*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

April 25 - 30

*Letters of Paul*

**Monday, April 25 2 Timothy 3:1-5**

*“Terrible times”*

 Chapter 2 ended optimistically: the Lord’s servant is to instruct opponents patiently, with the hope that God will graciously rescue them from Satan’s grasp. But chapter 3 presents another, less optimistic reality with which Timothy must come to grips: terrible times are coming and, as verse 5 makes clear, the future is now. The reasons why these times are so terrible are cited in verses 2-9, listing the perpetrators rather than the evil deeds. One commentator vividly refers to those in this chapter as “vicious characters.”

 While we might at first glance assume that the kind of people listed here have nothing to do with the Christian faith, Paul states that they have a form of godliness or religion. The fact that Paul counsels Timothy to have nothing to do with them may indicate that they are somehow connected with the church in Ephesus, even that they might be members of the church. It is important to note how Paul makes it clear in 1 Corinthians 5:9-11 that believers are not to dissociate themselves from immoral people in the world, but from those in the church.

*Sadly, Lord, some who proclaim to be Christian are not at all Christ-like. Amen.*

**Tuesday, April 26 2 Timothy 3:6-9**

*“Victimization of women”*

 These verses continue the warning against the evil people so graphically described in verses 2-4. Because of the religious form of their heresies, they are especially dangerous to Christian women who may have been young in the faith and possibly come from lives of prostitution or other forms of perversion connected with many of the pagan religions of the day. Consequently, they are vulnerable to the treachery of the false teachers who seek to underhandedly worm their way into their lives and win their confidence.

 Verse 8 contains another description of the false teachers, this time by reference to “Jannes and Jambres,” two figures known from extrabiblical literature. These are the names Jewish tradition gave to the Egyptian magicians who tried to imitate the miracles performed before Pharaoh by Moses and Aaron. What they had in common with the false teachers at Ephesus was that they also stood against the truth and were rejected as far as the faith is concerned. Paul concludes with the assurance that they won’t get away with their deception.

*The abuse of the vulnerable, Lord, is a disgrace. Amen.*

**Wednesday, April 27 2 Timothy 3:10-13**

*“But you, Timothy . . .”*

 Paul’s autobiographical notes in his letters serve several purposes. They demonstrate the sovereign grace of God in his life, acknowledge that faithful service does bring suffering, and provide a model for Timothy. The present passage accomplishes the second and third of those purposes. It opens with the emphatic, “But you . . .,” which calls Timothy as a witness to the difference between the false teachers just described and Paul’s teaching and way of life.

 As Paul’s list progresses in verse 10, he is not flattering himself but rather showing where his values are, values that are not optional or relative but of absolute importance in the life of the Lord’s servant. Although Paul mentions that the Lord rescued him from persecutions (verse 11), he makes the point in verse 12 that everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, moving from his own experience to that of Christians in general. Persecution is not exceptional for those who faithfully follow Christ.

*Give me patient endurance, Lord, when I face persecution for your sake. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

April 25 - 30

*Letters of Paul*

**Thursday, April 28 2 Timothy 3:14-17**

*“All Scripture is inspired by God”*

 Not only had Timothy learned the truth from Paul and others, he had become convinced of it. The reason for this lies largely with the integrity of the people from whom he learned it, such as his grandmother Lois, his mother Eunice, and Paul. When Paul speaks of Scripture in this context he is referring to what we know as the Old Testament, and Jesus taught how the Scriptures pertain to him. Salvation does not come automatically from reading the Scriptures, but they are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

 Verses 16-17 are the strongest statement in the Bible about itself. We understand that the word “Scripture” now includes the New Testament, since 2 Peter 3:16 cites the writings of Paul among the “Scriptures.” That these Scriptures are inspired (literally, “God-breathed”) indicates they originate in God. Their purpose is to teach us what is right and correct what is wrong in our lives. In that way they will train us in the doing of the good work that God has prepared for us to do.

*Thank you for Scripture, Lord, for it teaches truth and how to live it. Amen.*

**Friday, April 29 2 Peter 1:12-18**

*“We saw with our own eyes”*

 The apostle Peter, one of the original twelve disciples, writes a letter to fellow believers in which he will explore the erroneous ideas and practices of certain so-called Christians. But before he launches into these specifics, he does two things: (1) He commends his readers for their spiritual maturity (verse 12), and (2) he lets them know that he writes to them as one who is himself near death (verses 13-15).

 The “we” of verses 16-18 refer to Peter and the other apostles, since it was only they who were eyewitnesses of the Transfiguration. Peter’s point is that the fact of Christ’s transfiguration, and thus also the belief that he will come again, rests on the testimony of several apostolic eyewitnesses. Christ’s coming again in glory was a part of the basic gospel message preached by the apostles. The readers of this letter had received that message, and it was crucial that they held on to it and didn’t allow false teachers in the church to dissuade them of the truth of Christ’s return.

*The witness of those who saw you, Lord, strengthens my faith in you. Amen.*

**Saturday, April 30 2 Peter 1:19-21**

*“Moved by the Spirit, they spoke from God”*

 As with Peter and the other eyewitness apostles, the prophets of the Old Testament also testify to Christ’s glorious appearance at the end of history. The prophets’ predictions did not arise from their own private ideas about what the visions they received meant, for what the prophets said did not have its origin in their personal interpretation. Rather, they spoke from God as the Holy Spirit led them what to say and record.

 The claims of the Bible itself demand that we fully acknowledge both that specific human beings wrote the words of Scripture, and that God caused the words he wanted to be written to be written. How, then, is the truthfulness of the claims of biblical Christianity established in the heart of an individual? It requires both the text and the Holy Spirit. The Bible gives evidence regarding Christ, but evidence without the work of the Spirit will be of no use; but a refusal to appeal to evidence flies in the face of both the historical nature of God’s revelation to humanity and the witness of the early Christian themselves, such as that given here by Peter.

*Through the Spirit’s work in me, Lord, your Word reveals truth to me. Amen.*