

- REFORMATION -

Small group questions

2 Tim 3:10-4:5 "A Bible that deserves to be read."

Leaders – this is our last small groups questions sheet to be produced this year. If still meeting beyond this date, I'm sure you'll still find useful discussion around the Advent series which starts next Sunday.

1. Share your best (or most desperate) story of asking "who's in charge here?"
2. Why is it important to know in various contexts, who is in charge?

Who's in charge?

3. Why do you think over time, the church assumed so much authority – and gave so much authority to its popes?
4. Mark claimed that the differences between us and the pre-reformation church centred around the issue of authority. What will be some of the differences which emerge between a church where the church itself claims authority, compared to a church where the Bible has the final authority?
5. Why did the reformers fight (and die!) to ensure that the Bible was put in the hands of the people? Why was there so much resistance to that from the church?

Whose Word is this?

6. According to 2 Timothy 3:15, what is the key task of the Holy Scriptures?
7. Why does Paul make clear once again, the means by which salvation comes?
8. Mark said that salvation was not about what we ___ but what has been _____. Not about achieving a _____, but receiving a _____. Why is it crucial we get this? And how had the church at the time of the Reformation so seriously mucked this up?
9. What does Paul mean when he says the Scriptures are "God-breathed"?
10. The scriptures are also for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. Discuss the meaning and significance of these. To what great end will these take us?? (See end of v17.)
11. What do you see is the difference between saying at the end of a Bible reading in the service "This is the Word of the Lord" compared to "Hear the Word of the Lord"?

Who's listening?

12. We've seen the significance of the Bible – fought for at the Reformation – laid out clearly by the Apostle Paul. What are the clear implications for us and for the church today?
13. Read the start of Ch 4 of 2 Tim – why would people *not* want to listen God through his Word?
14. What changes might *you* need to make so that God's word has a much more significant place in your Christian life in the year to come?

My thanks to everyone who has taken part in our small groups this year. It is through these groups that we grow in our understanding of God's word, help each other wrestle with the implications and support and love one another in prayer and all manner of practical ways. We want to encourage more and more into these groups next year. We're going to call them "Connect" groups, as we seek to connect with God, with His Word, with one another and with our community. They'll start with a launch on Wednesday night 14th February and begin in earnest the following week!

Date: 19 November 2017
Services: 730, 930 Peregrin
Series: Reformation
Passage: 2 Tim 3:10-4:5
Title: A Bible that deserves to be read
Outline: Who's in charge?
Whose Word is this?
Who's listening?

you're squabbling with your telco provider over the NBN... you're getting nowhere...

and you ask the person on the other end - "can I speak to the person in charge?"

you're trying to return something at the supermarket... the chicken - never up to scratch... the girl at the desk is giving you a hard time... and eventually you ask (politely of course!) - "look, who's in charge here?"

the question of who's in **charge** - who calls the **shots** - who has the **authority** is very important... in all manner of circumstances...

and at the time of the **Reformation**, the question was very significant in the church.

Where does the authority **lie**?

Who has the authority in the church? //

So here's where we're heading this morning in this **final** sermon in the Reformation series

1. Who's in charge?
2. Who's Word is this?
3. Who's listening?

1. **Who's in charge?**

At the time of the Reformation - and for some centuries beforehand - it was very clear that the authority lay with the **church** - with the **Pope** - and with **church tradition**.

Think back to last week and the Lord's Supper... do you remember what we saw?

That there's no change to the bread and wine - they **remain** bread and wine - and that the minister is in **no way** performing a **sacrifice** for sin at the communion because we clearly see that **Jesus'** sacrifice on the cross was the **one and only** - the **one true sacrifice**... that his work there on the cross is a **complete** and **finished** work - where no further sacrifice for sin is appropriate.

The Reformers made very great challenges to those propositions... and the result was a communion service where the focus is on remembering (what Jesus did), on revelling (in all that it means) and realising (that this is just a foretaste of what is to come)...

But what led to those errors in the first place - and why are there **still** those differences between Anglicans - in fact - between most protestant churches and the Roman Catholic church?

Because of the issue of **authority**.

Anglicans will argue clearly that the Bible **ALONE** has authority in the church.. that the church sits **under** the Bible..

The Roman Catholic doctrine is that the **church** is in charge - through **tradition** - through the **pope** - and that therefore the Bible sits **under** the authority of the church.. that tradition holds as **much** or **more** authority and that the church is the only true **interpreter** of the **Bible**.

Which is why the Bible was kept in the hands of the clergy and academics alone!

...for the church asserted it had the sole authority to **interpret** the Bible, and prohibited translations in to the language of the people.

or why? They would lose all their power and authority if the people could read for themselves – and interpret for themselves – what God said in his word!! //

Now check this against the official doctrine of **our** church... Article 20 of 39 articles of faith....

XX. Of the Authority of the Church. ... it is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God's Word written...

And in the ordination service – those being ordained are asked:

Are you convinced that the holy scriptures contain all doctrine required of necessity for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ? And will you instruct the people committed to your care from the scriptures, and teach nothing (as required of necessity to eternal salvation) except what you are convinced may be proved by the scriptures?

To which they reply

I am convinced, and will do so, by God's grace.

Church over the **word**?

Or the **word** over the **church**?

Anglican – clearly – the **Word** over the Church!

But throughout 500-1500AD, the church was the self-proclaimed guardian of the scriptures.

The **reformers** however, engaged with the Bible in new ways, studying the original Greek and Hebrew texts, and teaching and preaching the Bible to the people.

They taught that the Bible was the word of God, the highest spiritual authority.

They worked tirelessly to translate the Bible into the languages of the common people.

John Wycliffe, sometimes called the “morning star of the Reformation,” struck a spark that ignited the flame of an impending revolution. In the 1380s, Wycliffe's followers produced the first complete translation of the Bible into English.

Then another momentous development impacted Europe. In the 1450s, Johannes Gutenberg developed a metal movable-type printing press, allowing for faster and cheaper book production. His first major printed work was the Latin Vulgate.

Martin Luther came to believe that the **Bible, not the church**, was the highest spiritual authority.

Accordingly, Luther wanted a Bible that was accessible to common people – in their language. From 1521 to 1522, he translated the New Testament into German from Greek, and then with the help of other colleagues, Luther finished the translation of the entire Bible in 1534.

He **wrote** that “we must ask the mother in the home, the children in the street, the common person in the market about this. We must be guided by their tongue, the manner of their speech, and do our translating accordingly.”

The Bibles of the Reformation were meant to be opened, read, and studied so that all could engage with the Bible.

The Reformation spread into England during the reign of King Henry VIII.

In 1526, William Tyndale, inspired by Luther, illegally printed his English New Testament.

He **desired** "to have all the scripture unlocked and opened before thee; so that if thou wilt go in, and read, thou canst not but understand."

Henry ordered every copy collected and burned!

And Tyndale was tried for heresy in 1536, strangled and burned at the stake.

But just one year before, in 1535, Myles Coverdale had printed the complete English Bible. Coverdale then helped publish the Great Bible, the first and only authorized English translation of the Bible in 1539!

The Bible in the hands of the people...!///

Who's in charge?

God rules the church through his word... and we must be clear – the Bible has the authority....

Because now we must turn to the Bible ourselves and ask the question

2. Whose word is this?

Well – this word is **God's** word!!

And **he** has the authority!

And He **rules** – by his **Word**!!

Paul is saying to his young protégé Timothy – v14 – have a look - *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.*

Wise for salvation **THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS** -

How does **salvation** – our rescue from sin and death come about? Through faith in Christ Jesus – by trusting Jesus – our devotion to Jesus...

Here we see this consistent message...

not about what YOU **DO** but what has been **DONE**
- about receiving a **gift** not achieving a **mark**

I hope we're all so clear on that this morning...

Salvation comes through **faith** in **Christ** – and the more you read and understand the Scriptures – the clearer you become on that...

There's **clarity** and **certainty**

There's **wisdom** for **salvation**

you won't find any of that anywhere else!!

Continue in this says Paul //

I want to ask you this morning...

...are you committed to **continuing**?

Despite terrible times **outside** the church – many Christians distressed at the SSM result this week...

Yet – what should we **do**? Give **up**? No! **Never!**

We should **continue** as Paul says to Timothy – continue in what we have learned and become convinced of...

Continue in the Scriptures... reading, loving, living by the Scriptures... read, marking, inwardly digesting them...

And terrible times **within** the church – we've explored some of that over recent weeks... and since the SSM result – plenty clergy **within** the church – **already** pushing for the church to embrace the will of the people!!

And God says to us this morning – through Paul – are **we** going to **continue** in what we have learned – many of us from infancy...?

For these holy Scriptures are able to make you wise

...**wise** for **salvation**...

...through **faith** in **Christ Jesus!** //

But that's not Paul's only reason for continuing on in what Timothy has learnt from a child – for continuing on – with the Scriptures...

The second very significant reason – please take note – is because these Scriptures are

God-breathed

not **inspired**, // **EXpired**.

God **speaking**.

Not **dictation**.

But God using **human personalities** and **language** and **skills** to speak to us

2 Peter 1:21 - *For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit*

It originated in God's **mind** and was communicated from God's **mouth** by God's **breath** or **spirit**.

It is therefore rightly termed '**the word of God**' - for God **spoke** it. Indeed, as the prophets used to say, '*thus says the Lord*' /

As when you speak, consonants and syllables are driven from the breath in your lungs, so the Bible is contending that this word that we have is from the very breath of God.

So - **Scriptures** - Old Test, and New Testament... - **God's word** - **God speaking**.¹

God speaks to **us** in the pages of Scripture today.

And in so far as what a preacher says is **consistent** with what the **Bible** says, God speaks through the **preaching** of his Word.

...and **BECAUSE** what we have here is God's word. God speaking - than it is useful for the following activities - v16 -

- i. **Teaching** - putting us on the right track
- ii. **Rebuking** - showing us when we are on the wrong track
- iii. **Correcting** - putting us back on track
- iv. **Training in righteousness** - right relationship - appropriate behaviour - for those in right relationship by God's grace

End goal - *thoroughly equipped for every good work*.

You want to know how to live **God's way**?

You want to be useful in his **kingdom**?

You want to be a blessing to **others**?

You want to develop a **servant heart**?

You want God's **compassion** for the **lost**?

You want his **passion** for his **mission**?

Want to see where you're going **wrong**?

Want to see sin which has become a **habit** to which you have become blind?

...where you need to be **shaped** and **moulded** in to the person God wants you to **be**?

You want to **hone** your gifts and use them in his **service**?

Then - here's the **book**...

¹ OK - but *what* Scriptures?

Old Testament - that was what Paul and Timothy had available to them...

And this view is exactly Jesus' view of the Old Testament... that we read there is what God said...

Let me show you... Matthew 22:31 *But about the resurrection of the dead - have you not read what **God said** to you...* then Jesus quotes from the Old Testament... he what he reads there as the words of God

Again - in Acts 13:34 - As God has said - then Paul quotes the OT - then

Or in Hebrews in many places - "as God said" or "as the Holy Spirit says" - (3:2) as they insert quotes from the Old Testament.

So yes - the NT sees OT as the words of God!

NT?

Peter - speaking of Paul's writings... 2 Peter 3:16 [Paul's] letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the *other* Scriptures, to their own destruction.

Implication - Peter sees **Paul's** writings as **Scripture**!! So, we're talking all Scripture - OT and NT

there's **life**

There's **help** in the **present**

there's **hope** for the **future**

there's an **answer** to **sin**

there's an **end** to **evil**

there's **rescue** from **death**

Wisdom to **live** by

wisdom to **draw** from

wisdom to **apply** ///

It's no wonder that Paul goes on to tell Timothy - *Preach the Word!!* - Read 4:3... people don't want sound doctrine - just want hear what they want to hear - want to hear that which endorses their current lifestyle... want to hear what the **world** wants to hear...

But friends - we must expect that God will challenge our society - otherwise - he has nothing to say !!

That's why we unapologetically **preach** from the Bible here **Sunday** after **Sunday**...

Normal pattern - move systematically through a **book** or **significant portion** - so we might understand it and get it into our **system**.

Where the church has **abandoned** the Bible -

Where the church no longer **acknowledges** it to be the Word of God

... it just **contains** the word of God

... or - some - worst case - that it is in **no** sense the word of God - just an ancient record of how people thought way back then...

...in **those** places - the Church **declines**, Christians **abandon** the faith - usually by abandoning **morality** first - and the church is **dying**...

When we finished the Bible reading this morning - we all said: "**THIS IS** the word of the Lord"

But now the push - not **THIS IS** the word of the Lord - but **HEAR** the word of the Lord... that is - you hear whatever you think the word is saying!

Subtle... can you see the difference...?"

Hear it in so far as you personally **subjectively** figure it to be the word of God...

No - here in this church - we will say "**THIS is** the Word of the Lord" and we'll say it with **great conviction!**

Let me finish - with my third point

3. **Who's listening?**

One of the most difficult challenges you'll face as a Christian - staying one!

How will you **continue** in what you have learned? - when there are such terrible times *within* and *outside* the church?

Here's how - by the holy Scriptures which are able to make you **wise** for **salvation** through **faith** in **Christ Jesus**

By the holy Scriptures which is the very **word** of **God**

By the Holy Scriptures which are useful for **teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteous** so that we might be the people God **wants** us to **be...** //

When we consider that God speaks through the words of the Bible, it's surprising that we so easily fail to listen to him every day.

In these pages - we know God, we know **ourselves** better, and through it, God helps us see the world **through** his eyes.

If it's the **word** of God - it's the most important thing you'll **read** all day!

Thanks to the vision of the Reformers, who saw the corruption of the church - the power of the church - the way people were led strayed by the church - they saw the need to get the Bible into the hands of the people...

So that they might see that salvation came through faith in Jesus and not through the church

That righteousness is FROM God...

That godliness grew as people wrestled with the word, not as they engaged in the rituals of the church

That grace comes as we draw close to God through his word... not as we go through meaningless ceremonies...

People died - were martyred - so that we might have the Bible in our own hands, in our own language..

And we go... ppppffff - what's happening on Facebook or in the newspapers... or the magazines....

Friends - in your hands is the very word of God...

Read it... learn it... live it... revel in it... be transformed by it....

For...

2 Tim 3:16-17 - All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.