and as baptised Christians we have the Spirit - we should listen to the Spirit as we read. But be careful – if you read and wrestle with God - – like Jacob, you will be changed.

It really is dynamite and transformative – you will not only be changed but as St Paul says, you will be – ‘equipped for every good work’.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.