

The Real Life Timothy

Acts 16:1-3

Introduction:

1. Sometimes when we read about biblical characters they seem almost bigger than life to us.
2. We may even perceive them in an idyllic way, as if they had no problems and did not face the difficulties of everyday life.
3. In the passage we have just read there are some clues that give us insight into the real life circumstances of Timothy.
4. He may have never gotten his picture in the paper at Rome or Jerusalem or even in the local paper at Lystra, but he made a significant contribution to the work of the Lord and we need to remember him for it.

Discussion:

I. His background.

- A. Paul connected with him at Lystra (51 A.D.).
 1. Perhaps Timothy was a native of this town.
 2. Paul had visited this town on his first preaching trip (Acts 14:8ff).
 - a. He had healed a lame man there.
 - b. The people thought that the gods had come down to them.
 - c. They began praising Barnabas and Paul identifying them with the Greek gods Zeus and Hermes. They barely restrained them from offering sacrifices to them.
 - d. Paul and Barnabas taught them about the living God who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that is in them (Acts 14:15).
 - e. Perhaps Paul had contact with Timothy during this first visit to Lystra?
- B. He was a disciple.
- C. The son of a Jewish woman who was a believer named Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5). But his father was a Greek.
 1. Like many of us he came from a mixed religious background.
 2. If his father was like the others in Lystra Greek polytheism would have been the influence.
 3. His mother was obviously devoted to the Jewish Scriptures and along with Timothy's grandmother (Lois) had taught Timothy (2 Tim. 1:5).
 - a. Our family background has a powerful influence on us. The things that we are taught (or not taught) there carry us through life.
 - b. Parents/grandparents teach your children. Cf. Deut. 6:7.

II. His reputation.

- A. Well spoken of by the brethren in Lystra and Iconium.
- B. Probably based on his good report from the brethren and his knowledge of the Scriptures Paul chose him to go with him on the rest of his preaching trip.
- C. Paul took him and circumcised him.

1. This might seem unusual in light of Acts 15 and the fact that Gentiles did not need to be circumcised and observe the law of Moses in order to be saved.
2. But in order to not cause disturbance among the Jews he was circumcised.
3. This tells me that Timothy was a young man willing to humble himself to “unnecessary restrictions” in order to reach Jews and Greeks with the gospel.
4. He could have demanded his “rights,” but he did not.
5. They passed through the cities delivering the message that Gentiles did not have to be circumcised and observe the Law of Moses in order to be saved.
6. The churches were strengthened and increased in number daily.

III. His on-going work with Paul. Rom. 16:21 Paul identifies Timothy as a “fellow worker.”

- A. Paul and Silas went on to Philippi preaching. Timothy is not mentioned in connection with the events of Philippi. Paul and Silas were imprisoned. Perhaps Timothy was not.
 1. 1 Tim. 4:12 describes him as a youth.
 2. Perhaps he was not imprisoned because of his youthfulness.
- B. He is not mentioned in the work at Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9) but may have been present.
 1. Acts 17:14 says that he and Silas remained in Berea after Paul departed.
 2. They rejoined Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:5).
 3. He was with Paul in Athens (1 Thess. 3:1-3) and was sent to Thessalonica.
 - a. He strengthened and encouraged them.
 - b. Through their afflictions.
 - c. We ought to do the same. Sometimes I fear that in our “extreme congregational independence” we fail to give appropriate consideration to each other. Perhaps we are too inward focused. Young people take note of Timothy’s influence and be reminded to do as he did.
 4. When he returned to Paul (at Corinth) he brought good news of their faith and love and how they thought kindly of Paul and Silas (1 Thess. 3:6). It was from Corinth that the three of them wrote 2 Thessalonians.
- C. On the third journey Paul sent Timothy to Corinth from Ephesus. See 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10.
 1. He returned to Paul at Ephesus.
 2. He and Erastus were sent to Macedonia (Acts 19:22).
 3. Paul later joined them there (2 Cor. 1:19).
- D. Timothy accompanied Paul on his last journey to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4).
- E. Timothy was included as author of Philippians (1:1), Colossians (1:1) and Philemon (1). Most likely written from Roman imprisonment. How was Timothy involved in Paul’s imprisonment?
- F. Paul refers to him . . .
 1. “My true child in the faith” (1 Tim. 1:2).
 2. “My son” (1 Tim. 1:18).
 3. “My beloved child” (2 Tim. 1:2).
- G. It is evident in the epistles of 1 and 2 Tim. the great responsibility Paul entrusted to Timothy.
 1. Timothy was to remain at Ephesus to address those who taught strange doctrines

- (1 Tim. 1:3-7).
2. Knowing the difficulties Timothy faced Paul said “fight the good fight” (1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim. 3:1ff).
 3. Timothy had the responsibility to teach so that overseers could be appointed (1 Tim. 3:1ff).
 4. He was to instruct about the care of widows (1 Tim. 5:1ff).
 5. He was to hold fast to the sacred writings (2 Tim. 3:14ff).
 6. He was to preach the word with great patience and instruction (2 Tim. 4:2).

Conclusion:

1. Timothy may not have occupied the place of an apostle.
2. He seems to have always worked under the leadership of Paul.
3. The last mention of Timothy is in Heb. 13:23 which refers to his release, probably from prison.
4. While Timothy may have been a young man and may have been looked down on because of his youthfulness (1 Tim. 4:12) he was a devoted worker. In speech, conduct, love, faith and purity he was an example of those who believe.
5. He is a real life character of mixed background, teaching by mother and grandmother, willing to endure the difficulties associated with a life committed to the Lord and His work.
6. May each of us—young and old--be as Timothy, a real life worker in the cause of Christ.