

Called to a New Life

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[0 : 00] I'd like us to turn to that third part of Scripture that we read earlier, 2 Timothy, and chapter 1 and verse 4.

2 Timothy, page 1197, 2 Timothy, chapter 1 and verse 4.

As I remember your tears, I long to see you that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith.

A faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.

Paul is, of course, one of the principal characters of the New Testament.

[1 : 17] But very often, there are other people who are mentioned alongside the Apostle Paul, and of them all, one of the most important is this man, Timothy.

And it's fascinating to be able to go through the New Testament and to put together little pieces of information, some of them explicit pieces of information, other ones you can infer from different parts of the New Testament that build up a picture of the life of this young man, Timothy.

Here's what the Apostle thought. Here's what Paul thought of Timothy. He calls him this, a beloved and faithful child in the Lord. He calls him a fellow worker.

He calls him a brother and God's servant in the gospel of Christ. And he even goes as far as to say this, I have no one like him.

So that's what the Apostle thought of Timothy. And clearly, from these remarks, we can see that Timothy was someone very special to the Apostle Paul. But when we examine some of the things we know about Timothy, perhaps our picture, the picture that we have of him at first, gets changed.

[2 : 29] First of all, he wasn't an older, mature man. He was a young man. Paul tells Timothy at one point, let no one despise your youth.

So even as a minister, he had to take on responsibility from a very early age. We also know, or we think, that he was prone to illness.

As Paul tells him at one time, to take a little wine for his stomach. The wine was to be used medicinally for his stomach. And so from that, I think we can infer that he perhaps was prone to some kind of illness.

Also, we can infer that from other things that Paul said about him, that he was naturally a shy person. He wasn't inclined. He wasn't your stereotypical, bold, brash leader.

He was more inclined to go into the background, more inclined for other people to make their decisions rather than him. Not the kind of person you would expect to be a leader in the early church.

[3 : 34] And yet, that is the person who God chose to be one of the greatest leaders in the first century church. And before we go even any further, it tells us something about what God is looking for in those who he wants to appoint to special purposes, particularly with respect to the gospel.

Sometimes we think of these people as people who display evident marks of leadership. They've got to be strong on the outside. They've got to be big on the outside. They've got to be able on the outside.

But that's not always the kind of person that God chooses. Sometimes it's the very last people that we might think have the kind of qualities on the outside that God, these are the very people that God chooses.

And he transforms them from what they are into what he wants them to be. And I say this because every congregation, particularly a congregation this size, ought regularly to be asking who our next leaders are.

Who are our young men in the church who are the Timothys and the Peters and the Pauls of the next generation? If you are a follower of Jesus today, then I hope that you're asking, what is God's will for me?

[4 : 54] What does God want me to do with my life? And I hope that you're praying that, I hope that you're even questioning perhaps the fact that God may want you to do something that you never even thought of.

Maybe the last thing, the last thing I ever thought of, last thing I ever wanted to be when I was young was a minister. Last thing I ever wanted to be. I'd seen it. My dad was a minister beforehand.

And I'd seen the kind of life they lived. And to me as a young person, it wasn't attractive to me. Even as a young Christian, it wasn't attractive to me. But yet, that's over the years, God changed my whole outlook.

And made me to see that what's important in this life is obeying God. And he changes your desires. And I'm quite sure that Timothy, when he was converted as a young man, probably around about 15 years old, I'm quite sure that when he was converted, the last thing he ever wanted was to have to go to another city and to pastor, to be the minister of a church there.

But God changed him. And he gave him the gifts and the abilities to be able to do that. And the thing for us to do is to pray and to ask the Lord that God will use us.

[6 : 07] And we can all, it's not just ministers that God uses. It's every person who wants to serve the Lord. We've all got a job to do. We've all got a work to do for his kingdom.

And this was the work that Timothy had to do. So, what else do we know about Timothy? There's a very, very interesting book that was written some years ago by a man called Lance Pearson.

And it's called In the Steps of Timothy. If you ever get a chance to get a hold of this book, it's not for sale now. It's out of print now. But you ever see it on a second-hand bookshelf, go for it because it's a fascinating book.

Because what Lance Pearson did was he read his New Testament again and again and again. And he had a particular interest in this young man. And he put together all the wee bits of information that we have.

And he built up this picture of the life of Timothy. And it's a very interesting read. It's not just interesting. It's fascinating. In which he puts all these wee bits together.

[7 : 07] And some of it is one of the most fascinating sections, what he says about this particular passage here, which relates to the home background from which Timothy came.

His father was a Greek. It means that he wasn't a Jew. But his mother was Jewish. Now that in itself gives us a picture of the kind of home that Timothy was likely to have come from.

Sometimes we read these things and we just pass over them as if they were just details. But that detail, it opens up for us an insight into the kind of home or the kind of boyhood that Timothy would have come from.

It cannot have been an easy thing for Timothy to have grown up. Because remember, the Jews and the Greeks, they thought they didn't particularly like each other.

We don't quite know how his father, who was a Greek, came to be married to his mother, who was a Jew. It did happen in those days. But Jews preferred to keep to themselves.

[8 : 14] And they despised the Greek people. They were not Jews. They were not chosen by God in the Old Testament. And so, unfortunately, the Jews... Of course, this was the whole point of the book of Acts and the Apostles because God had to get rid of these awful prejudices that the Jews had.

Through the gospel, that prejudice disappeared. But when Timothy was growing up, that prejudice was still there. It would have been one thing for him to grow up entirely as a Jewish person.

Then he would know his identity. He would know his own people. He would know his parents and his community and all the rest of it. It would be another thing altogether. It would be one thing for him to grow up as a Greek.

He would then know his community. But he was half and half. He was neither one nor the other. So he couldn't really think of himself as a Jewish boy because he hadn't been circumcised.

And his father was a Greek. And the Jews were always suspicious of him because his father was a Greek. He was never truly accepted in the Jewish community. Neither was he truly accepted in the Greek community because they would have thought of him as a half-caste, a Jewish pig.

[9 : 29] That's what they would call Jewish people. And because his mother was a Jew, then the Greek people would have despised him as well.

So he's accepted by nobody. Can you imagine what it would have been like to grow up in that kind of environment where your pals all spoke to one another about you and they didn't like you and they probably bullied you?

He was probably bullied as a young man. I don't think there's any question about it. He would have been bullied as a young man just like many a young person is bullied today.

That's the kind of picture that we form of this very interesting young man. But it doesn't stop there because the Bible also tells us that he wasn't, he grew up not being circumcised.

The circumcision was a mark that Jewish people put on their male babies. And the Bible tells us that he hadn't been circumcised. Now it's hard to try and work out why it was that with a Jewish mother he hadn't been circumcised because circumcision was absolutely essential if you were Jewish.

[10 : 46] And yet he wasn't. The only thing we can guess is that there may have been some conflict between his father who would have thought, well, I don't mind you teaching him the Old Testament but when you're going this far that's you becoming fanatical.

Do you recognize that? We'll come back to that a little bit later on. But I reckon there must have been, there must have been from time to time conflict between a father who was very, very different from his mother.

Obviously the father didn't stop the mother teaching him the Bible but yet it's very likely that when the mother wanted him circumcised then the father may have objected on some ground.

And again, that perhaps tells us something about the home in which Timothy grew up. A home that was not perhaps united in the things that they should have been and the things that we would like them to have been united by.

It's also likely, and again, we're not so sure of this, that the father possibly died. The father wasn't around when this book was written, when this letter was written.

[12:03] And if that's the case, then that's another factor. Perhaps he lost his father at a very young age. Are we getting a picture of the kind of background that Timothy came from?

Sometimes we get the impression that backgrounds were all happy and peaceful and harmonious in those days. Do you know I'm glad that they weren't because there's many a person today who grows up in a divided home.

There's many a person who grows up today not knowing who their true friends are, being an outcast from their friends, perhaps being bullied in a very unhappy childhood.

Perhaps there's a people who are, there are many, many people who grow up with grief, having lost a father or a mother. People who grow up in broken homes.

I'm so glad that we can go to the Bible today and find people who are just like that. Not people who are ideal, who always, the kind of people that just fit your ideal person, but they're real people who have had real hardships and that's why the Bible is so important and so human because it enters into our world.

[13:21] God comes into our real world with all our hardships and with all our sorrows and with all the things that scar our personalities. Some people believe that their personalities have been scarred by their own background.

Perhaps that's true. The Bible has got something to say to you. In the Bible, God is not writing you off like the rest of the world or even perhaps your family, but God is accepting you for what you are.

And God says, I know who you are. I know your background. I know where you've come from. I know the trials and the difficulties that you've had. Perhaps as a young person, I know these things.

Come unto me, said Jesus, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. There's no such, there's no rest like the rest that we can have in the gospel.

That's where we really find the rest because we find a God who understands everything about us and God who accepts us. As we come in faith, believing in Jesus Christ as our Savior, we are accepted because of what Jesus has done for us.

[14:34] And not only that, God rebuilds our lives. He starts at the very beginning again and He raises us to newness of life. That's why Paul said, if anyone is in Christ, He's a new creature, a new creation.

The old things are passed away and the new, the all things have become new. So that's the kind of background, a background in which, in which Paul was taught as a Jew, with a Jewish mother, he would have been taught the law and the prophets.

That's the Old Testament. The law of Moses, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. And then he would have been taught also all about the prophets. Now again, it's fascinating to think of a boy growing up with that environment.

Very much the kind of environment, perhaps in some respects, as I would have had growing up to learn parts of the Bible, to learn the Ten Commandments.

But you know, you can't just learn the Ten Commandments and, well, that's okay. Because the Ten Commandments come from God and it's God speaking to us. And it's God telling us the kind of life that we ought to have, that He expects us to have.

[15:45] And you know, there's nothing as devastating as the Ten Commandments when you start taking them seriously. And I reckon, I'm quite sure that Timothy would not just have learned them just like that, but that he would have taken them seriously.

And there would be times, perhaps when he was trying to get to sleep at night, where he would be saying, maybe, what if I die tonight? I know that I haven't kept the Ten Commandments. I know that I have, that I've worshipped other things, that there are things in my life that mean more to me than God does.

And I know that the living and true God who called Abraham and Isaac and Jacob to himself, I know that I'm not like Abraham. I'm not like Isaac. I'm not, God is not the first in my life.

He's not the number one. So I'm breaking this, the first commandment, right off. I know that I haven't obeyed my parents as I ought to have. I know I haven't kept his day as I ought to have.

I know that I've hated people. I've despised people. People who perhaps have hated me. So in a sense, I've killed them. I know that I've taken things that haven't belonged to me.

[16:50] I know I've coveted things. You know, the Bible says that if we break the law, even in one respect, we've broken the whole thing. And if you really take God's law seriously, it's a terribly solemn thing in which you're brought to see that you're accountable to God.

And if we're to stand before him today, we would be condemned. And I'm quite sure that Timothy, as a young person, just the same way as many a young person here today, and you've thought the same thing, if you died tonight, where would you be?

Where would you be? What would you say to God? God's law condemns every single one of us, but not only so. There's another part of the Old Testament that talks about the prophets.

And in the prophets, there's a great promise. And the promise is that one day God would come and take away our sin and wash our sin. He would come and that on a great, in the one great sacrifice, that our sin could be washed away.

And I'm quite sure that Timothy and his mother all the way through, they longed for that day to come. I wonder when that man is going to come into the world to take away our sin. And then all of a sudden, when Timothy was 15 years old, there was a big commotion in his town in Lystra.

[18:09] And the commotion was all about a group of visitors, two or three visitors that had come to visit them. And they were bringing a message that they had never heard before. And as they listened to them, they heard a message that they had never, ever heard before.

A message which was just what Timothy was looking for. Because all his life, he had been asking himself, how can I be right with God?

And there was the answer. This person of Jesus Christ who came into the world and who declared himself to be God's son. How did they know he was God's son?

Because of his life, because of the extraordinary things he was able to do. He couldn't be anything else. The kind of miracles that he did, he had to be God's son. No one else could have done the kind of things that this man Jesus had done.

And Timothy had to come to the conclusion that this is God himself. But this man had been taken and he had been crucified on a cross. He had been nailed to a cross.

[19:14] But three days later, he had risen from the dead again and had appeared to his disciples. And his disciples were now going out in the most extraordinary power and telling the whole world that if they believe in Jesus, if they trust in Jesus, then they will be right with God.

And God will give them a new life and a new beginning and a new start. That's just what Timothy was looking for. And I'm sure that there's someone here today and that's what you're looking for as well, isn't it? You need to have a new start, not just to keep trying to be right with God.

You'll never do it. You'll never make it. You need a new beginning. You need the gospel to flood into your heart and for God to raise you to newness of life. That's what you need.

So stop trying. Stop keeping. Stop continuing to try and be right with God. You won't make it by yourself. You need to hear the same message as Timothy. And as Timothy, listen to that message.

He was attracted to Jesus. He was drawn to the gospel and he began to believe. His life was changed. Perhaps not overnight.

[20 : 18] We don't know how long it took for Timothy to become a... That's not important. What's important is that there was between his young days and now there was a massive difference.

He was a new person. A brand new person. He was changed. And when it became known that he had begun to follow Jesus, he was baptized.

He had never been baptized before. Of course he hadn't. But he was baptized when he started telling people that he was now a believer in Jesus. And you know, Paul, for Paul, this was an unforgettable moment in his life.

Here was a young man and he watched that young man being changed by God himself through the gospel. And what was most evident about this young man was his faith.

A faith that was evident. And here is how Paul describes that faith in these verses. He says, as I remember your tears. Your tears.

[21 : 23] That's the first thing that Paul remembers about the faith of Timothy. Now, I don't believe these were tears of departure when Paul was leaving Timothy and they had become such good friends that Timothy was broken when he saw Paul leaving.

There must have been hundreds of people who were crying when Paul would leave them. These were not tears of just sadness. These were tears of faith that spoke about how sincere and passionate Timothy's faith was.

This was a faith that reached deep inside his heart. This was a faith in which he had come to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ in which Timothy had been shown his own filthiness inside.

But he had been shown the love of God in Jesus in sending Jesus into the world to die for him. And Timothy was so overcome with such a love, the love that God had for him.

Why should God love him? Why should God love any of us? That's the greatest mystery that I can even ever think of. Why should God love me? And yet, that truth itself is the greatest truth I can think of this morning.

[22 : 43] And if that doesn't break me and break my heart, then nothing can. When I think this morning of the love of God in Christ and when Timothy thought about it, it reduced him, it broke his heart to tears.

And these were the tears of faith in which he came in all his sin and he asked the Lord Jesus to have mercy upon him. It was a passionate faith. It was also a sincere faith.

What does that word sincere mean? I am reminded of your sincere faith. Some people think, oh well, here, there you go. That's all about religion. As long as you're sincere, it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you're sincere in it.

A lot of people believe that. you can be sincere, but you can also be sincerely wrong. When Paul talks about his sincere faith, he doesn't say his sincere religion.

The religion has gone out the window and it's been replaced by faith in the person of Jesus Christ. No longer was Timothy religious.

[23 : 54] He was now a believer, a follower of Jesus Christ. And it was his faith that Paul was describing as sincere. Do you know what it means? It means, the Greek word in the New Testament, it means this, unhypocritical.

Do you know what that means? It means that in every situation, Timothy acted, I'm not saying he was perfect, but in every situation, Timothy acted consistently.

And there's a lesson there to all of us who profess to follow Jesus Christ. We must not be one thing on a Sunday and another thing on a Monday. We must not act one way on a Sunday when we're worshipping here and then when we go into a place of work for people to say, I don't understand.

how that person can claim to be a Christian. I don't see much evidence of that in their life. Do you know if that's the kind of person you are? Do you know how much harm you're doing to the gospel? It's incredible.

That's the one thing throughout my whole Christian life I've heard people arguing against the Bible and of course there'll always be people arguing against the Bible and you can have that and we've got an answer for that and we can go into discussion about that.

[25 : 11] Do you know the one thing I don't have an answer for? I'm not saying I've got all the right answers. Of course I'm not. But do you know the one discussion that I cannot cope with? It's when people come to me and they say I don't understand it.

I know a Christian supposedly a Christian but the way he acts I can't take that person seriously. I don't have an answer for that.

people and please if that's the way you are please right now let this be the opportunity for you to come to God and to stop and to ask serious questions about the way you're living your life.

Timothy was unhypocritical. In other words what he was one day he was in the section. And do you know how Paul knew that? He knew that because he had been traveling with him. He had been with him all the time he was a traveling companion so that they they came into they had experienced difficulties together all kinds of of awful situations and Timothy was the same he acted in a Christ-like manner didn't matter what and it's the same with families.

You know the one thing that children will pick up from their parents? They'll pick up when you are being a hypocrite. They've got this knack I don't know how it works they've got this knack of knowing when you're being insincere.

[26 : 36] And don't try and persuade them that you're not because you won't be able to do it. They know. And as we bring up our children we have to be what we say we are.

And that means that we have to personally ourselves follow the Lord Jesus Christ and put him first to seek his kingdom. seek first the kingdom of God and when we do that our children will recognize it.

It is absolutely essential to be unhypocritical. That's what God asks of us. You might be here today and you say well I'm not a very good parent. Actually God doesn't need us to be skilled parents.

There are some parents who are more skilled than others. People who are more naturally skilled than others. But what God needs us to be as we bring up our children with these vows that our friends are going to take in a few moments is unhypocritical.

That's the very first thing that Paul needs that God needs us to be. Now just two minutes. He also remembers the origin of Timothy's faith.

[27:51] And he says this I'm reminded of your sincere faith a faith that dwelled first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now I'm sure dwells in you as well.

Now we have to be careful before we misunderstand this passage. Paul is not trying to suggest that faith originates in any other place but God. Neither is he trying to suggest that faith can be passed down like a kind of gene.

Faith is not a gene. Neither is he neither is he kind of suggesting some kind of heirloom that gets passed down like an ornament that belonged to my great great great grandfather and it's all passed through the family.

That's not what faith is at all. He's not trying to suggest that what a parent is a child would automatically be. And he's not trying to suggest that a person is going to become a Christian just because their parents are Christians.

And he's not trying to suggest that if your parent is not a Christian that you've got no chance of being a Christian. Thank God today there are millions of people who are coming to faith in Jesus who have never heard the gospel in their lives before.

[28:57] And yet there is a link between Timothy's faith and what he was taught by his mother and his grandmother.

There is a link, an important link. And that's because God uses means to bring people to him. And one of the most important means that God uses is the home and the place of the home, the precious, precious place in which a child lives his formative years.

When his or her eyes are upon his parents listening to their every word, watching their every move. And it's in recognition of that that we're here today.

The place and the importance of the family and in giving our children first of all to God. Listen, you know the first step in giving your children to God is to give ourselves to God.

That's the first step. Have you given yourself to God? I'm talking to our friends here. I'm also talking to every one of us who are parents and every one of us who are here today. Have you given yourself to God?

[30:03] That's the first step. But then it permeates through our family. Don't tell me that a child will not be affected. I know, I've said this before, I know that some of you have brought up your children and as it stands at the moment, at the moment, they appear to be wayward, they appear to have gone astray, you keep praying for them because the seed of the truth still lies in their hearts and they know what the truth is.

Maybe you're one of them yourself, maybe you've come here just because of baptism and you've no intention of darkening the door of the church again. Please think again. Please think again.

about where you stand with God and please come to God and ask him to change your life and to change that desire within you towards himself to open up your heart and to make you a new person in Jesus.

Now how is all this worked out? It's worked out by living a life that's oriented towards God in our homes. What place does God have in our homes?

Do you read with your children? Do you read the Bible with them? I'm going to be giving not today but later I'm going to be giving all the families here a children's Bible. We do that every time we baptize. Why is that?

[31:27] Because there are great books out there in which children actually they want to read them because they're put in a way in which Bible stories are presented to children in such a wonderfully child-friendly way.

There's no excuse anymore but it takes you to sit down at bedtime and say I'm going to read a wee chapter of this book. We're going to say a wee prayer to the Lord. Is that so difficult?

You say well I'm not a Christian. Is that so difficult? or perhaps is your own reluctance to do it the uneasiness that you feel in your own heart towards God?

Well please get over that. Please for the sake of your children come to God and who knows what God will do through the way in which you teach your children.

There's so many more things. The time has gone but just let me say this that it's the home but also the church. Please take your children to church.

[32 : 32] Please come to church. If your children are here today it's great to see you. You don't know how much Kenny I and myself how it thrills our hearts to see you in the gallery leaning over the gallery with your mums and dads and your parents and I know many of you have come for this.

Why don't you come normally to church? This is a place for families. A place where I hope that families will come and understand at least most of the service and where you'll see other children and where you get to see them afterwards and where you can come to Sunday school and where you can hear God's word put to you in a special way.

I want church to be great for children and I know that Kenny I wants the same. We want church to be great for our families and we want you to wake up in the morning every Sunday morning and say I can't wait.

Is that what we're going to work towards? We've done a lot already. It's all about families coming together and worshipping God and discovering God and who knows what God will do through that great means.

Let's pray together. Father in heaven we thank you for how special this occasion is and once again we ask for your grace to work within us in ways that perhaps we never expected.

[34 : 04] Bless us now we pray in Jesus name. Amen.