*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

April 18 - 23

*Letters of Paul*

**Monday, April 18 2 Timothy 2:1-2**

*“Teach these truths”*

The need for what Paul teaches and commands to be passed on pervades Paul’s letters to his “dear son” in the faith. The teachings of Paul are something valuable that require the care of reliable people. Paul emphasizes that what he has taught and commanded can be confirmed by others as having their origin in Christ. Further, says Paul, the people to whom Timothy is to entrust Paul’s teaching must be competent (trustworthy) in the sense that they can be depended upon to pass the teachings they have received on to others.

It is understandable why these instructions appear in a passage about being strong and enduring hardship. It would be natural for Timothy to use his strength and gifts to continue confronting heretics and wrestling with problems, but it is sometimes more difficult to train and motivate others to carry on one’s work. With Paul’s impending execution, the instruction of others weighs heavily on his mind. He is concerned that the gospel message will continue to be heard after Paul and Timothy go to be with the Lord.

*Your teachings, Lord, are being passed on by faithful people. Amen.*

**Tuesday, April 19 2 Timothy 2:3-7**

*“Endure hardship”*

The military image here has to do not with warfare but with disciplined obedience to one’s commanding officer over against succumbing to diversions that may interfere with military duty. By Paul’s time the Roman Empire had long since secured its dominance through the resolve, skill and strength of its soldiers, and Paul’s image of the soldier’s devotion would have been immediately recognizable.

Paul’s writes elsewhere about athletic competition where the emphasis is on personal training and discipline; here it is more on keeping the rules. Athletic contests were popular and highly valued in Greco-Roman tradition, and in order to win one must have been willing to compete within the rules. The image of the farmer, like the other two, would have been well understood by Paul’s audience, for everyone knew the need for a farmer to be hardworking in order to enjoy any fruit from his labor. All three analogies, like Jesus’ parables and parabolic sayings, require reflection, so Paul tells Timothy in verse 7 that the Lord will give him insight.

*The Christian life, Lord, requires the hard work of disciplined obedience. Amen.*

**Wednesday, April 20 2 Timothy 2:8-13**

*“Reasons for enduring hardship”*

Verse 8 moves from analogy to history. Whatever encouragement to endure hardship Timothy may receive from verses 1-7, it is the resurrection of Christ, the promised messianic descendant of David, that provides the strongest motivation. Picking up the reference to suffering and imprisonment in 1:8 and the reference to chains in 1:16, Paul refers in 2:9 to his own suffering in chains, but adds that God’s word is not chained – Paul continues to preach the word even while in prison. For, as he states in verse 10, he is willing to endure anything necessary for the sake of proclaiming the message of salvation.

Verses 11-13 comprise a “trustworthy saying,” that is, a saying that contains the essence of Christian teaching. The saying deals not simply with something historical, though it is based on the historical death of Christ, and certainly not with something physical, for we have not actually been put to death. Rather, there is a personal identification with Christ in his death that is supposed to mark the end of the *sinful kind of life* we previously lived.

*These momentary hardships, Lord, are nothing compared to eternity with you. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

April 18 - 23

*Letters of Paul*

**Thursday, April 21 2 Timothy 2:14-19**

*“Correctly handle the word of truth”*

Paul is concerned with the activities of false teachers in the Ephesian church. Verse 14 warns against useless, destructive quarreling, verse 15 urges a correct handling of the truth, and verse 16 counsels against worthless, foolish talk. This empty talk is devoid of religious value and consequently leads into ungodly behavior. Paul continues in verse 17 with a second reason for avoiding godless chatter: it will spread like gangrene. Like a wasting disease, it will damage the Christian body of believers.

In verse 18 Paul gives an example of the consequences of incorrectly handling the word of truth. Hymenaeus and Philetus have been falsely claiming that the resurrection of the dead has already occurred, turning some away from the faith. After all, if these two men are correct and we are still here on earth, having missed the resurrection, then we must not belong to God. Verse 19 responds to this upsetting situation with the affirmation that God’s truth stands firm. God knows who belongs to him, and no amount of false teaching will change that reality.

*Your truth proclaims, Lord, that because I believe, I belong to you. Amen.*

**Friday, April 22 2 Timothy 2:20-21**

*“The imagery of household utensils”*

The imagery of verses 20-21 continues the theme of false teachers and teachings in verses 14-19, which concluded with the necessity of turning away from wickedness. In this new imagery, that of utensils in a wealthy home (that is, a home that can afford utensils that are costly as well as the everyday utensils of the ordinary householder), some of the utensils are made of gold and silver while others are made of wood and clay. The expensive utensils are used for special occasions, while the common utensils are used for everyday occasions.

When one keeps oneself pure by turning away from the wickedness of incorrectly handling the word of truth, one is like a precious utensil in the household of God, a utensil that God can use for the good work that he has planned for his church. Conversely, if one is engaged in the wicked practice of mishandling the word of truth, either through outright falsehood or by the twisting of words and meanings so as to precipitate quarreling and disagreements among believers, God is unable to use that person for the special occasion of ministry.

*In turning away from evil, Lord, I am available for your use. Amen.*

**Saturday, April 23 2 Timothy 2:22-26**

*“Further advice about handling controversy”*

Verse 22 presents two contrasting objectives: flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace. Verse 23 warns against arguments that produce quarrels, which must not characterize the Lord’s servant (verse 24). Verse 14 identified this quarreling as a kind of verbal warfare used by the opponents of truth. There is a progression here from arguments that are foolish and stupid to outright controversy.

In verse 24, the word for “kind” carries the idea of gentleness and stands in contrast to a controversial spirit. Being able to teach is also important, for there is truth to be taught in a strong, capable way. To be “patient with difficult people” means to meet the opposition of aggressive, controversial people, without losing one’s temper and lashing out at them. Verse 25 describes the appropriate response: gentle instruction with a view to the repentance (that is, turning to the truth) of the opponents. Such repentance will allow them to escape the devil’s power which has caused them to serve his designs for misleading the people of God.

*Help me, Lord, to engage in fruitful dialogue with opponents of your truth. Amen.*