

SCRIPTURE STUDIES

SERIES: A SURVEY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS**ACTS CHAPTER 16 Part 1****“YOUTH FOR TRUTH”****Acts 16:1-3**

As chapter 16 begins, Paul adds another member to his missionary team, a teenager named Timothy. There are some older persons in churches today who have written off young people. The apostle Paul would not have been found in that crowd. You will remember that he had agreed to take a young man named John Mark with him on his first missionary journey and even though John had deserted him, Paul was still convinced that youth would help advance the cause of truth and so he enlisted still another young man, Timothy.

Perhaps Paul remembered the sinful days of his own youth. In Acts chapter 7 we are told that when the saintly Stephen was stoned to death because of his testimony for Jesus Christ, that the rock-throwers laid their coats "at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul." [Acts 7:58] As a youth, Paul was mixed up with the wrong crowd and even consented to murder, so perhaps he wanted to help as many young people as he could get a right start.

Jesus Christ at age 12 was making waves in the religious community of his day. At the age of 30, He started a movement, choosing 12 young men as His disciples, that still shapes the world today. I think Paul sends a message to every church since his day, that young people must be given the opportunity to get involved in moving the cause of Jesus Christ forward. So Paul chose this teenager, Timothy, to go with him on a very important mission.

I. THE INTRODUCTION TO TIMOTHY. 16:1-3

“Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek. He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek.”

In these three verses we are introduced to Timothy. He would eventually become the only man in the New Testament to be called by the Old Testament designation of "man of God." A greater commendation cannot be given. However, here in Acts chapter 16 he is still a young fellow just starting out.

How did Paul know Timothy? Well, Paul had visited Lystra on his first missionary journey and Timothy was but a boy at that time. Paul had met Tim and his family and knew his background. As he begins his second missionary journey, he is probably in his late teens and Paul saw great promise in him. Not many people see much promise in today's youth, but I'm not one of them!

An article about teenagers reads as follows: "A teenager is an 'it' turning into a 'he' or 'she.' A teenager is one who is too old to be a child and too young to be an adult. They subsist on hotdogs, noise, potato chips, giggles, pizza, cell phones, emotional outbursts, and ice cream. Their normal habitats are the school room, the automobile, the mall and the video game room. They are not easily domesticated but can be trained to do astonishing tricks if rewarded frequently with increased praise and/or an increased allowance. Their principal enemies are their parents and teachers who frequently cross their paths. Some authorities who do not have to live intimately with them rank them as our nation's most valuable wildlife."

I do not know who the author of that piece was, but I am afraid that many adults feel that way about teenagers. I am not one of them. I was once a teenager, of course, and I lived a little on the wild side, but when I surrendered my life to Jesus Christ he made something new out of my life!

Let us look briefly at this young man Timothy whom Paul chose to accompany him in ministry. What a privilege was Timothy's and what experiences awaited him!

A. Timothy was the son of a godly woman.

Verse one tells us that Timothy's mother was a Jewess and that she was a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. In his second letter to Timothy Paul wrote, "when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice, I am persuaded that it is also in you." (Second Timothy 1:5)

B. Timothy was a student of God's Word.

"From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures...." (II Tim.3:15) Paul later instructed him to *"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."* (II Tim. 2:15)

C. Timothy was a saint with a good witness.

"He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium." (16:2) He had a good testimony, one of the major qualifications of Christian ministry.

A word to those who are skeptical of our Christian young people: our youth are going to carry on what we have started. They are going to sit right where we are sitting, and, when we are gone, supervise those things which we are now overseeing. You may adopt all the policies you please, but how they will be carried out depends upon the young people. They will be the future church. So it would be well to set the example before them and encourage them in every way possible now!

II. THE INDUCTION OF TIMOTHY.

"Paul wanted to have him go on with him." (16:9)

Paul needed someone to fill the place of John Mark who had abandoned the Paul on his first missionary journey, and he invited Timothy to go along with him. What an opportunity of a lifetime to get to travel with the apostle Paul!

A. He was inducted as a son.

Paul looked upon young Timothy as his son in the faith, as his spiritual child whom he loved very much. His tender affection comes out again and again in his writings. He calls him "son" four times in first and second Timothy. In writing to the church at Corinth, Paul wrote, "for this cause have I sent unto you Timothy who is my beloved son." (First Corinthians 4:17)

B. He was inducted as a soldier.

"This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare." (I Tim. 1:18)

And, *"...endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.."* (II Tim. 2:3)

Many young people are on the march today -- marching for many different causes. Few are marching for the cause of Jesus Christ. Timothy marched in Christ's army!

C. He was inducted as a servant.

Paul informed Timothy that *"a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient...."* (II Tim. 2:24)

He was discipling Timothy and trying to build leadership principles into his life so that he might serve God and people better. There are three qualities that characterized Timothy that should characterize every young person: A keen mind, clean morals and clear motives. That is why Paul chose him to accompany him in ministry.

When we responded to Christ's call to "Follow me," we enlisted in His army. He is the Captain of our salvation. (Heb.2:10) To Him we owe our love as His son, our loyalty as His soldier and our labors as His servant.

III. THE INSTRUCTION OF TIMOTHY.

He not only taught Timothy as they traveled together day by day, but he later wrote instructions to him. Paul sent two Instruction Manuals to Timothy. They are the books of 1st Timothy and 2nd Timothy. In them he gave him Personal Instructions and Pastoral Instructions.

A. Personal Instructions.

Among the Personal Instructions are two that reveal that Timothy, as a Pastor, was yet young. He wrote, *"Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity."* (I Tim.4:12) And, *"Flee also youthful lusts."* (II Tim. 2:22)

These are but two of the many personal and practical instructions that Paul gave to Timothy and they are instructive to young and old believers alike today.

B. Pastoral Instructions.

A good example of Paul's Pastoral Instructions to Timothy is seen in this passage: *"Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership."*

Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you." (I Tim. 4:13-16)

There are many other essential instructions for pastor and people alike in Paul's two instructional manuals addressed to Timothy. We would do well to "*Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.*" (I Tim. 4:15)

CONCLUSION

The example that Paul sets for us in mentoring a youth should encourage us to "*Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.*" (Prov. 22:6) We should begin with our own children and then reach out to others. Churches should have great youth programs that reach and teach youth the truth.

I recently read a shocking statistic that should make all church leaders and members alike sit up and take notice. Here are the statistics: The average age of people in the United States is 23.5 years of age. But the average age of church members is 56. The average church member is 32 plus years older than the national average! When I read that I thought, "What happened to the young people in the average church?"

Illust. In the very early days of the French Revolution, the schoolboys of Bourges, from 12 to 17 years of age, formed themselves into a group called, "The Band Of Hope." They wore a uniform and were taught to march. They had a flag with this sentence upon it, "Tremble, tyrants. We shall grow up!" And grow up they did. And the result was the French Revolution. (Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The Quotable Spurgeon*, Wheaton: Harold Shaw Publishers, Inc, 1990)

Thank God for older saints, but we will be passing off of the scene. It is the youth of our churches who will perpetuate the ministry. The greatest asset that any church has are its youth. Let us start in every church "Youth for Truth" – "Bands of Hope!"

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