

## Our Sunday School Lesson.

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SERIES FOR 1897.—SECOND QUARTER.

Studies in the Acts and Epistles.

## PAUL'S ADVICE TO TIMOTHY.

Lesson XL.—June 13, 1897.

2 Tim. I. 1-7; III. 14-17.

## INTRODUCTION.

Timothy is one of the interesting characters of the New Testament story. We know him but slightly; his name is preserved from oblivion only by its association with the unforgettable name of Paul. He is renowned not for words he himself spoke, but for words which were spoken to him. He appeals to us as one of the first who were from boyhood nurtured in the Christian life. Christianity had begun to invade pagan homes. Faith unfeigned took possession of his grandmother Lois; it became the possession of his mother Eunice; it descended to Timothy as a treasured home inheritance. He was a home-bred Christian.—The glimpse given (2 Tim. 1:5) into Timothy's early home in Lystra is suggestive. We see a Christian grandmother and her daughter contending for a precious boy against the influence and teaching of a Greek father. A drama, perchance tragedy, was there enacted.—That Timothy had both Hebrew and Greek blood in his veins, and may have been the recipient of both Jewish and Grecian culture, is a prophecy of the unity of races and religions in the Gospel of the Son of Man.

## SCHOLARS' STUDY.

**TIME.**—Timothy was born A. D. 31-32; he was converted A. D. 46 or 47; he joined Paul A. D. 51; this epistle was probably written about A. D. 67.

**PLACE.**—The epistle was sent by Paul from a prison in Rome; it was received by Timothy at Ephesus. Timothy was born in Lystra, Asia Minor.

**GOLDEN TEXT.**—"From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation."—2 Tim. 3:15.

**UNIVERSALIST CATECHISM.**—XXII. What is God's attitude toward sinners? He is displeased and righteously indignant because of their sins, but loves all sinners as his children.—John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; I John 5:9, 10, 19.

## TEACHERS' HELP.

Upon Timothy is conferred the distinction of having been a friend of Paul. We have in Acts and the Epistles many intimations of Paul's friendships. His greetings and remembrances and farewells throb with human love. As others cherished homelike he, a homeless man, cherished his friends. Friendship with him, under Gospel illumination, was more than an earthly pleasure; it was a prophecy and foretaste of heaven.

And of all Paul's friendships we recall none more beautiful than this one with Timothy. Paul was bound to the young man as with hooks of steel. He was his spiritual father; he loved him with paternal affection. Timothy shared with him the hardships of his ministry; he loved as a comrade. Timothy was his heir in the apostleship; he loved him with devoted solicitude.

Who was Timothy?

We recall (Acts xvi: 5, 6) that in the course of their first apostolic journey among the Gentiles Paul and Barnabas came to Lystra, a city of Lycaonia, where they preached the Gospel for some time, and, although fiercely persecuted, made some converts. Among their converts was Lois, a Jewess, and her daughter Eunice, who had married a Greek, by whom she had Timothy, then about nineteen years of age. From their Greek names it is reasonable to infer that both Lois and Eunice had been born on Grecian soil; but they did not fall into the ways of the Grecian idolatry. It was their good fortune, implying opulence, to possess copies of the sacred Hebrew scriptures, or of some of them; and it was their greater good fortune to be able to instruct Timothy from his early childhood in the incomparable literature of their nation.

Of the father of Timothy we know little. Some infer that he had died previous to the coming of Paul and Barnabas to Lystra; but it is quite as likely that he was a Greek sensualist, who regarded all religious doctrines with skeptical indifference. His Grecian culture, whatever it was, was not of such stamina as could resist the positive faith of Lois and Eunice in shaping the character of Timothy.

There appear to have been at Lystra no synagogue; we learn of no other Jews being in the city than those we find in this one household. But the Hebrew devotion in this home had prepared Timothy for Paul's message, when the apostle brought the Gospel to his neighborhood.

It has been reasonably conjectured that young Timothy was among the beholders of the stoning of Paul in Lystra, when Paul was left as one dead. Timothy was, by previous education, prepared to appreciate the heroism which the great apostle then exhibited.

When Paul and Barnabas departed from Lystra good seed was left in the heart of the young man.

Two or three years afterwards Paul made a return journey to Lystra. He found Timothy an avowed disciple. Notwithstanding his youth, he was recognized as an efficient champion of the Christian faith; he was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and

Iconium. The old apostle discerned in him capability of usefulness in a wider field. Paul's choice of him for a companion in his missionary wanderings was an extraordinary compliment to the inexperienced disciple. That Timothy was willing, under direction of the apostle, to enter on a service he knew would be both difficult and perilous, proves that he had in him a holy ambition and a consecrated spirit.

It was, as Paul perceived, possible for Timothy to fulfil a special mission in uniting the yet antagonistic Jewish and Gentile sects in the church. The Gentiles would see in Timothy a fellow-Gentile; the Jews, because of his maternal inheritance, would see in him a fellow-Jew. But as yet Timothy had not formally accepted his Jewish inheritance. Because of his isolation from a synagogue he had never received circumcision, the rite which the Jews regarded as a condition of their fellowship. It was in accordance with Paul's habit of deference to ineradicable prejudice that he advised Timothy to be circumcised. The rite which, as a rule, he did not impose upon Gentile converts, the rite which he strenuously resisted when it was made a condition of Christian discipleship, he recommended as a courtesy, an expedient, as an appeal to the Jews in behalf of the Gospel. Timothy was formally ordained to the ministry; his ordination being accompanied by the symbolic laying on of hands by Paul.

Timothy became Paul's helpful companion in his missionary travels. He accompanied him to Macedonia and as far as Berea; here he remained with Silas while Paul went on to Athens. He followed Paul to Athens; he was sent on a mission to Thessalonica; he was afterwards with Paul at Corinth. He was Paul's assistant in his third missionary journey. We find him with the apostle at Ephesus, from which city he was sent by him again to Corinth; we find him afterwards sent by the apostle to Macedonia; he is Paul's companion in his journey back to Asia from Corinth. We find him with his spiritual father during Paul's first imprisonment at Rome. After Paul's deliverance we find him at Ephesus, where Paul addresses to him his first Epistle, so full of loving counsel in regard to the dangerous tendencies in the Ephesian church. In this letter he expresses the hope that he may soon visit him at Ephesus; a hope which, however, appears not to have been fulfilled. We find Timothy still at Ephesus when, from a Roman prison, during his second incarceration, Paul writes to him a second Epistle. In this Epistle he expresses his wondrous solicitude in matters of faith; he expresses undiminished confidence and affection; he urges him to hasten and come to him in Rome. It is probable, indeed, fairly certain, that Timothy fulfilled this request and was Paul's prison-ministrant till the old hero's life ended in martyrdom.

This was Timothy; seen at a glance, pictured in outline.

We have warrant for believing that he was worthy of Paul's friendship. Although we unfortunately have no words of his to which we can appeal as testimony, his acts imply that he was not wanting in filial love, in appreciative comradeship, in reverential love ingrained in his life.

We recall again that this second Epistle to Timothy was written during Paul's second imprisonment in Rome. In his loneliness, when certain professed friends were forsaking him, when some real friends were compelled to leave him, when he knew his earthly end was drawing near, he longed for the presence of his spiritual son. He sent Tychicus to Ephesus, to have oversight of the church there in Timothy's absence; he entrusts Timothy to make no needless delay in coming to him. (4: 9-15.) These last written words of Paul, written under such circumstances as are pathetic as they are heroic.

Our specimen passages will be fairly expounded by being reproduced in the free rendering of Conybeare.

## 1. Timothy Reminded of his Spiritual Blessings.—1: 1-7.

PAUL, AN APOSTLE OF JESUS CHRIST BY THE WILL OF GOD—sent forth to proclaim the promise of the life which is in Christ Jesus—to TIMOTHY, MY BELOVED SON, Grace, Mercy, and Peace from God our Father, and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God (whom I worship, as did my forefathers, with a pure conscience) whenever I make mention of thee, as I do continually in my prayers night and day. And I long to see thee, remembering thy parting tears, that I might be filled with joy. For I have been reminded of thy undiminished faith, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois and thy mother Eunice, and (I am persuaded) dwells in thee also. Wherefore I call thee to remembrance, that thou mayest stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the laying on of my hands. For God gave us not a spirit of cowardice, but a spirit of power and love and self-restraint.

In the same tone of exalted affection and faithful admonition Paul continues till we reach our second passage.

## 2. Timothy Exhorted to Abide in the Holy Scriptures.—3: 14-17.

Do thou continue in that which was

taught thee, and whereof thou wast persuaded; knowing who were thy teachers, and remembering that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, by the faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God, and may profitably be used for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for righteous discipline; that the man of God may be fully prepared, and thoroughly furnished for every good work.

The rendering in the revised version, *Every scripture inspired of God is profitable*, appears to be more faithful both to the letter and the spirit of the original. Conybeare understands the word "Scripture" in the Jewish technical sense, signifying the Old Testament; the revisers understand the word to signify all writings which are the outcome of the Spirit's inbreathing. Paul, as seems to us, exhorted Timothy to be a diligent student of all sacred literature, old and new; that he might continue the good habit of study he learned in his youth, and prepare himself more completely as a preacher of the Gospel.

## TEACHING POINTS.

**INTRODUCTION.**—Paul was admirable in his friendships.—Timothy was his spiritual son, his companion in the deepest spiritual experiences.—To the church at Ephesus Paul had given three years of earnest work; when he committed it to the care of Timothy he continued to be solicitous for its welfare. Both his epistles to Timothy were sent from a Roman prison, to give counsel and strength to the young minister at Ephesus.—Paul understood better than Timothy the seductions of the un-Christian philosophy, the danger of science falsely so called; and his Epistles evince the anxiety which he felt that Timothy might not be swayed from the simple Gospel.—The second Epistle to Timothy may be read as Paul's farewell to the churches.

(1.) 1: 1-7. **AWAKENING OF EARLY REMEMBRANCES.**—Paul reminded Timothy that he was the product of a good home.—The very names, Lois and Eunice, have a pleasant home sound.—Timothy, taught religion by his grandmother and his mother, and ordained to the Christian ministry by Paul, could not well help being the noble Christian he undoubtedly was.

(2.) 3: 14-17. **EXHORTED TO ABIDE IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.**—To abide in the things one has received with inward assurance from sacred writings, is to know an unfeigned spiritual help.—To learn the holy Scriptures from mother and grandmother at home, is to learn them by the help of a luminous commentary.—Inspired Scriptures can be tested by no better standard than this, their power to inspire us.

—The study of the Scriptures is no less inspiration in our day than in the days of Timothy and Paul.

—A Sunday-school teacher ought to be an enthusiast in personal Bible study.

—A husbandman should be the first partaker of the fruits.

—No one can be indifferent to the fact that he is remembered by a friend before the throne.

—Modern criticism of the Bible by the scholars and experts has not shaken the "impregnable rock of the holy Scripture."

—Study should be free, yet reverent.

—Religion at home is the most divinely beautiful thing in the world.

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