

Kirkwall Presbyterian Church
'Timothy'
Acts 14:8-20; Acts 16:1-5; 2 Timothy 1:3-7
June 5, 2026
By Keith Marcy

Last week we went along with Paul and Barnabas as they left Antioch to take the gospel – the story of Jesus – to the world of the Gentiles. The growing group of Christians, guided by the Holy spirit, sent them. They took a young apprentice with them, John Mark, a cousin of Barnabas. Their mission began on Cyprus, an island under the rule of a Proconsul of the Roman Government. Before they left the island, the governor had committed his way to Christ. The team of 3 sailed to Perga to begin a tour of Pamphylia and Galatia. John Mark announced he was going home. And he left. Paul held it against him for many years. Paul and Barnabas soldiered on.

The pattern was predictable:

- Enter a town and search out the synagogue. (Ten practicing Jews could have a meeting place called the synagogue.)
- Explain to those who gathered that, “Your Messiah has come! He lived and died according to the Old Testament prophecies. Believe on Him and live.”
- The result was almost predictive – the people threw them out.
- Then the two missionaries went to the marketplace and reasoned with the Greeks who worshipped a whole gamut of idols.
- Meanwhile the Jewish leaders stirred up opposition.
- There would be a riot, and the missionaries would be ordered out of town.

It happened in Pisidian Antioch.

They went on to Iconium where it happened again.

Yet wonder of wonders, in each town there were a few who believed, and the nucleus of a church was born.

Leaving Iconium, the two went to Lystra.

Read Acts 14:8-20.

Lystra had no synagogue. But it had two devout Jews – both women – who for years had taught their son and grandson about Jehovah, the living God who created everything we see, in all its wonderful details. This young man's name was Timothy. We could read the story of Timothy's encounter with Paul in two minutes and forget it. Today we pause and read from a document I call, “*Timothy's diary*.”

'Timothy's Diary'

This morning was normal – well as normal as they get. I memorized more of the scroll of Isaiah under the tutelage of my mom and grandma. They both believed in Jehovah, the God who spoke all things into being. They longed for the coming of the Messiah – God's Son – to be a descendant of King David who, in some way was their ancestor for they themselves were Jewish. They were good teachers – good because I knew they believed what they taught me. How? I do not know. It is like a 6th sense – you just

know. Every morning they spent with me – arithmetic, writing, reading and memorization, memorization, memorization. But they made learning fun.

My father would come in from his fields for lunch and in the afternoons, I would go out to help him. Today he came home with strange news.

“I walked along with a couple of weirdos coming into town. Both carried backpacks, both looked a little unkempt. One was stout, bold and brash. The other was tall and quiet and soft-spoken. Said they were from the far-away Antioch. They were on a mission with Good News – news from YWEH – your God, Grandma.” My father was a believer in Zeus, a Greek god.

“Where are they? Didn’t you invite them for lunch?” scolded my mom.

“No. They wanted to go to the marketplace.”

That day we had a hurried lunch. Mom and Grandma suddenly had to go to the market. Dad said I could go with them. When we got there, the stout brash one was already on the speaker’s box declaring that the Messiah had already come to far-away Jerusalem. Old George had his little booth right beside the speaker’s corner. Old George could not walk. He was born with deformed feet. So, he sat carving figures out of wooden blocks – little sculptures of Greek gods which he sold for a pittance. Today he laid his tools down and was listening intently to this man’s message.

The man was saying, *“They killed Him – the Messiah – they hung him on a cross – and they buried Him in a rich man’s tomb – but YWEH raised Him from the dead!”*

Then he stopped. He stared at Old George. *“I see your interest. I sense you believe me. Stand up on your feet.”*

And for the first time in his whole life, George was able to stand. Then slowly and cautiously he took a step. The quiet tall missionary took his hand and they walked a few steps. Then George let go and jumped up and down.

The crowd cheered and whooped and hollered, *“The gods have come amongst us today!”*

They called the short man, ‘Hermes,’ and the tall man, ‘Zeus.’ Someone laid a block of cheese on the speaker’s box, another gave the tall one a chicken. Both refused these gifts.

The missionaries tore their clothes. *“You must not do this. We do not take nor do we deserve sacrifices. We are messengers of Jehovah. We are just men like you. It is Jehovah who has healed George. Turn away from your worthless idols and come to Jesus, Jehovah’s Son who is alive and lives forever!”*

I think the crowd may have calmed down – except – except – at that moment some Jews ran in from Iconium and Antioch shouting, *“Don’t believe them! They are imposters. Their message is garbage. Rid the earth of them!”*

Someone threw a stone at the short one whose name was Paul. Then a volley of stones came from the wild crowd. A large one, baseball size, hit him on the forehead. He collapsed and lay on the ground – motionless. Then some young guys rushed forward. They grabbed his feet and arms and dragged him out to the garbage dump, whooping like savages.

I was frozen with fear. Was this a nightmare?

But Grandma – her deep faith made her bold. *“Follow them,”* she barked. My mom, and I and old George and the missionary they called ‘Barnabas’ and one or two others followed her. When we reached Paul, the welts were already swelling grossly, Grandma barked, *“On your knees.”* She prayed, *“YWEH, creator of the universe, raise up your servant.”*

A simple prayer, spoken from her deep faith, a result of years of study.

Paul’s lifeless body began to tremble. His chest began to rise and fall. He opened his swelling eyes. Grandma and Mom reached out a hand and helped Paul stand.

“Take me back to the city!”

“No!” I protested. *“The crowd is berserk.”*

“I know,” replied Paul. *“They need to see that our God is greater than they.”*

Grandma spoke, *“Timothy, go and get the large pitcher. Fill it with cold water at the spring and meet us at the house.”*

They gently washed Paul’s wounds and applied soothing olive oil. He sipped some tea. Before he turned in for the night, he ate a warm biscuit and a piece of lamb.

Before I turned in, I went to the garden and prayed, *“Thank you YWEH, and thank you Jesus. Today you let me see your power. I witnessed a miracle.”*

When I stood, I was startled to see Old George sitting on an overturned bucket.

“George, it is way past your bedtime.”

In the moonlight I saw glistening tears dripping off George’s chin. *“Timothy, pray for me – that I will have the courage like the man Paul, to tell my story to the unbelieving.”*

My words would not come. I embraced him, gave him a thumbs up and went to bed.

The next morning Paul looked amazingly better. After breakfast, both men profusely thanked my mom and grandma. I thought they would lay low for a few days.

“No,” exclaimed Paul, *“There are people in Derbe who need hope. We must tell them about our risen Lord. Soldiers of Christ do not rest. They Soldier on. We will return in a week or so.”*

Then his piercing eyes looked into mine. *“Timothy, be strong in your faith. Teach others what your dear mother and grandmother have taught you! Soldier on in this town declaring that God came down in the person of His Son exactly the way the Prophets said He would”.*

I watched them walking away toward Derbe. Less than 24 hours ago he had been left for dead. *“Lord,”* I prayed, *“make me like him, unstoppable!”*

We will continue the story next week.