



## BIBLE SUNDAY 2024

# Sermon outline

Reading: 2 Timothy 3.14 — 4.5 (NIV)

<sup>14</sup> But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, <sup>15</sup> and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

<sup>4</sup> In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: <sup>2</sup> preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. <sup>3</sup> For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. <sup>4</sup> They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. <sup>5</sup> But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

## Introduction:

In 1967, a 20 year-old athlete by the name of Kathrine Switzer made history by becoming the first woman to run the Boston Marathon wearing an official race number. Despite there being no specific reference made to gender in the marathon rule book, it was widely understood that only men were allowed to participate. Consequently, Kathrine registered for the

marathon under her name, KV Switzer, and received race numbers which she pinned onto her bib before running.

During the marathon, she was physically attacked by the race manager, who tried to grab her race numbers from her and remove her from the competition. The race manager also knocked her trainer and fellow runner to the

ground before being stopped by Switzer's boyfriend, who was also running. Despite all the opposition and obstacles, Kathrine Switzer completed the race.

Today's reading from 2 Timothy encourages us to keep going despite the obstacles we face in living out our faith.

## Background:

- Collectively, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are known as 'The Pastoral Epistles'
- The Apostle Paul, the author of 2 Timothy, was in prison in Rome, awaiting trial and probable execution
- Paul had a close relationship with Timothy, whom he described as 'his true son in the faith', (1 Timothy 1.2) and his 'dear son' (2 Timothy 1.2)
- In 2 Timothy, Paul passes on his parting instructions to Timothy regarding what he believed should be the life and work of believers

## Context:

- Paul exhorts Timothy: 'What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching' that Paul had taught him, (2 Timothy 1.13) and tells him to 'Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you.' (verse 14)
- In 2 Timothy 2, Timothy is encouraged to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus (verse 1) and pass on Paul's teachings 'to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others' (verse 2). Paul warns Timothy to avoid false teachings (verses 16–18) and to be kind to everyone (verse 24)
- Chapter 3 begins with talk of the 'last days' and verses 1–9 outline some of the sinful behaviours that will be prevalent in these, 'terrible times'. Verse 10 is then pivotal; as Paul says to Timothy, 'But as for you...'

## Key Points:

### 1 There are two very different ways of living in these 'last days'

The Apostle Paul has already addressed the sinful way in verses 1–9, but that's not the way he expects Timothy to live. Instead, Paul urges Timothy to remain faithful to the teachings he has learned, some from infancy (verse 15). It's likely that these truths had been passed down to him by his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice, (2 Timothy 2.5). The lives of these women bore witness to the fact that the Holy Scriptures are no ordinary texts; in fact they 'make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus' (verse 15)

#### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

- Chapter 3 offers two ways of living; a sinful way and a biblical way. Have you decided to live God's way?
- For those who have been raised in Christian families, what might it look like to 'continue in what you have learned' (verse 14) from Scripture? What about those who were not raised in Christian families? From whom might they learn and who are their role models? To whom might we pass on the truths of Scripture?
- 'Knowing the Holy Scriptures' (verse 15) is vital for the spiritual health of every Christian, as this is how we get to know what God is like, how he operates, and what his plan is for humankind. What do we need to do in order to engage more regularly and more deeply with the Bible? Set a reminder on our phone to spend time in the word? Get a Bible reading plan? Be accountable to others?

### 2 All Scripture is inspired by God.

'All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...' says Paul in verse 16. This is a hugely important and significant verse, cited regularly by Christians to support the fact that all Scripture is inspired by God himself. It re-affirms what we learned in verse 15, which is that we are not dealing with an ordinary text here. Scripture is useful, or 'profitable' as some other translations put it, for 'teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.' As well as charting the story of the people of God from creation onwards, and God's plan for our redemption and restoration, it covers teaching on a myriad topics, such as identity, relationships, friendships, finance, rest, work and so many others. It rebukes and corrects us by challenging us to become more like Jesus, by training us in righteousness. There is a purpose for us knowing Scripture, in that it equips us for every good work (verse 17).

#### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

- If, as the Bible says, 'All scripture is God-breathed', how do we deal with the parts that we disagree with or don't understand? Do we simply ignore them, or do we grapple with their context and meaning?
- Reading the Bible in community, such as in a prayer triplet, Bible Study group or home group situation can be an excellent way of going deeper into God's word, as it provides us with the opportunity to learn from one another and ask difficult questions
- The word of God is described in Hebrews 4.12 as being 'alive and active' in that we can read the same passage a number of times, yet the Holy Spirit can illuminate something different to us each time we read it. Consider sharing an example with the congregation where you have found this to be true
- Bible Society believes that the Bible is God's gift to the world. We share it because we want everyone to discover its message for them and because we believe it changes lives for good. We collect testimonies of how the Bible changes lives here, [biblesociety.org.uk/latest/mybible](https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/latest/mybible) Please feel free to share one or more of these stories with your congregation.

### 3 Share the Good News of Jesus while people still want to listen!

At the start of 2 Timothy 4, the Apostle Paul looks forward to the second coming of Christ, but he is also aware that there is much work to be done before that happens. Therefore, he gives Timothy a charge (verse 1). Bearing in mind that a charge is a solemn declaration made before witnesses in a legal case, Paul is both serious and clear about what needs to be done with the truths that Timothy knew; the word needed to be shared with others. There is most certainly an urgency in Paul's words here as he declares that 'a time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear' (verse 3).

#### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

- Not all of us are called to preach from a pulpit, but we can all share the Good News of Jesus Christ with others in some capacity. In fact, one of the most effective ways of sharing Jesus with others is simply by opening our homes to them and eating a meal together. Others might find opportunities to share about God in a sports club, or at the school gate, or maybe even in their workplace. Consider where your 'pulpit' is and how you might turn up the volume of your 'preaching' of the Good News
- In the United Kingdom we're blessed in that we can meet openly in our places of worship without fear of being shut down or persecuted in some way. Sadly, this is not the case elsewhere in the world

#### Iranian refugees seeking Jesus

Darius\* grew up in a strict Muslim family in Iran, but the violence and brutality of Iran's regime caused doubts to set in. 'Little by little I began to hate Islam,' Darius confided. 'I felt empty.'

Darius began searching. He read bits of Scripture online, then a friend invited him to an underground house church. Accepting the invitation was an enormous risk. After all, a Muslim attending a secret church in Iran can be jailed and even tortured. But in that small room, the Holy Spirit touched Darius' heart. 'I don't accept things easily, and just went to watch,' said Darius. 'But when they said God is love ... that was amazing. I prayed and became a Christian.'

You won't be surprised to learn that things became difficult in Iran for Darius after that. I can't share what happened but this young man is now here, seeking refuge. And when he walked into a church in the UK for the first time ever, Darius was welcomed with open arms.

\*Name changed to protect his identity

#### You can make a difference

Darius had never even seen a Bible in his language, let alone had one of his own. Today, you can provide Bibles to Iranians who long to know Jesus. Iranians like Darius are coming to UK churches, seeking Jesus, and it costs just £20 to put a special, easy-to-read modern Farsi Bible into their hands.

- **£20 provides a special, easy-to read modern Farsi Bibles to an Iranian believer**
- **£80 supplies enough Bibles for new Christians in a study group**
- **£500 provides Bibles to a church so they can disciple new believers**

## Conclusion:

Later in 2 Timothy 4, Paul talks about having 'finished the race, and kept the faith.' (verse 7). Marathon runner Kathrine Switzer would be fully aware that running a race requires discipline, training and perseverance. Reading the Bible also takes all three!

It takes discipline to set aside time every day to read an

excerpt from Scripture. We may not see instant results as we get 'trained in righteousness' by God's word, but as we intentionally familiarise ourselves with those God-breathed words, we're certain to become more like Jesus. This Bible Sunday, why not resolve to persevere in your study of the Bible and pray that you might grow in your knowledge and understanding of the things of God?

Bible Society believes that the Bible is for everyone. When we read it we discover more about ourselves; and more about the world. We want to see a world where everyone can experience Scripture and its power to transform lives and societies for the better. Healthy churches and spiritually healthy Christians always place value and worth on reading and applying Scripture.

## Bible Society resources:

Open the Book is one of Bible Society's most established and effective ministries. It brings the word of God to schoolchildren through innovative storytelling, active drama and audience participation. Volunteer teams in schools around the country tell ten to fifteen-minute scripted stories to primary school children in assemblies. Could your church form an Open the Book team to share God's word with children today?

*The Bible Course* is a video-based series giving participants an overview of the big story of Scripture and how all of the books fit together. It's one of Bible Society's most popular resources.

Bible Society has recently launched *The Romans Course* with a one-hour small group format similar to that of *The Bible Course* to encourage immersion in one of Paul's most-read letters.

With video explainers filmed against the stunning backdrop of Rome, discussion questions and testimonies for each session, this ten-part series is a great way to tackle a challenging letter.

Bible Society wants everyone to have access to the Bible and to understand its message for them. We translate it into different languages and we invite people to engage with it through the resources we provide. On this Bible Sunday, please consider supporting Bible Society's Bible a Month scheme with a regular donation of £10 a month or more to provide Bibles month after month for those in greatest need of the Scriptures.

*Rooted* is Bible Society's subscription journal. Each edition is based on a theme or book of the Bible and is filled with insightful devotionals and lots of space to be creative and reflective. As part of

the Rooted community, subscribers not only receive a new journal every other month, deepening their experience of the Bible, but they support the work to make the Bible available all around the world. Alongside the journals, there's also The Rooted Podcast which anyone can listen to for free. Join us for deep conversations about the Bible and how we can apply it to our everyday lives.

The Good News Bible – Children's Rainbow Edition is the best full-text Bible for children. Created in partnership with RE:QUEST and developed using ideas and feedback from parents, teachers and children, it provides a brilliant Bible-reading experience for a child. Perfect for use in homes, churches and schools, the educational features, colourful interactions and beautiful illustrations will keep children engaged as they delve into the text.