

**Armagh Baptist Church – 28<sup>th</sup> February 2010**  
**An Introduction to Timothy**  
**Acts 16:1-5, 2 Timothy 1:1-7, 3:10-17**

**Introduction**

We talk of the Great Missionary, the Apostle Paul, or the Authority of St. Peter, but what do you think about whenever I mention Timothy? - Quiet, timid, reserved, weak, ordinary.

Well he probably was all of those things, but isn't it great that God doesn't always insist on using Peters and Pauls to get his work done - because there's not too many of them around!

I think if we're all prepared to be honest for a minute we might find we have more in common with Timothy, than with any other character in the Bible.

- \* Not too many of us are up-front pulpit people, although that's not to say Timothy didn't preach - he did.
- \* Not too many of us are oozing with confidence, and full of authority, and yet in God's hands he can use us to do all sorts of things - like he did with Timothy.
- \* Not too many of us are extra-ordinary, most of us are just ordinary 5'8" Christians, and yet the Lord chooses to use the likes of you and me, just as he used Timothy.

In fact I think we might be a bit surprised to find out just how much the Lord did use 'a nobody' like Timothy. Maybe that might encourage us to think of how the Lord might want to use us in His Service today?

Next Sunday I intend to start a study of 1 Timothy: the first of two letters that Paul wrote to Timothy while he was on assignment in Ephesus probably in his mid-thirties. 1 & 2 Timothy are probably the last two letters that Paul ever wrote before he was executed at Rome in the mid sixties of the 1st Century.

Today I want us to concentrate on getting to know Timothy better himself. There were three main influences on Timothy's early life and up-bringing:-

**1. A GODLY PARENT (2 Timothy 1:1-7; Acts 16:1-5)**

As I mentioned a couple of weeks ago from Acts 16:2, Timothy was from a divided home. It was well known in his small home town of Lystra in Asia Minor, that Timothy was the product of a mixed marriage. His mother, who was a Jewess, would have been frowned upon by her relatives and friends for marrying a Gentile. Timothy's father was probably quite well to do, probably a business man, but he wasn't a Jew.

She was marrying outside of God's people. She was setting out in marriage in a divided home. All the people around knew that Timothy had not been circumcised at birth (v.3) as was Jewish custom, so it seems as if the father,

who probably followed the Greek pagan religion, was having his way as far as Timothy's religious up-bringing was concerned.

Many think that Timothy's father had died by the time we get to Acts 16, otherwise how would Paul have had the right to step in and circumcise Timothy - a task his real father would normally have performed. So Timothy was probably brought up by his father in the Greek pagan religion.

But if we turn to 2 Timothy 1:1-5 we will see that at some point (probably on Paul's first missionary visit to Lystra in Acts 14) Timothy's mother and grandmother came to believe in Jesus - they were now trusting in Christ. By Acts 16 his mother Eunice was referred to as "a Jewess" and also "a believer".

If we look on over to 2 Timothy 3:14,15 we will see that from his childhood, even though his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois had not yet heard the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, they had been faithful in telling Timothy the Bible stories of the Old Testament from God's Word.

What about you? Have you got Godly parents, or a Godly parent? Or like Timothy maybe you have a Godly grandparent? These are important influences on your life, and you should thank God for them.

Or maybe you had a parent like Timothy who didn't know the Lord, and didn't respect the Gospel, maybe they had no time for it all. But if Timothy came through it OK, then so can you.

Grace doesn't flow in families - it's up to each individual to accept Jesus for themselves - as we saw last week in the household salvations in Philippi. Sadly there are no guarantees if you're saved, that you're children will get saved too. But I'm quite sure, as well as teaching Timothy about God, his mother and his granny prayed for him too. That's all we as parents can do. Teach them the truth, live as Godly a life before them as we can, and pray that God will be gracious and save our children.

The important thing is what YOU do with the privileges God gives you?

Will you reject them, or like Timothy will you respond?

But not only had Timothy the influence of a Godly mother and grandmother, He also had the all-important influence of:-

## **2. GOD'S WORD (2 Timothy 3:14-17)**

Even before his mother was saved she was teaching Timothy Bible stories. From infancy Timothy knew the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament. Stories about Adam, and Abraham, Noah and Moses, Joseph and Jacob, Isaac and Ishmael, Samuel and Saul, David and Goliath, Solomon and the Psalms. He would also have been told that one day God was going to send the Messiah, to be their Saviour.

And all of these stories laid an important foundation for the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that would later come into Timothy's life.

It is possible that Timothy was born the year Jesus began his publicly ministry and began to make his way to the cross. So Timothy would have been 3 when Jesus was crucified, maybe 5 or 6 when the first garbled news about Jesus reached his ears, but he was probably 16 before Paul actually came to his village and preached the Gospel in all its fullness: The account of Acts ch.14.

But the background knowledge of the Scriptures in a child's heart and mind is very special. We must never under-estimate its importance. Let's never think it's like brain-washing a child before it can object for itself. If it's the truth, and we believe it is the truth, then our children can never begin to hear it too soon. And of course to memorize it as well!

If Eunice was sticking to her Jewish tradition, even though her husband was a pagan Gentile, she would have taught Timothy the Book of Deuteronomy, and he would have been able to recite it all off by heart by the time he was 12.

(Learning by rote seems to have gone out of fashion in schools today. Even poetry is not learned as much as before, but whether in fashion or out of fashion, we should be training our children in our families and in our Church to learn verses and indeed passages of Scripture off by heart. This is a very important part of their Sunday School years.)

It's interesting that Deuteronomy was the Book that Jewish children had to memorize, because over and over again in it, God tells his people to be sure to teach His Truth to their children. God's Word was to be an everyday part of their lives. (See Deuteronomy 4:9, 6:7, 11:19, 32:46.)

Remember Proverbs 22:6 (It may not always work that they will *follow* it, but they will surely never *forget* it if you teach it to them faithfully while they are children.) It says, "*Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*"

So Mother Eunice, with a little bit of help from Granny Lois, and maybe up against a whole lot of hindrance from Timothy's Dad, they played their part in laying a good solid foundation of God's Word in young Timothy's heart and mind.

But Timothy wasn't saved yet...

We've seen two important influences on his early life - A Godly Parent and God's Word, but there was a third...

### **3. A GOSPEL PREACHER. (Acts 14:8-20; 2 Timothy 3:10-13.)**

In Acts Ch.14 we have the account of Timothy's first contact with the Gospel as such. He was probably now about 16 yrs old. He's still living at home with his mother and granny, his father might already be dead by now, when quite unexpectedly some Christian missionaries come to their little back-water town Lystra - They were called Paul & Barnabas and it was quite an eventful day...

Paul & Barnabas had only come to Lystra because their lives were under threat in the nearby larger town of Iconium. So really they had come to Lystra hoping in a sense to get away from it all, and to regroup before going on again - but God had them there for a reason. While Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus, he spotted a man in the crowd who was crippled. He seemed to be listening better than most to what Paul was saying, and Paul could see that this man had faith to believe he could be healed. So Paul commanded him to stand to his feet, and he was healed (Acts 14:8-10).

Well the crowd went mad. They thought that Paul & Barnabas were 2 Greek gods who had come down to visit their town, and so they began to make preparations to make sacrifices to Paul & Barnabas.

They called Barnabas, Zeus, and they called Paul Hermes, and the local Priest of Zeus rushed in from his temple to start the sacrifices.

Paul & Barnabas were shocked that anybody would want to worship them! So they had to work hard to convince these pagan people that they were only ordinary men, and that no-one should be worshipped except the Living and True God, and his Son Jesus (v.11-18).

(Can you see just how pagan and superstitious Timothy's dad's side of the house must have been, if this was the sort of gentile town they were living in?)

Well eventually they got the crowd calmed down, but no sooner had that happened than the trouble makers from Iconium - the jealous Jews - arrived. They stirred up a mob riot and Paul ended up getting stoned within an inch of his life - and they left him for dead at the city gates. It was only the true believers (the disciples who had just trusted in Christ as their Saviour) who came and gathered round Paul in a circle. They were probably praying hard that his life would be spared - and praise God it was! I suspect that Eunice, Lois and Timothy were in that crowd that gathered round Paul that day. That was their first taste of the Gospel. That was their first glimpse of what it cost to stand up and be counted for Jesus (Acts 14:19-20).

Many years later in Timothy's life, Paul wrote to him in 2 Timothy 3:10-15,

\* Reminding him of those early days in his new found faith.

\* Reminding him how hard it was to be a Christian,

\* Reminding him that his knowledge of God's Word from childhood stood him

in good stead, but in and of itself it hadn't saved him.

It was *'able to make him wise for salvation'* but it wasn't able to save him (v15) For that to happen it took one more thing - he had to personally put his faith in Jesus Christ for himself, and then take his stand for Jesus himself.

\* Knowing that it wouldn't be easy, but it would be worth it!

Timothy's granny and mum seemed to get saved first, but Timothy wasn't too far behind them (2 Timothy 1:5).

Paul seems to have been present when Timothy trusted Christ, because ever since Paul called him *'his true son in the faith.'* (1 Tim.1:2, 2 Tim.1:2).

Some also believe that 1 Timothy 6:12 is a reference to the fact that Paul actually baptized Timothy just after he had trusted in Christ, when he made *"his good confession in the presence of many witnesses."* Paul might have done this when he re-traced his steps just a short time later to appoint elders in the new Churches in Lystra and Iconium (Acts 14:21-23).

Next time they would meet would be two years later; Timothy would be 18 - only two years saved; but then Paul would ask to take him with him as the junior member of his Missionary team on his first journey into Europe to preach the Gospel and plant churches. And his faith was so well spoken of in his home church that they agreed to let him go (Acts 16:2-5).

That was to be the start of Timothy's many years of service for the Lord.

Remember 1 & 2 Timothy were the last letters that Paul ever wrote before he was executed, so all of Paul and Timothy's partnership in Gospel work happened before these letters were written. To go straight into those letters would be missing out on all that Timothy had already done for the Lord.

Timothy was entering the Lord's Work at the age of 18 years old!

Nevertheless:-

\* He had already got a good testimony in his home town and home church - Lystra & Derbe, even though he was so young in the faith, and in years. But he was sent out with his home-church's glowing recommendation behind him. And that's how it should be when anyone enters the Lord's Work.

\* According to 1 Timothy 4:12-14 he was commissioned by his elders at Lystra. They laid their hands on him, and it seems they were able to identify what his gifts were at that stage.

In v.13 Paul reminds him what these were:

- He was able to read the Scriptures publicly (not everybody could read in those days), preach the Gospel, and teach disciples.

- That's what he was being sent out to do. He was to stick to it – and not deviate from it.

Bear in mind Paul's missionary team was going to be involved in cross-cultural missionary work, so that's why Paul had Timothy circumcised. This meant that Timothy was now in the unique position of being able to reach into and identify

with both sides of his divided community (Jew and Greek) in order to reach them with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

So Timothy sets out with Paul as a young 18 year old - just two years saved, to serve the Lord:

What about our late-teens and early twenties here this morning?

Would you ever consider doing something like that?

- Could you take a year out like Shirley Starrett has to serve the Lord?  
- Or maybe you could go short-term on an evangelism team or camp during the summer? You could give up at least some of your time to go and serve the Lord in spreading the Gospel. It will stretch you, but then it stretched Timothy too – in fact that's what it's supposed to do – to get you to fully rely on God!

Timothy's first year of service is recorded for us in Acts 16:4-10.

- At first Paul broke him in gently. They were just visiting existing churches with the letters from the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, encouraging them as they went. (v.4-5)

- But the next phase for Timothy would have left him a bit disillusioned (v.6-10) Most of the rest of his first year was spent facing obstacles, and changes to their plans, so much so that they seemed to get nothing done!

- And yet maybe under God's sovereign control, those delays, allowed time for Paul to personally train, instruct and disciple young Timothy deeper in the truths of God's Word, because sooner than he might think he was going to need it. N.B. That's the good thing about short term mission involvement for young people, because it isn't all taken up with you giving out the Gospel to others, a lot of it is geared to help you grow and develop in your faith as well, and in your knowledge of God's Word. So even all those obstacles in Acts 16 had a purpose for Timothy's life.

But then in v.10 they get their "Macedonian call", and they're off to Europe with the Gospel for the first time! What a thrill for young Timothy to be part of that! Then Acts 16-18 is the record of Paul, Silas and Timothy planting the first 4 Churches on the continent of Europe – in Philippi (Acts 16), Thessalonica & Berea (Acts 17), and Corinth (Acts 18). And at this stage Timothy is still only about 20 years old! Yet the Lord has used him as part of a team to plant no less than 4 churches! That's exciting stuff for anybody of any age!

**In Philippi** he sees Lydia, the demon-possessed slave girl and a hardened Roman Jailer get saved, but he also sees Paul and Silas getting put in the stocks and getting whipped until their backs bled, and then thrown in prison. *And* he experienced the earth-quake that got them out of it! (Acts 16:14-40).

**In Thessalonica** he witnessed many Jews and Greeks trust in Christ after just 3 weeks preaching in the local synagogue. He sees a new church brought into

being. But he also sees the effects of a mob-riot, and because of it they have to get out of town in a hurry, by night. (Acts 17:1-9).

**In Berea**, just down the road, he sees a hunger for God's Word like he's never seen it before, as they check out everything they've heard Paul preach. Again another little church comes into being as many of them put their trust in Christ. But yet again those Jealous Jews from Thessalonica come down the road and again there's a riot and Paul has to flee for his life. (Acts 17:10-14).

This time Timothy & Silas are left behind on their own to consolidate the work (Acts 17:14-15). Paul goes on to Athens to wait for Timothy & Silas to join him.

But whenever they did meet up, according to 1 Thessalonians 2:17f, guess who drew the short straw? - Timothy! Paul sent him back to Thessalonica - Where the rioters were! He's only 20 years old, or maybe 21 at most, and yet Paul is sending him out for the first time on his own - and where does he send him? Only back into a notorious hot-spot as far as the Gospel is concerned. Who said serving the Lord was boring?

Not only is he seeing the world, and seeing lives transformed and churches brought to birth, but he's brushing with danger left, right and centre - and now he has to go-it-alone!

**This was to be the first of several SOLO TRIPS that Paul sent Timothy on:-**

### **1. THESSALONICA. (1 Thess.2:17-3:6)**

Purpose: To see how the church and believers were getting on in the face of persecution. (v.5)

- To gather up-to-date news for Paul. (v.5)
- To preach and teach them the basics of Christian discipleship. (v.2).
- To strengthen and encourage them in their faith. (v.2).

### **2. CORINTH**

- Seven years later Paul gives Timothy another tough assignment.

Purpose: This time he sends him to a church that has openly and blatantly fallen out with Paul, and is rejecting his authority. (1 Corinthians 4:7-21)

Paul is actually fearful of how Timothy will be received by them (1 Cor.16:10-11) It seems as if Timothy is entering the Lions' Den on Paul's behalf!

### **3. PHILIPPI**

- Another 7 years passed before Paul sent Timothy on another mission.

Purpose: (Philippians 2:19-23)

- He seems to have been sent to sort out some false teaching (Ch.3)
- And to try to solve a fall-out between two women (Ch.4:1,2)

#### 4. EPHEBUS

- It was about a year after that when Timothy was left in Ephesus by Paul. While he was there, Timothy receives his 2 letters from Paul (1 & 2 Timothy).

Purpose:

- To deal with false teachers, possibly erring elders (1 Tim. 1:3, 4:1-6)
- Then to appoint new elders (1 Timothy ch.3)
- And set them an example of how to live a godly life (1 Tim.4:11-16)

Author: Paul wrote 1 Timothy from Macedonia, sometime after he was released from his house-arrest in Rome at the end of the Book of Acts.

But he was arrested again, and this time he was imprisoned in Rome, and was waiting execution on Death-Row. It was from Death-Row in Rome that Paul wrote his last ever letter - 2 Timothy. And it sounds as if the end was near for him in 2 Tim 4:9,13,21. – N.B. He wants Timothy to come quickly! We don't know if Timothy ever got to see Paul before he was executed.

#### CONCLUSION

Apart from some more travels and an imprisonment mentioned in Heb.13:23, Church History tells us that Timothy actually finished out his days in Ephesus.

The Apostle John came to work there, and the two of them worked together for many years, until John was exiled to prison and hard labour on the island of Patmos - where he wrote the Book of Revelation.

Timothy was killed in Ephesus in the year 96/97 in his mid sixties. He was stoned to death by a mob in the middle of a pagan festival, after 30 years of serving the Lord there!

So this morning we have seen 3 positive influences on Timothy's young life that were instrumental in bringing him to faith in Christ.

All 3 ingredients were important – they all played their part in his conversion:

**\* A GODLY PARENT \* GOD'S WORD \* and A GOSPEL PREACHER.**

You may have had some, or all of these influences on your life?  
The question is have they made you wise enough to get saved?  
Have you responded by putting your faith in Jesus Christ?

But as I think of his many years of service, I'm struck by the line of a hymn:-

**“Only one life - it will soon be passed –  
Only what's done for Christ will last!”**

I think Timothy says two things to us this morning:

**“You're never too young to start” and, “It's always too soon to quit!”**

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