

1 Timothy 1:1-2 Timothy, My Son

It is to Timothy that this letter is sent, and Paul was never able to speak of him without affection in his voice.

Timothy was a native of Lystra in the province of Galatia. It was a Roman colony; it called itself "the most brilliant colony of Lystra," but in reality it was a little place at the ends of the civilized earth. Its importance was that there was a Roman garrison quartered there to keep control of the wild tribes of the Isaurian mountains which lay beyond. It was on the first missionary journey that Paul and Barnabas arrived there (Acts 14:8-21). At that time there is no mention of Timothy; but it has been suggested that, when Paul was in Lystra, he found a lodging in Timothy's home, in view of the fact that he knew well the faith and devotion of Timothy's mother Eunice and of his grandmother Lois (2 Timothy 1:5).

On that first visit Timothy must have been very young, but the Christian faith laid hold upon him, and Paul became his hero. It was at Paul's visit to Lystra on the second missionary journey that life began for Timothy (Acts 16:1-3). Young as he was, he had become one of the ornaments of the Christian Church in Lystra. There was such a charm and enthusiasm in the lad that all men spoke well of him. To Paul, he seemed the very man to be his assistant. Maybe even then he had dreams that this lad was the very person to train to take up his work when his day was over.

Timothy was the child of a mixed marriage; his mother was a Jewess, and his father a Greek (Acts 16:1). Paul circumcised him. It was not that Paul was a slave of the law, or that he saw in circumcision any special virtue; but he knew well that if Timothy was to work amongst the Jews, there would be an initial prejudice against him if he was uncircumcised, and so he took this step as a practical measure to increase Timothy's usefulness as an evangelist.

From that time forward Timothy was Paul's constant companion. He was left behind at Beroea with Silas when Paul escaped to Athens, and later joined him there (Acts 17:14-15 , Acts 18:5). He was sent as Paul's emissary to Macedonia (Acts 19:22). He was there when the collection from the Churches was being taken to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4). He was with Paul in Corinth when Paul wrote his letter to Rome (Romans 16:21). He was Paul's emissary to Corinth when there was trouble in that unruly Church (1 Corinthians 4:17 ; 1 Corinthians 16:10). He was with Paul when he wrote 2 Corinthians (2 Corinthians 1:1 ; 2 Corinthians 1:19). It was Timothy whom Paul sent to see how things were going in Thessalonica and he was with Paul when he wrote his letter to that Church (1 Thessalonians 1:1 ; 1 Thessalonians 3:2 ; 1 Thessalonians 3:6). He was with Paul in prison when he wrote to Philippi, and Paul was planning to send him to Philippi as his representative (Philippians 1:1 ; Philippians 2:19). He was with Paul when he wrote to the Church at Colossae and to Philemon (Colossians 1:1 ; Philemon 1:1). Constantly Timothy was by Paul's side, and when Paul had a difficult job to do Timothy was the man sent to do it.

Over and over again Paul's voice vibrates with affection when he speaks of Timothy. When he is sending him to that sadly divided Church at Corinth, he writes: "I have sent to you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 4:17). When he is planning to send him to Philippi, he writes: "I have no one like him.... As

a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel" (Philippians 2:20 ; Philippians 2:22). Here he calls him "his true son." The word that he uses for "true" is gnesios (Greek #1103). It has two meanings. It was the normal word for a legitimate child in contradistinction to illegitimate. It was the word for genuine, as opposed to counterfeit.

Timothy was the man whom Paul could trust and could send anywhere, knowing that he would go. Happy indeed is the leader who possesses a lieutenant like that. Timothy is our example of how we should serve in the faith. Christ and his Church need servants like that.

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