

TIMOTHY'S ADVANTAGES

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“I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day, longing to see you, even as I recall your tears, so that I may be filled with joy. For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well” (2 Tim. 1:3-5).

With these words Paul thanked God for the unfeigned faith that Timothy possessed. Paul's gratitude was deepened by the realization that faith in the Christ now spanned three generations in the family of Timothy. Timothy was blessed with some distinct spiritual advantages and Paul wanted to remind him of those.

First, he was blessed with a rich spiritual heritage in his family. Paul paid high tribute to Timothy's grandmother Lois, who passed her faith on to her daughter Eunice, who in turn passed it on to Timothy. Timothy was a third-generation Christian. This means that these two women in Timothy's life had been faithful followers of the Jewish faith, reflecting often on the promises God had made to their fathers of the coming Messiah and His salvation. Now they had confessed that Jesus was the Christ and had given their lives to Him.

Paul preached the gospel in Timothy's home town of Lystra on his first missionary journey (Acts 14:6). It was likely during the course of this preaching in his home town that Timothy heard the gospel from Paul and became a Christian. Paul probably called Timothy his “beloved and faithful child in the Lord” (1 Cor. 4:17), and his “true child in the faith” (1 Tim. 1:2) because he was one of Paul's own converts.

But Paul knew that a great advantage for Timothy was the fact that his grandmother and mother were devout believers first. What they instilled in the young Timothy was of too great a value to put a price on. Paul reminded him of that later in this epistle with these words: “You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 3:14-15).

This was undoubtedly the single most important influence in the young life of Timothy. In this situation he learned of God the Creator and the great things He had done for His people. He learned principles of righteousness and truth. He learned to honor and respect the Holy Scriptures as the revealed word of God to man, given as a “light unto our feet and a lamp unto our path.”

This is not to say that there were no challenges for Timothy. The strength of the faith of Eunice and Lois was challenged by the fact that Timothy's father was apparently an unbelieving pagan Greek. Besides this, the people of Lystra were themselves mostly superstitious pagans, as they demonstrated when Paul and Barnabas visited there (Acts 14). Because of these circumstances, the mother and grandmother knew that they had a heavier responsibility toward Timothy than would have been true had the father been a Christian. Timothy had been richly blessed growing up, but even his blessings were mixed.

Second, Paul constantly prayed for Timothy. And he made sure Timothy knew it. It must have been a great encouragement to Timothy, especially in the midst of the difficulties and challenges inherent in his work, to know that friends and loved ones like Paul were praying for him.

Paul reminded Timothy of these advantages not only to offer him encouragement, but also as a challenge. Timothy must not take his blessings and opportunities for granted.

What advantages have you been blessed with? Many of us, like Timothy, were blessed with godly parents who sought to pass their faith on to us. From the earliest days we were taught the lessons and principles of God's word. Others, including some who read this, were not so blessed. You have had to face some challenges to get where you are, but so did Timothy. And that's alright. All of us are blessed in different ways.

To whatever degree we have been blessed, we all should count our blessings. Rather than focusing on the obstacles in our path, we should take note of the many advantages that are ours today. And make the most of our opportunities. Use what you have been given. Take advantage of the blessings that have come to your life. Finally, thank God for His goodness.