

TIMOTHY taught by his grandmother

Timothy was born in Lystra, Anatolia, in present day Turkey, to Eunice whose mother, Lois, was Jewish. It seems that his father was Greek and that others of the family had become Christian and were noted for their piety and faith. St Paul had visited Lystra previously and the NT records that he had healed one there who had been crippled from birth. Timothy was part of the early church and was known as one who knew his Bible - the OT Scriptures. Paul had introduced the family to Jesus as the long promised Messiah.

Paul writes to Timothy, 'What a rich and honest faith you have. It is handed down from your grandmother Lois to your mother, Eunice, and now to you.'
2 Timothy 1.v5

Timothy's relationship with Paul was close and the apostle entrusted him with missions of great importance. He became co-author for 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians 1&2, Thessalonians and today's reading, Philemon, and had become St Paul's disciple and later his companion and co-preacher. In 52AD, Paul and Silas – another Greek Christian – took Timothy with them on their journey to Macedonia. We understand that Timothy left his country, his house and his parents to follow the apostle and to share in Paul's poverty and suffering. Timothy must have had dyspepsia as Paul, on one occasion, encouraged him to 'use a little wine for his stomach's sake'.

If Timothy were alive today he would be travelling to advise churches on how to 'run' their fellowships, how to deal with false teachings like overemphasis on prosperity, and what qualities are needed in a pastor. When Paul was in prison and awaiting martyrdom, he summoned his faithful friend for a last farewell. We can imagine the scene as the two shed tears. The apocryphal *Acts of Timothy* state that in the year 97AD, the 80 year old Timothy tried to halt a procession in honour of the goddess Diana by preaching the Gospel outside. The angry pagans beat him, dragged him through the streets, and stoned him to death.

But it is the women that influenced Timothy for eternity that we will spend more time with. First, let's get to know **Lois**. Her name means 'agreeable or desirable' She was a devout Jewess who had instructed her daughter and grandson in the OT scriptures. She gave her daughter a Greek name, **Eunice**, which was linked to the goddess of victory, Nike. The family lived in Lystra, among people who worshipped the gods of Greece, yet Lois faithfully raised a daughter who loved God and helped raise a grandson who shared that love.

In case we feel that we can do little for God in today's world, let's remember that we all influence others. We can choose this to be for God and good, both in who we are and in what we say. This record shows the value of positive Christian training in the home. Timothy's name means 'one who fears God'. Heredity piety and personal faith are implied in Paul's reference to the two women. While parent's faith can sanctify a child, all must make up their own minds about who Jesus really is.

As far as we know, Lois and Eunice preached no sermons, performed no miracles and died ordinary deaths. So why are we concentrating on them today? They brought up a boy. Timothy would become one of the leading figures in early church history. St Paul esteemed him to such an extent that he entrusted his own last will and testament to him. While Timothy was a product of grace, this didn't just fall from heaven. It came through his mother and grandmother. By investing themselves in the life of this child, Lois and Eunice reaped unbelievable personal rewards. How did they do it? From a baby Timothy heard the good news and the women covered it all in his youth.

Most of us are mothers, fathers, grandmothers, grandfathers and God-parents and we are all teachers – whether we like it or not. Today we are reminded that we have an obligation to influence our families for good with the Gospel. And if this seems too hard just now, let's recall the words of Solomon whose mother was Bathsheba the adulterer.

'Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways acknowledge God,
and he shall direct your paths.' Proverbs 3. 5-8

We can all be conveyers of truth, no matter our faults.

May this be so, for his name's sake. AMEN

