

Session 6

July 9, 2023

PAUL AND TIMOTHY

Acts 16:1-5; 2 Timothy 2:1-2; 3:10-12

Of all the mentoring in the New Testament, none is more prominent than that of Timothy by the Apostle Paul. Imagine the learning that took place as the young preacher was mentored by the great theologian! In our focal texts, three important lessons stand out:

Lesson #1: Even disciples need discipling (Acts 16:1-5). In this introduction to young Timothy, three things are highlighted. First, we see his *faith*. He was a *disciple* (v. 1). Paul's obvious warmth toward him (calling him his "true son in the faith" [1 Tim. 1:2]) indicates that Paul likely led him to Christ in his early youth. Second, we see his *family*. He was the son of a devout Jewish woman who had married a gentile (v. 1). This was prohibited by Jewish law, but not unusual for those far from Jerusalem. The use of the term *Greek* normally refers to a lost person as well. But whatever was lacking in the religious life of Timothy's father was made up for by the piety of his mother, who, together with *her* mother, were examples of *sincere faith* (2 Tim. 1:5) and saw to it that Timothy, from his childhood, knew the Scriptures for himself. (2 Tim. 3:15). Third, we see Timothy's *faithfulness*. The *brothers* (believers, v. 2) spoke highly of him. Paul wanted him to go with him as he traveled about the cities of Derbe and Lystra. But because there were Jews in the area, and they all knew that Timothy's father was a gentile, Timothy submitted to circumcision. This was not required (see Acts 15), but was an expedient act, giving both Paul and Timothy additional credibility among the Jews while removing a potential barrier to the gospel. His faithfulness was further demonstrated by his distribution of the findings of the Jerusalem council (Acts 15) to the area churches. Timothy was very young at this point, but he was already involved in meaningful ministry. And Paul was there to guide him along. For reflection: *Do you know born again women who have married lost men? What extra challenges do they face? What does this text teach about faithful parenting?*

Lesson #2: Invest in those who have the most potential (2 Tim. 2:1-2). Typically, Christian workers are not nearly as interested in fame and fortune as they are in being *effective*. Here, in Paul's last letter, he leaves his protégé with some very clear "effective ministry" advice. First, he describes the *source* of effective ministry. Paul tells Timothy not to trust in his good name, or his abilities, or his Christian pedigree. Rather, he tells him to be strong "in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (v. 1). Simply put, any effectiveness Timothy will have in ministry will be a result of God's grace at work. Think about it: we are saved by grace, called by grace, gifted by grace, and here, empowered by grace. Second, Paul tells Timothy the *strategy* of effective ministry. Since this is found in 2 Timothy 2:2, I learned it on the mission field as the "222" principle. It involves the strategy of *multiplication*. What is learned should be passed on to others who in turn will pass it on to others. Whenever I teach this principle, I remind my students to be selective in who they invest in. That's what Paul did! We should mentor those who are both *faithful* and *able to teach others also*. That's the best way to ensure the spread of the gospel as well as the doctrine that goes with it. For reflection: *Think about some people you might be able to disciple. Are they both faithful AND able to teach others?*

Lesson #3: Accept the bad with the good (2 Tim. 3:10-12). Finally, Paul reminds Timothy that with all the good he has shared with Paul (the apostle's teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, and endurance), he has also witnessed the sufferings that came with the successes. English theologian Charles Ellicott recounted it this way: "Not merely were his plans thwarted, his hopes baffled, his friends alienated, through the persistent enmity of his opponents, but *bodily* suffering was inflicted on him—stoning, scourging, long and weary periods of imprisonment, were among the repeated sufferings he endured for his Master's sake." For reflection: *Why do you think Paul included this lesson for Timothy? What applications do you see for us today?*