

## TIMOTHY - CHARACTER STUDY

Timothy was a resident of Lystra (Acts 16), which is a city in the Roman province of Galatia. Lystra was a rather insignificant town, at least eight miles from the great east-west trade route. It was in a rich fertile area, on a small mound, with a couple of small rivers flowing past. The ruling class was the local aristocracy of Roman soldiers who lived there. There was a group of Greek educated residents who were called the Hellenes. They were not a racial group, but an educated and generally well-to-do segment of the population. (Acts 16) This could possibly be the group in which Timothy's father belonged. However, the majority of the people were from the uneducated Anatolian tribe which had their own vernacular. (Acts 14)

Timothy's grandmother and mother were Jewesses (Acts 16) and they were believers before him. (2 Tim 1:5) We do not know when they were saved. It could have been through those who had been at Pentecost (Acts 2). We do know that they taught Timothy the scriptures from an early age.

Where was Timothy's father in all this? That's a good question for which there is no clear answer. We can make a guess that it is possible that he died early in Timothy's life, since his mother and grandmother seemed to have raised and educated him in spiritual matters. This could also be why Timothy and Paul connect in a "father/son" relationship. Did Paul become a father figure to Timothy because either his father was absent or unwilling to educate him spiritually? There was certainly a depth of relationship between them.

Timothy, it seems, was saved on the first missionary journey through Paul (1 Tim 1:2), and saw all that went on in the city of Lystra when Paul was there. (2Tim 3:10), Acts 14:8-20). In the few years between the first two missionary journeys Timothy grew strong in his faith, and made quite a reputation for himself. "He was well spoken of by the brethren at Lystra and Iconium." (Acts 16:2) We also know he made some sort of public stand of witness, probably baptism (1 Tim 6:12). He was young when saved - probably late teens, early twenties.

When Paul arrived in Lystra on the second missionary journey, he wanted Timothy to accompany him. It was probably at this time that Paul and the elders laid hands on him to see his ministry released (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6), a ministry that needed to mature and grow. (1 Tim 4:15) Paul also at this point had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:3), so that his ministry could extend into the Jewish communities and synagogues.

Timothy quickly became a significant part of Paul's team, being given a number of missions to accomplish on behalf of the Apostle. We know he went on at least six such expeditions:

Acts 17:14-15	Left with Silas in Beroea
1 Thess 3:6	Sent to Thessalonica
Acts 19:22	Sent to Macedonia from Ephesus
1 Cor 4:17, 16:10	Sent to Corinth from Ephesus
Phil 2:19	Sent to Philippi
1 Tim 1:3	Left in Ephesus

His tasks included helping to establish churches (Acts 17:14-15); enquiring about churches' welfare (1 Thess 3:6); seeking to correct doctrine (1 Tim 1:3); dealing with false teachers (2 Tim); and giving news of Paul (Pm 3).

Paul had a very high regard for him, calling him "Fellow worker" (Rom 16:21); "Beloved and faithful child in the Lord" (1 Cor 4:17); and "God's servant" (1 Thess 3:2). Paul's highest recommendation of Timothy is in Phil 2:20-22:

*"I have no one like him, who will be genuinely anxious for your welfare. They all look after their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But Timothy's worth you know, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the work of the Gospel."*

As Timothy grew in his ministry, Paul invested more and more authority in him, so that when he was sent to a place on behalf of Paul, Paul would instruct him to "Remind people, and charge them," (2 Tim 2:14); "convince, rebuke, exhort" (2 Tim 4:2); "Charge certain persons not to teach different doctrines" (1 Tim 1:3); "Command and teach these things" (1 Tim 4:11); "Teach and urge these duties" (1 Tim 6:2), etc.

We can find out a little of Timothy's character by what Paul says about him and to him. In 1 Cor 16:10 the church at Corinth was told to receive Timothy in such a way that he would be put at ease among them, and that he was to be respected by them. This, with the instructions of Paul in the two letters to Timothy, suggests a young man who is a little unsure of himself; timid and liable to hold back, rather than push himself forward. Paul gives him the following instructions:

"Let no one despise your youth" (1 Tim 4:12)  
"Practice preaching, teaching, public reading" (1 Tim 4:13,15)  
"God has not given us a spirit of timidity" (2 Tim 1:7)  
"Share in suffering" (2 Tim 1:8)

It is possible that his stomach problem was due to a nervous disposition (1 Tim 5:23). It does seem clear that he was growing into the ministry, and was tempted to neglect the gifting and ministry he had received. He was exhorted a number of times to "Get on with it!"

"Do not neglect the gift..." (1 Tim 4:14)  
"Practice these duties..." (1 Tim 4:15)  
"Rekindle the gift..." (2 Tim 1:6)

Remember he must have been courageous to face the trials and persecutions that he did even if he was timid and fearful. Ministering with Paul was not easy.

Paul says in Acts 14:22 that: "It is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God." And this was to strengthen and encourage the believers.

It seems that Timothy heeded Paul's word in 2 Tim 1:8 to "share in suffering," for in Hebrews 13:23 we read that he had just been released from prison. Church tradition held that he was clubbed to death while speaking out against a pagan ritual feast in Ephesus, around 81 AD.