



Spiritual Parents

1 Timothy 1:1-2

Introduction

The book of 1 Timothy is a treasure amongst the books of the New Testament. It differs from a lot of the other books in the Bible as it appears to be a personal letter from the Apostle Paul to his dear friend Timothy – a spiritual son and fellow Kingdom adventurer. 1 & 2 Timothy (as well as Titus) are generally known as the ‘Pastoral Epistles’ because Paul is giving practical instruction to those who have responsibility for overseeing the life of local churches.

Background

Paul became a Christian when he dramatically encountered the risen Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus, where he was hunting down Christians to imprison (Acts 9). After he had surrendered his life to the Lord, he disappeared for a while to his home town of Tarsus before being sought-out by Barnabus as a leader in the Antioch church. It was from here that Paul began his missionary journeys (Acts 13:1-3).

In Acts 14, we see Paul and Barnabus arrive at a city called Lystra. Paul and Barnabus preached the gospel and healed the sick



(vs.7-8). They faced opposition in the city and their visit was cut short, but a number of people must have come to know the Lord because, when Paul and Silas returned on a different missionary journey some years later, there seems to be an established church there (Acts 16:36-41). It is on this visit, that Paul meets Timothy. The Christians there spoke highly of Timothy (v.2) and Paul must have spotted potential in this young man, because Paul invited him to join them on their adventures (v. 3) and begins the process of mentoring him.

Around twenty years later, Paul and Timothy have an established relationship and it is obvious that there is a tremendous amount of mutual love and respect.

It is at this time, however, that Paul is taken to Rome to face imprisonment and it looks as though Paul's days as a free man may be at an end. This was around AD60 and Paul's house arrest under Roman guard is the note on which the book of Acts ends (Acts 28). From this place of confinement, Paul wrote the letters to the Ephesians, the Colossians and to the Colossian slave-owner, Philemon.

Many people think that Paul's imprisonment came to an end and he was released for a few years before eventually being re-arrested, imprisoned and beheaded in around AD65. By this time, Paul was a very old man. During the few years of freedom between his two imprisonments, Paul appears to have travelled around the churches in Asia Minor to strengthen the Christians and put things in order.

Timothy in Ephesus

Ephesus was part of present-day Turkey. It was a place where a number of trade routes came together, so was an important commercial centre. It was also where the pagan temple to the Roman goddess Diana was built. It was a city that provided great challenges for the Christians there, but had a thriving church. This didn't stop the Lord Jesus naming the church in Revelations (2:1-7) and warning them against 'forsaking their first love'.

When this letter was written (between AD63 and AD65) Paul had apparently travelled into Macedonia to visit the churches there (1 Timothy 1:3). He left Timothy behind in Ephesus to oversee the church and iron-out some problems in his absence.

Life Group questions...

1. Paul greets Timothy as 'my true son in the faith' (1 Tim 1:2, 18). We know that Timothy had a Greek father (Acts 16:1), so what did Paul mean when he described Timothy as a son?
2. What do you think it means to be a 'spiritual parent'?
3. Can you share about any significant people who were like spiritual parents to you? Have you had any experience of being a spiritual parent to somebody else?
4. If the church is supposed to be like a family, what do you think we should be doing to see spiritual infants grow to maturity in Christ? How can this happen in Hope Church?