

In Our Own Words



Christ Lutheran Church
Route 27 & Davis Mill Road (2.5 miles north of Rt. 355)
Germantown, MD



Lenten Devotional Booklet

2021

The Pastoral Epistles

Lent 2021

1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus are called the Pastoral Epistles because the apostle Paul writes to his sons in the faith encouraging and instructing them. Several times throughout these letters Paul lists the criteria of holiness for “overseers and elders,” namely pastors. Pastors are called to a holy life and will even incur a stricter judgment (James 3:1). Pastors must be “apt to teach.” But the teaching doesn’t end with pastors. Paul instructs Timothy, “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2).

These epistles are not meant for pastors only. God’s teaching and instruction have passed through teachers such as Paul, Timothy, and Titus, down through the generations even reaching us today. In these letters Paul also gives instruction to many different kinds of people. Men and woman, young and old, slave and free. Each one has a specific calling and purpose. Each one of us is called to keep the Ten Commandments, but we each follow them within our own context and vocation. God is merciful to grant us such specific instruction.

Even though God gives us excellent instruction we still cannot and do not keep his will perfectly. Lent is a penitential season when we especially remember our sins and seek a renewed righteousness. We thank the Lord that our Lenten season ends with Good Friday when we especially remember Jesus’ death on the cross. Yes, we remember why Jesus had to die: because of our sin. But we also remember that by His death he has destroyed sin and death for us. And after His rest in the tomb, by His glorious resurrection, He has justified us and granted us new and eternal life.

Therefore, during this Lenten season, may the gospel of Jesus be at the forefront of our minds. May all our teachings, words, and actions flow from it. And may we entrust this good news to those who will be able to teach others also.

Pastor Abraham McNally

Friday, February 19

1 Timothy 1:12-17

The Foremost of Sinners

I find the Conversion of St. Paul to be one of the most amazing stories in the Bible. Why didn't God just dispense with Paul and get someone else? Well, it turned out God knew what he was doing.

There was a strikingly similar event in college. The worst "hell-raiser" on campus one night fell to his knees, accepted Christ and became the #1 evangelist there. I met him later. I don't know what reaction he got from his former colleagues, but he obviously didn't care.

You may think, "God made a great preacher out of Martin Luther, but he couldn't do that with me." Wrong. He doesn't do that with many (the pulpit would get crowded), but He could. The foundation stones of an arch are just as important as the keystone, even though you may not be able to see them. (They are probably ugly anyway.)

You may not have heard of Philo T. Farnsworth. He is considered by many to be the inventor of television. (Where would we be without our TVs?) You may not be familiar with Franklin Graham, son of Billy Graham. He heads a relief organization, Samaritan's Purse, which operates worldwide. His "company plane" is a 747, same as the President of the United States.

Don't be as concerned with what you are not as what you can be. If you follow God's plan for you it will be important to somebody, and who that somebody is, God knows.

Prayer: Heavenly Father let me not feel that although on the great cosmic scale I am nothing, but that in Your all-encompassing sight I am something, and can do something. Art Delagrange

Saturday, February 20

1 Timothy 1:18-20

Fight the Good Fight

Paul is instructing Timothy how to live for the benefit of the new Church: "Fight Like a Good Soldier" We might find the word "Fight" odd, as people tend to think of Christians as pacifists. Indeed, Jesus once instructed Peter not to use his sword. (But note that he had been allowed to carry one.)

Back then physical battle was the rule of the day for convincing someone else to accept your rule of governance, or your religion. Indeed, Jesus had to admonish his followers.

The spiritual realm is no less of a battle, indeed greater. In the physical realm you would fight by day, then get the night off. In the spiritual realm it goes on 24/7. You may be attacked when you do not expect it, maybe not even realize it. Your biggest battles might come alone, in the middle of the night. You may be your own worst enemy.

On the other hand, our greatest asset, Jesus, is there for us at all times and in all places. One of our biggest mistakes is to ignore Him and try to go it on our own.

The complementary error is to just sit back and expect Jesus to do it all. If He was going to, I suspect He would have done it already. But He has chosen to include us as His fighting comrades, indeed, His brothers and sisters, and He knows best.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me stand beside You in the Good Fight, since then You will be standing beside me, which is all I could ever ask for. Amen Art Delagrange

Monday, February 22

Timothy 2:1-8

Admonition to PRAY

Pray much for others: plead for God's mercy upon them: give thanks for all he is going to do for them. These are God's words.

As I was reading this passage, that I had asked Mr. Joe to choose for me, I knew right away this was appropriate for me in many ways right now. I need to begin healing from the recent decisions happening in my (our) world.

We have to pray for all of those who have authority over us, all in high places of high responsibility that we may live in peace.

When we do not receive what we mostly desire in life, we need to have FAITH in GOD and CHRIST, who are our Saviors even when we don't see it in our timely fashion but in His due time.

We have to pray for the devisers, that they we may live in a more peaceful and respectful world.

PRAYER is the only ADMONITION we have and it works even though it seems remote.

God is here and Christ is between to bridge us to Him all we have to do is ask for His help. Seems complicated, yet so simple if you believe.

Prayer: Thank you God for loving me. Amen. Carol Bartels

Tuesday, February 23

1 Timothy 2:9-15

A Woman's Guide for Living the Christian Faith

The book of 1 Timothy delineates the story of the young pastor Timothy, restoring order to the church of Ephesus under the instructions and teachings of Paul, facilitating numerous tactics aimed towards the removal of false doctrine. In this chapter/verses Timothy particularizes his injunctions on worship and women's conduct guidelines, at first glance, I found myself at odds with these specific verses from a precisely literal, word-for-word at face value (ipsissimus verbus) stance, and have the utmost consideration and respect for the reader as well as my own faith to be entirely forthright in my interpretation.

In order to fully understand the purpose of Timothy's instructions for women in these verses, I had to excogitate (think out) the intentions behind the entire book. Then I envisioned myself in Timothy's shoes, and the amount of adversity he was confronting by taking on such a daunting assignment- not to mention at his age! He had to start somewhere right? This book illustrates him going back to the conservative basics of the faith area by area, listing criteria for each subject how-to live-in alignment with Christian Faith. Although these verses impress as commands, once taking in the book as a whole, they appear rather as a redirection; to divert focus away from exorbitant self-image via materialism and meretricious appearance. Hence, alternatively focusing on pious experiences and good deeds rather than indulgence on exorbitant self-image, materialism, and meretricious appearance. Conjointly, in verses 11-12, the directive emphasizes one's commitment solely to their own Christian faith, in full surrender, full focus on the individual's walk in Christ void of anything or anyone else.

Prayer: Holy Father, may we walk in pure faith and alignment with you, in all ways possible. I relinquish the ways of the material world in complete absolution, to live in harmony with the Lord. Amen.

Ashley Gray

Wednesday, February 24

1 Timothy 3:1-7

Qualifications of an Overseer

Perhaps when I think of overseers, or also would be called elders, there is a certain level of respect. But one that recognizes the responsibility of care over others. As Timothy mentions, a leader must be full of humility, and certainly not seeking a position to gain approval or power. It should be from a heart of love and care. As Jesus came not to be served, but to serve for the Glory of his Father, so should those who are instructed to care for others in the church. Jesus showed, through his respect for women and children, and the disadvantaged, of how a true shepherd of a flock should behave.

Prayer: Lord, thank You for reminding us of how You want us to lead those who are entrusted to us in our life. For those who are entrusted as Overseers over us, I pray you give them the strength to lead with humility. I pray also that You give them a heart to care for and lead those in the church, just as You our Father in Heaven has shown Your care for us. Amen.
Jeremy Depp

Thursday, February 25

1 Timothy 3:8-13

Requirements for Deacons

Paul is giving Timothy standards for the new Church. Previously he covered priests; this time it is deacons, and is quite similar. Our Church doesn't have deacons; the equivalent would be Council members or members of long standing.

They must be true to the Faith. I would be hard pressed to explain exactly why an atheist could not do the job, but I agree it would not work.

They must not have been married more than once. I have heard young people talking about what they want out of a first marriage. They just don't understand. It is normally forever. Jesus describes the Church as His 'bride', and even talks about the "marriage supper". Weddings today can get quite earthy, and I doubt that it was any different then, but this doesn't seem to bother Jesus.

Deacons should be able to manage their families. Again, the job is something more than could be done by a hireling. I have known priests that have had marital problems, and there was always a negative impact on their job.

So much for priests and deacons. How about the rest of us? The Bible speaks of different stations in Heaven, but as far as I can tell, the only thing that really matters is whether you're in or out. I once arrived at an airport gate just before flight time. They already had the door of the plane closed, and they refused to reopen it, I watched from the ground as the plane took off. Not a pleasant feeling.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, don't let me make the mistake of trying to squeak by. I want to be with you when you ascend to Heaven for the last time. Amen.
Art Delagrange

Friday, February 26

1 Timothy 3:14-16

The Mystery of Godliness

In today's text Paul instructs his spiritual son, Timothy, how Christians ought to conduct themselves in the household of God which is the Church. This is far more than coming to worship on time, bringing your offering, and paying attention to the sermon. Paul is talking about the very heart of our witness to the world. We share God's truth through the actions of our lives. Paul calls this "the great mystery of godliness".

Looking at the meaning behind a few of Paul's words the depth of his teaching becomes clear, or perhaps a bit uncomfortable.

The "Church" is not just the building where we attend worship. The Church is people redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. They are the ekklēsia, the "called out ones", seeking to live godly, holy lives of piety. Words we've misunderstood and rejected.

"Oh! We don't want to be like that! We don't want people to think we are better than they are, or holier than thou." But that is just Paul's point. If we don't live by different values than the world, the redeeming sacrifice of Christ has no meaning. We have nothing different in our faith to offer to others.

The tragedy of our age is that Christian values are not very different from those of the world. Christians cling to all the same "idols" the world worships. We trust all of the same idols for our security and peace. We are afraid to be different.

But Jesus is very different. God didn't enter our world to bring an environmental program, a new program to care for the poor, or teach us how to cure more diseases. He came to redeem us from the power of sin and death. He came to change hearts.

It is only this truth displayed in the daily lives of those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ that will change the world and bring us the peace we all long for.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, You have called us to be the Church. We are not better than anyone else. We are sinners redeemed by Your gracious love. Help us to be willing to show that same love to those in our world. Amen.

Pastor Emeritus Irvin Stapf

Saturday, February 27

1 Timothy 4:1-5

Some Will Fall Away

I feel that this passage is saying how in the latter days many people will follow worldly or materialistic things. Worshipping them instead of God. As time passes on more and more people will be ungrateful for what God has provided and commanded of us. I often think of the blessings God has given me and I encourage you to think of your own blessings. By doing so you can thank God and draw closer to Him.

**Prayer: God, I thank You for the blessings You have given me,
Amen.**

Jenna Raymond

Monday, March 1

1 Timothy 4:6-10

Spiritual Discipline

In these passages, Paul seems so much like a helpful dad, who is trying to instill good values in his son Timothy. Timothy was teaching the values of Christ Jesus to new converts, but at the same time among them, there were Gnostics, who were trying their best to give wrong life instruction to everyone.

These new Christians were needing Spiritual guidance for their lives and the world around them was saying that this was folly. Paul is saying to rigorously train yourselves to be Godly and to give our lives over to God rather than to seek out debauchery. Our Father has done everything to show us how to be pure and lead lives that are best for us.

I can understand what Paul and Timothy were going through, because it seems that every time Jan and I gather with grandchildren, we seem to instruct them on the rights and wrongs of this life, so that they will make proper decisions when trials come upon them. We know they will come!

Everything that God has created is good and was made for our enjoyment and good health. Foods also! Nothing is to be rejected if it is received with Thanksgiving and is consecrated by the word of God and prayer. Our Lord wants us to reach out and consult Him about what is right and proper for our life. Paul says physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things holding promise for the present life and life to come eternally. We must strive and labor to keep our hope in the Living God and Savior of all people.

Prayer: Father, please continue to urge us through your Spirit, to be faithful servants, and strive for your everlasting life. AMEN.

Bruce Gladhill

Tuesday, March 2

1 Timothy 4:11-16

Instructions for Timothy and all pastors

Paul is writing to Timothy instructing him on pastoring and caring for his church in Ephesus: to refute false teachings, appoint qualified leaders, to conduct church worship.

Pastors are not only responsible to read, teach, and preach God's holy word, they have the authority to administer the sacraments of the Lord's Supper (communion) and baptism. They also perform marriage ceremonies and preside at funerals.

God's word tells us that pastors should set an example for believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and purity. But the way I see it, these are standards for all believers.

We must live a life that shows others we love, believe, trust, and have faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. In this way we will not only be saved and have everlasting life but we may save others along the way.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help us to be instruments to bring others to you. Amen.

Janice Delagrance

Wednesday, March 3

1 Timothy 5:1-8

Fruits of the Spirit

I think Paul is showing us how the out working of the fruits of the Spirit should look like in our human relationships. Since everyone is created in the image of God and bear His image, we should exercise humility, patience, kindness, gentleness and self-control when dealing with each other. Instead of just saying "be humble" or "be kind" he gives examples of exactly what this looks like in a practical every day way. (Specially to Dance teachers :)

Prayer: Our Father and our God you gave us your holy word as a lamp to our feet and a light for our path. Help us not to be conformed to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of our minds that we may reflect your glory relating to each other as put down for us in 1Tim 5:1-8. Amen.

Tom and Elizabeth Ondulich

Thursday, March 4

1 Timothy 5:9-16

Care and instructions for Widows

Some things change in life, and some things do not! Just as we must find ways to assist with managing lives within our church, so did our forebears!

In this passage, Paul is giving a kind of management 101 class for "how to support widows". His advice to Timothy was to have the church provide support for widows over 60—especially those with no families. He encouraged believers to support widows from within their own families and he recommended that younger widows be encouraged to marry again, have children and lead productive lives that did not encourage idleness.

Paul urged all believers to lead lives in which they show devotion to doing good deeds, showing hospitality, and helping those in trouble. If we all led lives as Paul suggests, there would be far less need for other kinds of support and far more folks available to provide the support we all need.

Prayer: Dear Father, help us to heed Paul's advice to Timothy by helping each of us to find ways we can assist those in need especially those who have no family. Help us to find opportunities to do good deeds, show hospitality and help those who are in trouble. Thank you for providing us with directions to help us lead productive lives that demonstrate our love and worship of You. May we wrap our arms around your children as a way to show our love for You! In our Lord's name, Amen. Sue Geiger

Friday, March 5

1 Timothy 5:17-22

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CHURCH LEADERS

In today's text Paul advises Timothy regarding the conduct of elders who direct church affairs. As you read these six verses do you think, "I'm not an elder of the church so I can just relax"? No! This Lent's devotional takes us through the Pastoral Epistles; where Paul is instructing two of his chief assistants (one in Ephesus the other in Crete) how to advocate for God and Christ Jesus and how to encourage home churches. He says they should be without partiality or favoritism. In verse 19, he echo's Matthew 18:15-19 regarding a brother who sins against you. We cite this same text in our Church Constitution and By Laws under the heading of Discipline.

In verse 22, Paul says "Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and not to share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure". It took me some time to see that he's not talking about for healing, but as his two elders were to develop churches of believers, they should examine the leaders they designate and lay hands on them as a sign of vestiture. His advice for them to remain pure displays his expectation that they be self-disciplined, as good Christian examples.

Paul's instructions throughout these Epistle's remind me of the statues of the three monkeys (see no, hear no and say no evil). Evil is bad its opposite is God or good. Therefore, we should seek God by looking for Him, hearing Him and speaking of and to Him. Of these three I believe the most import is that of hearing Him. All scripture cites the word of God and Christ Jesus states "... he who has ears let him hear". Today's world, rejecting God.

Prayer: Merciful God, let us truly hear and digest your Holy Word. Help us to do what is right in our dealings with all peoples, in Jesus Holy Name. Amen.

Joe Flesch

Saturday, March 6

1 Timothy 5:23-24

God's Care for Physical and Spiritual Health

Here again this passage is appropriate for our current times; Sin is Sin. It does not mean you have to give up wine, certain sweets, or anything that should be in moderation, our own self-discipline is the key.

This also includes the words that come out of our mouths. This includes anyone in authority who led sinful lives; they are quick to sit in judgement of others. There is ONE thing for sure "GOD KNOWS" and there is no way getting around that.

We should be taught when we are children of a time and season for everything, so when we are confronted with decisions, we will have the ability to reason. Taking this tool away from us at any age leaves us angry and unsatisfied and often times we don't know that we are suffering such malnutrition.

God loves us so much that he gave his Son to die for us, God believes in us he knows we are capable of making LOVING, PEACEFUL, PRAYERFUL decisions. This is God's Care for our Physical, Spiritual and Mental Health.

Prayer: Thank you, God, for the gift of the Ability to REASON and Bless those who are in fear.

Carol Bartels

Monday, March 8

1 Timothy 6:1-2

Instructions for Slaves

In this passage Paul speaks to slaves telling them to give full respect to their masters to honor God. If their master also happens to be a Christian, then the slave is to redouble his efforts rather than to relax or reduce his service because he realizes that the one that will be benefiting is a brother or sister in Christ.

Since we are slaves to what we believe, that is the way it speaks to me. My words and attitude should be full of respect and honor to all whom I serve because my actions reflect on and honor God.

Dear Lord, give me the discernment I need for each day to serve and honor You with my faith and obedience. Amen.

Carolyn Shriver

Tuesday, March 9

1 Timothy 6:3-5

There is Only One True God

1 Timothy tells the story of young pastor Timothy, elder to the church of Ephesus under teaching of Paul, facilitating numerous tactics aimed at removing false doctrine. In these verses, Paul urgently reinforces the prominence of adhering to the teachings of Jesus Christ. Paul details the consequence of heeding spurious gospel, masqueraded as “truth.” Paul warns Timothy that following false doctrine causes petty squabbles, skepticism, and pursuit of material power and wealth. Paul continues that true wealth and bounty are fruits of faith in Christ. Peace of mind is from wanting of nothing other than a closer walk with Him.

This is a prevalent situation in our everyday life. It’s easy to become caught up in material possessions, power, and money. It consumes many who choose to worship money as God, and becomes a cancerous addiction and disease (in the name of “truth”), rather than choosing what feeds the soul, such as becoming one with Christ. I personally carry a heavy heart on this subject regarding how our society and so many of my peers/loved ones are entrapped in this malignant deception—even those who claim they are devout in faith! I am sad that they lack empathy and helping others because they worship money and material objects. It hardens their hearts, affects their judgment of others and sometimes to the extent of harming family members. I watch as it abets major problems we face socially as human beings, affecting everyone in the process; thus, it’s a vicious cycle of sin originating from the beginning of time and it still infests every corner of our Earth today. Paul was wise to insist on the significance of straying from the path of Christ, today we all witness this vicious cycle of sin each day. A life in Christ yields love, compassion, understanding, and most importantly a desire to strive to better serve Him.

Prayer: Holy Father, it is easy to become ensnared in the deceptions of the world in the name of truth. Help us keep our hearts open to You, may we always carry Godly awareness with us to see what is counterfeit and fallacious, steering clear of all that draws us away from You. Amen.

Ashley Gray

Wednesday, March 10

1 Timothy 6:6-10

Greed vs Contentment

How many times have you or a member of your family seen something and immediately said, I need that!

Your kids "need" a new toy, your husband "needs" a new tool, (he already has the same tool, but just in case, needs another one).

Mom sees a beautiful purse, (she has a closet full of beautiful purses), but she "needs" this one.

It is often hard to distinguish between needs and wants. Our wants can quickly take over our lives and greed take our lives.

We must not allow greed to take over, we must love Gods work more than money, and share what we have with others.

Most importantly avoid the love of money, be content with what God has given you.

Prayer: Father, I pray I will know my needs and not allow myself to become a slave to my wants. I pray that I will be content with what you have provide, Amen.

Helen Gibson

Thursday, March 11

1 Timothy 6:11-16

Flee from Evil. Pursue Righteousness.

Should we be sitting down waiting for God to act first? Many people believe that Christianity is a passive religion, that we should be waiting for God to act first in our lives.

The answer to this statement is NO! We must take charge and be active in our faith. We must obey God and do what we know is right in our hearts.

Keep the promise to be active in our faith, serve God, be in charge of our Christian life. Obey God with courage and do what we know is right in his eyes.

So, get going, don't wait, take charge, be active in your faith.

Prayer: Father, I pray I will always serve and be active in my faith, not sit back and wait for you to act first. Amen.

Helen Gibson

Friday, March 12

1 Timothy 6:17-21

Put your hope in God

The riches this world has to give is nothing compared to the riches God gives to us. First and foremost, He gave His son freely so that we could have eternal life with Him. He gives us family, friends, the beauty of nature and many other things if we only take time and look.

We should be satisfied with what the Lord gives, but our mind and our eyes continue wandering to what the world has. The Lord wants us to be rich in good deeds laying a good foundation for what is to come. We can do this by guarding the truth which has been entrusted to us (2 Timothy 1:14) and not listen to the godless chatter and contradictions that the world calls knowledge.

In these uncertain and uncomfortable times let us continue in the Word which will give us the truth which sets us free. This truth is far greater than the riches of the world.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, there is so much you want us to learn from your word. Please let us be willing to be taught by you. Help us to hear you above the voices of the world. Amen Jan Gladhill

Saturday, March 13

2 Timothy 1:1-7

Legacy of Faith

In these verses, Paul reminds Timothy of his beautiful legacy of faith. That which is Timothy's heritage; Paul reminds Timothy that his sincere faith first lived in his grandmother, Lois, his mother, Eunice, and now lives in him.

I love and thank God that I also have a beautiful legacy of faith. My grandparents, my parents, and now me. My mother was my strongest teacher and disciplinarian. So, Mom was the teacher, often singing hymns to me and having me then sing them with her when I found trouble and heartache or it found me. Songs like *"What A Friend We Have In Jesus"* and *"Abide With Me"* are two of my favorites when my siblings or friends seemed unkind or unsupportive. When days seem wearisome (as some have with these Covid-19 restrictions) I find singing those wonderful hymns that remind me that I am never alone and, in some way, God will help me be a blessing to others although I am not with them. My father just loved me unconditionally and taught me in his non-judgmental way that no matter where I went or what I did his love would always be with me. WOW reminds me so much of the promise of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. No matter where I am or what I am doing They abide with me always. Surely a God-Gifted legacy for me.

But my story doesn't end with me. Nor did Timothy's story end with him. We are told to follow the Spirit of God who makes us bold to use His power in love and self-discipline. And to use that power to help others come to Jesus and find their faith or to encourage and uplift others so their faith grows.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for your mercies and those you have given us to help us grow in our faith and love for You. Help us to share those blessings with others. Amen. Jeane Flesch

Monday, March 15

2 Timothy 1:8-14

Guard the Treasure Entrusted to You

We always look forward to the great Christmas movies shown every year in December. I've always enjoyed "It's A Wonderful Life", with Jimmy Stewart and how his uncle, at the most crucial time, misplaces several thousand dollars he was supposed to deposit in the bank. The Bailey's and the old "Savings and Loan" had put faith and trust in the uncle to do the proper thing with all the money.

Well, this passage today is dwelling on the aspect of being faithful and trusting in God's precepts. Paul is reaching out to Timothy with another letter and begins pleading with him to remain steadfast in the knowledge being given about the Lord Jesus Christ and His mercy and grace. Paul is urging him to have a clear conscience and to never be ashamed of his beliefs. This perfect grace given to all of us, was there at the beginning of time and shines forth forever.

Paul's intention is to encourage Timothy to keep these sound teachings and keep them in his heart, and to instruct everyone in the same way. In the 14th verse, he asks Timothy to guard the good deposit that is being entrusted to him. In our Christian lives, we are asked to stand firm and guard our deposits and be faithful and just, until our Lord returns.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you so much for your eternal grace and continue guiding us with your truth and blessings forever. AMEN.

Bruce Gladhill

Tuesday, March 16

2 Timothy 1:15-18

Faithful and Unfaithful Men

For me, it is impossible to read of 2 Timothy chapter 1 without a feeling of gratitude for the Apostle Paul, a noble minister of Jesus Christ. With pure love, obedience and a positive countenance, he testified of the risen Christ to the Gentiles across much of the known world. Throughout his ministry, he faced perils, hostilities, disloyalty and torture; yet he wavered not in his devotion to his ministry. His trust in God persuades him that "all things work together for good to them that love God".

Writing to Timothy, Paul mourns not for himself in his old age, abandoned to ruthless men and in prison chains. Yet, he is saddened by the apostasy of previously strong believers who now fear men more than God. Two previously zealous followers of Christ, Phygelus and Hermogenes have turned away in Paul's need for support and comfort. They forsake the paths of true religion, to love and comfort those in need. No murmur or complaint is expressed by Paul, only sadness for the defection of these two from Christ.

Onesiphorus on his frequent trips to Rome, sought out at great personal risk, the location of Apostle Paul. He being strong in faith and loyalty, "refreshes [Paul]" by his visits. This faithful servant of God, was rock-solid in his trust in the divine. Unlike his colleagues from Asia Minor, Onesiphorus understood that through Jesus Christ "sin had lost its power, death its sting and the grave its victory".

The powers of good and evil are all around us. Each day our choices to be faithful in Christ Jesus, draws us to goodness. Each daily habit of faithful Christian ministry guards us from the fiery darts of evil. Yet, there will come times when we face strong challenges – do I trust the opinions of others or the opinion of God more when making decisions?

Prayer: God of all humanity, grant us humility to trust in thy word; that we may walk the straight path of goodness and love for all, never deviating, Amen.

Chris Matthews

Wednesday, March 17

2 Timothy 2:1-2

Four Generations of Faith

The text for today comes from Paul's letter to Timothy whom he addresses as his dear son. In chapter 1 of this epistle, he writes to Timothy to encourage him in his ministry. He reminds him that his grandmother and his mother were women of faith in Christ Jesus and including Paul his adoptive father. Timothy has really four generations of faithful antecedents. He reminds Timothy that he (Paul) gave him the gift of God by the laying on of his hands. Here in chapter 2, Paul is encouraging his son, who is in Ephesus, to be strong in Christ Jesus and to entrust the teachings of Paul to reliable men who can then teach others. We must remember that in Paul's day the churches were groups of believers who met in homes, there were no Church Buildings or Christian Temples. In fact, they were under persecution for not honoring local gods.

There are many today who warn us that we Christians could be forced go underground again, if we do not deny God. As we view current events and the vitriol aimed at Christians in our society it is time for each of us to be prepared to put on the whole armor of God and to stand fast in our belief in God the Father, Christ Jesus His Son and the Holy Spirit. Remember if we die in Christ we will also live in Christ.

Prayer: Lord God, steel our faith in times of trial and tribulation and let us also be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus in Whose Holy Name we pray. Amen.

Joe Flesch

Thursday, March 18

2 Timothy 2:3-7

A Soldier for Christ

"Onward Christian Soldiers marching as to war, with the cross of Jesus going on before."

I remember like it was yesterday teaching our children's Sunday School class this song. After they learned the first verse, I closed the Sunday School door and taught them how they could "march like soldiers" quietly around the room. One of the children carried the American flag as we "marched like soldiers" quietly around the room.

In our Scripture for today, Paul reminds Timothy to take his share of suffering as a good soldier of Christ. A good soldier's aim is to satisfy the one who enlisted him. He also tells him a good athlete is not crowned if he doesn't compete and try to win. And it is the hard-working farmer that should have the first fruits of his harvest. Paul also reminds Timothy, and us, that the Lord will grant him understanding in everything.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, grant us your mercy when we fail to be "soldiers for Christ." We pray that we learn and practice all that Christ has taught us about keeping our minds and eyes on Him and reading his word every day. Praying in His name. Amen.

Audrey Stapf

Friday, March 19

2 Timothy 2:8-13

Remember Jesus

Remember Jesus is God, as shown by the fact that he rose again from the dead, but was human also as a descendant from David.

Jesus experienced persecution to the point of death on the cross for our forgiveness and salvation.

Paul tells us that after his conversion he suffered much for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ (imprisoned, flogged, stoned, shipwrecked, etc.). But he was more than willing to suffer if it would bring salvation and eternal life to him and those who would believe.

The truth is if we suffer or even die for Jesus' sake, it means we will begin living with him in heaven. And if we think our present service for Jesus is hard, just remember that someday we will reign with him. But if we give up when we suffer, and turn against Jesus, he must turn away from us. Even when our faith is weak, he will remain faithful to us. Jesus will never forsake us and he keeps his promises.

Keep your eyes focused on Jesus. Remember what happened to Peter when he took his eyes off Jesus on the water.

There are risks in keeping our faith. Are we willing to take these risks?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, we are grateful that you love us and will never forsake us. Amen

Janice Delagrange

Saturday, March 20

2 Timothy 2:14-19

Be Diligent

Oh my, but we are surely bombarded with all kinds of misinformation in our world today. It seems that there are those out to steal our money, steal our identity, steal our confidence, and perhaps the cruelest of all steal our faith. Nothing new according to Paul in his 2nd letter to Timothy.

Yep, he tells of Hymenaeus and Philetus who departed from the truth. They destroyed the faith of some, those who would listen and have their faith shaken to the core by Hymenaeus' and Philetus' deceitful lies. We too have false prophets and teachers around us. They share information that is surely their personal interpretation or their personal bias; instead of the truth. And perhaps one of their worse misrepresentations is to change the words of the Holy Bible to fit their understanding of current social norms and what they deem to be "politically correct." Joe and I left our prior church because sacred documents were being changed.

Paul reminds us in the 19th verse "The Lord knows those who are his," and "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."

So how do we know what to believe and not become unbelievers through our cynicism? We are blessed by the Word of God; the Bible. If it isn't in the Bible and if through our prayers for wisdom, discernment, and courage we are not finding it true then in all probability it isn't. Remember when Jesus said He would send One to protect us and guide us? That is The Holy Spirit who always dwells within us. Just call upon The Holy Spirit to enlighten your heart with God's truth. He will!

Heavenly Father, thank you that Your truth is always available through you Holy Word, the Bible. And thank you for sending The Holy Spirit to protect and guide us and enlighten our heart with Your truth. Amen.

Jeane Flesch

Monday, March 22

2 Timothy 2:20-26

Honorable and Dishonorable Vessels

In these verses Paul expounds on what he has written in the previous section. In the church (large house) there are things of honor and of dishonor. He urges Timothy (and all of us for we are all servants of the Lord) to be rid of the dishonorable things (false teaching, arguments, desire for glory, power, etc.) within the church body and within ourselves. Then, as “instruments for noble purposes” he tells us things the Lord desires that we do:

- “pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace”
- “avoid foolish and stupid arguments”
- “avoid quarrels”

We strive to do these but there may also be times when we need to refute those who oppose the truth if to be silent would be seen as agreeing with them. Then Paul tells us a fourth thing do - to “gently instruct”. Give up our human desire to prove to others that we are right and they are wrong and, instead, “be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful”. For, Paul reminds us, that it is not us who will change how others think but only God. We should not be frustrated or angry or feel insufficient if opponents don’t agree or even listen to us. By following the above four we will do what God wants and that is all we can do. He uses our words and attitude but it is He who works in them and who is “leading them to acknowledge the truth”.

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for guiding us in your truth and teaching us. Help us not to rely on our human wisdom but to use your Word and speak the truth in love. Amen. Meryl Benenati

Tuesday, March 23

2 Timothy 3:1-9

TERRIBLE TIMES

Did you read these first 9 verses of 2nd Timothy 3? In verse 1, Paul says, “There will be terrible times in the last days”. The next 7 verses describe all kinds of activities and social disorders in the last days. It sounds as if he’s talking about our last few decades and our society. His litany of these terrible times fairly well describes the social chaos and willful disregard of Gods’ commandments we see today. He says “...men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned are rejected”. In verse 9 he states that these people won’t get far as their folly will be clear to everyone. Oh OK, he’s not talking to us, we are believers. **Not so fast!** Throughout the Scriptures we see God demanding to be **obeyed**. We know that Christ died on that Cross to atone for our sins, thereby making us righteous before God. Look at Moses, God denied him entry into the promised land because when God told him, in the desert, to speak to the second rock to provide water, he disobeyed and struck it with his staff (Num 20:6-12). Yet we know that Moses is in Heaven, (see the Transfiguration in Matt:9). He was allowed to see the promised land from afar before he died, but only two men of the people who fled Egypt, who were over 20 years old were allowed to enter because they obeyed God (Num 14).

Paul’s message to Timothy is to be active in his pastoral roll and to be prepared to suffer for the Faith. I believe that his advice applies to all Christian believers. If we die in Christ we live in Christ – yet all believers will go before Christ’s judgement seat. I think believers will be judged on how we lived our belief and how we acted on that belief. Consider Jesus’ parable of the Talents (Matt 24:14-30).

Prayer: Lord God, open our ears to your word, have the Holy Spirit guide us, use our individual talents to spread the news of our kinsman redeemer Christ Jesus. Help us Lord, to stand firm in our faith throughout terrible times, Amen.

Joe Flesch

Wednesday, March 24

2 Timothy 3:10-13

The Godly Will Be Persecuted

In life we all face tribulations. There is no smooth sailing. Storms will come. Besides, Christians, swim against the main stream.

Jesus was persecuted from the beginning: King Herod tried to have him killed, Satan tempted him in the wilderness, the people in his home town wanted to stone him, the scribes and Pharisees had him crucified. His disciples were persecuted. Paul was persecuted and had to endure hardships. And today Christians are still persecuted all over the world. Why? Because Jesus was a stumbling block for Satan: Jesus was victorious! We are a stumbling block for Satan: In Jesus we are victorious!

Think about this: So often we wonder why some people seem to have the perfect life, health, money and success. Let me ask you this: Why would Satan have to make them stumble if he already knows they are his? He would not. But he needs to make us Christians stumble, because he is still working on making us his.

Yes, the godly will be persecuted, because we are God's.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, all the thanks, the glory and honor to You! We are Yours, and in Jesus' name we have the victory. Hallelujah! Amen.

Evelin D'Amico

Thursday, March 25

2 Timothy 3:14-17

God's True Direction for Life

Paul is sharing with Timothy to continue in what he has learned and has firmly believed from childhood.

He remembers that Scripture can instruct him for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

"Scripture is inspired by God, profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

As Timothy tries to live inspired by God, this chorus comes to mind: "Great is thy faithfulness. Great is thy faithfulness. Morning by morning new mercies I see. All I have needed thy hand has provided. Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me."

Let us pray. Glorious Lord, we thank you for your Word and the directions on how we should live, love and share your Word to others. May we pray daily for our family, friends, and others that they may see how your love changes us. In Jesus's name. Amen.

Audrey Stapf

Friday, March 26

2 Timothy 4:1-5

Preach the Word

In reading these verses it sure sounds to me that we are in the end times. It is sad to know that so many people today don't want sound teaching but want to live out their own fantasy and for God to accept it. I also rejoice that the return of Jesus is drawing near.

However, do we or are we willing to heed the words in verse 2 which tell us to preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching. We need to be caring for the lost. We are living in a spiritual warfare. Someone explained it like this, the lost are prisoners of war and you don't shoot them you try and rescue them. We need to pray fervently that the Lord gives us the words to speak in love.

It is easy to say I have my salvation, let the trumpet blow. We should be rejoicing in the Good News so much we will share it with everyone we can and stop complaining that they aren't on the same page as us.

As we rejoice In the Lord, we need to concentrate a little more effort on rescue and less time complaining.

**Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for opening my eyes to your salvation. Help me be bold to speak out in your name with love.
Amen** **Jan Gladhill**

Saturday, March 27

2 Timothy 4:6-8

The Crown of Righteousness

“⁶ For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we praise and thank You for the life and ministry of Paul and his example as a living sacrifice for the glory of God. I pray for strength to fight the good fight, to finish the course and keep the faith, to Your eternal glory. This I ask in Jesus' name. Amen. **Jane Simcox**

God's Work

"Be diligent to come to me quickly, for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica. Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry. And Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come — and the books, especially the parchments. Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words. At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and *that* all the Gentiles might hear. Also, I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve *me* for His heavenly kingdom. To Him *be* glory forever and ever. Amen! Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus stayed in Corinth, but Trophimus I have left in Miletus sick. Do your utmost to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, as well as Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brethren. The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you. Amen."

Paul encourages Timothy to remain passionate for Christ and to remain firm in sound doctrine even in the face of struggle and suffering. He inspires Timothy to guard the Gospel and suffer for it because it is a stumbling block to the proud.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I pray for the guidance of Your word, and to persevere in faith and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. I pray to live a life worthy of the Lord and to know the hope of eternal life. Thank You, Father, that You have promised to rescue all Your children from every evil deed and to bring us safely home into our heavenly inheritance in Christ. To You be all praise and glory forever and ever, AMEN.

Jane Simcox

Holy Week Devotional Titus 1

Titus 1, verse 9: "He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also rebuke those who contradict it."

In the first chapter of Titus, the apostle Paul gives Titus instructions to "put what remained in order." That is to say, Titus was to appoint pastors (translated elders) in every town. The required attributes of acceptable pastors are clearly presented and the ultimate objective is to teach sound doctrine and rebuke those who contradict it. Teaching and rebuking go hand in hand. Although it can be quite uncomfortable, the pastor has a duty to rebuke false teaching. Let's pray for pastors that they will be emboldened by true doctrine to teach what is true and rebuke what is false.

Chapter 1 speaks also to church leaders. Consider that Paul is instructing Titus to appoint pastors to guide the church in every town. Just so, we have a ministerium with leaders and pastors who work to identify potential pastors who will carry on this calling. Identifying pastors is not always easy. Let's pray for our ministerium that they will identify qualified men to serve as pastors and train them in the seminary.

As members of the congregation, we have a special calling too. God has revealed His requirements for pastors. Giving instruction in sound doctrine and rebuking false doctrine is serious business! As members of the congregation, we should respect and even expect this of the pastor and we should support them in this mission. Some pastors are afraid to speak the truth and feel that they are walking on eggshells. They fear reprisal from a stiff-necked congregation. Some pastors prioritize entertaining over delivering sound doctrine. As members of the congregation, we owe it to the pastor to listen attentively to his teaching. Let's pray that God will give each of us an appetite for sound teaching and curb our desire to be entertained.

Prayer: Lord, you have blessed us with pastors who feed us and teach us the truths of scripture. Bless our pastors and our congregation as we live, learn, and grow together; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Nigel Brown

Wednesday, March 31

Titus 2:1-15

Deny Ungodliness

The Cross of Jesus Christ stands ever before us! As Christians, we live in continual awareness of Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Every day is a blessed remembrance of His holy sacrifice for our sins, and every moment is a celebration of His glorious resurrection for our eternal life.

In view of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, and the promise of His coming again in glory, Paul gives these words of instruction to Titus: “deny ungodliness and worldly desires,” and “live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age.” Through his letter to Titus, the Apostle offers the same admonition to each one of us: “deny ungodliness and worldly desires,” and “live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age.”

The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ have given new life to all who believe in Him. We have been blessed by what Jesus has done **for** us. By grace through faith, we have been forgiven all of our sins, we have been reconciled to the Father, and we have received the promise of salvation and eternal life. If that were not enough, we have been blessed by what Jesus has done **to** us. By grace through faith, we have been filled with the Holy Spirit, we have been born again as children of God, and we have been inspired by Christ to renounce the devil and to lead godly lives.

Because of your new birth in Jesus Christ, who lives within you, you not only desire to do God’s will, you are enabled to follow His commands. Though you cannot do this perfectly, you are purposeful in your attempt. With the help of God, you will, “deny ungodliness and worldly desires,” and “live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age.”

Let us pray: Almighty and Merciful God: You have forgiven my sins and made me Your own child by grace through faith in Your Son, Jesus Christ. Now, because Jesus lives in me, direct my life, that I may do your Will and follow your Word. Work within me, that I, a sinner, may love, forgive, and serve others even as I have been loved, forgiven, and served by Jesus Christ my Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever, Amen.

Pastor Dr. Leins

Holy Thursday, April 1

Titus 3:1-15

Maundy Thursday Devotional Titus 3

The devil tries to get us to lose our faith by tempting us to one of two primary extremes: pride or despair. Pride leads us to believe that we are the source of our own salvation through our own works, or it leads us to think that we are not in need of salvation at all. Despair, on the other hand, leads us to believe that we are not saved at all, whether because we have not done enough works to earn God’s favor or we have done too much evil for God to have mercy on us. Notice that in both of these extremes the devil wants us to look in the same place to know whether we are saved or not: ourselves.

In Titus 3, St. Paul makes it clear to us that there is only one place we can look to find assurance of salvation. We look to the Lord and what he has done for us. Verse 5 says clearly, “He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.” God showers his mercy on us in multiple ways. In Holy Baptism, “He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.” And on this day of Holy Week, Jesus instituted Holy Communion as another means by which to deliver his grace, mercy, and forgiveness to us.

Paul also says in verse 8, “I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good.” Acts of love are a vital part of the Christian life, not as a means of salvation, but because God first loved us. But when we want to be reminded of the assurance of our salvation, we do not look to ourselves and the works we have done, but to the work that Jesus has done. Remember your baptism, or return to the communion rail, or simply listen to the Gospel message again, and there you will find hope, and salvation, and peace.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, turn us away from pride and despair. Grant us assurance of our salvation and strength to love our neighbors as you love us. Amen.

Reverend Alex McNally

Good Friday, April 2

Only Jesus Can Part the Flaming Swords

Special Devotion

Genesis 3:6-24 - When the woman saw that the tree was good to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband, and he ate. Their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked. They sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and hid themselves from the presence of the LORD. God said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them. Therefore, the LORD God drove them out of Eden and stationed angels with flaming swords to guard the way to the tree of life.

Romans 2:15 - "God has written his law on our hearts;" "All men seek happiness! What else does our longing and helplessness proclaim, but that there was once a true happiness? All that now remains is an empty trace. Yet no one can change this because the infinite abyss can only be filled with something that is infinite and unchanging. In other words, by God Himself." (Pascal, 17thct.)

Matthew 27:50-54 - "Jesus cried out ... with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook; rocks split; tombs were opened. The centurion keeping guard over Jesus saw the earthquake and the things that happened, said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

Revelation 22:1-5 - "The angel showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb. The tree of life was bearing fruit for the healing of the nations. There will no longer be any curse. They will see God's face again."

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, I kneel at Your blood marred feet below Calvary's cross. I cannot comprehend the depth of love that would make such a sacrifice for me. I belong on that accursed Tree, yet You took my place. You alone have clothed me and brought me to my true home. Amen.

Pastor Emeritus Irvin Stapf

Saturday, April 3

HOLY SATURDAY

Luke 23:50-56

Jesus did everything for us. He lived the perfect life in our place. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. But what about Jesus' action between His death and resurrection? On this Holy Saturday we remember Jesus' rest in the tomb.

You might be thinking, "How did Jesus rest in the tomb for us?" Remember when God created the world and rested on the seventh day? God called that seventh day, what we call Saturday, the Sabbath. God declared in his third commandment, "Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy." God told His people that they should rest from all their work on that day, even as He Himself had done. It would be a day dedicated to the Lord.

In our sinful nature we are incapable of keeping even the third commandment perfectly. Yes, we can't even rest properly according to God's command. But Jesus even kept the third commandment and fulfilled it in our place. By Jesus' rest in the tomb, He fulfilled that Sabbath rest for us. Now Jesus himself is our Sabbath rest. All who believe in Him will find rest, not only in this life, but in the new and eternal life He gives to us through the glorious resurrection we celebrate tomorrow.

I love one of the prayers in my Pastoral Care Companion book which contains the burial service I use. Let us pray it now: "Almighty God, by the Death of Your Son Jesus Christ You destroyed death, by His rest in the tomb You sanctified the graves of Your saints, and by His bodily resurrection You brought life and immortality to light so that all who die in Him abide in peace and hope. Receive our thanks for the victory over death and the grave that He won for us. Keep us in everlasting communion with all who wait for Him on earth and with all in heaven who are with Him, for He is the resurrection and the life, even Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."

Pastor Abraham McNally

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