

Scripture teaches us the way of salvation

2 Timothy 3:14–17 · Junior primary · Lesson 2

God gives Scripture to lead us to salvation through faith in Jesus and to prepare us for good works, so we should keep learning and living by His Word.

Estimated reading time: 15 minutes

Read 2 Timothy 3:14–17, then go back to verse 10 so that you hear the encouragement in its setting. Paul is writing to Timothy, a fellow servant of Jesus whom he loves. He is not offering a detached description of the Bible. Timothy must continue in the truth while facing people who deceive others and while knowing that faithfulness can bring suffering. What will keep him from being drawn away?

Paul's answer reaches back to the people who taught Timothy and the Scriptures he has known since infancy. Read 2 Timothy 1:1–14 and Acts 16:1–5 to meet some of those people. Then read 2 Timothy 4:6–18. The older apostle expects his death to be near, yet he still wants Timothy to bring his cloak and his books. The letter holds together lasting gospel hope and the ordinary needs of a man asking for a cloak, facing opposition and longing for company.

On a second reading of the main passage, trace three questions. Why should Timothy continue? What are the Scriptures able to do for him? Why can he rely on them for the work ahead? Give particular attention to the phrases about faith in Christ and every good work. Their relationship will keep the lesson from becoming either a celebration of Bible facts alone or a demand that children earn God's acceptance by behaving well.

Before Timothy travelled with Paul, he had a history of being taught. Paul names his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice in the opening chapter and remembers the sincere faith present in them. Acts identifies his mother as a believing Jewish woman and his father as Greek. Scripture does not give us a timetable of their household teaching or tell us precisely when every family member came to faith. It does give us a young man whose early acquaintance with the sacred writings mattered in his later service.

Those writings were the Scriptures of Israel, what Christians now call the Old Testament. Timothy did not grow up with a completed printed New Testament on a shelf. That simple historical distinction helps us hear Paul's claim properly: the writings Timothy already knew could make him wise for salvation through faith in Christ. The coming of Jesus did not make them useless. It brought their saving promises and purposes into clearer view.

Now Timothy is receiving an apostolic letter in a demanding setting. Paul recalls his own persecutions and warns that deception will continue. His instruction to remain in what Timothy has learned is therefore personal and urgent. A reliable foundation matters when attractive voices invite us elsewhere.

Continue in the truth you have received — 2 Timothy 3:10–15

Paul contrasts Timothy's path with the path of deceivers. He has already reminded Timothy of teaching and conduct, purpose and patience, love and endurance. These truths were not passed on as words disconnected from life. Timothy had seen something of what holding to the gospel cost Paul. The relationship gives weight to the appeal without making Paul's personality the foundation of faith.

Verse 14 asks Timothy to continue in what he has learned and firmly believed. Continuing is active. It involves staying with the truth, returning to it and allowing it to shape the next decision. A familiar passage can still teach us when a new circumstance exposes something we have not understood. We do not outgrow

the gospel because we can already repeat its language.

Paul also reminds Timothy that he knows those who taught him. The plural invites us to remember the wider story of his formation. His mother and grandmother belong in that story, alongside Paul's instruction. God's word had reached Timothy through real relationships long before this letter. Their faithfulness encourages us to value patient teaching whose importance may become clearer only over time.

This is especially helpful in children's ministry. A teacher may explain the same truth again without seeing an immediate response. The letter gives reason for patient persistence, but it offers no technique that guarantees conversion. Timothy's history is a particular testimony to God's kindness, not a promise that every child will follow an identical course if adults copy the same routine.

Nor does the passage require a certain household arrangement before a child can learn Scripture. Lois and Eunice are named and honoured for the faith that lived in them. A child taught by a grandmother, another caregiver or a church teacher can hear this account without being treated as an exception to the real story. Keep the welcome ordinary and direct: God's word can be heard here, and we are glad to learn it together.

But continuing in familiar teaching is not good merely because it is familiar. Some things learned early are mistaken. Paul is speaking about the sacred Scriptures and the trustworthy gospel Timothy has received. That brings us to the next question: what is this teaching meant to accomplish?

Follow Scripture to Christ for salvation — 2 Timothy 3:15

Paul gives Scripture a purpose greater than producing a well-informed pupil. It can make a person wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Wisdom involves recognising the truth and responding rightly to it. Here the response is directed towards a particular Saviour. Knowing the names of biblical people is valuable, but it does not by itself reconcile someone to God.

The Old Testament prepares us to understand that need. Its accounts show a good Creator, human rebellion, judgement and mercy, promises and repeated failures. Its worship teaches the seriousness of sin and the need for cleansing. Its prophets expose false hope and announce God's saving purpose. These different kinds of writing belong to a story that reaches its fulfilment in Jesus.

We do not need to make every object in every account a secret symbol for Christ. Paul's point is larger and firmer: Scripture makes us wise for the salvation found in Him. Jesus is the promised Saviour, God's Son who became human, died for sinners and rose again. The Bible's accounts and teaching help us understand who He is, why we need Him and what it means to trust Him.

The words about faith prevent a serious misunderstanding. Scripture does not save us as an object we possess, and learning it does not build up credit that God exchanges for forgiveness. We receive salvation through trusting Christ. The word tells us of Him and calls us to Him; He is the One whose saving work meets our need.

A familiar comparison may help you explain the difference. Someone can know a great deal about a person without relying on that person for help. The comparison has limits, because Jesus' saving work is unique, but it makes the distinction between information and trust easier to hear. Give the children the gospel itself rather than leaving them with the comparison.

Paul has already put grace before works in 2 Timothy 1:9. God saves according to His purpose and grace, not according to our achievements. This is why a child who struggles to remember can be invited to Jesus just as sincerely as a child who answers quickly. The next verses will speak of good works, but those works must remain in their proper place.

Receive God's teaching for a life of good works — 2 Timothy 3:16–17

Why can these writings be trusted to lead and equip people? Paul says that all Scripture is inspired by God. The translation's footnote expresses the underlying image as breathed out by God. The point concerns Scripture's source. God has given this word through human writers, so its authority does not depend on how strongly we happen to feel when we read it.

Inspiration is not the same as an artist finding an inspiring view or a speaker having a helpful idea. Nor does this verse describe the exact process by which every biblical book was written. Scripture includes poems, histories, letters and other forms, with recognisable human authors and purposes. God's authorship does not erase those features. It gives us reason to attend carefully to them as the way His word has been communicated.

Paul then describes four useful effects. Scripture teaches us what is true. It rebukes us by exposing what is wrong. It corrects us by bringing us back towards what is right. It trains us in righteousness, shaping a continuing pattern of life pleasing to God. These are related actions, not four boxes that every verse must fill in an identical way.

Consider an ordinary fictional situation: a child has spoken an unkind lie about someone. God's word teaches that the other person matters and truth is good; it exposes the lie; it directs the child towards an honest admission and appropriate repair; it encourages a growing habit of truthful, loving speech. The example helps us understand correction, but the forgiveness the child needs still rests on Christ rather than the success of the repair.

Verse 17 names the purpose: the servant of God is equipped for every good work. Timothy, as a teacher and servant of the gospel, is directly in view. He needs the Scriptures for the responsibilities entrusted to him. The same writings instruct the church he serves. We should not turn the phrase into a promise that a child who memorises a verse can perform every task without learning how.

Follow the order of Paul's thought. Scripture leads us to salvation through faith in Christ, then equips us for lives of obedience. Good works are the fitting fruit of grace. They do not supply a second entrance to salvation for people who prefer earning to receiving.

This also explains why correction can be hopeful. God's purpose is not merely to expose our failure and leave us there. His word directs us towards truth and a new way of living. A teacher who has been corrected by Scripture can offer correction with patience, knowing that both teacher and child depend on the same grace.

Faith receives the Saviour Scripture reveals

The gospel connection is already at the centre of the main passage. Scripture gives wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Begin there, with the saving purpose Paul actually names. Our problem is sin against God, not merely a shortage of useful facts. We need forgiveness and new life, and neither is a prize for successful study.

In the opening chapter, Paul explains that God's grace has been made evident through the appearing of Jesus, who has defeated death and brought life to light through the gospel. Jesus' death for our sins and bodily resurrection give substance to that hope. The One Scripture teaches us to trust is alive and able to save.

Faith means relying on Him and His saving work rather than presenting our achievements as the reason God should accept us. Repentance belongs with that trust: we turn from sin towards the Saviour. We should be plain about both grace and response without confusing them. A child is not asked to buy forgiveness by making enough improvements first.

Then the good works of verse 17 make sense. We learn to tell the truth, care for others and obey God because His grace is good and His word is trustworthy. The practical activity will put these truths in order. It must not suggest that assembling a sequence creates faith or that outward kindness proves conversion. Its purpose is to give children something they can use to explain why Scripture, faith and obedience belong together.

Inspiration concerns the divine source and authority of Scripture. Illumination describes the Holy Spirit helping people understand and receive the word God has given. Keeping these ideas distinct protects us from calling every helpful thought a new inspired message. A teacher depends on the Spirit while remaining accountable to the written text.

Scripture is sufficient for the saving knowledge and faithful service God intends. Paul does not say Timothy needs no other practical information or help from other Christians. He writes the letter precisely as one believer helping another. The Scriptures supply the controlling truth by which such help is judged.

The immediate reference to Timothy's childhood Scriptures is the Old Testament. Christians receive the apostolic New Testament as Scripture too; 2 Peter 3:15–16 recognises Paul's letters alongside the other Scriptures. We can affirm the whole Bible's authority without pretending Timothy possessed its later completed collection in infancy or that 2 Timothy 3 supplies a list of every biblical book.

Patient teaching without false assurances

Was Timothy saved because his mother and grandmother believed?

No. Paul speaks of their sincere faith and of faith in Timothy, but one person's faith does not automatically become another's. Their teaching mattered because it brought him the truth; salvation is through faith in Christ. Honour their contribution without turning family membership into an assurance of conversion.

What if I did not learn the Bible as a child?

Timothy's early learning was a gift, not a condition that excludes later learners. The same trustworthy word is available now. You can open it, ask for help and keep learning. Give newcomers in the class the background they need rather than speaking as though everyone remembers an earlier lesson.

Does rebuking mean speaking harshly?

Rebuke identifies wrong truthfully; harshness is not what makes it effective. Paul tells Timothy in 4:2 to correct, rebuke and encourage with great patience and teaching. A correction should help a person recognise the wrong and understand the right response. Humiliation, threats and public exposure are not necessary parts of that work.

Does learning the Bible guarantee good behaviour?

No. It is possible to remember words without receiving their meaning or trusting the Saviour they reveal. Scripture really does teach and equip, but it must not be presented as a technique for controlling children. Hear their explanations, correct misunderstandings and invite a sincere response while remembering that good manners alone do not show saving faith.

Bringing this to the children

Children should use the three joined panels to explain why Scripture leads us to Jesus and why doing good follows His grace. Keep the invitation warm for children beginning to learn now and those who have heard Scripture for years.

Have ready: Print Printable Resources single-sided at actual size: pages 1 and 3 for display, page 2 for each child plus one sample, and one Parent take-home per child. Have an open Bible, crayons, a tray and a scrap of paper for memory recall. Before class an adult cuts only page 2's solid outer rectangle; keep all three panels joined. Make one sample with the captions upright: draw a book, a cross and sharing hands; fold the right panel behind the middle, then the left over the middle, and reopen. No glue is needed. Leave the children's strips unfolded. Practise the demonstration with your helper and agree how to distribute strips, steady folds and listen to children explain grace and good works.

Remember together: Read the complete 2 Timothy 3:16 from page 3. Explain its useful teaching and correction words, practise the four printed phrases and use the supported covered-phrase recall. The comma belongs to the verse; the sentence continues into verse 17.

SCRIPTURE

All Scripture is inspired by God
and is profitable for teaching,
for rebuking, for correcting,
for training in righteousness,

2 Timothy 3:16, CSB

Listen for understanding: Ask who saves us and why good works matter. If a child makes Bible learning or good behaviour the price of forgiveness, return to "through faith in Christ Jesus" in verse 15, explain the gift and invite a fresh explanation. Both adults listen during drawing and folding.

Reflect before teaching:

- Who helped me hear Scripture, and what can their patient care teach me about serving this class?
- Where do I resist correction because I already know the religious language?
- Can I explain the difference between learning about Jesus and relying on Him for salvation?
- Do my expectations place good works after grace, or do my words imply that God welcomes only the children who perform well?

Pray before teaching:

Thank God for the people through whom His word has reached you. Ask Him to deepen your own understanding and trust, to make correction patient and useful, and to help the children hear the gospel clearly. Pray for those who are beginning with little biblical knowledge and for those whose familiarity may hide important questions.

Use the fictional example supplied in the Lesson to explore correction. Do not ask who has lied or invite public confession. Keep the whole memory verse intact while practising manageable phrases together. Repeating it is a way to learn, not evidence that the speaker is a Christian.

Before you teach: explain why Paul mentions Timothy's teachers, what Scripture's saving purpose is, what inspiration means, and why good works follow grace. Give a patient correction for the claim that knowing many Bible verses earns forgiveness. If that distinction is unclear, return to verses 15–17 and 2 Timothy 1:9–10.

For further reading:

Read 2 Timothy 3 with chapters 1 and 4. Acts 16:1–5 supplies Timothy's family and ministry setting; 2 Peter 3:15–16 helps explain the place of apostolic writings.

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