October 20th, 2019 

2 Timothy 3:14-4:5 Pastor Jenny Lee, Ph.D.

Upper St. Croix Parish UMC

**“Equip for Every Good Work”**

How do you think about the Bible? Someone may think of it as the living Word of God. Someone may think of it as a collection of wise stories. Korean traditional believers think of the book of the Bible as the living Words of God itself. So, they respect itself as the living Word of God. They put it on the sacred place, and bring it all the time as the symbol of God.

When I have heard about the Bible at first, is when I was in a hospital. It was when I could not be able to walk due to break my spine. It was when I lost hope to walk again because no one gave me confidence, including my doctors at that moment. One day, a pastor and his wife, who my mother attended the church, visited me in the hospital. The pastor’s wife gave me a book of the Bible after they prayed for me, saying to me, “Sister, please read the Bible so God may help you to walk again.”

What do you think of this situation? Try to think of it in my shoes! If you were not able to walk, and then someone tells you, “If you would read the Bible, you may walk again.” What are you going to do with the book of the Bible? You may read it to walk again if you believe in God or if you trust her, at least.

Today, the Apostle Paul tells Timothy, “You have learned and knew the sacred writings from your childhood that can instruct you for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ” (2 Tim 3:14-15). As Paul mentioned, Timothy has learned the Bible from his grandmother and mother from his childhood (2 Tim1:5). For Timothy knew it, Paul encourages him to continue in what he learned and firmly believed. Paul gives Timothy a certain statement about the Bible: “All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work” (3:16-17). I could not find a clear statement of the Bible more than this at any other place.

I think I mentioned before that this letter is Paul’s last wish to Timothy, who is a godson of Paul. Paul, who will be killed very soon because of the good news of Jesus Christ, really wanted to leave over something to Timothy. The more significant concern of Paul is to state what the scriptures can do to his beloved son in Jesus Christ so that Timothy lives out in the good ministry as he learned through the Bible. Paul said to his beloved son as the last wish: “Continue in the sacred writings as what you have learned, known and firmly believed from your childhood” because they are “able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ,” and because they are “inspired by God.” Paul says that they are “useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.” The Scriptures bring us to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Without the scriptures, we could have no knowledge of Jesus. Without knowledge of Jesus, no one could believe in God. Without faith, no one is saved in God.

Romans 10:17 says, “So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the Word of Christ.” We learned that we are saved in the faith of Jesus Christ by the grace of God. However, if we do not hear or learn about Jesus Christ, how could we believe in salvation through the faith of Jesus Christ? The Scripture indicates Jesus Christ, who is the way of salvation. Therefore, the Scripture is the best tool to teach, preach, and even instruct for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

If we do not know about the Bible, we may live with wrong prejudices and assumptions. As Paul mentioned in verse13, we may become wicked people and impostors, and we may “go from bad to worse, deceiving others, and being deceived.” The Bible is our source of doctrine. All of our teachings must be grounded in it. The Bible is the standard by which our ideas must be measured. I think that the Bible is the map of salvation and the route of our faithful lives. If we live in the wrong way, it corrects us to go back to righteousness. Psalm 119:105 says, “The Bible is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.” John Wesley, who is the founder of Methodism, identified the Bible as the most central authority for determining Christian belief and practice. He said, “*sola Scriptura*” in Latin, which means that only scriptures have power as the primary source to know God.

In the Book of Disciple of the United Methodist Church, Methodists say, “we believe the Holy Bible, Old, and New Testaments, reveals the Word of God so far as it is necessary for our salvation” (The Book of Discipline, ¶104). Therefore, if we do not know about the Bible, we cannot say that we are saved in the faith of Jesus Christ.

In the text, the Apostle Paul faces a crisis in how he keeps his loved son, many faithful people, and potential believers in the future left behind him because he knew he will be killed soon. So, he suggests that Timothy uses the Bible for his teaching, preaching, and even his life’s correction instead of speaking any other words. The Bible makes us not only growing in faith but also equips us for every good work. If you want to come to a growing appreciation for the Word of God in the Scriptures, spend some time to read the Bible. The Scripture is not given to us to produce theological arguments as an end in itself, but they are given to us to create good works in and through us. Paul says the Bible is for “everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.” I encourage you to read the Bible some spending time to equip for every good work.

Let’s go back to my story. You may assume that I have read the Bible at that moment. No, I did not read it. Instead, I threw the book of the Bible away because I did not believe it, and I did not know about God. I thought that the pastor’s wife might curse me. I thought that she means that I could not walk again because the book of the Bible she gave me is very thick, and it looked difficult to read. It took me a long to think about what she talked to me. If I knew about God at that moment, I might read it with hope to walk again. Unfortunately, no one makes me understand who God is and what the Bible is until I heard from her. After I spent time for about three years, I finally read the book of the Bible.

Therefore, because I learned and know, and firmly believe in God, I encourage you whether the time is favorable or unfavorable to teach and to proclaim the message in the Bible to your family and your neighbors so that they may come back to God in the way of salvation. I encourage you to read the Bible, paying attention to be equipped for every good work. This is our mission in the world to teach and make the people the disciples of Jesus Christ. Let us do it in our mission with our full hearts so the people who hear us may be saved at the time of God.

**Thanks be to God. Amen!**