

TO MY SON

An Expositional Study of II Timothy

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CHAPTER TWO -

GRANDMOTHERLY RELIGION

II Timothy 1:3-7

3 I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day;
4 Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy;
5 When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.
6 Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.
7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

THE young Timothy had motherly and grandmotherly influences brought to bear upon his life, and also fatherly influences: these latter not from his natural father, who, as I think, had died when his boy was only a little fellow, but from his spiritual father.

Observe, in verses 3-4, how tenderly affectionate the relationship is.

(i) *His love* - "**I thank God**": what for? For just the fact of Timothy: for the way in which he had prospered in spiritual things, and grown in grace, and for the very great help he had been in the mission work. And also for the fact that even in prison, cut off from him as he was, in person, he could still do something for him, and something big. What was it?

(ii) *His prayer* - If only we could come to a practical realisation of the fact that we cannot do anything greater for one another than to pray! Paul is so thankful to GOD that, in spite of everything, it still remains possible for him to help his young protege by praying for him "**without ceasing**". It is good to notice, in passing, that to "**pray without ceasing**" was the very thing he told his converts to do, I Thessalonians 5:17.

So here is a preacher who practices what he preaches. Would that all we preachers were as consistent: all too many of us, alas, are somewhat like the Scribes and Pharisees of Matthew 23:3, in that we "**say, and do not**".

To do anything, even to pray, "**without ceasing**" - with the exception of breathing - seems an impossibility; but an old papyrus letter dug up from ancient Eastern sands helps us to get the meaning. I expect you know that these excavations have, through an inspired discovery of the late Professor Deissmann, thrown a flood of light upon the nature and meaning of the New Testament Greek.

In one such, the writer complains of an "incessant cough" - meaning, of course, not that the poor man barked without stopping, but with constant recurrence. It is the same word as Paul uses, and which indicates not that he is continually at it, without interruption, but that he is constantly at it, whenever he gets the chance.

(iii) *His longing* - is another thing that we find so pathetic here. "**Greatly desiring to see thee**"; the last sight he had had of him, the young man was in "tears" at his friend's departure, and Paul, who was aware that he must soon depart this life altogether, would so love to see him just once more- "**do thy diligence to come shortly unto me**", he will write presently, 4:9. Timothy, too, would so love such a meeting.

(iv) *His joy* - in his "**son**" is evident; indeed, he is "**filled with joy**" at the recollection of his "**faith**". He recollects the very day when he led this boy to CHRIST, and recalls his advancement in the SPIRIT, as convincing testimony to the reality of his conversion. All this is in the forefront of the apostle's mind; but in the background is -

(v) *His anxiety*- lest, after all, this humanly timid young man should fail before the onslaughts of persecution, or sink beneath the weight of the burdens of his pastoral duties. So all the wealth of this big fatherly heart surrounds the youthful warrior in the fight; but our present study is to stress a grandmotherly influence. Paul, in effect, goes the length of congratulating Timothy that his faith is the very same as his grandmother's!

I wonder what the moderns will say to that? Doubtless they will impatiently assure us that those old "Gospel Bells" are cracked long since. Atonement, reconciliation, propitiation, redemption, Blood, salvation, and such like - cracked bells! Well, as somebody said some while since, the way to tell whether they are cracked or not is to ring them. In very truth, those who do ring them, instead of merely discussing them, find that the old sweet music is in them still, and that there's no appeal like the old peal.

Or, taking a different line, our modern friends will say that these ancient Bells need re-casting; we want something more up-to-date; if you must keep to these old-world conceptions, at least let us have them in a more present-day dress; drop the out-worn, and out-moded, phraseology. That sounds reasonable enough; but the trouble is that in translating these old truths into new language, something of the old truth is so often found to be sacrificed.

In trying to say the same thing in different words, you discover that you haven't said the same thing after all.

Anyhow, the keen, philosophically-minded, university-trained intellect of Paul was all in favour of what we have called Grandmotherly Religion. Some of its features are hinted at in our passage.

THERE WAS A FAITHFULNESS ABOUT IT

"**The unfeigned faith,**" says Paul.

(a) *The genuine article* - not merely of the head, but of the heart; not just an intellectual acceptance, nor a creedal assent, but a complete trust of heart and whole being.

(b) Faith is variously set forth. You will be familiar with that description of it in Hebrews 11:1 - "**Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen**". Or, in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's couplet

"Faith is an affirmation, and an act,
That bids eternal truth be present fact."

(c) The late Handley Moule says, speaking more particularly, that "for Paul, faith means faith in CHRIST". Yes, as we said earlier, he always runs beyond, and behind, things, to the Person.

(d) It is worth noticing that this quality is spoken of here as having "**dwelt**" in them - as if it were not just a visitor, but a resident; not merely a fair-weather friend, departing in foul.

Some of us Christians seem to lose all our faith when the storms of life overtake us - when trouble comes, or pain, or loss, or bereavement, or failure, or anxiety, or distress, faith in Him seems to leave us; we read of those who, in such sad circumstances, have lost their faith. The children at a Sunday-school treat were given as they went home, an orange, an apple, a bag of sweets, and a text card: Mary's text was "**Have faith in God,**" Mark 11:22.

As she got on to her bus, a sudden gust of wind blew the card out of her hand. "Oh," she said, "stop the bus, I've lost my Faith in GOD!" Enough to stop any bus!

But do not let any gust of ill fortune deprive you of your faith in Him. Verily, it is in the storm that faith should stand us in such good stead. Yet we let it go - just when it could be such a help! Do you recall how when, in the boat, the MASTER had stilled the tempest, He said to the disciples (Luke 8:25), "**Where is your faith?**" It had gone a-walking, when its presence would have proved such a stand-by.

(e) This faith in Him should be both initial and continual - that first act of trust which, by His infinite grace, makes us His and makes Him ours: and then the attitude of trust which, according to His purpose, is to be the secret, and principle, of our daily Christian life. Not only are we "**saved**" by faith, as Ephesians 2:8 teaches us, but also "**we walk by faith,**" as we learn from 2 Corinthians 5:7.

Such a faith is one of the fundamental characteristics of this Grandmotherly Religion which we are contemplating: faith in Him and faithfulness to Him - a simple trust; a steadfast fidelity. "**The unfeigned faith**", which was the common property of this godly family, and which, please GOD, is shared, with all its attendant blessings, by every reader. And then

THERE WAS A FRUITFULNESS ABOUT IT

This was no sterile religion. James 2:20 has told us that "**faith without works is dead**" - and in this old-world faith there is a multitude of works to establish the claim that it is very much alive. The MASTER said, in Matthew 7:20, "**by their fruits ye shall know them**" - and here we find such an abundance, and such an excellence, of fruit as to make it clear that this is the real thing.

Let us look at one matter that seems to underlie our present passage, namely:

(a) *The fruit of personal contagiousness* - the faith is passed on from one to another, one "catches" it from another; and that is a true mark and sign of spiritual life.

(i) "**First in thy grandmother Lois**" - I wonder how she got it?

Was she a fruit of Paul's ministry? We do not know; but I hazard the suggestion that she was already a believer when the apostle first visited her home town of Lystra. Perhaps, indeed, she was one of that first number of "**about three thousand**" who found CHRIST on the day of Pentecost. After all, that group consisted of people gathered at Jerusalem for the Feast from far and near, and when it was over they scattered again, returning to their homes, some of them at long distances.

How often, for instance, have people discussed how there came to be a church in Rome. Well, but Acts 2:10 tells us that there were "**strangers of Rome**" on the Pentecostal occasion. What is more likely than that some of those were amongst the converts? And then they would go back to their own city and "infect" others for CHRIST.

So the little church would begin with the little company, perchance even the solitary individual, who had caught the faith that day in Jerusalem.

There is a very interesting description given to us, in Acts 21:16, of a Christian named Mnason of Cyprus; it calls him "**an old disciple**", and the word used does not confine itself simply to his accumulation of years, like, for example, that one we have already noted in Philemon 9, in which the apostle is named "**Paul the aged**". The HOLY SPIRIT's word about Mnason is one that would not be an error to think of the phrase as "an original disciple" - another of the Pentecostal fruits, I suggest. Or was he one of the Master's own results during His ministry? I wonder, then, if this old lady Lois belonged to the same class?

Certainly among those attending the Feast were "**dwellers**" in many of the districts neighbouring on her own. Of course, the important thing is, not how she came to know the SAVIOUR, but the fact that she did so come to know Him.

Still, it is interesting to see the way people find their way to Him.

(ii) "**And thy mother Eunice**" - I think I can see how it happened to her. Old lady Lois returns home a converted woman; and her faith being of a healthy quality, she longs to win others for the MASTER. But where shall she begin, whom shall she try first? Why, in her own home, of course: her daughter, Eunice. If only she can win her, what a difference it will make to the home.

It quite often happens that people who become Christians, and who have an urge to serve, are perplexed as to where they shall start.

The New Testament is clear and positive on that point. Why, this very Paul, in his First Epistle to Timothy 5:4, says, "**learn first to show piety at home**" - some find that the hardest place of all: but none will deny that it is the most natural place in which to commence.

And you will recall the most authoritative statement of all upon the subject, which we find in Mark 5:19. The MASTER has set Legion free - in body, and, as I believe, in soul as well: and now, even as the LORD JESUS is going down to embark in the boat, His new convert conceives the idea of going with Him on His mission, that he might, in his own person, be a witness to the truth of His word.

He would at once go as a missionary overseas: let the LORD speak of His power, and let him be a confirmation and illustration of the same. It was a fine thought: and I am quite sure that the SAVIOUR was pleased, even though He did not accept what he offered. As GOD said to David, in I Kings 8:18, about the building of the temple, "**thou didst well that it was in thine heart,**" although He did not allow him to do it, so I feel certain was the LORD JESUS glad that Legion thought of going abroad as a missionary, even though He had other plans for him: "**Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee**".

Home first: that is the Divine order, "**beginning at Jerusalem,**" Luke 24:47 - your Jerusalem, your home town, your home, your family circle. So Lois began with Eunice. And the contagion spread.

(iii) "**In thee also,**" we know that Paul was the one who was what we call the means of Timothy's conversion; yet we may be quite sure that he was not the sole means. People are, almost always, drawn to GOD by a chain - Paul was the last link, mother was another, grannie the "**first**".

I think some people are specially gifted, and used, to be last links: but all the links make their contribution.

The "**he that soweth, and he that reapeth**" of John 4:36 are two links in the harvest - he that "plougheth" was, perhaps the first link: and when the golden grain is garnered, all the "**may rejoice together**".

Let us see to it that we are touching people for GOD, having a share somehow in influencing them Christ-wards. If we are not used to be "last links" - let us make sure that we are not "missing links" in this great enterprise. Let us covet to be soul-winners, at whatever stage our winning contribution shall be made. So did the godly women of Timothy's home prepare him for Paul to give the finishing touch.

The apostle found it easy work to gather this fruit: It was ripe for picking when he got there. Ah yes, this Grandmotherly Religion was very much alive.

If, for further confirmation, we may stray away from our passage into more recent times, we may

consider what I may call:

(b) *The fruits of practical activity.* Have there been any real lasting effects, and results, from this old-fashioned religion? Some people sneer at it: wait a bit - has it done anything worth while? If not, let us all sneer, let us continue to sneer; but what are the facts? Well, think of:

(i) *Its social conscience.* Eminent persons exhort the Church these days on its social obligations; but this was a commonplace among early Evangelicals. The abolition of the Slave Trade, the passing of the Factory Acts, bear witness to the practical nature of their faith.

(ii) *Its missionary heart.* There has always been a deep concern for the heathen world, "**without Christ**". I do not observe much earnestness on this subject on the part of our sneerers. But the old Evangelical religion sent Carey abroad, and Henry Martin, and a host of others, and established great Societies for mission work, both at home and abroad.

(iii) *Its earnest spirit.* In spite of frequent accusations to the contrary, it has not been gloomy and dull, but it has viewed life's responsibility seriously, as something for which an account must be given to GOD; it has not dealt loosely and flippantly with GOD's Word, and GOD's Law, and GOD's Day, and GOD's Things; it has ever carried that grand word "Duty" in the very forefront of its mind.

(iv) *Its holy living.* Many of its representatives may have come far short of its ideals, but it has ever stressed the urgency of holiness, and earnestly sought it. The great Convention Movement for the Deepening of the Spiritual Life, which has brought such blessing throughout the world, is one of the results of this Old Faith.

What we have termed Grandmotherly Religion cannot be so unworthy after all, if it has produced such fruits. And now for another feature -

THERE WAS A FEARLESSNESS ABOUT IT

(a) *No unworthy fear* - was there. "**God hath not given us the spirit of fear**", says Paul. Yet, if ever a man had reason, and excuse, for being afraid, it was young Timothy. Naturally timid as he was in himself; having upon his young shoulders the responsibilities and cares of his Ephesian church; face to face with all the perils and perplexities of a time of persecution - no wonder if he quaked before the situation in which he found himself.

However, Paul writes to brace him up; he assures him that he need not fear, with such a GOD above him, and before him, and behind him, and beneath him, and beside him, and within him. "**What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee**", says David, in Psalm 56:3; but Paul would prefer the prophet's word for him, "**I will trust, and not be afraid**", Isaiah 12:2 - an attitude which, as a matter of fact, the Psalmist did also himself afterwards take up, in verses 4 and 11.

We will not dare to criticise Timothy for any tendency to fear, for are we not also much inclined that way? How often we refrain from some right word, or action, because we are so dreadfully afraid of what other people would think, or say, or do! Do we not hesitate again and again from starting upon some good course, or undertaking, because of that stupid fear of falling, of not

being able, after all, to carry it out, or to keep it up! Are we not constantly halted, or crippled, in Christian endeavour because we are afraid of looking a fool! Well, this "**spirit of fear**" has no right to be there. As we think of the old worthies of past days, how completely free they were of all such unworthy feeling.

Of course

(b) *A right fear* - was theirs. Was it Lord Shaftesbury of whom it was said that "He feared man so little, because he feared GOD so much"? The fear of GOD is a thing about which the Bible has so much to say: indeed, Psalm 111:10 and Proverbs 9:10 combine to impress upon us that "**the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.**"

Yet this fear has very little place among the moderns. You have only to mark their flippant familiarity with GOD - a thing so different from the saint's blessed intimacy with the Most High, which is always accompanied by a reverent awe of Him.

The old religion was shot through with this godly fear. A number of elder boys were out together one time when some piece of mischief was proposed. On one of them refusing to join in, a companion said, "I suppose you're afraid that, if he finds out, your father will hurt you?" "No," was the reply, "I am only afraid I might hurt him." What a noble response; and that is, in part at least, what the fear of GOD really implies.

The presence of this fear, and the absence of all other fear, make up together that quality of fearlessness, which is such a marked feature of grandmotherly religion.

One last element is suggested by our present passage

THERE WAS A FORCEFULNESS ABOUT IT

A distinction is drawn in verses 6-7 between the gifts and the gift; and it is when both the gifts and the gift are duly and fully employed that there comes into life that forcefulness that is so characteristic of old-time religion.

Think first of:

(a) *The gifts*. Qualities which "**God hath . . . given us**" instead of "**the spirit of fear**".

(i) "**Power**" - both for defensive and offensive purposes; both for the negative side, and the positive side, of the Christian life. A power so utterly, and so gloriously, adequate for every demand that will be laid upon us. Verily, "**if . . . God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to . . .**" (Exodus 18:23). How shall fear abide when such power confronts it?

(ii) "**Love**" - this beautifully balances that "**power**," which might otherwise be a somewhat hard and harsh quality. Qualities are, in this, like pictures - the one needs to be balanced with another. Hence you get "**the goodness and severity of God**," of which Romans 11:22 speaks. "**I will sing of mercy and judgment**," says David in Psalm 101:1. So love keeps power in proper perspective and proportion. Yet be it remembered that love is itself the greatest power of all. And

"**perfect love casteth out fear,**" as I John 4:18 reminds us.

(iii) "**Sound mind**" - that does not give us an accurate conception of what the word means: which is "*discipline*" or "*self-mastery*" - the "*self-control*" not "**temperance,**" of Galatians 5:23, though a different Greek word, is used there.

How infinitely more effective is a horse when its wild freedom gives place to a proper control. What a wholly revolutionised thing, will that wide-spread, sluggish water become if it is confined within narrow banks - able now in its swiftly-running energy to do things, and to turn things. It is all the difference between waters dissipated, or disciplined, that is suggested by this quality of self-mastery. Now it would seem that these three things are not characteristics to be struggled for. According to our passage they are qualities which "**God hath . . . given us**"; They are His gifts to us believers; they are there - to be reckoned on, to be acted on. What forcefulness they bring to the obedient Christian.

Then there is:

(b) *The Gift*. We have spelt this here with a capital, because it is not, like those others we have spoken of, a thing - but a Person. At least, that is my view.

(i) Timothy had been specially set apart with the "**putting on of . . . hands**". In the light of the constant use of this sign, it ill becomes any of us to make light of what seems to have been a God-given ordinance. Paul himself had been thus "separated" for his life's work, as we see in Acts 13:3; and now he has done the same for Timothy.

(ii) At that time he had received "**the gift of God,**" the HOLY SPIRIT: that is, as I believe, an Anointing of the SPIRIT for the special service before him. It is necessary to look at the little word "**by**" in verse 6, lest we should imagine that it was the laying on of hands that conferred the Gift. The fact is, that the preposition in the Greek, when followed by the genitive case, as it is here, may legitimately be a preposition of time. We find it so, for example, in Acts 5:19, where "**by night**" means of course "during the night"; and the "**in three days**" of Matthew 26:61, is the same preposition and construction. This gives us, I think, the right to conclude that the laying on of hands does not of itself, as it were mechanically, and necessarily, do anything - it is not the Means of conferring the Gift, but the Moment which GOD chose for doing so. The distinction is not without importance.

(iii) In what sense is Timothy to "**stir up**" the Gift? The verb is a significant one:

Its main root means, "*Fire,*" and two additions to it mean "Up" and "Life". So we have the figure of re-kindling a flame.

The HOLY SPIRIT is, of course, often likened in the Bible to fire - we think of "**the SPIRIT of burning,**" in Isaiah 4:4, and of the "**tongues like as of fire**", in Acts 2:3. Though He is always in the believer, He may have only a little place; but when we are what Paul calls, in Ephesians 5:18, "**filled with the SPIRIT**", it means that He has, so to speak, blazed up to occupy the whole being. It is our recurring surrender of ourselves entirely to the LORD JESUS CHRIST that brings about that infinitely desirable state of affairs: this is the stirring up, the rekindling. When

the Gift is thus in control, and when His gifts are then in use, we find a practical Forcefulness of character, which is a peculiar property of the old "**unfeigned faith**".

Shall we, then, in view of the hints and suggestions in this passage, be prepared to despise, and even to discard, this Grandmotherly Religion? Shall we not, rather, seek more and more to get back to it - back to its reality, to its sincerity, to its fidelity, to its humility, to its activity, to its virility.

What was good enough for Paul, and for Timothy, is good enough for me.

~ end of chapter 2 ~
