

Letters To A Son: Paul's Letters To Timothy

Human friendships can be wonderful. In the Bible two friendships stand out: that of David and Jonathan and the friendship of Paul and Timothy. To this could be added the close friendship of Jesus to John for John was the "*disciple whom Jesus loved.*" The friendship of David and Jonathan was as brothers; the friendship of Paul and Timothy was like that of a father and son which friendship stretched over a score of years. Paul wrote two letters to this young man who had endeared himself so greatly to Paul--so much so that Paul called him his "*son.*"

Timothy's parents were of two different races. His father was a Greek, his mother was Jewish (Acts 16:3). His mother's influence was the greater because Timothy was reared in the ancient faith of the Jews. From a babe he had known the sacred writings which were able to make him wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15). His grandmother also had a great influence in his life and Paul calls to mind the unfeigned faith with dwelt both in his mother and grandmother; and which he was persuaded dwelt also in Timothy, (2 Tim. 1:5). The scriptures reveal nothing about Timothy's father beyond the fact he was a Gentile, but whether he was a proselyte to the Jew's religion, indifferent to religion in general or an idolater to whom another "god" (Jehovah) made no real difference is anyone's guess. Perhaps he had refused to allow Timothy to be circumcised as a Jew (since Paul took Timothy and circumcised him before taking him on his journey with him, Acts 16:4), but even this is speculation. We do not know.

We know Paul met Timothy when he made his first journey with Barnabas (although there is no mention of Timothy in Luke's account of that journey) because it was during that journey Paul was stoned and left for dead at Lystra, which events Paul reminds Timothy of in his second letter to him (2 Tim. 3:10f). It was likely at this point that Timothy was baptized, likely in his early teens, for Timothy was called "*a disciple*" when Paul later met him in Acts 16. Since in Paul's letters to Timothy, he calls him his "*true child in faith*" and "*my beloved child,*" this indicates Timothy has been led to the faith through Paul's teaching (1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2).

To avoid criticism for Timothy (since most Jews regarded him a "Jew" because of his mother and his upbringing), Paul deemed it expedient that Timothy be circumcised so that he might not be a stumbling block in preaching to Jewish audiences. At some point elders had laid hands on Timothy setting him apart for his special work of a minister (1 Tim. 4:4) -- perhaps when Paul took him on his second journey. At some point Paul laid hands on him to impart some spiritual gift to him (2 Tim. 1:6). From his

joining the company of Paul and Silas onward, Timothy was a co-laborer with Paul, parting briefly from him for a season to fill some service for Paul, but then returning to join him. This is seen in Paul's activities as he continued his second journey. Timothy was sent to Thessalonica to strengthen brethren there. But soon he was in Corinth again with Paul, at Paul's request (Acts 17:15; 1 Thess. 3:1). He was also with Paul on his third journey, still serving in the capacity as Paul's fellow worker and additionally likely serving as a messenger of the churches in Galatia to bear funds for them to poor saints in Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:1-4; Acts 20:1ff). Paul highly trusted Timothy and of him Paul wrote, "*I have no man like-minded who will care truly for your state*" (Phil. 2:20).

Paul joined Timothy with him in his greetings to epistles to six churches and/or individuals. To include Timothy in addressing the churches was a courtesy on Paul's part, yet it showed how Paul valued Timothy as well as documenting Timothy's presence with Paul in places and times when and where Luke does not so indicate his presence.

We know nothing about the Timothy's life after Paul's death. Paul had sent Timothy to Ephesus to charge certain men not to teach a different doctrine (1 Tim. 1:3). But when Paul's sentence of death was passed on him, he wrote a second letter to Timothy urging that he come with all haste that he might see him once more. Traditions exist about Timothy's latter life but the Holy Spirit chose to tell us nothing further about him. Did he reach the aged apostle before his exception? We hope that for the comfort his presence would have given Paul, he did! What a blessing Paul was to Timothy and Timothy to Paul!

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