*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

March 28 – April 2

Letters of Paul

**Monday, March 28 2 Timothy 1:1-2**

“Paul, an apostle”

 Paul connects his apostleship with the “will of God, according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus.” Paul is an apostle of Christ because God has willed it, not because he, Paul, or another human being has somehow decided that Paul is worthy or deserving of being an apostle. The reason for his reference to “the promise of life” is that Paul’s mission is to make known that this promise receives fulfillment through fellowship with Christ, a promise that relates both to the present life of the believer and the life to come.

 The word “Christ” is first of all a title (“Messiah” or “Anointed One”) and is almost always along with “Jesus,” identifying as the promised Messiah the man whose given name was Jesus. In that combination, Paul almost always places “Christ” before “Jesus,” and when used together with a preposition, such as “in Christ Jesus,” it conveys the idea of close relationship or union between a believer and Christ Jesus. In verse 2 Paul identifies Timothy as his “dear son,” a reference not to a biological but to a spiritual connection between the two.

*I praise you, Lord, for choosing me to be a follower of Christ Jesus. Amen.*

**Tuesday, March 29 2 Timothy 1:3-4**

“I thank God for you”

 Paul’s references to Timothy as the recipient of the letter are reflective, beginning with thanksgiving to God for reminiscences about Timothy. Paul is tender and sincere in his thoughts. But he also slips in some remarks about his own service to God before he continues with his comments about Timothy. Paul has a clear conscience about the sincere service he has offered God in company with faithful Jewish ancestors.

 What follows is a pattern of words about remembrance. (1) Paul remembers Timothy in his prayers. He does so constantly, and he does so night and day. This does not mean that Timothy is never out of his thoughts, but that during his frequent prayers around the clock he never fails to mention the young pastor. (2) Next, Paul remembers Timothy’s tears. We do not know the occasion referred to, but the important thing is that it says something 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.

*We remember our friends in prayer, Lord, thanking you for them. Amen.*

**Wednesday, March 30 2 Timothy 1:5-7**

“Remembering Timothy’s faith and spiritual giftedness”

 Paul recalls Timothy’s genuine faith. It was clear to Paul when he first met him that Timothy had an authentic faith thanks to the piety of his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois. Paul then reminds Timothy to fan God’s gift into flame. This may presuppose a lessening of Timothy’s effectiveness since Paul’s first letter, although we do not know the length of time between the two letters to Timothy, nor do we know the effect that the confrontation with the false teachers at Ephesus may have had on him.

 In understanding verse 7 it is common to do “mirror reading,” that is, to assume that the inner abilities that God gave Timothy for ministry through the Holy Spirit – power, love, and self-discipline – were being weakened as his natural timidity began to take over. Timothy needs to allow the spiritual gift to resume its dominance and restore a higher level of effectiveness in his ministry. For Timothy, as for all believers, while it is God who bestows spiritual gifts, Christians must take responsibility for their use.

*Help me to use well the spiritual gifts you have given me, Lord. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

March 28 – April 2

Letters of Paul

**Thursday, March 31 2 Timothy 1:8-12**

“No reason for shame”

 This passage is introduced by the word “so” (or “therefore”), indicating that Timothy’s ability to resist being ashamed lies in the gifts of power, love, and self-discipline (verse 7). Generally speaking, the word translated “be ashamed” designates the renunciation of Jesus Christ by a human being or the renunciation of a human being by Christ. In this context being ashamed stands in contrast to joining with Paul in suffering. Conversely, to not be ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ means to be willing to take a stand and confess the truth of the gospel, including the willingness to be identified with those who represent Christ.

 Why should we stand strong in the face of suffering rather than give in and take the easy route of “being ashamed” and renouncing Christ? We stand strong because God saved us and called us to live a holy life. This he has done through his Son, Jesus Christ, who has become our Savior. Him we are not ashamed of proclaiming and his teaching we will not abandon simply in order to avoid affliction.

*I have entrusted you with me life, Lord; I will not renounce you. Amen.*

**Friday, April 1 2 Timothy 1:13-14**

“The pattern of wholesome teaching”

 Once again, Paul blends sound teaching with godly living. Here, sound teaching is to be blended with “faith” (that is, faith applied in daily life) and “love.” While Paul has often spoken of “sound” or “wholesome” teaching in his letters, here he adds the idea of a “pattern,” meaning that which Paul has passed on to Timothy should be followed scrupulously by Timothy. He is not at liberty to deviate from the teachings of Christ first given to Paul and now to him.

 This passage calls on *all* contemporary Christians to reassess how well we are communicating the revealed gospel and teachings of Christ. To “hold on to the pattern of wholesome teaching” can also be expressed as “carefully guarding the precious truth that has been entrusted to you.” Both the keeping of the pattern and the guarding of the truth have been difficult at various stages of church history. Calls to compromise, exclusion from participation in public discourse, and outright persecution are some of the ways in which the Lord’s servants have been treated when they have affirmed God’s truth over against error.

*How I practice my faith and relate to others, Lord, is based in your truth. Amen.*

**Saturday, April 2 2 Timothy 1:15-18**

“The kindness of Onesiphorus”

 These verses reveal some of Paul’s personal feelings, picking up the theme of suffering and shame from verses 8-12. The nature of the desertion has been a matter of debate. Possibly prior to this writing some from Asia had been in Rome during Paul’s imprisonment there and had not supported him. The word translated “everyone” is often used in a general sense and must not be taken here to mean a total defection.

 Onesiphorus stands in beautiful contrast to the others. Taking up the theme of Paul’s imprisonment and the natural tendency of associates to be ashamed of him, Paul specifically says that Onesiphorus was not ashamed of his chains. He visited and encouraged Paul, unafraid to be seen not only as a friend but an active supporter of the apostle and, thereby, of Jesus Christ and his gospel. Paul feels so warmly toward Onesiphorus that he twice prays for the Lord to show his special kindness (mercy) toward Onesiphorus and his family. Paul concludes with a reference to the help Onesiphorus gave him in Ephesus, something about which Timothy knows very well.

*It is a great blessing, Lord, when our friends stand with us in times of trouble. Amen.*