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Acts 16 Timothy

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Let's pray. "Father in Heaven today we are about to open Your word. And some of us may need to hear from a lion, some of us may need to be cuddled by a lamb. You know our heart's conditions, You know our experiences, and we pray that as we open Your word, You will communicate to us the very message You want us to hear, in the way You want us to hear it. And that our hearts will be warmed, will be strengthened will be encouraged, in fact Lord, we ask for miracles to take place and lives to be changed. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen."

You could hear them coming for a long time. Long before you ever saw them you would hear them coming. Well you may see the dust off in the distance. But you would hear them, ten thousand Greek soldiers marching in cadence, tramping down the road to conquer. When they did arrive in a vision, or where we could see them, we would see that they were all dressed very similar. They would have their spears on the same shoulder; they had their swords on the same hip, their shields were all about the same length. They had the same type of head dress on, and basically a uniform that was the same color. Extremely impressive to see that type of uniformity, ten thousand men marching off to war. Their leader was just a young man. You know his name, Alexander.

When Alexander was twenty, his father Philip who was the King of Macedon, was assassinated. Some scholars have written that they thought Alexander had part of the assassination. Well, Philip had married again and had another child, and Philip and Alexander had had a falling out, and so there could have been some concern on Alexander's part that he would not get the throne. But, most scholars think that Alexander did not have a part in the assassination of his father, Philip. In fact, they have found documentation to demonstrate that Darius the third who was the King of the Persians that he may have hired some people within the household of Philip to assassinate him.

When Alexander was put on the throne, the first thing he did was to kill anybody that could be a rival to his throne. He was a man of decision. He was a man of action. He was a man that men feared. He was, if you will, a man's man. And he would take matters in the hand, and he did. He then decided that his life's goal would be to conquer Persia. He would kill Darius the third for having a part in whipping out his father and assassinating him. He would seek to do that, and at the same time he would take Greek thought and philosophy as far as he could go in the world. And so, we see him marching, marching with his troops. He marches North and then East, and then he comes South down through the narrow passage there. And he comes into Asia Minor and he is marching with ten thousand of his troops going off to war. And he comes to a very narrow pass in the mountains known as the Cilician Gate. It was only wide enough for a chariot

to pass through. So his soldiers had to wait as they were paired in twos or threes and they marched through and then they gathered again on the other side. And as he went through the Cilician Gates, Alexander prepared for great battles.

He would ultimately conquer all of the land from Egypt to half way into India. And he would die at the age of thirty three. Alexander the Great! Never lost a battle never lost a single battle. He went forth to conquer. He and his personage, and he and his army were very, very, impressive.

Now another scene comes before our minds. Three hundred and seventy four years later at the very same passage, the Cilician Gates, going in the opposite direction, you have two men. Paul and Silas, and they are going forth to conquer. I tell you, they are not very impressive. But I will tell you this, they never lose a battle. I'd like to study that with you today. Please turn in your Bibles to Acts chapter 16. You see some men trust in chariots, some men trust in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God. Acts chapter 16 we begin with verse 1. "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."

The "he" is Paul. In verses 40 and 41 of the previous chapter we read, "Paul chose Silas and departed being commanded by the brethren to the grace of God and he went through Syria and Cilicia strengthening the churches." They are going back to where Paul and Barnabas had been before. But this time they are going a different way, and they go through the Cilician Gates. And they come to the region where they had been ministering. They come to the cities of Derbe and Lystra. They are about twenty miles apart. That's why they are included in the same breath if you will; close enough, Derbe and Lystra.

They come there and it's been over two years since Paul and Barnabas were there before. And when they arrive they become reacquainted with some old friends. It says, "...and behold a certain disciple was there named Timothy." Now we are going to look at Timothy for a few moments today. See what we can learn about him; see how it informs us about the type of people God chooses to do great work through, and even more importantly, about the type of God that we serve.

We learn about Timothy in First Corinthians 4 verse 17. We'll be seeing little pictures of him, and when we put it all together, we should have a fairly good idea of what type of person he was. First Corinthians 4 verse 17, the Apostle Paul is writing this letter to the church at Corinth, and he includes this in the letter. He says, "For this reason I have sent Timothy to you who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord who will remind you of my ways in Christ as I teach everywhere and in every church."

Paul says, "Timothy is my son in the Lord." Apparently the apostle Paul is the one who lead Timothy to Christ. It's very likely that he had done it two years prior to Acts chapter 16. Timothy

accepted Christ, he was a believer, there is evidence and we'll see it in the very passage we are studying that he was active in the church and that's what drew Paul towards him. So Timothy is a son to Paul in the faith.

In First Timothy chapter 1 and verse 2 these are two letters that Paul actually wrote to Timothy sometime later. In First Timothy 1 verse 2 Paul mentions it again. He says, "To Timothy, my true son in the faith." It is a beautiful picture of tenderness that is described in the phrase. Paul considered Timothy to be his son in the faith. And as a father cares for a son and a son respects the father, that's the type of relationship they had -- Paul strengthening Timothy all along the way, Timothy rendering joy to the heart and service to the life of his father in the faith which would be Paul. Timothy was a young man. Look at First Timothy 4 verse 12. Paul says this, "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."

When Paul wrote this letter to Timothy, he said, "Let no one despise your youth." This letter is written 12 years after Acts chapter 16. So for Timothy to still be considered a young man, he had to have been pretty young when Acts 16 takes place. It is very likely that Timothy accepted Christ when he is about the age 16, maybe as old as 18. And it is very likely then 2 years later when Paul comes back through with Silas that Timothy is now 18, maybe as old as 20. And when this letter is written to him, he is 32 years old. So he is a young man. Timothy is a convert of the apostle Paul. Timothy is a young man.

Let's look at Second Timothy chapter 3 verse 14. Paul, again this is another letter he wrote to Timothy and he says: "But as for you, continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." We are told here that Timothy learned the Scriptures as a child. So he was raised in the home of somebody who believed in the Word of God. And they were teaching Timothy. Timothy learned the Scriptures as he grew up.

So we discover from these pictures that he was a convert of the apostle Paul that he was a young man, and Paul recognized that he had been raised in a church type environment where the Scriptures had been taught him. First Timothy 5 verse 24, we have another picture of him. Again, the first letter that Paul wrote to Timothy, and we are going to read verse 23; I said verse 24, I mean verse 23. So First Timothy 5 verse 23, Paul has some counsel for him. He says, "No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach sake, and your frequent infirmities." Paul is saying here, "Use wine medicinally." Apparently Timothy is a sickly individual. It is identified here that he has frequent infirmities.

So we discover that Timothy, you know he is raised to be religious. As a young man he accepts Christ, he is a convert of the Apostle Paul, he is still a young man throughout all these stories, but he is a sickly individual. He is not the type of person that you think of a leading a movement or somebody that you would rally around, especially if you were to compare him with Alexander the Great, a man's man. Timothy not only is he sickly, well, Second Timothy 1 verse 3 and 4 teach us that he is kind of emotional too. Second Timothy 1 verses 3 and 4, we read this: "I thank God whom I serve with a pure conscience as my forefathers did, and without ceasing, I remember you in my prayers night and day, greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears that I may be filled with joy."

Now imagine you are a young man. You are somewhere between the ages of 20 and 32. And they are going to describe you. How would you like this? You were taught to be religious as a child, that's not bad. You were a convert of the apostle Paul that's not bad. How about this? That you are a sickly individual and you are really emotional, you cry a lot. Somebody needs to wipe tears from your face a lot. Would you like that? I mean is that really, come-on is that how you want to be described? And those of us who aren't young man, you may be a lady here, would you be attracted to a fellow like that? "O yes, that's the kind of guy I want. I want a sickly guy that I can help wipe tears from his cheeks, yes, that's the guy I am attracted to." If you are, please talk to somebody, you need help. You don't want that kind of guy.

Timothy! I mean you put these pictures together and you think, "Brother!" He is not an impressive person. Not like we consider impressive people. You know, I don't think if we described him to the community and said, "He is going to be here to speak," that people would come. But I dare say, if we said, "Payton Manning or" does Atlanta have any stars? We are not going to take their quarterback, we don't want that crowd. Surely Atlanta has somebody that has... their baseball team has stars, right? Give me one! Chipper Jones! "Hey, Chipper will be here!" There will be a crowd, there will be a crowd.

But Timothy, he is just not impressive. But yet, he does accomplish some things. Look at First Timothy 1 verse 3. Paul in his introduction, he says: "As I urged you when I went into Macedonia - remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine." He was the pastor of Ephesus. And church tradition teaches us that he died there in Ephesus. He was a martyr for Jesus Christ. So say whatever you want about his personage or his physicality, the guy had courage enough to die for his Lord. That is impressive. There is another thing about him; we find it in Hebrews chapter 13. He was willing to take a stand in Hebrews 13 verse 23. The author of the book of Hebrews says this: "Know that our brother Timothy has been set free with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly." So Timothy apparently had been imprisoned for his faith.

So when we put the picture together, I mean his personage is not very impressive but there is something about his faith that God was able to use him and he accomplished some great things. He was a pastor at Ephesus, he was willing to go to prison for Christ, he was willing to die for Jesus, and we have a picture: Paul, Silas and Timothy walking off to conquer the world for Christ. And you know what, they did. They did! The apostle Paul will write later, "We've been to the then known world with the Gospel." They changed the world.

Well let's go back to Acts 16 and see what else we can learn about these incredible people who are really in so many ways unimpressive. But they learned that "Some trust in chariots, and some trust in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." Chapter 16 verse 1: "Then Paul came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman..." lot of 'certains' here. "Certain disciple, certain Jewish woman..." Her name is Eunice; her mother's name is Lois. Do you know how I know? I should have had you stay back there in Second Timothy. If you want to read it later, Second Timothy 1 verse 5, it talks about them that Eunice is the mother of Timothy and Lois is the grandmother. They have a lot to do with Timothy's upbringing. It's quite apparent, otherwise they wouldn't be mentioned.

"A certain disciple was there named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed." Verse 1, "...but his father was Greek. And the way that is written in the Greek, the way that the mother is described, it's not strong enough so that it comes through in the translation. But it indicates that she is a widow at this time. The father is off the scene. He is gone, he has passed away. And so, Timothy is there with the women in the house you know, he is a young man. He is being raised by them. Father is gone. But it says here in verse 2, "He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium." So during the two year time period that Paul had been there, and when he comes back this young man, this sickly young man, this unimpressive young man was ministering to other people, and when Paul arrives there is a good report about him. And Paul says, "I want to take him with me. I want him to be part of this ministry. I am going to pour my life into this young man and build the kingdom through him."

It says in verse 3, Paul wanted to have him go with him. "And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region." Now some of you may be thinking, "Brother, why doesn't Paul land on the side of consistency?" Acts chapter 15 the whole issue was the people didn't have to be circumcised anymore. They didn't have to keep the Law of Moses, so what's this all about? I am glad you asked the question. Again, we go back to a major premise when it comes to surviving theologically in an environment of religion. And that is this: we must learn to think. We have to learn to think. We have to learn to use common sense. Yes, it is true. Nobody had to be circumcised anymore. In fact, I can show you where Paul absolutely refuses

to circumcise Titus. But Titus is a gentile. And it's true that Timothy is not fully Jewish until he is circumcised, but let's seek to understand the environment and the culture and dynamics. And here is what's going on.

In the world where Paul lived, if somebody was born into a home where the mother was Jewish and the father wasn't, or the father was Jewish and the mother wasn't, that kid was Jewish. He was Jewish; didn't matter whether it was the mom or the dad that was Jewish, in their mindset that kid was Jewish. But circumcision under normal situations would happen on the eighth day of life. And later, if you converted to Judaism, it would happen at the age you were.

Timothy because of his father apparently, his dad said, "That kid is not having that done to him. My dad didn't do that to me, and his dad didn't do it to him, and I am not doing it to my kid. Besides, when I potty train him, I don't want him to be so different than me." Whatever reasons he gives? Not happening. So the father dies later. Timothy, perhaps out of respect for his father or perhaps because he is not fully committed, we don't know, never was circumcised until Paul comes along. And Paul says, "Look, you are Jewish. And we are going to go first to the synagogues when we go into the cities. And we'll be preaching to Jewish people. They are going to expect that you are one of them who now believes in Christ. But if you are not considered fully Jewish," which circumcision is baptism and voting to church membership, that's what it was to them, "then we are going to have problems because they will never listen to you. The Gentiles will listen to you if you are circumcised, they don't care." In fact, a Gentile could teach a Jew. They didn't care. But you take a Jew who is not circumcised, he's got nowhere to go, with the Jews that is.

And so Paul says, "Look, get circumcised, be Jewish, be Jewish believer, and think of all the souls that we can win." That's what I mean about thinking. Because a rule is made, practice is followed, think about it in the circumstance and the situation that you are in. I thought about doing a whole sermon just on that point. But the examples I would come up with, I realized, wasn't worth the aggravation. So you just think of how you can apply that.

We come to verses 4 and 5. "And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep which were determined by the apostles and the elders at Jerusalem, so the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily." Paul, Silas and Timothy go on a journey together. I tell you, if we would see them on the road, we would say, "Huh, that's not very impressive." Not like ten thousand Greek soldiers marching with cadence. That is impressive. These three men went out without weapons to conquer the world. They had one weapon. That was their faith.

Look at Psalm 20 verse 7 please. The author of this Psalm, and most people believe it's David, wrote: "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord

our God.” Look at Psalm 33 verse 16, it says: “No king is saved by the multitude of an army. A mighty man is not delivered by great strength. A horse is a vain hope for safety. Neither shall it deliver by any, by its great strength. Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His mercy to deliver their soul from death and to keep them alive in famine.” You see brothers and sisters, God is looking. He is studying; He is searching the landscape for those who want to hope in His mercy because He wants to show Himself strong on their behalf.

Those people who may not be impressive to other people, in fact, probably all of us here have felt so discouraged at times about who we are or who we are not that we’ve just, “...you know, why go on, why go forward?” And other times we think well of ourselves. You know when the hair is just right, and the dress is working, or the suit is whatever, and you know the clothes are good, that tank-top shows what I really am. You know whatever you are going through and you feel good about yourself. Those are fleeting times, are they not? And truth be told, the vast majority of time that we spend in this world is struggling with our basic insecurities. And you know, we hear of people that do great things, and we like to be a great person. We may be involved on campus, and you know, there are these leaders that are there. And we’d like to be a leader. But truth be told, few people on this planet are impressive. Few people are impressive. Most people aren’t. We are weak, we cry, we have our sicknesses, we have our doubts, we have our fears, we have our dumb decisions, we have it all.

But I’ll tell you, all God wants from you is for you to hope in His mercy. He will be everything you aren’t and that is impressive. You know, think of the church back then. You’ve got a converted Pharisee, kind of cranky, hard to get along with. We don’t know much about Silas, that’s why I didn’t even preach about him. There is not enough written. You got Timothy, you know this unimpressive young kid, it’s said enough about his frailties. You got Eunice and Lois, and you know, how you are going to conquer the world with a mother and a grandmother, you know, how you are going to do that? You are not. And the red tagged team goes out, and they win the world for God. That is because they did not trust in their strength, they did not trust in their ability. They did not trust in their looks, they did not trust in their talents, they did not trust in anything about themselves. They trusted in the name of the Lord, their God.

And today, I don’t know where you are. You may feel like Alexander, just one battle after another, just victory after victory after victory. Well good for you. But may I remind you, Alexander was never defeated in battle, but he never could conquer himself. He basically died because of his intemperance in alcohol. Jesus offers us more than Alexander ever did. Oh yes, they write about him in history. He was a great general and all that kind of stuff. But it won’t be too long on the other side of eternity, and we won’t be even talking about the guy. But we will be talking about Timothy, and Lois, and Eunice. We’ll talk about Paul and Silas, and we’ll talk about you. Because it won’t be anything that you did, or that Paul and them did, but it’ll be all

that God did through them. And that is impressive. They trusted Him, and He used them to do things that will last for eternity.

Simple question today: would you like to trust God that way in your life? And if you would, I am just going to ask you to stand. "Father in heaven, there may be some right now whose faith is as thin as a single hair and they are just barely holding on. Lord, may they hope today in Your mercy. May Your strength become theirs. There may be some that are so discouraged by themselves and by their lives. Lord, may they turn away from their failures and weaknesses to You this morning, and to see Your greatness, and to know that Jesus has never lost a battle, and that in Him, they will be victorious. And teach us all Lord to trust You, we pray in Jesus' name, Amen."