

**MESSAGE 3: THE SCRIPTURES - BE ADEQUATE AND EQUIPPED**

**Introduction**

- How can God's workman be ready and properly equipped?
- Ans: Be men of truth, grounded in the truth revealed in the Scriptures

**The Scriptures**

- The Scriptures is the primary source for knowledge of God's revelation of truth to train, correct and equip the man of God, so that we may be adequate and equipped for every good work:

**2 Timothy 3:16-17**

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

- At the heart of scriptural revelation of truth is revelation of who God is and how we can know Him and relate deeply with Him, walk with Him and serve Him
- We must seek to gain insight into the truth revealed in the Scriptures, absorb it, live it out
- The Scriptures is a unique book
  - o It is the only book with content and teaching we can wholeheartedly receive and absorb into our hearts and live by
  - o This is because the Scriptures is inspired by God for this purpose
  - o The authority of the Scriptures rests on the authority of God
  - o We submit to its teaching because we submit to God
  - o What we need to ensure is sound, wholesome interpretation and application

**Hunger and thirst for spiritual insight**

- Hunger and thirst for God must go together with hunger and thirst for spiritual insight into the truth and God's revelation

**Psalms 119:18, 20**

18 Open my eyes, that I may behold  
Wonderful things from Your law.

20 My soul is crushed with longing  
After Your ordinances at all times.

**Determination to live out the truth**

- The hunger and thirst for insight into God's revelation must go together with a determination to absorb the truth and to live it out

**Psalms 119:33-35**

33 Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes,  
And I shall observe it to the end.

34 Give me understanding, that I may observe Your law  
And keep it with all my heart.

35 Make me walk in the path of Your commandments,  
For I delight in it.

**Psalm 119:127–131**

127 Therefore I love Your commandments  
Above gold, yes, above fine gold.

128 Therefore I esteem right all Your precepts concerning everything,  
I hate every false way.

129 Your testimonies are wonderful;  
Therefore my soul observes them.

130 The unfolding of Your words gives light;  
It gives understanding to the simple.

131 I opened my mouth wide and panted,  
For I longed for Your commandments.

- What God desires to teach us is truth, which has a positive moral content and direction and is of enduring value

**Psalm 119:160**

The sum of Your word is truth,  
And every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.

**Psalm 119:151**

You are near, O Lord,  
And all Your commandments are truth.

- Psalm 119 has much to say on the subject we are considering - the psalmist introduces this long psalm by strongly motivating us to live in this way
- We are truly blessed when we seek God with all our heart and walk in His righteous ways

**Psalm 119:1–3**

1 How blessed are those whose way is blameless,  
Who walk in the law of the Lord.

2 How blessed are those who observe His testimonies,  
Who seek Him with all their heart.

3 They also do no unrighteousness; They walk in His ways.

**Why is the Scriptures so important to believers?**

- Because the Scriptures is inspired by God and is the primary source of clear, reliable revelation of who God is and what He desires to communicate to us
- What about God revealing Himself directly to us in our hearts and communicating the truth to us? Is that not an important source of revelation of who God is and what He desires to say to us?
- Yes, but it is through the Scriptures that God reveals to us an inexhaustible wealth of knowledge of the following:
  - o God, His attributes, character and ways
  - o Why God created man, His intentions for man and what He requires of man
  - o What has been in God's heart in relation to the outworking and fulfilment of His purposes
  - o The plight of man and God's salvation plan for us in Christ
  - o Spiritual warfare and how to fight the good fight of faith

- o The importance of moral, and spiritual stature
- o God's provision of Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures
- o The role of the church and how church life ought to work out
- o The kingdom of God
- o Many moral and spiritual principles so we can fare well in this fallen world and bear fruit in every good work
- All the wealth of knowledge and spiritual understanding that God wants to reveal to us is not revealed to us directly but through the Scriptures
- Whatever we think God is revealing to us directly needs to be examined in the light of what the Scriptures teaches, to help us ascertain and confirm its authenticity - that:
  - o God has indeed spoken to us
  - o It is not our own thoughts and ideas
  - o It is not thoughts and ideas from the evil one
  - o It is not a contaminated mixture

### **The Scriptures – objective basis for knowing the truth**

- One major reason God has given us the Scriptures is to provide us with an objective basis for knowing the truth
- This is to safeguard us from going astray because of deception by the evil one, wrong teaching, and the vulnerability of the human heart and mind
- The evil one can also lead believers astray through wrong interpretation of the Scriptures
- We can safeguard ourselves from going astray by exercising care in the way we interpret and apply the Scriptures
  - o There is much in the Scriptures that can be recognised by the careful, prayerful reader as the clear teaching of the Scriptures
  - o We ought to live our lives within the framework of these clear truths and principles
  - o We ought to exercise care in examining and interpreting what we hear and read within the framework of the clear truths and principles – this approach can help us discern truth from error

### **Role and ministry of the Holy Spirit**

- The Holy Spirit inspired the writing of the Scriptures
- We must look to the Holy Spirit to help us to:
  - o understand the Scriptures with spiritual insight
  - o hear what God is saying to us
  - o discern truth from error
  - o apply the Scriptures to daily life
- We must do so at the personal level and corporately

### **What ought to be our approach to the Scriptures**

- Consider prayerfully what God has revealed in the Scriptures and live our lives accordingly

#### **Joshua 1:8**

“This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth,

but you shall meditate on it day and night,  
so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it;  
for then you will make your way prosperous,  
and then you will have success.

- o Context: The Lord's instructions to Joshua as Israel poised to enter the Promised Land
- o Principle is applicable to personal and corporate level
- o History of Israel illustrates this area of truth: when Israel and her kings abided by the book of the law → success and God's blessings; when they failed to do so → negative outcome, ruin.
- Paul's instructions to Timothy: diligence and accuracy
  - 2 Timothy 2:15**  
Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.
  - o Principle here is applicable to the way we approach interpretation and application of the Scriptures, what God is saying to us and all areas of doctrine
- Seek to understand, absorb and apply what God desires to teach us through the Scriptures
  - o Do not superimpose our own ideas and inclinations in the way we understand the text
  - o Do not look for texts to support our own ideas
  - o Do not allow our own ideas and inclinations to influence and contaminate accurate understanding
  - o Do not allow influences from other sources to distort our understanding of the truth revealed
- We can be adversely affected in our understanding of the Scriptures in these different ways without being conscious of it
- We need to deliberately look to God to free us from anything that hinders us from a true, accurate and wholesome understanding of the Scriptures and what God desires to say to us:
  - o All preconceived notions
  - o Personal biases and inclinations
  - o Views and opinions of men
  - o The ways and ideas of the world
- It is the personal responsibility of every believer to ensure what he receives into his heart is indeed the teaching of the Scriptures, untainted in any way

#### **Learning and benefiting from the understanding of others**

- Can we learn and benefit from the understanding of others?
- Yes, God does want us to learn from one another, and from the preaching and teaching of those whom God has raised up and equipped to fulfil their role for the well-being and growth of God's people – they are God's gifts to the church

#### **Ephesians 4:11–12**

11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,  
12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

- However, make sure our reliance and faith rest on the truth God has revealed in the Scriptures and not the views and understanding of men
- We learn and benefit from the understanding of others to the degree they help us understand the true teaching of the Scriptures
- For this area to work out well, two important aspects need to work out well:
  - o The one who is communicating
  - o The one who is hearing or receiving

### **Good preaching and teaching**

- The preacher, teacher has a heavy responsibility to preach and teach the truth
- He must be earnest in seeking to have a sound, accurate and wholesome understanding of the Scriptures
- His hunger for God and truth and the meaning and richness of his personal walk with God will have a significant bearing on the effectiveness of his ministry of the word
- He must exercise care that what he preaches and teaches is accurate and wholesome - as much as feasible, to cover the whole counsel of God in a comprehensive and wholesome manner
- He is not motivated by a desire to be popular, catering to what the hearers prefer to hear nor deterred by their response - his primary concentration is on faithfully communicating what the Lord desires of him
- He ought to support his understanding of the truth from the Scriptures and show how he derives his understanding of truth from the Scriptures
  - o This is very important because the true source of the authority of what he says must be God and what God has revealed in the Scriptures – not from himself
  - o The hearer or reader must be able to satisfy himself that what he is hearing is indeed the teaching of the Scriptures and not merely the assertions of man
- When this is properly done, the hearer will be helped to grow in his knowledge of the truth and what God desires to teach us from the Scriptures
- The hearer will have the proper basis for absorbing the truth into his heart
- He will also be helped to know how to interpret the Scriptures and how to derive truths from the Scriptures

### **The good hearer**

- The good hearer is one who hungers and thirst for God and truth - eager to learn and deepen his knowledge of God and truth
- He will exercise care to ascertain that what he hears is indeed the teaching of the Scriptures
- When he recognises what he has heard is indeed truth as revealed in the Scriptures, he will receive and absorb the truth into his heart
- Let us learn from the commendation of the response of the Bereans to the ministry of Paul and Silas:

#### **Acts 17:10–12**

10 The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

11 Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.

12 Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men.

o This should be even more so for us today who have the whole Bible

- The good hearer will exercise care not to receive or be adversely influenced by anything that is unsound, unwholesome or absorb any wrong teaching into his heart
- When he is not sure whether what he has heard or read is wholesome and accurate, he will not immediately receive it into his heart but will wait until he is clear it is truth before doing so
- To be able to do this well, he must read and seek to understand the Scriptures for himself, to the degree that this is feasible in his context
- He seeks to have a healthy familiarity with the whole Bible so that he can examine and see whether what he hears and reads is consistent with the teaching of the Scriptures
- Where verses and passages are referred to, he can examine to see whether they have been properly interpreted and applied, or taken out of context and do not actually support the point made
- To have such a healthy familiarity of the whole Bible, it is needful to read through the whole Bible regularly, again and again
  - o Read prayerfully from O.T. and N.T. a reasonable number of chapters each day, say 5-8 chapters
  - o Reading one to two chapters a day is not sufficient – will take a long time to read through the Bible once
  - o Reading 5-8 chapters a day does not take much time if you read them at a reasonable speed
  - o Pondering over the truths can take place after you have read the chapters if you have the time, or at other times of the day or on other occasions
- Substantial reading of the Scriptures in this way also helps you understand the truths in the Scriptures in a wholesome way for yourself - it is also spiritual food and nourishment for your soul

### **Spiritual nourishment and growth**

- We will be spiritually nourished and will grow when we appreciate and absorb the truth and pay heed to what God has to say

#### **1 Peter 2:1–2**

1 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander,  
2 like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word,  
so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,

- Do not get bogged down by passages you find difficult to understand
- Do not be deterred when reading the Bible seems dry
- Continue to read with good attitude and in faith
- Read the Scriptures with a sincere longing:
  - o to know and absorb the truth

- o to hear what God is saying
- o to deepen our knowledge of God and relationship with Him
- o to walk in truth and live a life that honours and glorifies God
- o to fulfil God's will for our lives
- Heed the words of the Lord Jesus to the Sadducees who hold wrong views of important doctrines (they do not believe in the resurrection):

**Mark 12:24**

Jesus said to them, "Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that you do not understand (*margin: or know*) the Scriptures or the power of God?"

- o This highlights the importance of personal knowledge of God and true understanding of the Bible
- If you approach and read the Scriptures in the way described, you will find the following to be increasingly true:
  - o Your heart and spirit will be in line with the exhortations and teachings of the Scriptures – its thrust, spirit and meaning
  - o You will be able to appreciate what the Lord is seeking to teach us through the Scriptures
  - o The major truths and principles will become clearer as the years pass by (both the big picture and the specific issues and principles)
  - o There will be spiritual insight, spiritual refreshment and nourishment
  - o You will have a deep sense of fellowship with the Lord and identification with what is in His heart

## Conclusion

- Here's a beautiful picture to help us remember important aspects of what we have considered:

### **Luke 10:38–42**

38 Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home.

39 She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word.

40 But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me."

41 But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things;

42 but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

- o Many believers are like Martha - we welcome the Lord Jesus into our lives but we are distracted, worried and bothered about many things (including legitimate things)
  - o What can we learn from the words of commendation of the Lord Jesus with regards to Mary?
  - o Know our priorities and what is appropriate to concentrate on in each context (there is a time and place for doing what Martha was doing)
  - o Let us learn from the positive example of Mary - she was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word
- The picture here communicates to us a believer who deeply appreciates the Lord and is eager to hear what He has to say:
    - o Mary paid attention to what the Lord has to say with a receptive heart – learning from Him what is in His heart, what is important to Him
    - o This will help her nurture her relationship with the Lord and her knowledge of Him
    - o Will also help her deepen in her understanding and knowledge of the truth
  - Learn to have a heart like Mary's - at all times, especially when reading the Bible and when there is the preaching and teaching of the truth
  - John 12 tells us she was also the one who broke her alabaster vial and poured the costly perfume on the Lord Jesus - her sincere expression of deep love and devotion to the Lord