

# St Martins C3 – November 17, 2024

## *Trust and Obey: Living Scripture*

### Sermon Notes:

Today, we look at the importance of Scripture so we can understand it well and obey what it says.

There is a tendency to approach Scripture to be treated like Aesop's Fables. That is where every story (particularly in the Old Testament) becomes solely a moral lesson.

This approach allows us to turn the Scriptures into anything we want them to be. We can find a verse to back up any position we want.

### **Read Romans 15:3-5**

One of the main points of scripture is to teach us and give us hope, patience and encouragement to wait for God's promises and to live in harmony as the church.

The Bible is not all about us, it is about God and His plan and how He can use us in His story.

That is why we need to dig deeper into Scripture to ensure we understand what it says. We need to comprehend what was actually being communicated and how that principle applies today.

Ultimately, the hope that is being talked about in Romans 15 is the hope that a Messiah would come who would take all the insults, sin and rebellion and let it fall on Him.

We need to believe that the same God who worked and acted in the Scriptures is working and acting today.

We must understand Scripture accurately but that is not the ultimate goal.

### **Read Matthew 7:24-27**

The fool listens to the word of Jesus. The wise person listens to the word of Jesus *and obeys*. It is not what they hear or even what they believe, but what they do that defines them as a fool or wise person.

Your life is founded not just on what you believe or what you hear, but on what you do with the things you believe, what you do with the things you hear.

You have never truly learned a lesson until you live it. And you keep on living it to make your foundation strong.

Here are three questions to turn information into application:

- 1) What do I need to think more about?
- 2) What do I need to discuss?
- 3) What am I going to do?

Jesus is saying, "If there is an area of your life where you are facing the same lessons over and over, then you need to do something about it. If you know the truth but don't live it, then you are a fool." It's time to get on our knees before the highest God and ask for the help of His Spirit to empower us to live for Him.

Our lives would be different if every time we read the Bible, we took one God-inspired thought and processed it deeply.

## Questions for Connect Groups:

### Key Point

Read Scripture and learn to trust God, apply it as you obey.

### Questions

What stood out to you from this week's message?

What does this message tell you about God and humans?

What are the things you do to help ensure you are understanding Scripture accurately?

How do we ensure we are not making Scripture like Aesop's fables, i.e. moral lessons on being good?

Why do you think Jesus puts such a large emphasis on obedience to his words over just hearing and believing?

What is the difference between what Jesus is suggesting and the "moral lesson" approach?

What is something you have read or heard recently that you have thought requires more thought?

How helpful do you find it to discuss difficult parts of the Bible with others?

What action is God calling you to right now as a result of your Bible reading? If this question is hard to answer, why is that?

What things have helped you find good daily application from Bible reading?

## **Monday Devotion: Christ is Central**

### ***Read Colossians 1:15-22***

As you read the Bible it is essential that you stay focused on the key truth that it proclaims and that is the centrality of Jesus to the story God is painting and his centrality to our lives.

In whatever scripture we are reading this truth must be close to our hearts, as it is essential to our understanding of all things we read.

Today take some time to prayerfully SOAP (Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer) this magnificent scripture. It is a timeless description of the transcendence of Jesus and his pre-eminence in the world.

As you seek application, ask the three questions we discussed in this week's sermon:

- 1) What do I need to think more about?
- 2) What do I need to discuss?
- 3) What am I going to do?

May God lead you to a greater understanding of his truth, may he show you who he is and give you power to live for him with a new confidence.

### **Pray**

- For a fresh revelation of Jesus
- For the ability to live out the things he has laid on your heart

## **Tuesday Devotion: More than Knowledge**

***Read Colossians 1:8-10***

I had a friend who thought the most important thing in the Christian life was believing the right theological ideas. He was convinced that if people knew the truth their faith would be pure and without error. He spent hours researching and arguing theological ideas. As a result, he emphasised belief and neglected action.

The verse he used for his understanding was Colossians 1:9. Paul here is praying for the people of Colossae that they would have complete knowledge of God. This is indeed a valuable and honourable prayer. However, notice the context of this scripture by reading verses eight and ten.

In verse eight, Paul praises them for the love they have for others. Love, before knowledge, is a defining characteristic of the church's connection with the Holy Spirit.

In verse ten, Paul shows knowledge is a means to an end. The end goal is the product of fruit in their hearts and lives and growth as they know God better.

As we read the Bible may we do it not only to know things about God but to grow closer to God and to honour him by producing a life that is transformed and transformative. That is what reading the Bible is all about.

### **Pray**

- That God would produce his fruit in our life
- For God to use the Bible to draw us closer to Him

## **Wednesday Devotion: Faith and Deeds**

***Read James 2:14-26; Matthew 7:15-20***

There is some teaching that if it weren't in the Bible we would probably consider heresy. James 2 is one of those passages. Here James so emphasizes our actions being integral to our salvation that it seems like he is peddling a "works-based" salvation that runs contrary to the grace-based salvation that is foundational to our faith.

However, when we consider James' argument we see that it is logically consistent. What he is presenting is not something opposed to God's gift of grace, but merely it is the other side of the same coin. For, if God's great salvation work is as powerful as we know it to be then it will cause a transformational change in a person's attitude to be seen through the person's action.

In this way, James' teaching is the same as Jesus' in Matthew 7. A good tree will produce good fruit and a bad tree will produce bad fruit.

As you are transformed by reading Scripture may you see the fruit of a life that is focussed on God. As James says the key test of this will be seen through the way we care for the poor and treat those who have less than us. May we examine our lives today and see how God wants to change us.

### **Pray**

- Pray for those around you who have less than you through ill-health, poverty or difficult circumstances. Ask God to give you ways to serve them.

## **Thursday Devotion: Together**

***Read Philippians 2:12-13; Romans 12:1-2***

God wants to change and transform us and our transformed action is a sign of God's work in our lives. So, it is right that we ask how does this work happen? In these two passages, we encounter two understandings that are essential to this process.

Philippians 2 shows that this change is a mixture of God's work and our work. Paul encourages the people to take his words and work hard to fulfil them while he is not there. He says to do so is to work out their salvation. This is a work of our will. The next verse indicates that God is intimately involved in the process of changing our desires.

In Romans 12, Paul highlights that people need to live a transformed life as a work of gratitude for all that God has done for them. This happens as we reject the ways of the world around us and instead let God transform us by changing the way we think.

This change of mind will happen as we allow God's Spirit to change our minds and as we spend time immersed in the truth of Scripture. That is why, throughout the ages, the two greatest spiritual disciplines have been to read the Bible and pray. As you spend time prayerfully doing SOAP, may you be changed by God's work in your life.

### **Pray**

- Pray for those around you who are not seeing the transformation in their lives that they want to see.

## **Friday Devotion: Strapped to our Hearts**

### ***Read Deuteronomy 6:1-9***

Moses passed on the law of God to the people, and he gave them the solemn command to be intimately connected to it. As a result of this passage, many Jewish people would wear on their arms a tefillin or phylactery, a small black box with pieces of the Torah in it, while they prayed. They would also attach a box to the outside of the door of their home as a reminder that these words were important and sacred.

Because we are New Testament Christians not bound to the Old Testament commands, we are not obliged to do this today. However, there is a principle here that is hard to ignore. God intended that people would treasure his revelation and ensure it held an important part in their lives.

Today, our way of doing that is to spend time each day reading the Bible. As we do, we can find new depths to the great work that God has done through his Son. We can also discover the amazing principles by which we can live for God and share His love with the world.

As we do this it is our prayer that we would be transformed. We pray that love may flow through our lives until God's way of life is evident to all and it is strapped not just to our arms or doors but to our hearts!

### **Pray**

- That we would have a great love for the Bible and that as we read it we would be transformed