

Place: Lurgan Baptist 25:1:2015

Reading: Philippians 2:19-24

## **THE JOURNEY TO JOY**

### **9. NOT YOUR AVERAGE RUN OF THE MILL CHRISTIAN**

David Jeremiah tells us that in 1924 at the Paris Olympic Games, Eric Liddell stirred his generation with his refusal to race on Sunday and his ultimate victory in the 400 metre race. The entire story was depicted in the Academy Award-winning film "*Chariots of Fire*." If you saw that film, you will remember the surprise you felt when at the end you read these words about the hero of the film. "*Eric Liddell, missionary, died in occupied China at the end of World War II. All of Scotland mourned.*" It was exactly one year after winning the gold medal that Eric Liddell went to China as a missionary with the London Missionary Society. After teaching in a college there, he decided to engage in rural evangelism, by bicycle and by foot he carried the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the back country of China.

After Japan invaded China and World War 2 broke out, Liddell was classified as an '*enemy national*,' and in August 1943 he was sent to a prison camp. He was one of 1,800 prisoners packed into a facility which measured 150 by 200 yards. He was housed in a dormitory that provided a room three feet by six feet for each man. While a prisoner, Liddell accepted the

challenge of his situation and organized athletics taught hymns, and ministered God's Word. David Michell was a child who was interred along with Eric Liddell. He later remembered the influence this national hero had upon everyone in the prison. "*None of us will ever forget this man who was totally committed to putting God first, a man whose humble life combined muscular Christianity with radiant godliness.*" Just months before he would have been liberated, on 20 February 1945, Eric Liddell died of a brain tumour. What was Eric Liddell's secret? David Michell, the little boy who was imprisoned with Eric Liddell, wrote,

***" He unreservedly committed his life to Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord. That friendship meant everything to him. By the flickering light of a peanut-oil lamp, early each morning he and a roommate in the men's cramped dormitory studied the Bible and talked with God for an hour. As a Christian, Eric Liddell's desire was to know God more deeply, and as a missionary, to make Him known more fully."***

My .... was this not Timothy's secret? He was unreservedly committed to his Lord and Saviour. Timothy was not your average run off the mill Christian. *You see, the curse of the local church today is lack of commitment.* So few believers, are willing to make an out and out commitment to a task. Some Christians come out on Sunday morning, and that's it. The same faithful few do nearly all the work. My .... it's difficult to find anyone who will make a long term commitment to do anything, whether it be to teach a

Sunday School class, help in the creche, visit the sick, or reach the lost. My .... do you know why ? *"All seek their own not the things which are Jesus ChristS."* ( 2:21) *"An all for one, and one for me,"* attitude has infiltrated the church. Living for the earthly, instead of the eternal, living for self instead of for God, living for time instead of eternity. Vance Havner once made the statement that most *Christians live such subnormal lives that if they began to live a normal Christian life people would think them abnormal.* To put it very simply, most believers live an average Christian life.

The average Christian spends very little time in the Word and in prayer. The average Christian rarely shares their faith. The average Christian comes to the services fairly regular but such things as Christian service and growth and soul-winning are not important to him. I heard about an itinerant evangelist, who when he arrived in a local town, would always buy the local newspaper to learn a little about the place he was in, and the people to whom he would be preaching. On this occasion he was to speak in Bloomington, Illinois. He arrived on Saturday night, bought a paper and began to read it. It seems that there are two small towns next to Bloomington, one called *"Normal,"* and the other called *"Oblong."* As he was looking at the paper he came to the society section and he came across this headline, *"Normal boy marries Oblong girl."*

Here we find a Christian that was not normal. Timothy was not your average Christian. He was not your every day kind of believer. Now Paul probably met Timothy

on his first missionary journey ( Acts 14:6) at which time, this young man was converted. ( 1 Cor 4:17 ) Apparently, Timothy's mother and grandmother had been converted first. ( 1 Tim 1:3 ) He was the son of a Jewish mother and Gentile father, but Paul always considered the young man his own *"dearly beloved son,"* in the faith. ( 2 Tim 1:2 ) When Paul returned to Derbe and Lystra on his second missionary journey, he enlisted young Timothy as one of his fellow-labourers. ( Acts 16:1-4 ) From this time onward Timothy had the joy of serving with Paul and ultimately replaced him when Paul was *"called home."* ( 2 Tim 4:1 )

Do now you see what Paul says here of Timothy ? *"For I have no man like-minded who will naturally care for your state."* ( 2:20 ) That word *"like-minded,"* is made up of two words *"equal,"* and *"soul."* Paul was saying, *"I have no man with a soul equal to Timothy's."* Timothy was not your average Christian. There were many believers in Rome, but Timothy was in a class all by himself. Why ? Well, Paul gives us here 3 characteristics of this young man.

### **(1) TIMOTHY WAS READY TO BE SENT ANYWHERE**

Paul is happy to block out a few days in another man's diary so that he can receive an up to date report on life in Philippi. Did you notice ( 2:19 ) ? The phrase *"to send"* is so common in the New Testament that it turns up 79 times and four of those references are found in ( Ch 2 ) Paul was concerned about the church at Philippi ( 2:23 ) but that phrase *"to send"* not only

speaks of Paul's concern, it speaks of Timothy's availability. The willingness, of Timothy to go anywhere. Suppose God planned to send you to some dark corner of the globe to be His servant, to souls in darkness would you go ? Henry Martin on the eve of his departure for the mission field, said " *I go to burn out for God.*" Would you be prepared for that, if it proved to be God's will for you ? My .... Timothy was ready at any moment to go anywhere on Paul's errands in the service of His Master.

***(a) Timothy went in spite of THE DISTANCE::***

It would not have been easy for Timothy to leave the side of his beloved father in the faith in order to go to Philippi, but he was willing to go if that was God's will. Have you ever told the Lord, " *I'm willing to go anywhere Lord, You want me to go.*" Rome to Philippi was a distance of some 800 miles, which would have taken about six weeks. But Timothy went in spite of the discomfort and distance. My .... missionary history abounds with Timothy's brothers and sisters. In 1885 the English cricketer C.T. Studd sailed for China only to be invalided home in 1894. Undaunted,, however he served in India from 1900 until 1906 before retiring through illness. This was only a prelude to his main work in Africa from 1912 until 1931. Like, Timothy Studd was willing to be God's messenger boy. (a)

***(b) Moses went in spite of THE DEFICIENCY:***

Yes, back to Egypt, from which forty years before he had fled for his life ( Ex 4:18 ) Now he made every

excuse for not going. Moses said, "*Lord I have got a deficiency, I am not eloquent.*" " **0** *Lord, I am not eloquent .... but I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue.*" (Ex 4:10 ) Time and again when God called Moses was beating around the burning bush. He had all kinds of excuses why God could not use him, why it would be best for the Lord to pick someone else to do the job. But when he saw that this was God's plan for him, " *he went.*" (Ex 4:18 ) And to what purpose ? My .... is God calling you to go ? Are you making excuses ? Are you saying, "*Lord I am unworthy ?*" ( Ex 3:11 ) " *Lord I am unlearned ? I don't have all the answers.*" ( Ex 3:14 ) "*Lord I am unauthorized, I don't have much to offer*" (Ex 4:1) " *Lord I am unfit,*" ( 4:10) "*Lord./ am unwilling.*" ( 4:13 ) My .... He is either Lord of all or not Lord at all.

***(c) Elijah went in spite of THE DANGER:***

For he was sent to go and meet cruel, undisciplined, hen-pecked Ahab, who had been searching the land to find him, that he might silence his awkward, prophetic ministry. We read " *And Elijah went,*" ( 1 Kings 18:2 ) He went in spite of the danger, in spite of the risks involved. My .... is God calling you to go somewhere and it involves a risk ? Perhaps it entails danger, privation, hardship and even suffering. Are you ready to step forth regardless of the risks involved ? ( Acts 15:26 )

***(d) Philip went in spite of THE DECISIONS:***

But he was the leader of a great revival movement in

Samaria. Surely it must be a mistake, for he was the pivot of this widespread blessing. My .... demons were exorcised, the sick were healed, the lost were saved, the believers were baptised and Philip was the leader of this great revival movement in Samaria. Surely the Lord would not be telling him to leave the teeming multitudes to speak to one man ? It must be a mistake. Despite being mystified we read "*And Philip went,*" ( Acts 8:27 ) To lead the Chancellor of the Exchequer to Christ, who in his turn was seemingly used of the Lord to found the church in North Africa. What a good thing Philip went. Is God asking you to leave the place where you have been used and blessed to go somewhere else ? Could it be that you are to leave the multitudes to speak to one confused soul ?

***(e) Ananias went in spite of THE DOUBTS:***

*" Lord, surely I am putting my head in the lions mouth, this Saul of Tarsus has come to Damascus to persecute the saints, there must be some mistake." " Go thy way, Ananias for he is a chosen vessel unto me .... and Ananias went." ( Acts 9:17 )* And he had the joy of being the first Christian to give to this remarkable convert the right hand of fellowship and to minister to his needs. Ready to be sent anywhere. That was our Timothy. The saintly F.B. Meyer still preaching at eighty two years of age said this, *" I have only one ambition, to be God's errand boy."* Many years ago there was a young couple serving in a local church, who had the conviction that they should go to South America to preach the gospel. The wife penned a song that became a missionary evergreen.

***Lord send me, Oh send me forth I pray  
The need is great, Thy call I will obey.  
Thy love compels me, I must go  
I'm longing, ready, willing to go***

Are you ? Are you available to God ? Are you willing to be sent anywhere ? (1)

**(2) TIMOTHY WAS READY TO SERVE ANYONE**

Timothy served Paul, but he was willing to go and serve the Philippian church. My .... Paul cannot speak highly enough of young Timothy for he says, *"For I have no man like-minded who will naturally care for your state." ( 2:20 )* The word "*naturally,*" means "*sincerely, genuinely.*" Timothy was someone who really cared. Many years ago Dwight Morrow, told a group of friends that he felt Calvin Coolidge had a chance of becoming the President of the U.S.A. They all disagreed saying that Coolidge was too quiet, and lacked colour and political personality. One said that no-one would like him, but Dwight Morrow's daughter Ann, who was just six at the time spoke up and said, *" I like Mr. Coolidge."* Then she held up a finger with a bit of adhesive tape on it and said, *"He was the only one who asked me about my sore finger "* Her father nodded and said, *" Gentlemen there is your answer:"*

Can I ask the overseers of this fellowship ? Do you really care about the flock ? Do you care enough to ask, to pray, to phone, and to visit ? Timothy cared. This man has a big heart for people. Ready to serve

anyone. Indeed Paul talks here about,

**(a) HIS PERSONAL MENTALITY:**

" *For I have no man like-minded,*" ( 2:20 ) Timothy had a servants mind, a servants attitude, servant's heart. ( 2:22) Like his Lord and Master, Timothy thinks of others and not of self. He was not interested in " *winning friends and influencing people,*" but he was genuinely interested in the physical and spiritual welfare of others. My .... there were hundreds of Christians in Rome. Paul greets twenty six of them by name in ( Rom Ch 16 ) yet not of them was available or suitable to make the trip. " *All seek their own interests ....,*" ( 2:21 ) In a very real sense each of us lives either in ( 1:21) or ( 2:21) The first verse says " *For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain,*" the second verse says, " *all seek their own,*"

Oh, as Paul looked around Rome he found the general run of believers to be of that self-seeking spirit, that degrades the Lord Jesus to second place. Here are saints to be taught, no-one cares. Here are babes to be nurtured, no-one cares. Here are sinners to be saved, no-one cares. Here are sick ones to be visited, no-one cares. Here are tracts to be distributed. Here are petitions to be offered. My .... is this a description of our church ? Of me ? Of you ? " *All seek their own,*" or like Timothy do you have a servants attitude ? When Sir Bartle Frere returned from India the carriage was sent to the village station to bring him to his home. When the servant of the house, who was but recently employed asked how he should recognise Sir Bartle,

his aged mother said, " *Look out for someone helping someone else.*" Sure enough when he got to the station the servant saw a man helping an old lady to the platform. Going straight up to him, he said

" *Sir Bartle ?*" Yes, it was he. A servant's attitude. (a)

**(b) HIS SPIRITUAL MATURITY:**

For Paul says " *But ye know the proof of him ....,*" ( 2:22 ) The word " *proof* " speaks of that which had been tested and proven. Timothy was no raw recruit, no novice at the business of serving the Lord, by serving others. You see, Paul did not add Timothy to the team the very day the boy was saved. Paul was too wise to make an error like that. He left him behind to become part of the church fellowship in Derbe and Lystra, and it was in that fellowship that Timothy grew spiritually and learned how to serve the Lord. When Paul returned to that area a few years later, he was happy to discover that young Timothy " *was well reported of by the brethren.*" ( Acts 16:2 )

Well how do we train new converts ? We say, " *John's just got saved, we'll give him a wee job in the Sunday School, teaching the tinnies,*" as if anyone could teach the wee folk. ? Or we get him up on a Sunday night to testify, or rope him into the choirs, and we don't give him time to get his roots down, and before long John is spiritually nowhere. Why was Timothy ready to serve anyone ? Well, there was (a) (b) and there was,

**(c) HIS EVANGELICAL MINISTRY:**

"As a son with the father he hath served with me in the gospel." ( 2:22 ) Does that tell you a lot about Timothy ? It also tells us a lot about Paul. We might expect the apostle to report that Timothy had served him as a son to a father. But instead he said that Timothy had served with him. They were co-slaves. Paul shared his very life with Timothy and there is no question that this was the secret to Timothy's progress and maturity. J. Oswald Sanders says that " Timothy would have been about twenty years of age when his tutelage began. " It was Paul and Timothy like father and son working together in the gospel. My .... Timothy was not your average Christian. The simple truth is, you cannot get the average Christian to visit, to work, to pray, to be concerned about those who are lost. But Timothy was special. Ready to serve anyone. Is that you ? I say Timothy was not your average run of the mill Christian for he was (1) (2) But,

### **(3) TIMOTHY WAS READY TO SACRIFICE ANYTHING**

Do you see that word " served, " in ( 2:22 ) ? It means ( douleuo ) " to serve as a bondman or to take up the slave's life." Paul does not say " He hath served me," rather "He hath served with me in ( or for the promotion) of the gospel." (1:5 ) Can you see Timothy slaving away alongside his spiritual father sharing the hardships, perils and difficulties the opportunities of the campaign ? (3) You see, Timothy was,

**(a) READY TO SACRIFICE HIS FAMILY:**

You get the impression that Timothy was brought up in a sheltered home. Paul says, " I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice." ( 2 Tim 1:5 ) Its the picture of a quiet and godly home with Tiny Tim reared in the Scriptures, brought up in the faith, and as a young lad coming to know Christ. Paul says "From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures .....", ( 2 Tim 3:15 ) Do you read the scriptures to your children ? Has your child ever heard you read from God's Word ? Have your children ever heard you pray ? Do you pray around the meals at your house ? Are you creating an atmosphere conducive to God doing a work of grace in their lives ? Oh, can you imagine the influence of mother Eunice and Granny Lois ?

My .... Timothy had a wonderful family background. But then came the day when he was ready to sacrifice his family for the promotion of the gospel. Is your family the reason why you have not stepped into the Lord's work ? Most of you are within striking distance of your family, family ties are strong, but are they a stumbling block, to you, hindering you from promoting the gospel. Do you recall the words of the Lord Jesus ? " If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters yea and his own life also he cannot be my disciple." (Lk 14:26 ) Christ must be first in our lives. Is He first in your life ? (a)

**(b) READY TO SACRIFICE HIS FELLOWSHIP:**

The relationship between Paul and Timothy was like father and son. When Timothy was enlisted on that second missionary journey ( Acts 16:1-3 ) it heralded the start of a lifelong friendship. *They laughed together, cried together, prayed together, travelled together and preached together* Do you recall that when Paul was near the end of life's journey, facing death he sends for no-one but Timothy. He says, "*Do thy diligence to come before winter*" ( 2 Tim 4:21 ) How close they were, and yet Timothy was ready to be sent here and there on gospel errands, to Philippi ( 2:23 ) to Ephesus ( 1 Tim 1:3 ) to Thessalonica ( 1 Thess 3:6) to Corinth ( 1 Cor 4:17) ready to sacrifice fellowship for the promotion of the gospel.

Do you have any idea of how lonely it can be in the Lords work ? Do you ever drop a card, send an e-mail, make a phone call to those who are lonely and cut-off for the sake of the gospel ? (a) (b)

**(c) *READY TO SACRIFICE HIS FUTURE:***

As he went here, there, and everywhere looking out for the interests of Paul and the fledgling church. The last mention we have of Timothy, comes after Paul's rearrest at Rome, with his execution pending he writes his farewell letter to Timothy. According to Eusebius, Timothy was the first bishop of Ephesus. According to Nicephorus, Timothy was clubbed to death at a feast of Diana for denouncing the licentiousness.

Timothy's name means "*Honouring God.*" My .... did he not live up to it ? (1) (2) (3) For Timothy realised

that true service is total service. Should that not be obvious when we remember we are called to handle "*the things which are Jesus Christ 's.*" ( 2:21) We are called to carry on the work of Him who "*took upon Him the form of servant.*" When David was returning to Jerusalem after Absalom's rebellion had been quelled Barzillai said to David "*Thy servant will go a little way.*" ( 2 Sam 19:36 ) Christ said to His Father, "*I will go ALL the way*" "*Not as I will but as Thou wilt.*" ( *Matt 26:39* ) Total commitment. The hymn writer said, "*ALL the way my Saviour leads me,*" That's was Timothy, is that you ? Are you ready to be sent anywhere ? To serve anyone ? To sacrifice anything. Anywhere. Anyone. Anything. At any cost.

A pig and a chicken were walking down the road together one day. As they walked they saw a sign advertising a breakfast to benefit the poor. The chicken said to the pig, "*You and I should donate a ham and egg breakfast.*" The pig responded, "*not so fast, for you it would just be a contribution but for me it would be total commitment.*" That's why Timothy was not your average run of the mill Christian. For him it was total commitment, what's it for you ?

***Others, Lord, yes others !  
Let this my motto be,  
Help me to live for others  
That I may live like Thee***