*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

November 18 - 23

*Gospel*

**Monday, November 18 Romans 1:16-17**

*“I am not ashamed of the gospel”*

 Paul insists that he is not ashamed of the gospel. Indeed, why should any of us be ashamed of a message which explains the power of God that leads to salvation? The Greek word *soteria*, meaning “salvation,” is related to *sos,* meaning “safe and sound.” What the gospel tells us is that through Christ God has made available to humankind the possibility of spiritual safety for all eternity and completely soundness for all of life. In his travels Paul had seen God’s power making every conceivable type of person “safe and sound.”

 Paul goes on to say that this safety and soundness is available to all who believe. In the Old Testament the focus was on Israel, but now the gospel is universally available. Paul adds that the gospel of salvation is “first for the Jew.” By this Paul means that Jews were the first to receive the good news of Jesus Christ and, therefore, the first to have the opportunity to believe and be saved. Paul also has in mind that it is first through the ministry of Jews such as himself and the twelve Apostles that the Gentile world has begun to hear the Gospel.

*I praise you, Father, for making me “safe and sound” in Christ. Amen.*

**Tuesday, November 19 1 Thessalonians 1:4-10**

*“You received the gospel with joy”*

 As Paul begins his letter to the Christians in Thessalonica, he speaks of the Good News (gospel) of Jesus Christ. It is clear that the Thessalonian congregation is actively sharing with others the gospel they received (verse 8). What is important to notice is both *what* they were bearing witness to and *how* they were doing it. Paul notes that not only had the “Lord’s message” – that is, the good news about Jesus – “sounded forth,” but also the Thessalonians’ “faith in God” – that is, their response to the good news – had “become known.” In short, they were sharing both the good news about Jesus and the impact of that good news on their own lives.

 As to how they were doing it, Paul notes in verse 9 that others were talking about what the Thessalonians *did*: They turned from idols and served the true God. That is, their behavior was consistent with, and testified to the reality of, their message. Following the example of Jesus and the apostles, they practiced what they preached. Lastly, Paul notes their eager expectation of the Second Coming of Christ.

*Having accepted your gospel, Lord, may my life reflect it to others. Amen.*

**Wednesday, November 20 2 Timothy 4:1-5**

*“Do the work of an evangelist”*

 The English word “evangelist” is taken from the Greek word “euangelion,” a word made up of a prefix “eu,” meaning good, and the word “angelion” meaning message or news. Thus, an evangelist is a person who is sharing “good news” with others. Paul, of course, uses the word to refer to a person who is sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. In these verses, he is challenging Timothy to be an evangelist, in spite of the difficulties that such sharing entails.

 In his ministry as an evangelist, Timothy is to be “persistent.” Yet, persistence in sharing the Gospel must be balanced with patience and encouragement. There is a time for speaking and a time for silence, to paraphrase the wisdom of Ecclesiastes: “To everything there is a season” (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Timothy also needs to be aware that people will often reject the right teaching of the truth of God’s Word, and instead look for teachers who will tell them what they want to hear. They will reject the truth and follow strange teachings very different from the Gospel. Still, Timothy needs to do the work God has given him.

*Strengthen me, Lord, to do the good work of sharing your good news with others. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

November 18 - 23

*Gospel*

**Thursday, November 21 1 Corinthians 15:1-8**

*“It is this good news that saves you”*

 Paul reminds the Corinthians how they had come to hear the gospel and the difference it had made in their lives. Paul had been the human instrument by which God brought his gospel to them, and it was by the acceptance of that gospel that they had been saved and had taken their stand in the world as believers. Paul wants them to realize how precious the gospel is, and he urges them to firmly hold on to what they believe.

 When the gospel is reduced to its essence, it is an event in history. It was not something which was enacted in another place, like the activities of the Greek gods, but a happening that can be given date and place and person. Paul summarizes God’s activity in three statements: Christ died for our sins, was buried, and he rose again. In a condensed form Paul focused on the significance of the cross in salvation, the reality of his death on our behalf, and our hope in the resurrection. The fact that there were still living those who had seen the resurrected Jesus gave further strength to their faith.

*Help me, Lord Jesus, to hold on firmly to my faith in you. Amen.*

**Friday, November 22 Matthew 9:35-38**

*“Jesus went about . . . teaching . . . preaching . . . healing”*

 Jesus’ teaching, preaching, and healing was one integrated ministry, not three separate ministries. His healing was a physical sign of the Good News power of his teaching and preaching; his teaching and preaching message was affirmed by his healing. Jesus taught and preached that our sin is not cured by adherence to the rules of religion, but only by God himself through the death of his Son. The crowds seem to want healing without attending to their deeper needs of salvation from sin.

 As we put ourselves into God’s hands, he understands our lives better than we do and at times he is more concerned with the development of our hearts that he is with the comfort of our lives. There is no question that God enjoys giving good gifts to his children. But sometimes what we think is the best gift does not always address the deepest needs in our lives. Our hearts have been tainted by the effects of sin, and sin hits the center of our desires and our ability to have a relationship with God.

*I give my sinful heart into you care, heavenly Father, that you may heal it. Amen.*

**Saturday, November 23 Romans 10:13-16**

*“How can they hear about him unless someone tells them?”*

 Starting with the fact that faith is necessary, Paul asks how anyone can possibly call on the Lord for God’s promised salvation without believing the promise. Then he asks how anyone can come to this belief without being told what is available to believe. He follows with a question as to how people can hear without someone telling them. This in turn leads to a question as to how people can tell others about the promised salvation of God without being sent as those who will tell.

 In the context of Paul’s argument, his point is that if the gospel is available to “both Jews and Gentiles, alike,” then the Gentiles as well as the Jews must know about it, and the telling of it to the Gentiles will require considerably more involvement of the Jews (who were the first to receive the Gospel) than has been evidenced so far. To his own people, the Jews, who are upset at his ministry and scandalized by his message of God’s grace to the Gentiles, Paul is saying, “Come join me in the sharing of glad tidings with those who have never heard.”

*Thank you, Father, for those who have shared the gospel with me. Amen.*