

The Messenger



“... How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!” Romans 10:15

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Timothy: Ability and Availability

by Jeff May

It is interesting to observe that so many of our biblical heroes of faith were young when they made a great stand for God. Who hasn't been uplifted by Joseph, David and Daniel in the Old Testament? Likewise, when we come to the New Testament, the young man Timothy becomes a great model for young people.

He must have been exemplary because the apostle Paul took him in and became his mentor. That says something. Paul was intense in his ministry and would not tolerate a person who failed in his duty. Do you remember his refusal to take John Mark on the second preaching journey? I don't know why Mark didn't continue but for whatever reason, it did not sit well with Paul (Acts 15:37-41). Yet, concerning Timothy, Paul spoke with glowing words, saying "I have no one likeminded" and "As a son with his father, he served with me in the gospel" (Phil. 2:20, 22).

What made Timothy so special to Paul and to the Lord? Two things come to mind.

First, he was special because of his ability. Paul first met Timothy at Lystra where he was "well spoken of" by the brethren (Acts 16:2). Without a doubt, Timothy's mother and grandmother prayed for him and helped him develop himself as a young man of God. In due time, people noticed. What a great lesson for young men desiring to preach. Don't storm into preaching. Work slowly to develop your ability. Take every opportunity given you to serve. As you do, brethren will begin to see and appreciate your work and they will push you. You do not have to push yourself nor should you. That's what Paul told Timothy (I Tim. 4:12-15).

Paul encouraged him in his abilities. Adults – please hear this. If you are prone to running young people down, quit it. Why do so many speak so negatively about young people as if they aren't going to make it? We made it didn't we? I wonder how many kids have been beaten down by the words, "You are never going to amount to anything." What we say to young people has the power to inspire them or destroy them.

It reminds me of the story of a man passing a tattoo shop. He noticed a tattoo in the window that read, "Born to lose." He asked if anyone ever wanted that one. The shop manager replied, "Yes." "But how could anyone tattoo 'born to lose' on his body?" the man asked. The manager replied, "Before tattoo on body, tattoo on mind." If you tell a young person long enough that he will not make it, the likelihood is he will not make it. Paul encouraged Timothy by saying, "Let no man despise your youth."

It is powerful when people prophecy (forecast) good things for you with words like, "You are going to do well, young man." Paul reminded Timothy that good things had been prophesied about him and encouraged him to make their prophecies come true (I Tim. 1:18). A Danish proverb says, "What you are is God's gift to you. What you become is your gift to God." Timothy made the most of his ability.

Second, he was special because of his availability. Ability is no good to God without availability. Paul loved Timothy because he was available. Note the times Paul referred to having "sent Timothy" or that he asked for Timothy (Acts 17:15; I Cor. 4:17; I Thess. 3:1-2; Phil. 2:19-22)? Timothy was available!

One of the problems we have in the church today is that we have too many people with ability but little availability. That's frustrating. The local church could be so blessed by members putting their talent to work but they've got too much on their plate. Timothy brought both ability and availability to the table. No wonder Paul loved him.

Real servants don't let their lives get overcrowded with pursuits that limit their availability. "No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier" (II Tim. 2:4). If we only serve God when it is convenient, we are not servants.

Are you available to God? Anytime? Timothy was. Do you wake each day with the thought that you are open to God's agenda for that day? Timothy did. He read, he prayed, he served daily. Let us be likeminded.

News and Notes:

Remember to check the prayer list for those with ongoing spiritual weaknesses and physical illnesses.

"...Pray for one another...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James 5:16