*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

May 16 - 21

*Letters of Paul*

**Monday, May 16 Titus 2:11-15**

*“Grace abounds”*

 In verses 1-10 Titus was to tell several specific social groups to demonstrate the truth of God’s Word by the way they lived. Now we see an important reason why they, and we, are able to do that: The same grace that saves us from the penalty of sin helps us to overcome the powerful influence of sin so that we may live the kind of life God calls us to. God’s grace does not stop at the point of salvation but accompanies us on the further journey of our new life, providing the wisdom and direction needed to remake our now-redeemed lives.

 The contrast in verse 12 tells us specifically that we are to turn from (say “no” to) godless living and sinful pleasures. Instead we are to turn to (say “yes” to) wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God. As we live this way, empowered by God’s ongoing grace, we look forward with hope to the day when Jesus returns and all that God has said “no” to will disappear and all that God has said “yes” to will remain forever, including those who by faith have accepted his Son, Jesus Christ, as their Lord and Savior.

*Thank you for your grace, Lord, which helps me live each day in you. Amen.*

**Tuesday, May 17 Titus 3:1-3**

*“How believers are to live”*

 The section begins with a reminder to be subject to and obey rulers and authorities. That, of course, is not new to Paul’s writings (see especially Romans 13:1-10). This little paragraph in Titus moves the reader from the requirements of specific governmental regulations to having a humble Christian attitude in all social relationships. The steps in between are not necessarily in any logical sequence, but rather pick up sample elements of Christian attitudes to others. Doing good, not slandering people, being peaceable in relationships, and being considerate of others keep us from self-congratulation for the mere observance of law.

 There is an implied contrast between the Christian who seeks to express the love that is the goal of God’s law and the person who cannot even be subject and obedient to secular authorities. One can perhaps picture a wealthy Scrooge conferring with his accountant and tax attorney, looking for loopholes in the law that will save him taxes, in contrast to a businessman or woman who gives away as much as possible to help those in need.

*To follow your rules, Lord, is to follow the rule of love. Amen.*

**Wednesday, May 18 Titus 3:4-8**

*“A trustworthy saying”*

 Verses 4-7 contain a “trustworthy saying,” an expression that Paul uses here and in other letters to refer to a statement that contains fundamental truth about the Good News of Jesus Christ. Because Jesus himself can be trusted as (1) our *way* to God the Father, as (2) the *truth* of God revealed in a human being, and (3) the *life* of God offered to all, these sayings about him can be trusted to teach what is necessary for salvation.

 According to the saying, God has revealed his kindness and love. While not said directly, the implication is that God did this when he sent his Son into the world that the world might be saved through him. This salvation is not available based on human achievement – not even the achievement of living a righteous life. This salvation is available only and completely because of God’s mercy. Through the forgiveness of sin, available because of Christ’s death on the cross, a new birth and a new life are ours. The Holy Spirit, who brings about this new birth and new life, comes to live within the believer, and he is the guarantee of our eternal life.

*I trust your Word, Lord, which declares that in Christ I am saved. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

May 16 - 21

*Letters of Paul*

**Thursday, May 19 Ephesians 2:4-10**

*“Saved by grace when we believed”*

 This passage is one of the clearest, most expressive, and most loved descriptions of salvation in the New Testament. Including verses 1-3, it contains several “formerly-now” contrasts which distinguish a life of sin and alienation before Christ from a life of faith in Christ: living in sin versus living in good works prepared by God; this world versus the heavenly realm; death versus life; sinful nature versus union with Christ; wrath versus mercy and salvation; by nature versus by grace; salvation by works versus salvation through faith.

 The main problem in applying this passage to our own lives is for us to take it seriously. For the most part, we do not believe the picture of ourselves is as bad as Paul says. Are the lives we so carefully groom meaningless – a living death – without God in the picture? On the other hand, we find it hard to believe that God really loves us so deeply. The passage is about value and hope: Without God humanity has little of either; with God humanity is given immense hope and lasting value.

*I am as sinful, Lord, and your grace is as wonderful as you say. Amen.*

**Friday, May 20 Titus 3:9-11**

*“Some words about controversies”*

 The handling of controversies is an important matter in the letters of Paul. The reason given here for avoiding them is that they are unprofitable and useless. In 2 Timothy 2:23 the reason is because stupid arguments produce quarrels, which are contrary to the attitude a servant of the Lord should have in trying to attract others to the faith. For Titus, the uselessness of controversy relates to its ineffectiveness in changing others. Therefore, after a couple of warnings, Titus is to have nothing to do with an argumentative person.

 Verse 11 gives the reason why this person should be rejected: the individual’s hopeless nature. This does not mean that grace is never extended, for the person has already had both a first and a second warning. What has been established is that this divisive person cannot be changed by words, even the words of God’s truth, for they have turned away from the truth. Their sinful persistence in causing divisions among God’s people shows their master is not God but the evil one.

*You desire unity among your people, Lord, and for this we pray. Amen.*

**Saturday, May 21 Titus 3:12-15**

*“Final remarks”*

 Everyone likes stories about people. *Reader’s Digest* discovered this fact many years ago. The popular books in Christian bookstores often are those that are full of illustrations about people. The Gospels contain narratives and parables about people. Thus, one almost has a feeling of relief when, after the heavy instruction in this letter to Titus, Paul also talks about people.

 This closing section stirs up the imagination. We like to think about the busy apostle preparing for where he will spend the winter. Did he plan to take any time for vacation? We wonder what Zenas the lawyer was like and why he and Apollos were the special objects of Paul’s loving care. Every instruction about doctrine, every warning about heresy, and every encouragement to holiness and good works is effective only as it is realized in the lives of real people. Surely one of the joys of heaven will be to meet those who throughout the ages have discovered the love of God in Christ Jesus.

*Thank you, Lord, for the people in my life. Amen.*