*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

March 14 - 19

Letters of Paul

**Monday, March 14 1 Timothy 5:1-8**

“Relationships in the church family”

After providing a brief introduction to the topic of relationships in the church family in verses one and two, Paul establishes a connection between one’s faith and one’s concern for others. It may stem from the Ten Commandments, the fifth of which is, “Honor your father and your mother.” The command here, “honor,” may be the catchword between this passage and that. Even though there is no direct connection, there is an important truth in common. One who is truly faithful to God will respect others, a truth found also in the so-called “second” great commandment about loving one’s neighbor.

Paul directs that family members must care for their own or else they will be considered worse than unbelievers, and family members most responsible for widows are their children. The faith dimension of such action is underscored by the conclusion that this pleases God. One cannot be truly faithful and please God while ignoring the needs of human beings, especially those in one’s own family.

*To care for one another, Lord, is a priority of our commitment to you. Amen.*

**Tuesday, March 15 1 Timothy 5:9-16**

“Caring for widows”

The early church selected and enrolled widows in order to qualify them to receive financial assistance directly from the church – they were put on “the list of widows.” Paul here gives specific details for who should be on the list among those women who have been widowed. First, they must be at least 60 years old. Second, they have not remarried after widowhood, that is, they don’t currently have a husband who supports them. Third, her reputation as a person well known for her good works is to be considered, with her good deeds being of all kinds, examples of which are bringing up children, showing hospitality, being kind to strangers, and helping those in trouble.

Younger widows were not to be enrolled. Rather, they were to be encouraged to remarry, both for the sake of being supported by a husband and so that sexual desire might have an appropriate expression. Additionally, remarrying involved the care of a husband and, perhaps, children, a full life which precluded the dangers of idleness.

*Help us to know the best way to care for those in need, Lord. Amen.*

**Wednesday, March 16 Acts 6:1-6**

“Righting a wrong”

Jewish society had a system to help needy widows. Probably the isolation that resulted when these people became Christians made these sources less accessible to them. Grecian widows were particularly needy as they were not native Judeans and many did not have relatives to care for them. Almost certainly the Grecian widows were not deliberately discriminated against. The cause of the problem was the increase of the number of believers. In an active and expanding movement it is possible for the less prominent people not to be noticed. But that is still wrong. The Old Testament has many clear and specific regulations to ensure that socially depressed people like widows, orphans, and aliens are not overlooked. When a system is instituted such problems are minimized.

The apostles did not focus attention on the complaining attitude toward the leadership. There was a genuine problem, and the best way to quell doubts about prejudice was to solve the problem first. The apostles made an administrative decision which led to righting the wrong.

*Give us wisdom, Lord, to right the wrong when someone has been overlooked. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

March 14 - 19

Letters of Paul

**Thursday, March 17 1 Timothy 5:17-20**

“Honoring elders”

Elders as a group in the church had the responsibility of leadership, and all of them had to be doctrinally strong and teach effectively. Among them were those who devoted such significant time to preaching and teaching that financial support was necessary. Paul uses the Deuteronomy 25:4 quotation about not muzzling the ox to support his assertion. All elders were worthy of respect, literally “double honor” in the original Greek, and all were worthy of the dignity and recognition of their office as elders, but not all were necessarily to be remunerated.

With verse 19 the passage takes a sharp turn from honoring to accusing elders, though the elders are still honored by the exercise of caution in making an accusation. The Old Testament requirement of two or three witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15) is appropriately applied. Its use is crucial here not because elders are more important than others but because the reputation of an elder is so important to the witness of the church and because Satan can use disgrace to his own ends.

*We thank you for our church leaders, Lord, and honor their leadership. Amen.*

**Friday, March 18 1 Timothy 5:21-25**

“Further instructions”

The warning in verse 21 to avoid partiality and favoritism seems a matter of common sense and courtesy. However, since Timothy is working closely with the elders, his natural tendency might be reluctance to act strongly against a leader who has sinned. In verse 22 Paul warns Timothy not to be hasty about the “laying on of hands,” which can refer either to ordaining elders into leadership or to accepting a repentant person back into the community. Whichever it may be, neither should be done in a hurry

The dangers of excess drinking were well known in the ancient world, so it may have seemed natural to Timothy to question whether he should drink wine at all. In verse 23 the apostle tells Timothy it is appropriate for him to drink “a little wine.” “A little wine” will help his stomach, and “a little wine” will avoid the danger of excess. Then, picking up the matter of sin, private and public, Paul makes the point in verses 24-25 that sooner or later both sins and good works will become public.

*Give us wisdom, Lord, in matters relating to church life. Amen.*

**Saturday, March 19 1 Timothy 6:1-2**

“Slave and masters”

These verses conclude the theme of chapter 5, which contains advice about widows, elders and slaves. Paul’s instructions here pertain only to slaves, not (as in Ephesians 6:5-9 and Colossians 3:22-24) to both slave and masters. He makes two points: Masters deserve full respect, and slaves should give Christian masters even better service. This section provides yet one more example of the blending of Christian teaching and life application.

The reason for giving the master full respect is so that God’s name and the apostolic teaching are not slandered. This respect is to show itself in good service. This is a work ethic that embodies the two “great commandments” (although they are not mentioned here). For slaves to love God fully and to love their neighbor (in this case, their master) as themselves will mean that they must serve their master well, thus bringing honor to God. These instructions accord with the teachings of Paul’s letters which encourage Christians to bring honor to God in all their relationships.

*May the way in which we do our work, Lord, bring honor to you. Amen.*