*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

February 21 - 26

Letters of Paul

**Monday, February 21 1 Timothy 1:1-7**

“False teaching in the church”

 It was no ordinary mission that Timothy was called to, in contrast to the time when Paul had sent him to Thessalonica to strengthen and encourage the believers in their faith (1 Thessalonians 3:2). Apparently Timothy was already at Ephesus when it becomes clear to Paul that conditions are critically unhealthy there because of false teaching. Paul therefore urges Timothy to stay there for a specific purpose: to command these false teachers to stop.

 God’s work ought to be promoted instead of controversial speculation. This work is in contrast to controversial speculation, in part because it is effective and unifying but specifically because it is by faith. One should think and act out of a confidence in what God is doing. Paul goes on to cite love as the goal of this command, and the recognition of this purpose is important. The solidity of the love Paul speaks about, in contrast to mere feeling, is established by the fact that it requires an integrity of character to exist: a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

*When false teaching is addressed, Lord, may truth be spoken in love. Amen.*

**Tuesday, February 22 Acts 16:1-5**

“An introduction to Timothy”

 As Paul and his colleagues set out on Paul’s second missionary journey, they come to the city of Lystra where a well-spoken-of young man of mixed parentage (Greek father and Jewish mother), Timothy, becomes the newest member of the team. Timothy needed to win the esteem of the Jewish Christians, and being circumcised would have given him openings in sharing the Gospel with Jews. If he had been a “full-blooded Gentile” Paul would not have insisted on circumcision, as we see with the Greek Titus, whom he took along to Jerusalem (Galatians 2:3).

 Prior to embarking upon this second missionary journey, Paul had travelled to Jerusalem to battle the Judaizers. His battle was against insisting that circumcision was a condition for the full inclusion of the Gentiles among the people of God. Timothy’s circumcision was not in order that he might receive salvation. Rather, being saved solely through faith in Christ, his circumcision was for the purpose of effectiveness in ministry. Born half-Jewish, it was appropriate for Timothy to go through the painful process of full initiation into the Jewish community.

*Ministry can be costly, Lord, but it is worth it for the sake of the Gospel. Amen.*

**Wednesday, February 23 1 Timothy 1:8-11**

“The law”

 In a play on words, Paul says the law (*nomos*) must be used correctly (*nomimos*). Proper use, of course, requires an understanding of its purpose. Paul speaks to this issue at length in more than one place, but reference may be most profitably made, besides the present passage, to Galatians 5:13-26. There the law is summarized in a single command: Love your neighbor as yourself. This assumes, of course, the love of God as the greatest commandment. The Galatians passage goes on to show that the acts of the sinful nature must be replaced by the fruit of the Spirit which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

 Here in 1 Timothy Paul describes those who actions are contrary to the law. Such people love neither God nor neighbor. Verse 9 establishes a principle that the law has been made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels. Those who resist doing what it right need to be confronted by a standard that clarifies what they are doing is wrong.

*The law reveals my sin, Lord, so I can turn to you and be forgiven. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

February 21 - 26

Letters of Paul

**Thursday, February 24 1 Timothy 1:12-14**

“The Lord has given me strength to do his work”

 Paul’s gratitude is to the One who gave him strength. In Philippians 4:13, he declares, “I can do everything through him who gives me strength;” and he will later write of a specific instance in which the Lord gave him strength when he had to face his accusers alone (2 Timothy 4:16-17). The apostle will also encourage Timothy to “be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 2:1). The idea in this encouragement to strength is not to brute force but to moral strength as a requirement for serving God. While strength comes from God, faithfulness is required of Paul and of Timothy.

 Paul’s explanation to Timothy as to why God had mercy on him is because he acted “in ignorance and unbelief.” That does not mean that God automatically forgives anyone who acts without knowledge in their non-Christian days, but it does express the sovereign mercy of God in reaching out to Saul of Tarsus, who sought to honor God by trying to wipe out the Christians when he thought they were blaspheming.

*You give me the strength, Lord, to do what you ask of me. Amen.*

**Friday, February 25 1 Timothy 1:15-17**

“The mercy of God”

 Verse 15 begins with “a trustworthy saying” that contains the essence of the Christian message: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” The purpose of Christ’s coming, to save sinners, has been welcomed by two millennia of human beings who, conscious of their guilt before God, have gratefully accepted the redeeming event of the saving death of the Lord Jesus for them.

 In this passage two extremes are cited of those for whom Christ came. One is the group of sinners described in verses 9-10, that is, the lawless and rebellious; the other is represented by Paul himself, who, in spite of all his righteous deeds, calls himself “the worst of sinners.” These two extremes illustrate the breadth of God’s mercy. Further, as verse 16 explains, it is not only as an act of kindness that God shows sinners mercy, but it is also a showcase for God’s unlimited patience. The church is a wonderful blending of all kinds of sinners, brought together as forgiven people by the Holy Spirit who lives in each one of them.

*All who belong to you, Lord, came to you as sinners. Amen.*

**Saturday, February 26 1 Timothy 1:18-20**

“Here are my instructions for you”

 These closing verses give chapter 1 a tight integrity. The opening greetings of the first verses are followed by the statement of the need for Timothy’s presence in Ephesus, which specifies his main duty there. The problems he will face include the teachings of those with a defective view of the law. This leads to a discussion about the law that, in turn, segues, via a mention of the gospel, into Paul’s testimony. It now remains for the initial statement of Timothy’s assignment to Ephesus to be enlarged by a transformation into a charge, which is the function of these final verses.

 Christian ministry is more than proclamation; it includes confrontation. The names change, but people like Hymenaeus and Alexander have managed to infiltrate groups of professing Christians down through the ages. The very expressions “shipwrecked” and “handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme” hammer home the seriousness of false teaching. To combat heresy, the believer must cling to their faith in Christ and possess a clear conscience as to their own integrity of character.

*May false teaching be exposed, Lord, and your truth clearly proclaimed. Amen.*