*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

September 21 - 26

Philippians

**Monday, September 21 Philippians 2:19-24**

*“I have no one else like Timothy”*

 Paul considers Timothy an exceptional ally in times of trouble. He shows this by giving Timothy three commendations: (1) Timothy understands what it means to be united in spirit with other believers, both with Paul and with the Philippians. Timothy is of like mind with Paul in that he has a genuine interest in the Philippians’ welfare.

 (2) Timothy stands apart from every other believer whom Paul might have sent to the Philippians because, unlike them, he puts the interests of Jesus Christ above his own interests. Like Paul, who was more concerned with the advancement of the gospel than that he was in prison or that other Christians were making his hardship more difficult, and like Christ, who put obedience ahead of exploiting the privileges available to him as God, Timothy subordinated his own interests to the things of Jesus Christ. (3) Timothy’s mettle had been tested in the difficulty of apostolic service, and both Paul and the Philippians had found him as faithful as a son to his father, as willing to serve in the work of the gospel as Paul himself.

*Like Timothy, Lord, may I genuinely care for the welfare of others. Amen.*

**Tuesday, September 22 Philippians 2:25-30**

*“I am sending Epaphroditus back to you”*

 How surprised the Philippians must have been to see Epaphroditus again. They had sent him to Paul not only to deliver a monetary gift from the church but also to stay with Paul and minister to his other needs, something they could not do themselves from such a distance. Why was he back so soon despite Paul’s continued imprisonment? In order to answer this question and to forestall any ill will toward Epaphroditus for not completing his assigned task, Paul explains why Epaphroditus has returned and commends him to the Philippians for his diligence.

 Paul introduces Epaphroditus with a fanfare of complimentary language, leaving little doubt that their messenger is returning with the apostle’s blessing. Paul explains to his readers that the illness Epaphroditus suffered was neither minor nor incidental to the mission itself. It almost resulted in his death, and it happened because Epaphroditus was trying to carry out his commission faithfully. Thus, Paul has not sent him back with reservations about his conduct, and the Philippians should welcome him in the Lord with great joy.

*Like Epaphroditus, Lord, may I be your messenger to help others in need. Amen.*

**Wednesday, September 23 2 Timothy 1:1-7**

*“I remember . . .”*

 In these verses Paul speaks of remembrance. (1) Paul remembers Timothy in his prayers. Night and day he does so constantly, meaning that during his frequent times of prayer he never fails to mention Timothy. (2) Paul remembers Timothy’s tears. While we do not know the occasion referred to, the important thing is what it says about their relationship. Clearly, Timothy is not the only one who is sad, for Paul longs to see Timothy so that he himself may be filled with joy.

 (3) Paul then recalls Timothy’s genuine faith, a faith that first resided in his mother and grand-mother, the implication being that they shared their faith with Timothy. (4) The fourth remembrance is actually a reminder Paul gives Timothy to fan God’s gifts of power, love and self-discipline into flame. This may imply a lessening of Timothy’s effectiveness in ministry as pastor of the Ephesian church, perhaps due to the confusion produced among the congregation and the timidity produced in Timothy by false teachers. Timothy needs to allow God’s gifts to resume their dominance and restore a higher level of effectiveness in his ministry.

*By your Holy Spirit, Lord, you give us gifts to use for ministry. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

September 21 - 26

Philippians

**Thursday, September 24 2 Timothy 1:8-14**

*“Do not be ashamed”*

 Telling Timothy not to be ashamed could well imply that Paul had seen some tendency toward this in Timothy. Timidity and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with others do not blend. Some of us will find the fact that this may have been a problem for Timothy a source of comfort. How well we know the fear that often accompanies our efforts to witness for Christ. The power to overcome this timidity grows out of an understanding and appreciation of the gospel itself: it saved us, called us, graced us, abolished the power of death, and brought life and immortality.

 Paul goes on to say that God has chosen him to be a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the gospel. In sharing the gospel, Paul experienced all kinds of suffering and hardships. When one departs from the world’s values or standards because of one’s commitment to Jesus as Lord, it will always bring the fear of rejection. But, Paul says, he is not ashamed, for he is confident in the One whom he has believed and he is certain that Christ will save him on the day of his Second Coming.

*We proclaim the truth of the gospel, Lord, by sharing it with others. Amen.*

**Friday, September 25 2 Timothy 2:1-7**

*“Endure hardship”*

 Ministry is difficult. Discipleship is difficult. Thus, Paul charges Timothy to endure hardship. Paul uses three dramatic metaphors, portraying the qualities required in those called to endure hardship for Christ. The soldier portrays a sense of *priority*. The athlete models *discipline*. The farmer is the pattern of *perseverance.*

Christian discipleship and ministry require all three. As the soldier must leave all other pursuits, so the disciple must place his or her self at complete disposal to the Kingdom of God. As the athlete must keep all feeling, instincts, and reactions under control in order to compete according to the rules, so the disciple must live life under orders and within boundaries. As the farmer must work long and hard, often under adverse conditions, so the disciple must persevere, perhaps for long periods of time with little reward for the sake of being faithful to Jesus as Lord. Ministry is difficult, but there are great joys and rewards of such a life, as Paul and Timothy experienced, and as we can experience as well.

*When life is hard, Lord, you give me the strength to endure. Amen.*

**Saturday, September 26 2 Timothy 3:10-17**

 *“Remain faithful to Scripture”*

 Paul gives Timothy some very personal advice. Paul bases his appeal to Timothy on his own experience, ranging from his teachings to his suffering. Paul is blending belief and behavior, theology and practice. Timothy is called to turn away from the false teachers and to stand alone, if need be, and endure persecution for his faithfulness to Jesus. Most importantly, he must be faithful to the Scriptures he has received.

 To Paul and Timothy, the Scriptures were the writings contained in the Old Testament, very likely the same collection of thirty-nine books in our Bible today. Speaking of the nature of the Scriptures, Paul states that they are given by inspiration of God, literally that they are “breathed by God.” Being the Word of God, they bring us to salvation through faith Jesus Christ. They are our source of Christian teaching. They show us where we have gone wrong, and they lead us back onto God’s path. And, they train us to be in a right relationship with God and with others. Putting it all together, Scripture equips us to do the good work that God has in mind for us to do.

*I will read and study your Word, Lord, for it equips me to do your good will. Amen.*