

“Can you believe this?” 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

Do you know how big the Universe is, how vast our Solar system is, how huge the Earth is? Can you comprehend the incredible complexity of life? What about the diversity of life? How marvellous is this creation!

It is estimated that there are hundreds of billions of galaxies. Not stars, not solar systems, but galaxies! Your unique identity is established by more than 3 billion letters of your DNA. The simplest living cells are more complex than the most sophisticated spaceships, and your body contains tens and tens of trillions of such living cells. Besides, we are not the only living creatures out there. Today scientists estimate that there are far more than million different species of living creatures on this planet.

The evidence clearly suggests that someone envisioned and brought all of this into existence and still enables this breath-taking creation to go on every second of every minute. All of this, from the tiniest particles in the remotest star in the farthest galaxy till every cell of more than 8 billion human creatures.

What kind of super-Intelligence could possibly do that? What kind of incomprehensible wisdom and infinite power does that Being possess? Wouldn't that be incredible to know more about this Being? To discover this greatest of mysteries... Wouldn't that be something worth dying for – just to be able to experience the presence of that Being?

But... here we are. Tiny specks inhabiting one small planet, only a few make it till 100. What we learned yesterday, we have mostly forgotten today. We are so limited. How can we possibly dream about knowing anything about this all-powerful, eternal and all-knowing Being? Wouldn't that be the peak of arrogance to claim that we could somehow on our own figure out who this Being is and what He is like?!

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Unless something miraculous happens... Unless this Supreme Being decides to reveal Himself to us. To come to us and to introduce Himself. But how could that happen? How could we communicate with someone so different from us?

Think about how we generally get to know others? It is quite simple. We converse, and as we converse, we learn what the other person is like. This is exactly what this Being, the Creator of the Universe, the Designer of all living things, has done.

He has revealed Himself by conversing with us. It is true. He has spoken to us. He has revealed who He is and what kind of being He is. He wants you to know Him. He does. He has revealed what He has done in the beginning.

He has revealed what He has prepared for His beloved human creatures at the very end. He has revealed to us who we are and for what kind of life He created us. He has revealed what is wrong with us and what He has already done about it.

It sounds almost unbelievable, doesn't it? What would you give just to be able to hear from the Creator Himself about the mysteries of this world and the world to come? The truth is - you can. Yes, you can. Anyone can.

God the Creator has chosen to speak with us in human language, He has commanded His chosen messengers not only to proclaim His message, but also to write it down, and He Himself has confirmed that it is, indeed, His message by mighty signs.

Remember what happened at Mount Sinai? The whole nation of Israel heard God Yahweh speaking to them in thunder and lighting and thick clouds of smoke and fire and very loud trumpet blasts and earthquake...

That was the most terrifying life and death experience... and because they all had witnessed it, they firmly trusted that what God's servant Moses wrote down, was a message from the Holy God Himself. So God continued to speak to us through His chosen messengers, confirming His message with mighty signs and miracles.

But then He did something that completely defies human reason – the Eternal God, the Second person of the Holy Trinity, came to us as one of us, as an ordinary man Jesus from Nazareth. He spoke to us in human language, conversing with us face-to-face.

Those chosen men, who saw Him, touched Him, who ate with Him, who witnessed everything He did, they wrote it down, guided by God's own Spirit. Today we have their testimony, the message from the Triune God available to us. All in one place. In this one Book which has been printed in more than 6 billion [!] copies. Parts of the Bible have been translated into more than 3500 [!] different languages.

Almost every living person has access to the Bible, or at least to the message of this most sacred Book. For this is what the Author of the Book commanded, – bring my message to all nations, to every human being! We have this Book. It's been brought to us. Every family, every person in Canada has access to this Book and to its message. We can have it on our computers and on our phones. We can read the message from

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the Triune God anywhere at any time; we can listen to Him and learn His wisdom. We can... Everyone can... But... Do we? Do we listen to Him, do we even want to listen to Him? It is sad, but even many Christians don't care much about what God says to us. This is why we all will benefit from hearing the exhortation that Paul the apostle wrote to his beloved Timothy.

“Continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ... you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” Hear this!

To make you wise for salvation... The Bible is like no other book. It is a living and active Word of God, it kills and makes alive, it creates new hearts in us. God Himself speaks to us as we read or listen to His message; the Triune God converses with you.

He tells us loudly and clearly that He is coming to judge His creation – us; that we can't stand before His throne of judgment on our own, for He searches and judges the depth of our hearts, all the secret thoughts, and not only our behaviour.

But the Book that we have received is able to make you wise for salvation. As you listen to God who speaks to you in the Bible, as you study His Word, meditate upon it, as you discuss it with others, God's own Spirit comes to you.

Meaning, God not only makes you wise for salvation, He Himself delivers His salvation to you as He embraces you with His Spirit, as He creates faith in Jesus, as He makes home with you and welcomes you in the divine fellowship with the Trinity.

That is God's gift to you. Undeserved and infinitely precious gift which transforms us from strangers and enemies of God into His children and co-heirs of God's eternal Kingdom; this gift brings you to an everlasting feast served to all God's people.

The Word of God does it all... the Sacred Writings... as we listen to God speaking!

So, one thing the Word of God delivers us is salvation, and that's priceless, but that's not all. We are still here, in this age and in this world, and we have lives to live and neighbours to serve. How to go about it? Is there any wisdom available from our God?

Listen how Paul the apostle continues: **“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”**

Equipped for every good work... You see, the Word of God not only brings us new life in Christ, but it also supplies God's wisdom for our lives as our Creator reveals what His design for our lives is. How to live wisely in all our responsibilities.

How to be a child, how to be a parent, how to be a spouse, how to be an employee, and how to be an employer, how to live in relationships with neighbours, and how to live in relationships with our God, what to do with God's gifts entrusted to us, etc.

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Hear this! God's Word reveals to us God's will and wisdom for all facets of our lives. Your God wants to bless you, He wants you to be a blessing for others, this is why He Himself instructs us how to lead our new lives as He equips us for every good work.

What a privilege to be taught by our Maker Himself! But... How many even among Christians want to listen? This is why Paul continued: **"For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths."**

It sounds like our days, doesn't it? We live in times when many consider the world to be smarter than its Creator, when foolish cultural trends, often contrary to God's wisdom, tend to gain more authority than God's instructions... even among Christians.

Do we inquire how to give our lives as living sacrifices to the Lord? Do we seek God's wisdom for our relationships, marriages, parenting, work lives, stewardship? Do we even seek His will and instructions for His Bride, the Church? Do we?

We live in times when those sheep with itching ears want to rule, instead of living in joyful obedience of faith to their Redeemer. We live in times when those who want to remain faithful and live according to our Lord's instructions are often despised, ridiculed and rejected. Just as Jesus foretold.

But fear not, you little flock, this is exactly what the Holy Spirit foretold. **"But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant [...] unappeasable [...] lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God ... [mixing with Jesus' disciples, but] ... denying God's Word and its power."** (2 Tim 3:1-5)

So, what can we do in times like these? As the psalmist wrote: **"I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."** Lift up your eyes and rejoice!

Rejoice for our gracious God still converses with us! He hasn't given up on us, and He never will. We still can listen to His voice, marvel about His goodness and patience, we are not yet persecuted for doing it, we can daily grow in God's wisdom and rejoice in His salvation and proclaim it to others.

Even more, not only have we received God's message, but we also have the Triune God Himself gathering us so that He could be with us and bless us. Right here, amid His congregation! All of this is a miracle, a genuine miracle! The Triune God with us...

I pray that by God's grace we can hold fast to our Lord Jesus and to His Word - in His Sacred Writings, the Bible - even in this age of indifference, even if we are despised by the world. And the peace of God that surpasses all human understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Jesus Christ. That is His promise to you.

Amen.