

Timothy, a Young Evangelist & Missionary

(Acts and I & II Timothy)

by

Joelee Chamberlain

Sometimes you may think that only older people can serve the Lord, but did you know that young people can serve the Lord as well as older people? In fact, I thought that today I'd tell you some true stories about one young man that the Bible tells us about in the New Testament who served the Lord. Would you like that? Okay.

Now, we don't know just how old this young man was when we first hear of him. He wasn't a little boy at the time, but the Bible does speak of him as being young. So who was this young man? Well, this young man's name was Timothy. Have you heard of Timothy before? (Oh, and sometimes in the Bible Timothy is called "Ti-mo'the-us", which is the Greek form of his name.) But what do we know about Timothy?

Well, the first thing we hear about Timothy is that he was a Jew and that he was raised by his grandmother and mother who were also Jews. The grandmother and mother had faith in the Lord God, so they raised Timothy from the time he was just a little boy to know the Bible that they had then and to know about the Lord.

Now, what did I mean when I said "the Bible that they had then"? Wasn't it like the Bible we have now, today? Well, it was like part of the Bible we have today, but Timothy's grandmother and mother only had what we call the Old Testament. They didn't have the New Testament.

But why do you think they didn't have the New Testament, too? Why, because the New Testament hadn't yet been written when Timothy was a little boy! But why hadn't the New Testament been written by then? Why, because they were living in the time that we call New Testament times! Nearly all of the things in the New Testament hadn't been written down yet because they were just then happening and would be written down later! So, except for just a couple of places in the New Testament letters, whenever the New Testament speaks of "the Scriptures", it is only talking about the Old Testament, the part that people had then. But let's get back to Timothy.

So, Timothy's grandmother and mother were able to teach little Timothy about the Lord God from what we call the Old Testament. Timothy's grandmother was named Lois and his mother was named Eunise. Now, it isn't really necessary to remember their names, but I like to remember names. However, I had trouble remembering which was the grandmother's name and which was the mother's name, which was which. But then I came up with an idea that helped me remember them. Would you like me to share this with you? All right.

Well, what I did was I took the first letter of each name, starting with the grandmother's name, then the mother's name, and finally Timothy's name. And I made a word out of the three letters. I took "L" for Lois (the grandmother), "E" for Eunice (the mother), and "T" for Timothy.

Three generations in order. These 3 letters, L, E, and T. make a word. What is that word? Yes, LET! So now I can always remember their names and which is which! LET! Lois (grandmother), Eunice (mother), and Timothy! L, E, T, "LET"! (As I said, it isn't really important to remember the names, but I think it's fun! And maybe you can surprise your parents by knowing this! But let's go on about Timothy now, okay?!)

All right then, as I said earlier, Lois and Eunice were Jews. And Lois, Eunice, and Timothy had faith in the Lord God. But what about Timothy's father? Why, the only thing that we know about Timothy's father is that he wasn't a Jew! We don't even know his name!

Young Timothy and his family seem to have lived in a town, a Roman colony, named Lystra, way up in the mountains of what we now call Turkey. Timothy was evidently a godly boy and then became a godly young man, because the Christians in Lystra and another nearby town spoke very well of Timothy.

Well, one day when Timothy was a young man, two men, missionaries, came to their town. The men's names were Paul and Silas. Paul??!! Yes, this was the Apostle Paul, and he was on his second missionary journey!

Now, some time before that, Paul and Barnabas had been to Timothy's hometown, also, and perhaps Timothy had heard them preach about Jesus then; we aren't told. But evidently Paul had heard about Timothy, because this time when Paul and Silas came, Paul asked Timothy if he would go with them as they went to different countries and told people about Jesus and encouraged them to be strong Christians.

Yes, I know that I've talked about the Apostle Paul a lot when I told you about the book of Acts and also six times when we talked about Paul's life. But now I'm talking about Paul because of Timothy. So let's go on.

Anyway, Paul asked the young man Timothy to go with them, so Timothy went with Paul and Silas as they travelled on. They went to many towns and cities, telling the people about Jesus and how they could be saved from their sins. They told the people that Jesus was the Son of God, but that He had come to earth as a human, too, but that Jesus had never done any sins. They told the people that Jesus loves us so much that He had come to earth to die on the cross for our sins. They told the people that Jesus didn't stay dead, but that 3 days later Jesus was alive again and stayed alive. And they told the people that by believing this and by trusting in Jesus to save them from their sins, they could be saved from their sins and could go to heaven someday. They also told the people that Jesus was coming back someday, and that then He would be King of everyone and everything forever, and that the people who had trusted in Him to save them from their sins would be with Jesus then also. Probably Paul and Silas did most of this talking about Jesus, but Timothy was there, too, and he may also have talked about Jesus. But we aren't really told.

Many people in many places believed what Paul, Silas, and Timothy told them, (Though, as I just said, we actually aren't told if Timothy were preaching about Jesus yet, but we know that later

he did.) Yes, many people trusted in Jesus, and many groups of believers were established; churches were formed in lots of places.

Well, after going about 300 or so more miles through the mountains, Paul and Silas and Timothy finally got to the seacoast of the Aegean Sea. (The Bible doesn't say how they traveled, but probably they were walking!) Of course, they would have been telling the people in the towns along the way about Jesus, wouldn't they? The Aegean Sea lies between what we now call Turkey and Greece and is a part of the Mediterranean Sea. And there on the seacoast of what we call Turkey, they came to the city of Troy. Troy was a very important city.

When they were in Troy, a doctor named Luke joined them. Yes, this is the same Luke who wrote the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts! Then Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke all took a ship and sailed about 100 miles to the other side of the Aegean Sea. They got off the ship and went about 9 miles inland until they came to a big city named Phi-lip'-pi. (This is also pronounced as Phi'-lip-pi. I don't know which way is preferred, but I'm just going to say Phi-lip'pi.) (By the way, the city of Philip'pi was named after Philip, the father of Alexander the Great.)

Now, the Romans ruled all over everywhere at that time. And in some ways that was a good thing for Paul and Silas and Timothy as they were doing all of this travelling. How was it good for them? Well, for one thing, the Romans had made many good roads which made it easier for them to travel as they went to the cities and towns. Also, the Romans had made it so that these roads were usually safe for people to walk on; there weren't lots of robbers on these roads.

And another big thing is that the Greek language was spoken all over the Roman empire. Now why is it important that the Greek language was spoken in all of these cities and towns? Well, think about it a minute. What if Paul and Silas and Timothy only knew one or two languages when they went to the many different cities and countries and spoke to the people? And then, what if the people they talked to hadn't known the one or two languages that Paul, Silas, and Timothy knew? What if the people spoke a different language than the ones Paul, Silas, and Timothy knew? Why, how would those people have been able to hear about Jesus? But most of the people in the Roman empire knew the Greek language. And we know that Paul, Silas, and Timothy knew the Greek language, and that at least Paul also knew the Hebrew language that many Jews used. So this way Paul could tell about Jesus in Greek to everyone wherever they went. Of course, this was all part of God's plan. Yes, God had really worked things out well so that the good news about Jesus and how to be saved could be taken to many, many different cities and towns and countries, hadn't He? But let's get back to Timothy as he and Paul, Silas, and Luke get to Philip'pi!

Well, around that time the king of the Romans, called the Caesar, had made a law that the Jews couldn't have their synagogues (where they met to worship God) in Rome or in any of the cities that were Roman colonies. In fact, Caesar had said that the Jews had to leave the city of Rome. Well, as I said earlier, Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke got to Philip'pi, and Philippi was a Roman colony. So since the Jews couldn't have a synagogue there, the Jews in Philippi would go outside of the city, out by the river, in order to pray together and worship the Lord together.

Well, one day after getting to Philip'pi, Paul and Silas and Timothy and Luke went out to the riverside, and there were some women there praying. And Paul and the others spoke to the women, telling them about Jesus and how they could be saved from their sins by trusting in Jesus.

Now, there was one woman there by the riverside whose name was Lydia. Lydia listened carefully to what Paul was saying. Then Lydia believed in Jesus, and then she was baptized. And evidently others who lived with her in her house also believed and were baptized. Then after that Lydia said to Paul and the others, "Please come stay in my house." She evidently asked them several times, so finally they said they would. Wasn't that good of Lydia? And Lydia was serving the Lord, too, by helping these missionaries, wasn't she?

Now also in Philippi is where some bad men caused trouble for them, and Paul and Silas were thrown in jail. Evidently Timothy and Luke weren't put in jail, though. But that night the Lord sent an earthquake which scared the jailer! (I tell more about that other times both when I talk about the book of Acts and in Part 3 about the Apostle Paul. It's a very exciting story!) Anyway, the next day after they got out of jail, Paul and Silas went back to Lydia's house and talked to them. Then Paul, Silas, and Timothy left Philippi, but Luke stayed there in Philippi.

Well, Paul, Silas, and Timothy travelled about 100 miles down to the city of Thessalonica, but bad people caused trouble for them there, too. So Paul and Silas and Timothy left Thessalonica and traveled about 30 more miles to the town of Berea. Again bad people tried to cause trouble, especially for Paul, so the Christians had Paul go to another city to keep him safe. But Silas and Timothy stayed in Thessalonica for a while longer.

Finally Paul got to a big Greek city named Corinth. There he met a man named Aquila and his wife Priscilla. They were Jews who were Christians and had lived in Rome. But they had had to leave their home in Rome because of Caesar's law that I told you about earlier. Aquila and Priscilla made tents for a living. Now, Paul also made tents for a living, so at first Paul stayed with Aquila and Priscilla.

Well, after a while Silas and Timothy joined Paul in Corinth, and they stayed in Corinth for over a year, preaching about the Lord Jesus. But then bad men made trouble for Paul again. Now why were bad men causing so much trouble for Paul everywhere he was going? Yes, it was because Paul was preaching about Jesus, and these bad men didn't like it. Can you imagine not wanting to hear how to have your sins forgiven and be able to go to heaven some day?! How strange -- and how foolish! But there are some people like that, and often they don't want others to be saved either. So they cause trouble for people who teach about Jesus. How sad. And also how very wicked of them!

Anyway, after the bad men caused this trouble in Corinth, Paul, Silas, and Timothy, along with Aquila, and Priscilla all got on a ship and sailed together back across the Aegean Sea to the big city of Ephesus. From there they sailed to Jerusalem. Timothy was certainly travelling a lot, wasn't he?! In fact, this whole time was about 3 years!

After a while Paul and Silas and Timothy started out again on what we call Paul's third missionary journey. They traveled back through the mountains of Turkey again. It doesn't say in the Bible, but the road they took probably went through Timothy's hometown, so probably Timothy saw his family again. Anyway, they kept going, clear over to Ephesus on the seacoast again. (They were certainly doing a lot of travelling, weren't they?! And, remember, they didn't have cars or airplanes then, so, again, they were probably walking!)

After spending about 2 years in Ephesus, Paul sent Timothy and another man ahead of him across the Aegean Sea to Macedonia. While Timothy was gone, there was a big riot in Ephesus because of Paul's teaching about Jesus! So Paul left Ephesus and met Timothy in Philip'pi. And then, there in Philippi, Luke joined them again. Later Paul had Timothy and some other men sail back over to Troy and wait for Paul and Luke there. Then after a few days Paul and Luke sailed to Troy themselves and joined Timothy and the others.

Oh, something happened that time in Troy that I want to tell you about. In a way it's sort of funny, and I think you'll like to hear it! The Bible doesn't mention Timothy's name in this story, but he was probably there. Okay. One night after work a lot of people gathered together to hear Paul preach. They seem to have been in the third story of a building, and there were a lot of candles or lamps burning to give them light. (Of course, they didn't have electric lights then.) It was in the Spring time, and though it doesn't say, I wonder if the room got quite warm. Well, as I said, it was night time, and there was a young man there named Eu'-ty-chus, and he was listening to Paul preach. Paul would only be there a very short time, so everyone wanted him to talk to them a long time. Well, Eutyclus was sitting on a window sill in this third story, and he began getting sleepy. (Have you ever gotten sleepy during a long sermon?! I have!) But what do you think happened then? Why, poor Eutyclus went fast asleep -- and he fell out of that high window! Oh dear!! The people ran down to where Eutyclus was lying on the ground, and they thought he was dead! Well, Paul went down, too, and Paul fell down and hugged Eutyclus, and he said, "Don't worry! He's alive!" And Eutyclus was all right! That sounds like a miracle, doesn't it? (The Lord often let Paul do miracles.) Then they all went back upstairs and had something to eat, and then Paul preached some more until it was daytime. Just think, Paul had preached all night!

After that Paul had Luke and Timothy and maybe some other men get on a ship and sail around some land that stuck out into the water, to a town and wait for him there. For some reason Paul wanted to walk there. It seems to me from looking at a map that he probably walked 10 or so miles overland from Troy across the land that stuck out. Anyway, when he got to where he was going, Paul then got on the ship with Luke and Timothy, and they sailed on, eventually getting to Jerusalem. They'd been gone 4 years this time!

In Jerusalem some more bad men caused a riot, and though Paul was rescued by the Roman soldiers, he was put in jail. After a while Paul was sent to the big city of Rome and was in prison there. It sounds in the Bible as if Luke went with Paul to Rome. I don't know if Timothy did at that time or not. However we do know from 2 letters that Paul wrote later to some churches, that Timothy was with Paul at least for a while in Rome when Paul was in prison there.

You see, Paul wrote letters, both to churches and to individual people. He wrote 2 letters (I and II Corinthians) to the church in the city of Corinth. Paul wrote 2 letters (I and II Thessalonians) to the church in the city of Thessalonica. He wrote a letter (Ephesians) to the church in Ephesus. He wrote a letter (Philippians) to the church in the city of Philippi. These are all cities that we talked about that Timothy visited with Paul, aren't they? And Paul wrote other letters as well. Among these other letters are 2 letters that Paul wrote just to Timothy. They are called First and Second Timothy.

Yes, in the Bible we have 13 letters that Paul wrote. So just think! We can actually read copies of the letters that Paul wrote almost 2000 years ago, including the 2 letters to Timothy!

Well, after that we don't hear much more in the Bible about Timothy. Timothy had been a faithful friend to Paul, hadn't he? Timothy had travelled and served the Lord with him. And Paul left or sent Timothy as a missionary to different places to comfort and encourage the Christians and to help start new churches.

Yes, Paul loved Timothy and called him his own son in the faith. And in his letters to Timothy, Paul encouraged Timothy and told him what kind of men to appoint as leaders in the churches and told him how churches should be run. Timothy, even though he was still a young man, was evidently very important to those churches.

In his letters Paul told Timothy to tell the people in the churches that they were only to teach what the Lord God said. And Paul told Timothy that the Christian people needed to love each other and to pray and to thank God. He told Timothy how men and women should act, and how wives and husbands should act toward each other, and how masters and servants should act toward each other. Paul also told Timothy to teach that we should be content, happy, with what we have. And Paul told Timothy not to worry about being young.

It is thought that Paul was in prison in Rome when he wrote the second letter to Timothy. And in this second letter Paul told Timothy that all Scripture, all of the Bible, was given by God and was good for teaching us, for correcting our mistakes, and for training us to live godly lives. And that way we can do good things in our lives. So it is important for us to know as much of the Bible as we can, isn't it?

Also, it seems that there had been some prophecies that Timothy would be a good servant of the Lord. Timothy became what is called an evangelist and a missionary. That means that Timothy preached about Jesus and how people could be saved and be able to go to heaven by trusting in Jesus.

Yes, if we trust in Jesus to forgive our sins, He will, won't He? After all, God always keeps His promises, doesn't He? And this is what Timothy told lots of people. Oh, and if we trust in Jesus to save us from our sins, then He will be our King! And someday the Lord Jesus is coming back, isn't He? And then He will be King of everyone and everything forever -- and whoever has trusted in Him will be with Him forever!

Yes, this is what Timothy preached. Timothy was truly a godly young man, wasn't he? I hope you enjoyed hearing about him.