

Minor Festivals: St. Timothy, Pastor and Confessor, January 24

“You know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.” (Philippians 2:22)

In the year 49 A.D. the apostle Paul and his fellow missionary Silas set out on Paul’s Second Missionary Journey. They passed through Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) and visited the congregations that were founded through his gospel-work during his First Missionary Journey. One of those congregations was in the city of Lystra. When they arrived there, they were introduced to a disciple named Timothy. His mother was a Jewess and his father a Greek. His grandmother was named Lois and his mother Eunice. They made sure the Old Testament Word of God was handed down to Timothy. When they heard the good news about Jesus, they believed he was the promised Messiah and Savior from sin to whom the entire Old Testament pointed.

The believers spoke well of Timothy. Paul wanted to take him on the missionary journey and so he circumcised him. Why? Not because it was necessary—for since Christ fulfilled the Law, circumcision was no longer necessary. So why did Paul circumcise him? So that his state of “uncircumcision” would not become a stumbling-block for the people they were trying to reach. Remember, whenever Paul went to a new city, the first place he went was to the Jewish synagogue. There he would proclaim that Jesus of Nazareth is the fulfillment of the Hebrew Bible. If Timothy would enter the synagogue without being circumcised, it would put up a roadblock for the gospel. Out of sensitivity toward the Jews’ uninformed consciences, Timothy was circumcised.

And so began Timothy’s long partnership in the gospel with the apostle Paul. He accompanied Paul for eight years on his Second and Third Missionary Journeys. They traveled throughout Asia Minor, Northern Greece, Southern Greece, and the Land of Judea. He was with Paul in Rome during his first imprisonment, which lasted a couple of years. After Paul was released, he went on his Fourth Missionary journey. During this time they may have traveled to Spain, then to the Island of Crete, and then to Ephesus. There Paul left Timothy to shepherd the congregation.

While Timothy was still in Ephesus, Paul was arrested once again and carted off to prison in Rome. From there he wrote his “Last Will and Testament,” his Second Letter to Timothy, his true son in the faith. Paul knew that he would soon be executed for the sake of the gospel. He longed for Timothy to guard the good deposit of the gospel that had been entrusted to him. He also longed to have Timothy come quickly and visit him in prison.

For almost two decades, Timothy labored side by side with Paul, as a son laboring with his father. After Paul was executed, Timothy continued to shepherd God’s people and be a staunch confessor of the Truth. He was imprisoned for preaching the gospel, and subsequently released (Hebrews 13:23). Tradition says when he was eighty years old he tried to stop a pagan procession in honor of the false goddess Diana. The angry revelers beat him, dragged him through the streets, and stoned him to death.

Certainly, Timothy carried out Paul’s charge to him: “Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” (1 Timothy 6:12) May you and I imitate such a faithful servant of the Lord.

By all your saints still striving, For all your saints at rest, Your holy name, O Jesus, Forevermore be blessed.
You rose, our King victorious, That they might wear the crown And ever shine in splendor Reflected from your throne.

All praise for faithful pastors, Who preached and taught your Word, For Timothy your shepherd, True servant of his Lord.
Lord, help your pastors nourish The souls within their care, So that your Church may flourish And all your blessings share.

After sharing this devotion with your family, take the time to read 2 Timothy 1-2.

Pastor Zuberbier