

2 TIMOTHY 1:5

THE ADVANTAGE OF A GODLY FAMILY

“I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.”¹

The way of salvation is taught by godly people; but the Spirit of God must make the dead individual alive in Christ. We cannot be educated into the Kingdom of God; however, we can witness the Faith lived out in the daily lives of righteous individuals. Witnessing such righteous lives, the Spirit of God can create the desire to come to life in Christ. A child raised in the presence of godly parents will not easily run from the Faith as that child matures.

Paul has written, “[If] any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy” [1 CORINTHIANS 7:12-14].

Paul is not suggesting, as some have erroneously argued, that children of Christian parents are saved because of their parents. Rather, he is stating that children raised in a Christian home have a significant advantage in the matter of coming to faith; they are raised in the presence of a righteous individual, witnessing the impact of the Faith on that parent or those parents. This is a significant advantage, even if it is ignored in contemporary Christian life.

For the benefit of our families, to encourage those who have influence over children or grandchildren, I present this message in hopes of making our family life stronger. My purpose is to encourage godly homes in which our youth come to faith in the Risen Saviour early in life.

PROVIDE A GODLY MODEL OF RIGHTEOUS RESPONSES TO LIFE’S CHALLENGES — Paul commends Timothy for his “sincere faith.” The word translated “sincere”² occurs but six times in the New Testament. The Apostle admonishes the Roman Christians, “Let love be *genuine*” [ROMANS 12:9a]. Paul appealed to several evidences when arguing for the validity of the message he declared; one evidence was “*genuine* love” [2 CORINTHIANS 6:6]. Earlier, in his First Letter to Timothy, recall that the Apostle attested, “The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a *sincere* faith” [1 TIMOTHY 1:5]. James will contend that the wisdom from above is “impartial and *sincere*” among other characteristics [JAMES 3:17]. And, finally, the Big Fisherman will urge believers, “Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a *sincere* brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart” [1 PETER 1:22].

From a philological point of view, the Greek term *anupókritos* means “lacking in pretence or show,” hence, “genuine” or “sincere.”³ In the passages cited, this word qualifies love (either *agápe* or *philadelphía*). Thus, we see that Christian love arises from an open heart without ulterior motives. Likewise, when Paul uses this word to speak of the faith sought, it speaks of faith that is not affected by expediency. True faith grows out of the union of the believer with the Living Christ; it is rooted in the heart and is expressed by a transparent life.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Wheaton: Good News Publishers, 2001. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

² “Unfeigned” (KJV), “true” (New Century Version), “genuine” (NKJV, NLT),

³ See Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (United Bible Societies, New York, NY 1996) 674

Though it is not intended to be the focus of this message, I do not want to pass by too quickly considering the type of faith that causes joy for the follower of the Christ. I believe it will be beneficial for us to note even briefly the quality of faith that should be sought in each disciple's life. Godly faith, as is also true of the love Christians are to express, must be genuine. We are neither to feign love, talking a good game while refusing to live as though love meant much, nor are we to use love as a medium of exchange. The love we express to one another as followers of the Christ must not be contingent on how that love is received.

Much of what is identified as "love" in modern culture is offered on a *quid pro quo* basis. The concept is that I will love you so long as you are worthy of my love or if you love me in return. Do we Christians need to be reminded that we do not deserve Christ's love? He loved us when we were unlovable. Scripture is replete with passages teaching this truth. For instance, we are taught by Paul, "While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life" [**ROMANS 5:6-10**]. God's love was showered on fallen mankind, not because we deserved His love, but because He was revealing His love toward us through providing atonement for those who would receive it.

Of course, we dare not ignore John's instruction provided in his first letter. The passage is somewhat extended, primarily because it constitutes a major argument presented by the Apostle of Love. "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

"By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother" [**1 JOHN 4:7-21**].

There is an aspect of Timothy's faith that is not frequently mentioned among the churches of our day—his faith revealed the correlation between the Jewish Faith and the Christian Faith. The professed Christian cannot be anti-Semitic. We must recognise that, as Jesus Himself has testified, "Salvation is from the Jews" [**JOHN 4:22**]. Christians are not antagonists of the Jewish people; we appreciate that they were the repository of knowledge concerning the True and Living God. The Apostle Paul reminded Christian readers that "The Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God" [**ROMANS 3:2**].

2 TIMOTHY 1:5
THE IMPACT OF A GODLY FAMILY

As believers in the Son of God, all twice-born individuals must be humble before the knowledge that God has revealed His grace toward us; He has shown us great mercy. This is especially true for those of us who are not Jewish. We who are Gentiles dare not presume against the mercy we have received; and especially is it true that no Gentile dare discriminate against God's Chosen People, the Jews. Anti-Semitism must never be tolerated among the people of God. Rather, we must show love and compassion toward those whom God calls His chosen ones. In support of this contention, I refer to an extended statement in which the Apostle to the Gentiles cautions against presumption. He writes, "Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, as it is written,

‘God gave them a spirit of stupor,
eyes that would not see
and ears that would not hear,
down to this very day.’

And David says,

‘Let their table become a snare and a trap,
a stumbling block and a retribution for them;
let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see,
and bend their backs forever.’

“So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

“Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

“But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. Then you will say, ‘Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.’ That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.

“Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in”
[ROMANS 11:7-25].

While these aspects of what Paul has written are true and must be recognised, I am particularly focused now on developing a godly model to respond to the challenges of life. I find it somewhat surprising to observe that Paul opens the letter by focusing on a grandmother, a mother and a son. Framing this information in contemporary terms, we could say that Paul is emphasising *the intergenerational character of the mission of the faithful*. He is suggesting that the Faith is passed from one generation to another. What is perhaps surprising is that Timothy had received the Faith through his maternal line and not his paternal line. In this letter, Paul is challenging this younger man to transmit the Faith to subsequent generations.

I have often stated that in conducting evangelistic visits, my observation is that should a father come to faith, I commonly expect that the entire family will turn to faith in the Son of God. When a mother comes to faith, she is not often successful in influencing her husband to embrace the Faith, and she may or may not influence her children to believe in the Christ. Children are less influential still in bringing parents to faith in the Son of God. A father, however, is almost inevitably influential in bringing his family to faith. When Paul and Silas addressed the jailer in Philippi, they testified, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household” [Acts 16:31]. When the jailer believed, we read this joyous assessment, “He rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God” [Acts 16:34].

That is the influence of a man. Despite all the ridicule heaped up against maleness in this day, it is still true that a father has incredible influence over his family for good or for evil. When a father is absent from the home, we witness that young men often turn out to be brutes while young women turn to inappropriate avenues seeking love and affirmation. A godly father will circumvent many of those tendencies while instilling a heart to seek what is good. Especially in influencing children toward the Faith, a father’s role is of inestimable value. I understand that there is the sad phenomenon of fathers who are not assertive and not particularly godly who have scant influence for good and for God. Nevertheless, it remains true that a husband and a father who seeks God has great influence on his family.

I do not want anyone to draw the conclusion that I am suggesting that a mother in the home is unimportant—she is crucial in lending balance to the temperament of the father. Nevertheless, when considering transmission of the Faith, though women are frequently more spiritually perspicacious, a woman’s influence will be less effective than that of a husband and a father. Don’t misunderstand—one can always cite instances of a child raised without a father who comes to faith, honouring God and serving as a benediction to the mother who raised that child. After all, the exception proves the rule. Nevertheless, the consistent observation is that a child raised in the absence of a father is at a disadvantage in embracing the Faith. It is not without reason that God chooses to present Himself as Father of those who believe.

We saw in a previous message that Timothy was “The son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek” [Acts 16:1].⁴ Perhaps God has included this information concerning the absence of Timothy’s father especially to encourage this present generation. At a time when fathers are increasingly absent from the life of the children they sire, we are sacrificing our youth to the influence of this dying world. The future of the Faith is threatened by the absence of fathers in the home. Christian mothers are called to do what is almost impossible. Notice that I said “almost impossible.” It is possible for a mother to influence her children to follow Christ the Lord; but that will require incredible courage and extreme effort.

⁴ Michael Stark, “To Timothy, My Beloved Child” (sermon), preached 8 February 2015, <http://newbeginningsbaptist.ca/clientimages/42652/sermonarchive/2%20timothy%201.02%20to%20timothy,%20my%20beloved%20child.pdf>

What is important for us to see is that though this letter was written during the apostolic era, Timothy was not a first generation Christian—he had a grandmother and a mother who were believers. It is not clear that Timothy came to faith through Paul’s preaching; these women in his life were possibly the sources of transmitting the Faith to the child, thus ensuring the continuation of the Faith for another generation. Timothy’s grandmother and mother had honoured the Lord by training the child in the Faith. Consequently, the young man had not only embraced Christ Jesus as Master of life, but he had served faithfully within his home church. His service did not go unnoticed either in that congregation or in nearby communities of faith, for we read, “He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium” [ACTS 16:2]. So, early in Paul’s Second Missionary Tour, Timothy joined the apostolic band.

The future of the Faith depends upon the transmission of the Faith to each succeeding generation. Lois and Eunice had combined their love for Christ to ensure that their grandson and son would know that Jesus Christ is Saviour of the world. Their loving efforts were richly rewarded according to Paul’s testimony. Note how he has spoken of Timothy’s “sincere faith,” and how he noted that this faith “dwelt first in [his] grandmother Lois and [his] mother Eunice.” Now, the genuine faith Paul had witnessed in these two women is evident in the younger preacher. I believe we are on solid ground if we credit the transmission of this faith to training provided by these two women. Just so, the faith is likely to be transmitted to the next generation through the training provided in the homes where Christ the Lord is honoured.

Preachers and theologians frequently grapple with how we can revitalise the Faith. Various concepts and schemes are proposed, but one that is not often mentioned is modelling the Faith in the home—modelling transformation through daily life. Christian parenting is far more effective in ensuring that our children come to faith and that they accept the Holy Faith of Christ the Lord than all the preaching from all the pulpits in the world. Preachers and parishioners understand that we are responsible to “Preach the word [being] ready in season and out of season.” We also realise that the message must be proclaimed from pulpits as we “Reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” [2 TIMOTHY 4:2]. However, I suggest that godly parenting is many times more effective at revitalising the Faith and ensuring continuation of the Faith than all the powerful preaching that can be raised up in this day.

One demonstration of the power of God is superior to a thousand dreamy sermons. Especially does this hold true when that demonstration of God’s power is witnessed through the lives of godly parents who are resilient before the vicissitudes of life. Perhaps you have seen an ad that promotes a major insurance company which is currently on television. People are asked to affix labels to a timeline, with one colour representing disappointments and problems and another colour representing joys and pleasing circumstances. Then, they are asked to affix those same coloured labels to a future timeline representing what they think will happen.

The moderator notes that the past is represented by about equal numbers of the two colours, as people acknowledge that life is composed of advances and setbacks. However, when asked about the future, it is almost all one colour as the people posting are anticipating a future that is near perfect. He points out that since the past is made up of advance and trial, then it follows that the future will likewise be composed of joys and sorrows.

Well, the ad is correct. We are very foolish if we adopt a Pollyannaish view of the future, and especially if we are anticipating that everything will somehow magically pan out with our family or with the Faith so that we need not be concerned for the future. If we fail to train our children in the Faith, if we fail to ensure that they come early to faith and are taught in this holy Faith, the Faith will soon die out in this place.

Children are trained in the Faith by both precept and example. Verbal instruction will be more powerful still when coupled with example. You know very well that the old admonition, “Do as I say, not as I do,” is meaningless when training a child. Children adopt what is witnessed in the home and not what is stated. (How do they so easily learn those bad words?)

Now, let me become somewhat pointed in my message to the people of God. Life will never consist of one continual victory—we can anticipate some failures. The impact of our life is not defined by the disappointments we experience. Our children are always watching to see how we adapt to the changes thrown into our path. There, in the laboratory of life, children witness the power of God at work in the lives of those whom they love.

Lynda and I suffered extreme disappointment at one point. The pain was so severe for us that I questioned how I could continue preaching. I consulted several pastors, seeking counsel for what I should do. The counsel I received was priceless. Qualification for divine service is not that one is perfect; rather qualification for divine service comes from how one responds to challenges when life is unfair, or when opposition arises, or when pain seems unbearable.

At that time I reviewed the qualifications for eldership, reminding myself that an elder is to be “self-controlled” and that “he must manage his own household well” [see **1 TIMOTHY 3:2-7**]. Digging deeply into the Word, I was reminded that no household is perfect, and that no life is free of disruptions. The measure of one’s life is not that one never has a disruption or that everything is always perfect. The measure of a life, and what is instructive for those who watch us, is not that we are without flaws or without pain, but that we respond in a godly manner to disappointment. To parents listening at this time, I urge you to realise that every disappointment in your life is an opportunity to reveal the power of God at work in your life.

Look again at the Apostle’s recitation of his life. He speaks of intense labours, heart wrenching imprisonment, countless beatings and trials that repeatedly brought him near to death. “Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?”

“If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying” [**2 CORINTHIANS 11:24-31**]. Do you imagine that Paul never had experienced doubt as he went through these experiences? Do you actually believe that he was some sort of a super hero who never questioned what was happening? Are you so naïve that you actually believe that the Apostle didn’t complain to God about the burdens he was called to endure? He did complain—and vociferously!

Shortly after writing the aforementioned survey of life as an Apostle, the Apostle wrote, “To keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong” [**2 CORINTHIANS 12:7-10**].

Understand, then, that I am not advocating a life free of conflict, or even that we will never suffer failure. I am, however, insisting that learning to respond to inevitable disappointments provides opportunity for us to model godliness. The Faith is caught, not taught. If you are inconsistent in how you respond to life's challenges, your children will never learn the value of the Faith. At best, in that instance, they will see the Faith as an interesting philosophy; but they will not grasp the essentials of a walk with the True and Living God or with the Son.

Let me be practical, asking you to answer some pointed questions. Do your children see you pray? I am not asking whether you fling a hurried petition heavenward before you eat a meal, though returning grace should be common in each Christian life. I am not asking whether you breathe a panicked prayer when the nice policeman turns on his lights. I am asking whether you children join in prayer as a family on an ongoing basis.

Do your children join you in reading the Bible? Do they join you in memorising Scripture so that the Word finds lodging in their hearts? Are they learning to walk through precept presented through regular times of teaching in the home? I am not discounting the message preached each week, but if the only exposure to Christian doctrine your children receive is during a Sunday morning sermon, it is likely that they will not adopt this Faith as their own.

How often have I witnessed parents who come to me bemoaning the fact that their child is just entering his teen years and is abandoning the Faith! "Pastor, he is a good boy, but he doesn't want to come to church any longer. We need to have more entertainment in our youth group so the kids will want to be there." That's a wonderful idea! Let's inoculate your children against the Faith! Let's pander to their desires rather than instructing them in righteousness! Let's entertain them rather than train them. Why, yes, that should work!

Who shall train a child if not the parent! I recall a family who pleaded with me to do something with their child. Do you have family devotions? "No." Do you have times of family prayer? "No." Do you read the Bible with your child? "No; but we brought her to church!" Well, you've taught your daughter that the Faith has primacy in your life less than one percent of the time. You taught your child that the Faith is optional. "But we are so busy," they mewed. "She just isn't interested in the church!" Of course she isn't interested in the church because she has no relationship to Christ the Lord! As this couple pleaded with me, I asked, "Who is the parent in the home?" Their pitiful response was, "You don't understand how hard it is."

My mind goes to some prime examples of parental failure that are apropos at this point. "Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, 'I will be king.' And he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. His father had never at any time displeased him by asking, 'Why have you done thus and so?' He was also a very handsome man, and he was born next after Absalom" [1 KINGS 1:5,6]. An absentee father named David trained this young man to live without regard for God. Of course, this didn't turn out well. After David's death and when Solomon had been crowned King, Adonijah continued his attempts to promote himself, leading eventually to his death [see 1 KINGS 2:9-25].

Another negative example of failure to train children is witnessed through the life of Eli. Recall the Bible tells us of his sons, "The sons of Eli were worthless men. They did not know the LORD" [1 SAMUEL 2:12]. They abused the position of priests, seizing the choice cuts of meat for themselves rather than offering them to the LORD as they were supposed to do. They acted forcefully to take what they wanted from those who came to worship, evincing a sense of entitlement that was dreadful and disgusting in one who was to serve God. They even slept with the women who came to serve at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting [see 1 SAMUEL 2:13 ff.]. Their great sin was that they "treated the offering of the Lord with contempt" [1 SAMUEL 2:17].

Their sinful attitude finally came to the attention of their father, but it was too late. “Eli ... kept hearing all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who were serving at the entrance to the tent of meeting. And he said to them, ‘Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all these people. No, my sons; it is no good report that I hear the people of the LORD spreading abroad. If someone sins against a man, God will mediate for him, but if someone sins against the LORD, who can intercede for him?’ But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for it was the will of the LORD to put them to death” [1 SAMUEL 2:22-25].

When God acted, it was swift and terrible. Hophni and Phinehas were slain after they had brought the Ark of the Covenant into the battle with the Philistines [see 1 SAMUEL 4:1-11]. When Eli heard of this, he fell over backward and broke his neck. Even the wife of Phinehas died giving birth because she heard of these events. Before she died, she named her child “Ichabod,” because she said “The Glory has Departed” [see 1 SAMUEL 4:12-22].

I’m speaking directly to Christians at this point: do not lose touch with your godly roots. Our society is jettisoning the concept of family as social engineers redefine what it means to be married and as those same termites destroy the foundations of our culture through redrawing the boundaries of the family. This will not turn out well for society; and the ruin can only be hastened if Christians adopt those same attitudes rather than standing firm against the tide. If we will honour God, and if we will see the Faith continue vibrant and lively, we will prepare our children to live whatever the world may throw at them by living out the Faith before their eyes.

Our culture saturates us with nonsense about progress and with the pretense that all change is good. We are indoctrinated to think that failure to change is regressive. However, these foolish notions are a gossamer delusion that deceives us into deliberately discarding the wisdom of the ages and the righteousness that built the great nations of the west. We are quickly losing the historical foundations and collective memory that could otherwise infuse us with moral courage and strength. If these honoured structures are lost, the cost will be unimaginable. We will have lost the strength and the vigour of apostolic teaching. The battle is fought on many fronts, but the most vital battle in this war against the Faith is being fought in your own home.

If you have not done so before now, begin now to change the future for your family through discipling. Disciple yourself first, and then begin discipling your children. Start now to have a time of family Bible reading and family prayer, giving your children a heritage in the Faith. Your family is assaulted hourly via radio, television and the Internet. They are being trained to disregard family and to despise the Faith. Your actions, the way in which you spend your time and the way in which you are training your children will determine whether your family has a future, or whether your family will be just another casualty of a corrupt culture.

Blessed is the man who has the heritage of godly parents. My mother left home when I was but a child—she left on the first day of school. My dad determined that he would raise his boys to the best of his ability. I bless God constantly for the heritage with which I am endowed. My granddad and grandma were godly, declaring the things of God to my brother and me whenever we were with them and openly praying for us. However, my dad’s determination to follow the Lord made the greatest and most lasting impression in my life.

Each evening during the winter months, dad would call my brother and me to sit at his knee while he read to us from the Bible before praying for his sons. I have gone to bed many nights hearing the whispered prayers of my dad as he knelt by his bed in the room next to ours, pleading with God to save his sons and enable him to be holy. I recall with joy the songs of the Faith that he sung, beating cadence with a hammer as he sharpened plowshares or filled sickles.

ENCOURAGEMENT TO PRAY — The memory of Timothy's genuine faith, a faith that could be traced directly to his mother and his grandmother, brought the Apostle to the point of prayer. Just so, when your home determines that it will be a home marked by godliness, many will offer up prayers of thanksgiving for you. One godly family, transgenerational in fulfilling the mission of the Faith, brings many of the faithful to the point of offering thanksgiving to God. Remember that Paul's prayers were because he was reminded of what had been accomplished through the teaching of Lois and Eunice.

Every father should function as a teacher of righteousness for his children. Every mother should serve to teach her children from infancy to love the Lord God. In doing this, parents are preparing their children for the work of God's good Spirit. The parents will be offering up a prepared field in which the Holy Spirit can work as the seed is planted and the plant is then nurtured. It is not the job of parents to save their children; but it is the responsibility of parents to ensure that their children know of Christ the Lord from earliest days.

I watch the parents of our church as we worship. The training children have received is evident. Those that are still little ones watch their parents and they imitate what they witness. When the parent sings, the child will quite naturally want to hold a hymnal and make a joyful noise. When the elements are passed during the Communion Meal, I often see children tug at the sleeve of the mother or the father as the child asks what is happening. The parents bend over and whisper that they are worshipping, remembering the Lord's sacrifice. Wonderment is writ large on the face of the child; and though she doesn't fully understand, she accepts what she is told. It is always amazing how much of the preaching of the Word children hear and retain. We think they are not listening, that they are uninterested, when all the while their minds are absorbing words, some of which stick.

In one congregation, the wife became pregnant with her second child soon after I arrived. She and her husband faithfully came to church week-by-week, listening as I declared the message of life. When that little boy was born, I observed a wonderful thing. As I would lift my voice to preach, the little lad would twist in his mother's arms, straining to see the voice that he had heard for nine months in his mother's womb. When Duncan was able to walk, he would toddle to the end of the row and peer around the chair to look intently at me as I spoke. Later, when his mother would be listening intently to the message, he would slip out of the row to walk down the aisle in order to stand beside me as I spoke. From earliest days he had heard the preaching of the Word. His parents would read the Bible, memorise Scripture and pray together each evening. What had been preached in the services was being put into practise in the home. Would it surprise you if I told you that the young man came to faith at a very young age? That godly husband, his godly wife and their godly children are a blessing to all who know them. Whenever I think of them, I lift my heart in thanksgiving to God for His grace and for what He is accomplishing through their lives.

We can lift our hearts in prayer at the thought of those with whom we share the Faith. Paul offered thanks to God simply that some had faith. Writing the Corinthians, the Apostle said, "I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus" [**1 CORINTHIANS 1:4**].

Other believers elicited prayer from the Apostle because of their love for all the saints. He said of the Colossian Christians, "We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints" [**COLOSSIANS 1:3, 4**].

2 TIMOTHY 1:5
THE IMPACT OF A GODLY FAMILY

Again, Paul was moved to prayer when he heard of the faith and love expressed by some believers. In the Ephesian Encyclical the Apostle wrote, "Because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers" [EPHESIANS 1:15, 16].

Writing the Roman Christians, Paul expressed his gratitude because they were open in their proclamation of their faith. "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world" [ROMANS 1:8].

Permit me to give one other example of what moved the Apostle to pray for believers. He spoke of his joy over the Philippian Christians because they entered into partnership with him to advance the cause of Christ. "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now" [PHILIPPIANS 1:3-5].

But as he wrote Timothy, Paul was moved to pray because of the young preacher's genuine, unfeigned faith. "I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well" [2 TIMOTHY 1:3-5].

Let's determine that we will so live that people pray with joy when they hear of us. Let us determine, each of us, that we will devote ourselves to transmitting the Faith to our children, to our grandchildren. Let us determine that we will live out this genuine Faith, modelling it so that those whom we love will also embrace this Holy Faith. May God make it so for each of us. Amen.