*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

May 2 - 7

*Letters of Paul*

**Monday, May 2 2 Timothy 4:1-2**

*“Preach the Word of God”*

 Verse 1 begins Paul’s final exhortation and appeal to Timothy. The opening is in the form of a charge to “preach the Word of God,” given in light of the presence of God and Christ Jesus in Timothy’s life, and remembering that Jesus will one day return to judge the living and the dead. From various biblical texts we learn that future judgment will be a complex event. Not only will all be judged before the great throne, resulting in eternal life or death, but our lives as servants of the Lord will be evaluated. In 1 Corinthians 3:12-15, Paul specifically focuses on how each Christian’s contribution to the ministry of the church will be evaluated.

 To “preach the Word of God” is to preach God’s truth. To “be prepared” contains the idea of standing by, taking a position of readiness. The third, fourth and fifth imperatives (“correct, rebuke, encourage”) reflect the necessity of a strong ministry in view of false teaching at Ephesus. The modifying words “patience” and “good teaching” denote that both a good attitude and good teaching are important when presenting the truth of God.

*I pray for those who preach your Word, Lord, and for those who hear. Amen.*

**Tuesday, May 3 2 Timothy 4:3-5**

*“The rejection of sound doctrine”*

 Verse 3 explains the reason for the charge in verses 1-2. The Word must be preached because sound doctrine is going to be rejected. The future tense describes a situation that is already coming into being. People will gather teachers around them, the verb conveying the idea of heaping up an assortment of things, of accumulating teachers such as these. They are not teachers of truth. Instead, their appeal is that they suit the sinful desires of the people. People will listen eagerly because of their itching ears, that is, ears that want to be soothed with agreeable pleasantries.

 Verse 5 begins with “but you.” In spite of this movement away from the truth, Timothy must think clearly, fully aware of all that is going on. This means that he has to endure hardship, for the teachers of itchy ears will not appreciate Timothy pointing out their false doctrine. The work to which he must apply himself is that of sharing the Gospel, and the doing of the various responsibilities to which God has called him on behalf of God’s people in Ephesus.

*May my ears hear your true Word, Lord, and not itch for soothing falsehood. Amen.*

**Wednesday, May 4 2 Timothy 4:6-8**

*“The time of my death is near”*

 Paul now offers comments about himself. In his letter to the Philippians he says, “But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering,” while here he writes, “I am already being poured out like a drink offering.” When writing Philippians he hoped for future years of service. Now he realizes the end of his earthly ministry is near.

 Paul makes three statements in verse 7 using a verb in the perfect tense to express each accomplishment of his ministry: “I have fought,” “I have finished,” “I have kept.” The good fight he has fought has been a noble contest. The race he has finished has been a test of endurance. The faith he has kept is his personal relationship with God through Christ.

 In verse 8 he speaks of what is coming. The righteousness that is his has been given him by Christ – he, Paul, is righteous because a righteous Savior died for him and made him righteous. The image of a future award in the form of a crown is not to be understood as something that Paul has earned, but rather as a symbol of something that affirms what is already true of Paul.

*Righteous in you, Lord, I look forward to the day of your appearing. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

May 2 - 7

*Letters of Paul*

**Thursday, May 5 2 Timothy 4:9-15**

*“Come as soon as you can”*

 The reason for Paul’s request that Timothy come to him as soon as he can is that Paul’s ministry companions have been leaving him, and his distress will be compounded if Timothy is delayed. Demas has made the choice of loving the things of the world more than loving the gospel of Jesus Christ. We know nothing about Crescens and his reason for going to Galatia. Like Demas, he may be abandoning the gospel. Or, like Titus, he may have been sent on a mission by Paul.

 The statement in verse 11, “Only Luke is with me,” conveys his sadness that so many from his ministry team having left him, whatever the reasons. “Get Mark” implies that he is not at Ephesus and that Timothy should pick him up on his way to join Paul in Rome. At some point after Paul’s refusal to have Mark continue with him on his missionary journeys (Acts 15:37-40), a change took place in Mark or in Paul, or perhaps in both, that made it possible for Paul to trust Mark again as an associate in his ministry. We don’t know why Paul sent Tychicus to Ephesus, but it may have been in order to lead the ministry once Timothy left to visit Paul.

*How good it is, Lord, to minister with fellow believers. Amen.*

**Friday, May 6 2 Timothy 4:16-18**

*“The Lord stood with me”*

 The first time Paul was tried and acquitted was after the end of Acts when he was being held under Roman house arrest. Now, for the second time, he is imprisoned in Rome and once again awaiting the disposition of his case. That first time the Lord gave Paul strength to withstand the charges, resulting in his being freed to continue preaching the Good News through further missionary travels. Paul emphatically points out that no one came to his defense at his trial – they all deserted him. Paul’s “wish-prayer” that “it not be held against them” is a reminder of the words of forgiveness on the lips of Jesus at his crucifixion.

 That the Lord will deliver him from every evil attack picks up the reference to what Alexander the metalworker did in verse 14. Like the harm of Alexander, the actions of the Roman justice system will not be able to keep Paul from arriving safely in God’s heavenly kingdom. That such is God’s faithfulness to Paul, and to all who suffer for his name’s sake, is cause for praise, both now and forever.

*There is nothing, Lord, which will ever be able to separate me from your love. Amen.*

**Saturday, May 7 2 Timothy 4:19-22**

*“Give my greetings”*

 Paul’s final greetings and personal references are, in the best sense of the word, sentimental. Priscilla and Aquila have meant a great deal to Paul, and Paul has spoken warmly of them in several of his prior letters. Given that the household of Onesiphorus is mentioned rather than Onesiphorus himself suggests that he has died, and this is a sympathetic word to his bereaved family. Paul’s mention of Erastus, who is not with Timothy in Ephesus but in Corinth, without further description, implies that Timothy knows him. He may have been the Erastus mentioned in Romans 16:23 who was Corinth’s director of public works. Trophimus, who is in Miletus, would also have been known to Timothy.

 Verse 21 gives a note of urgency to Timothy’s projected trip to see Paul before winter arrives and the sea lanes are closed. Paul then cites several otherwise unknown people: Eubulus, Pudens Lilnus, and Claudia. The Lord is mentioned one final time at the end of the letter, referencing his presence within through the Spirit and his grace which offers salvation to all.

*Thank you, Lord, for good friends in the faith. Amen.*