

Introduction

Timothy is recognised as the recipient of two letters from Paul included in the New Testament. Yet there are – co-written with Paul. However, behind the scenes this man was a giant of Christian faith and practice. There are nine occasions when the name Timothy is used and a further 19 when Timotheus is used. The name Timothy means ‘honoured of God’

What the bible tells us about Timothy

Timothy came from Lystra in modern day Anatolia, Turkey. Paul and Barnabas had visited Lystra on the first missionary journey of Paul when many people were converted and became Christians. When Paul returned a few years later Timothy is already a respected Christian. His mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois were Jewish converts. (2 Timothy 1 v5). Timothy himself seems rather self-effacing and timid yet in 1 Corinthians 16 v10 he is an active Christian ‘doing the work of the Lord’.

Timothy’s father was a Greek Gentile which is probably why Timothy was never circumcised at birth. Paul, wanting to have Timothy accompany him on his travels, recognised this would cause problems when preaching to Jews. So Timothy was circumcised to ensure his acceptability and recognition by Jewish listeners. (Acts 16 v1-3).

It is also worth noting how Paul went about his preaching and travelling. His first point of contact was usually at the local synagogue (eg Acts 13 v5, 14 v1, 18 v4 etc) where he preached to Jews and proselytes (converts to Judaism) (eg Romans 1 v16, 2 v9-10). After rejection, Paul would then preach to Gentiles (Acts 13 v45-6, 18 v6). Sometimes a tactical approach to evangelism is worthwhile!

After leaving home, Timothy accompanies Paul on most of his Second Missionary Journey and also his Third Journey. (Maps in your Bible should show the routes taken as Christianity spread). Timothy is involved in serving five named churches – these are: 1 Thessalonians 3 v1-2, 1 Corinthians 4 v17, Philippians 2 v19-22, Acts 17 v14 and 1 Timothy 1 v3.

After Paul is imprisoned in Rome and before his execution, he writes four epistles and three of these indicate that Timothy is still with him – see, Philippians 1 v1, 2 v19, Colossians 1 v1 and Philemon 1 v1. In Philippians 2 v20-22, Timothy receives, from Paul, high praise for his Christian life and attitude and also his faithfulness.

What can we learn from Timothy?

Tradition has it that he became the leader of the church in Ephesus and died a martyr’s death when he was over 80 years old. Timothy was faithful to God. With Paul being imprisoned, both Timothy and Titus were sent as Paul’s envoys to look after churches recently founded. So, their books named after them are known as Pastoral Epistles and give instruction on how churches should be run in terms of looking after members, administration and how arrangements should be conducted.

The books of Timothy are a source of encouragement for him as he was relatively young and this enabled a condescending attitude being used against him: 1 Timothy 4 v11. Timothy is venerated by the Eastern Orthodox church on 22nd January. The Roman Catholic church recognises Timothy on 26th January and he is invoked against stomach and intestinal disorders!

Summary

I have received a blessing preparing these notes. Yes, I knew the name of Timothy and that he was linked with Paul. Now I think, what a Godly man who used his talents for God but was encouraged by his mentor Paul to be a stalwart in the early Church. I suggest you now read again the epistles bearing his name.

Prayer

Father God, thank you for your Word the Bible. Please help me to hide your words in my heart so that I do not sin against you. Thank you, Jesus, for being the reason we have a ‘good-news’ message to share with others. May I always be faithful to you. Amen.