

Baptisms

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[0 : 0 0] that are a part of that letter of Paul to Timothy. But before I mention the passage and before we read it together, I think we all are aware that today we will be baptizing four very precious children, Sadie and Holly and Jude and Maya, each one created in the image and likeness of God.

Each one loved by God. Each one, of course, loved by their parents who today bring them to be baptized.

And yet also each one, and we will be witnesses of this fact presently, each one very small and fragile and vulnerable, in permanent need of care and protection.

Each one with enormous potential, with gifts to be discovered, maybe some already being discovered, and abilities to be nurtured.

They are at the start of their lives with so much to learn. And today I want to think about learning, about children who learn and parents who teach.

[1 : 2 0] So let's read a passage that will help us consider this matter of learning, of teaching and learning. 2 Timothy 3, verses 10 to 17.

It's on page 1196 in the Church Bible. 2 Timothy 3, reading from verse 10 to verse 17.

And there we read, You, however, know all about my teaching. Here Paul is addressing Timothy. 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 Lystra? The persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and imposters will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

[2 : 4 6] 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.

The Word of God. I want to consider this morning particularly the words that we find, or the teaching that we find in verses 14 and 15, and direct myself in a particular way to parents, not only the parents who today will be bringing their children to be baptized, but all of us who have the privilege and the responsibility of being parents, and very particularly if we at a given point have brought our children to be baptized.

And we can divide our message in the following way. First of all, I want us to consider our highest hope. Our highest hope as parents. What is our highest hope?

And secondly, to consider our precious resource. This passage speaks of a precious resource that is given to us in order that we might see fulfill our highest hope.

And then thirdly, our solemn responsibility. Again, each of these things with particular reference to parents. Our highest hope, our precious resource, and our solemn responsibility.

[4 : 20] Well, what is our highest hope? What is your highest hope for your children? People may answer that in different ways. If we were to ask folk, maybe have a survey of folks in Aberdeen, what's your highest hope for your children?

And I imagine we would have a variety of answers. Some might say, well, as long as they enjoy good health, that's really all that really matters. And other things, well, but good health, that's important.

That's what I hope most for my children. Maybe others would say, well, no, I want them to do well at school. To do as well as they can, and to go on to college or university, and to have a career, and to be successful.

Maybe they wouldn't use the word be successful. It sounds a bit crass. But, you know, that's the idea. That they would do well. That they would be able to achieve great things.

Maybe some might say, I'd like to give them the opportunities I never had in that regard. That's what I want for my children. That is my highest hope. And others might say, well, I'm not that concerned about their academic achievements, or their professional achievements, but I do want them to be happy.

[5 : 31] As long as they're happy, that's the most important thing. I want my children to be happy. And if that involves, as perhaps for many it would, finding a good and faithful husband or wife, well, that's what I want.

And then, in due course, they can give me some happiness as grandchildren come along. Well, different people might answer that question in different ways. What is your highest hope for your child or for your children?

There are some who are very focused, and whose primary concern is that their child would excel in some field. I wonder, and I don't presume to know, and certainly I'm not suggesting that this is the case, but I just wonder, and I do emphasize that, I wonder what Judy Murray's highest hope is for Andy.

We're just about to start Wimbledon. You know, all those years of training, and of driving him here, there, and everywhere, and just focused on his tennis career. I wonder what her highest hope is for him.

I wonder if it is that which may become a reality, even in these couple of weeks that are before us. I don't know. Well, all of these hopes that have been mentioned are admirable.

[6 : 45] None of them are hopes that we could criticize or question, I don't think. But for Christian parents, for Christian parents, surely our highest hope for our children finds expression in the words of Paul in verse 15.

As he addresses Timothy, How from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

Wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. This is our highest hope, that our children would know and love and put their trust in Jesus.

This is our highest hope. I'm sure Christian parents here gathered today would echo that and would add their amen to that.

If we were in Peru, I'd have heard lots of amens from the congregation, but we're in Aberdeen. So I trust that in the depths of your heart, you have been saying amen to what I have been saying.

[7 : 57] That is our highest hope. Perhaps your wee girl that you love so much is no academic, will never bring home diplomas for being top of the class, will struggle to get A grades, even in standard grades, or what seem to be the less challenging exams.

But she knows and loves and trusts in Jesus. That is what really matters. Your lad may have two left feet and couldn't score a goal to save himself, but he knows and loves and trusts in Jesus.

That's what really matters. That's your highest hope, is it not? Your precious child maybe suffers from poor health that is a cause of much heartache and pain and perhaps will close many doors of opportunities that others may have.

But even with that poor health, your child knows and loves and trusts in Jesus. And you know that that is what really matters. That is your highest hope.

That is our highest hope as parents. This is the main thing. This really is what life is all about. You know, people ask, what's life really all about?

[9 : 10] Well, believe me, this is what life is all about. To know Jesus and to love Jesus and to trust in Jesus and to serve Jesus. This is what life is all about.

And so I ask the question of you, is this your highest hope? I ask it of Alistair and Sarah, of Stephen and Julie, of Eric and Ruth. Is this your highest hope?

That your children would be wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus, as it is expressed here by Paul.

Our highest hope. But that leads us on to a second thing that I want to consider this morning, and that is our precious resource.

The passage speaks of a precious resource at our disposal. If indeed our highest hope is that our children would be wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, we will want to do all in our power to ensure that this is so.

[10 : 16] We will want to employ all the resources at our disposal to ensure that that highest hope is realized. What is our precious resource to lead our children to a living and saving faith in Jesus Christ?

Well, again, the passage we have read gives us an answer to that question. We read again there in verse 15, Paul speaking to Timothy says, And how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

How is it that Timothy had become wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus? Well, he had been brought to that point. He had been brought to a saving, living trust in Jesus by the Holy Scriptures.

He had been trained in them from infancy. And these Scriptures, says Paul, are able to make you wise for salvation.

The Holy Scriptures. Now, as Paul was writing to Timothy and he spoke of the Holy Scriptures, he was referring to what we know as the Old Testament. And without arguing the case, I think we can simply state that we believe that today the whole of the Bible, including the New Testament, constitutes the Holy Scriptures.

[11 : 51] And we could give reasons for that, but time does not allow. The main thing we want to stress is this, that the Bible, the Word of God, this is what we are presented with by Paul as our resource that will help us lead our children to that point where they are wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

What role does the Bible play? Well, the Bible leads. The Bible instructs. The Bible makes wise. The Bible, the Holy Scriptures, point to Jesus.

Indeed, from the very beginning, from Genesis through the Old Testament and all the prophecies that we find there, all pointing to Jesus. And then Jesus comes in the fullness of time and His life and death and resurrection described for us in the pages of the Gospels and explained for us in the pages of the Epistles.

All of the Holy Scriptures pointing to Jesus, leading to Jesus, pointing to the One who can save, pointing to the One who can bring us to that faith in Jesus Christ.

This book, the Holy Scriptures, is a precious book. It is our precious resource. It's described by Paul in verse 16 and 17. And we're not going to be considering these verses, but we simply read them to see how Paul describes these Holy Scriptures of which he speaks.

[13 : 24] All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness so that the man, woman of God, may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

This book, the Bible, much decried and much marginalized in our day. This book, the Holy Scriptures, properly used and applied, can lead your children to a knowledge of the truth.

It can make them wise for salvation. Ignore it at your peril. Now, let's be honest with ourselves. Do we use this precious resource as we ought?

Or does the Bible often fulfill more of a decorative function in our homes? If ours is a Christian home or a church home, well, of course, we have a Bible at home, don't we?

Maybe it's in a prominent place, visible for all to see, I don't know. But is its function often decorative? The story is told of a minister who visited a home of somebody in his congregation.

[14 : 42] And having spent some time with the woman that he was speaking to, he was going to close the visit by reading the Bible and praying. And at that point, the woman who had a small child with her there said to her small child, Son, go and bring mummy's favorite book.

She thought it was a rather nice way of getting her child to bring a Bible. And the child rushed off and came back proudly holding the Argos catalog, much to the embarrassment of the mother in question.

Mummy's favorite book, daddy's favorite book. Is that how our children would describe the Bible? Is that what they see as they live with us day by day?

There's no way of deceiving them. We can deceive others. We can present a wonderful face to others. But our children are there with us 24-7. They know the truth. They know what's important to us.

They know what really does have priority in our homes. We can't pull the wool over their eyes. The Bible, our precious resource.

[15 : 54] But that brings us on to a third element that we want to consider this morning. And that is our solemn responsibility. Our solemn responsibility as parents.

Well, what is our solemn responsibility? Well, it is to be teachers. Now, that is true in many ways as parents. As parents, we must teach our children in a wide variety of ways.

Now, all parents know that to be so. We teach them good manners. We teach them good hygiene. We teach them reading and sums. We teach them football and piano.

Some of us aren't particularly gifted to teach those subjects, but nonetheless, we try our best to teach them in so many ways. And of course, all that is important.

It's all good stuff. It really is good stuff to teach our children all of these things. But our most solemn responsibility as Christian parents is to teach them the Holy Scriptures.

[17 : 02] If indeed, our highest hope for them is that they would be wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus, if we recognize that our most precious resource that would help us instruct them and lead them to that living and saving faith are the Holy Scriptures, then we will realize that the only reasonable thing for us is to take responsibility for teaching them the Holy Scriptures.

To do otherwise would be entirely incoherent. It would actually put a real question mark on whether it is indeed our highest hope that they enjoy and know faith in Jesus Christ.

It would put a question mark over our pretension that we contend that the Scriptures are indeed our most precious resource. Christian parent, you are, you must be a Bible teacher.

That is your calling. It is perhaps your highest calling as a parent that you would teach the Holy Scriptures. That is how our children will learn.

Timothy is described as having been brought to that knowledge, having been brought, having been led to that faith, having been made wise. How was he made wise?

[18 : 23] Well, because he had been taught. How, we read there in verse 14, but as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of. And it continues, and we'll be thinking a little bit about some of the implications of that verse in a moment.

But the point is this, that as parents, our solemn responsibility is that we would teach the Holy Scriptures, that we would teach the Bible. Now, as we do consider a little bit more carefully this responsibility, and here we'll maybe be spending a little bit more time, we can divide this matter in two ways or in two parts.

This solemn responsibility, first of all, to think a little bit about the nature of the teaching. What kind of teaching are we talking about? And secondly, the character of the teacher, to which Paul also makes implicit reference in this passage that we have read.

So, we're considering our solemn responsibility. We've thought about our highest hope. We've identified our most precious resource, and now we're considering our solemn responsibility, but we're going to do so in two ways.

First of all, to think about the nature of the teaching that we are to impart, and then secondly, the character of the teacher. That's us, if we are parents.

[19 : 49] First of all then, the nature of the teaching. What do we find in these verses that we've read? Well, I think there are three things we could highlight. One is that this teaching is to be permanent and persistent.

Again, if we just read again those verses 14 and 15 and have them very much in our minds and becoming more and more familiar to us. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of because you know those from whom you learned it and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

And particularly, those words of Paul, how from infancy. The nature of the teaching, permanent and persistent. Paul speaks of Timothy learning from infancy.

And when he speaks of Timothy learning from infancy, he's not just speaking of an early start date, though that's included in the teaching that he was given.

But it also points to a permanent and persistent teaching of the Scriptures. How from infancy, and the implication is that that's when it began, but it continued from your earliest years, your earliest months, your earliest days.

[21 : 12] You were taught by those who were bringing you up from infancy. And that continued. As you became a wee boy, and as you went to school, and as you got older and became a teenager, and so the years go by, but from infancy, from the very beginning and permanently, you were taught, you were instructed, you have known, you have learned the Holy Scriptures.

This teaching is permanent and persistent. The implication also is that it, when we speak of it as being permanent and persistent, is that it will be formal, but also informal, when occasions are specifically set aside at home and within the community of faith that is the church, where our children will receive, if you wish, formal instruction, and that is important.

And we have the Sunday school, and you have other opportunities where children can be taught the Scriptures. And in our homes, there can be also formal times, if you wish, to use the word formal, organized times, perhaps would be a better word, where we set aside time to read the Bible with them and to teach them from the Holy Scriptures.

But this permanent, persistent teaching will also involve informal opportunities. Even in the Old Testament, I say even, also in the Old Testament, we find how in Deuteronomy, parents are encouraged that as they walk to the fields and as they rise in the morning and as they go to bed at night and in all of their daily activity to be instructing their children in the Holy Scriptures, to take every opportunity.

You're watching the news and somebody says something and you can respond to that. Well, what does the Bible say? And you're going on a trip and you see things outside of the car window or out of the train window and you can use those opportunities to instruct and to teach from the Scriptures, be it quoting a specific verse or simply instructing them from a mindset that is grounded in the principles of the Word of God, the values that have been forged in your own life by the Word of God.

[23 : 22] All of these things very naturally and spontaneously and informally will form part of this teaching that you are to give your children.

But you, Timothy, how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures. permanent and persistent but also, and this in a way is reinforcing some of what we've already commented, practical.

Timothy is encouraged by Paul in verse 14 to continue in what you have learned. To continue in what you have learned. And this phrase or this manner of expression of Paul, continue in what you have learned, doesn't simply mean don't stop believing.

Paul isn't simply saying to Timothy, well, you've come to certain convictions, you have certain doctrines that you hold to be true, well, keep on believing them. Don't stop believing.

When he says continue in what you have learned, there is an implication there that what he has learned will find application and practical outworking in his life.

[24 : 33] He will continue in what he has learned. He will give expression to what he has learned in the life that he lives, in the decisions that he makes, in the walk that he walks. This is a practical thing.

This teaching is practical teaching. Paul highlights that or emphasizes that when he goes on to describe the Scriptures in verse 16 and concludes in this way in verse 17, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

This teaching has as its purpose that there would be results in the life of the one being instructed. Practical results that will be visible and tangible and will make a difference in the way he or she lives and moves and relates to others.

This teaching is to be practical. Practical also in the sense that we teach, if I can put it in this way, expecting results. expecting results, expecting that the Word of God will indeed change our children, that the Word of God will indeed mold them, that the Word of God will indeed in due course.

And this ultimately is our greatest desire, will indeed ultimately make them wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. This is the greatest result that we long for, that we expect, that we pray for, that in due course it would be so for our children.

[26 : 05] And we long for that and we pray for that and we expect that, not because we trust in our proficiency as teachers, but as we trust in the promises of God for our children.

Promises that will find visible expression even today as children are brought for baptism. So the nature of this teaching, this solemn responsibility that we have, permanent and persistent, practical.

But a third element here that we find in Paul's words is that it should be persuasive. Persuasive. There's an interesting expression that Paul uses here when he is describing this growth and maturing in faith of Timothy.

In verse 14, Paul says of Timothy that he, in this process of being instructed, in this process of being taught, Timothy had become convinced of what it was he was being taught.

As Christian parents, we don't look for an automatic, unthinking, acquiescence with what we teach. Now it's true that when our children are small and impressionable as they are, then it is likely that they will acquiesce in an unthinking way with what we say.

[27 : 32] If I tell a two-year-old or a three-year-old that Jesus is Lord and that he has to trust in Jesus and that Jesus will forgive his sins, it's pretty likely that a two- or three-year-old will say, yes, daddy, I believe that.

That's the nature of children. That is so. And that is a solemn responsibility because what we say they are likely to believe. But it's interesting here that Paul says of Timothy that his convictions went beyond simply accepting what his parents said to him because of who they were solely for that reason, but rather, Paul says, that you have become convinced of the teaching that you have been given.

You see, if our children's faith is simply an automatic, unthinking, acquiescence with what we say, it may last, it may survive childhood, it may survive adolescence, but once they're out in the big bad world and once they're being confronted with very different world views and very different ways of understanding life and once they're being presented with contradictory messages to the one they receive, they are going to be pulled and blown in every direction and if they have not become convinced of what they have been taught, then they will abandon what they have been taught.

Others will argue more persuasively and so they will leave beside or leave behind childish things as they will be told that what they believe is or are.

so it's important that the teaching that we provide our children be persuasive, that it be our concern that they, with Timothy, would become convinced of the truth of what we say.

[29 : 21] that in due course and God will demonstrate and confirm the timing of it but in due course we would be able to see in them and discern in them personal convictions, personal faith that will stand them in good stead and that they will carry with them long after they have flown the nest.

So there are some aspects or some characteristics of the nature of the teaching that we are to impart to our children as Christian parents. Permanent and persistent and as I simply repeat them perhaps you could have that mental exercise those of us who are parents of asking yourself well is this what I am doing?

Permanent and persistent practical and persuasive. But I said that this third point that we're considering our solemn responsibility has two elements and I want to just mention briefly the second element and it is this the character of the teacher.

Not only the nature of the teaching but the character of the teacher. Now Paul makes implicit reference to that not implicit explicit reference to that in verse 14 when he says but as for you continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of and then he says because you know those from whom you learned it.

Because you know those from whom you learned it. He says continue in the faith hold to what you have been taught for this reason because you know from whom you have learned it.

[30 : 56] And here Paul is making very clear reference to the integrity and the character of the teacher or in this case teachers because he speaks in plural. The clear implication is that Timothy was convinced not only because of the coherence of the content though we have stressed that that is important but Timothy was convinced not only because of the coherence of the content but you might even argue principally because of the character of the teacher or the character of the teachers in this case.

Well who were Timothy's teachers? Who were his teachers? Well Paul was one of his teachers and yet on this occasion it would seem that Paul is not making in the first instance reference to himself but he is going way beyond way back beyond his involvement in Timothy's life.

We've already noticed how Paul says how Timothy from infancy had known the scriptures. Well who had been his teachers as an infant? Well they are mentioned by name in this same letter in 2 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 5 if you just go back one page if you do have your Bible open you only need to go back one page to chapter 1 and verse 5 and Paul is speaking to Timothy and he says I have been reminded of your sincere faith which first lived in your grandmother Lois isn't that a wonderful expression?

Faith living in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and I am persuaded now lives in you. Here are Timothy's teachers here are the ones to whom Paul makes reference when he says continue in what you have learned persevere carry on because you know from whom you have been taught.

What gave credence to the message of granny and mummy was the lives they lived. That's what gave credence to the content. This is a huge challenge but also a great encouragement for us as Christian parents who maybe consider ourselves to be very poor teachers.

[33 : 09] sinners. You see these words of Paul remind us if we can put it this way maybe a way that is easy to remember it reminds us of the persuasive power of a pious parent and pious used in its most positive sense.

The persuasive power of a pious parent. You see when that child is 17 or 18 and goes to university and he may be studying theology or molecular biology or all kinds of things psychology and he's being bombarded left right and center with messages that run contrary to what he has been taught and maybe he won't have all the arguments to respond but that child will remember I know who taught me.

I know who my mother is. I know that what she said is true because I know who she is. You see this will be a bulwark. This will be a foundation and this is not anti-intellectual.

This is not saying that that young person will not study widely in order to be able to give a reason for the faith that he holds but together with that study and together with that use of his mind that God has given him will be that bulwark that he knows, she knows from whom he learned or she learned.

You see the character of the teacher is so fundamental in producing or in achieving the desired result. Even this morning as vows will be taken one of the promises that will be made is that as parents by our prayers, by our teaching and by our example we will lead our children that they might come to be wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

[35 : 01] You see your character counts. Coherence between word and deed matters. Hypocrisy kills faith. Double standards strangle a nascent trust.

And our children see it all in a way that others don't. Maybe one small question remains as we consider the teachers of Timothy. And an appropriate question today on Father's Day.

Where's Dad? You see Paul makes reference to Granny Lois and Mother Eunice. But where's Dad? Well we don't know.

We don't know if he wasn't a believer, if he wasn't around, we don't know. But certainly there is no reference to him here in Paul's letter to Timothy.

And that does remind us that in the bringing up of our children, in our most holy faith, our children need teachers, plural.

[36 : 06] That is what Paul makes reference to. He speaks of the teachers that Timothy had and where it is possible. And it is not always so.

There is no better way than where Mom and Dad are fulfilling this responsibility of teaching their children in the things of God. And not only would I say that it is important that Mom and Dad are involved, I think we can go further and say that the primary responsibility for spiritual leadership and instruction in the home falls upon the Father.

Now the reality is that many mothers assume that role by default and I celebrate those mothers and I congratulate them and I urge them to carry on. But it is not as it should be.

So often we as fathers are guilty of not taking on this responsibility, this solemn responsibility and just letting Mom take care of that side of things.

We make the money, we do the practical things and then our children, especially our sons, look on and say, well Mom's the one who's praying and reading the Bible but Dad, he doesn't bother with that kind of nonsense.

[37 : 23] And what is the final result of that model in the home? The character of the teacher is very clear here from Paul's words, fundamental to bringing these children to the point where they are wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Well as we close, let's just remind ourselves of what we have been considering and and I ask you again the question that I asked at the beginning, what is your highest hope for your children?

Is it that they would be wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ? Is it that they would know what it is to be saved by Jesus, to have their sins forgiven, to be part of the family of God, to be a disciple and a follower of Jesus, to trust in Him in the good times and the bad, is that your highest hope?

Well if it is your highest hope, thank God that He has provided you with a precious resource, the Holy Scriptures, they are available to you, that you would use these scriptures and that in that way your children would be instructed and led to Jesus and to trust in Jesus.

And all that remains is that we as parents would take on our solemn responsibility, that we would do so decidedly and also expectantly resting on the promises of God, that we would take on that solemn responsibility of teaching our children, conscious that the character of the teacher is as important, possibly more important, certainly as important, as the coherence of the content that we impart, that God would help us and let us pray.

[39 : 17] We'll be right back.