

Remembering Mothers and Grandmothers (2 Timothy 1:5, 3:14-15)

This morning I want to take a step back from our study through Philippians to go back in the life of the person Paul's writing that book with. I've talked a lot about Paul, but Philippians begins with the words '*Paul and Timothy.*' Paul isn't by himself in prison, Timothy's with him as he writes Philippians. Let's start in 2 Tim 1, Paul's last letter from prison where he looks back on Timothy's godly upbringing and calls Timothy to look back on his mother. Behind the man Timothy there stood a godly woman and her godly mother.

2 Tim 1:2: *To Timothy, my beloved son... ⁵ For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well* (NASB). Paul recalled the faith of Timothy's mother and her mother. I thought it good for today to remember mothers as God's Word does. Our church memorialized 3 godly men last month but we also need to also keep in our memory godly women.

Last month we saw in Phil 4 we're to dwell on whatever is good, honorable, admirable, excellent, worthy of praise, and so on. Motherhood is all of those in scripture. In the 10 commandments, mothers are to be honored. In Pr 31, the mother is called *excellent* (v. 10) and she does her husband *good* (v. 12) and he *praises* her and her children rise up to *admire* her as blessed (v. 28). Charm deceives, beauty flees, but a woman fearing God is worthy of praise. 2 Tim 1:5 is about the faith of our mothers and it's fitting for Mother's Day.

This is the same Paul who writes what we're to set our mind on in Phil 4, he calls to mind Timothy's mother and grandmother. God's inspired Word lists by name these 2 women God used to form this man. '*I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice...*' that's how the NKJV says it. It doesn't mention their husbands having faith but there were roots of faith in these ladies who planted seeds of faith that bore fruit in this family tree of faith for Timothy.

Sometimes a good tree can have a dead branch, but there was life and faith in Timothy that owed its source to the tree that came before. As Paul looks at Timothy's life, he sees godly family resemblance on his mom's side, and his mother's mother. We've studied things we need to dwell on in Phil 4, so today I thought it good for us to dwell on this, the faith dwelling in mothers. I've been dwelling on this in a new book I read this week by Tim Challies, *Devoted: Great Men and Their Godly Moms*. It has a chapter on Timothy. In 2 Tim 3 Paul comes back to what he learned as a child from these ladies:

3:14 *You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them,¹⁵ and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

NIV *'you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scripture ...'* Who were those Paul learned from, as an infant and child? His mom and apparently his grandma also. His dad isn't named in 1:5, evidently because Paul only saw genuine faith in the women raising Timothy. Acts 16 says when Paul came to Lystra *'a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek.'* So it only says his mom was a believer, not his dad. Timothy when Paul came was already a disciple or follower of Christ. In 2 Tim 1:5 we read Timothy's grandma was the first in the family to come to faith, then presumably she shared her faith with her daughter and grandson.

Outline:

- 1. The Role of Grandparents in Faith**
- 2. The Remembrance of Mothers in Faith**
- 3. The Responsibility of All to Continue in Faith**

In 2 Tim 1:5 notice first of all: **The Role of Grandparents in Faith**
v. 5 says the faith in Timothy *'...first dwelt in your grandmother Lois...'*

Lois was one of the faithful Jewish sisters of her generation like Elizabeth and Anna in the temple looking for the Messiah their sacred OT writings of scripture pointed to. Maybe Lois was part of the Passover crowds that heard Jesus preach the gospel years earlier, or heard of the gospel from Pentecost crowds that travelled back through Lystra? In Acts 14, missionaries came to Lystra, but before a church was planted, gospel roots were already in this Jewish woman I'm sure prayed often for Eunice and Timothy's conversion. Can you picture Grandma Lois taking tiny Tim on her lap, reading Bible stories to him, telling him about the wisdom and salvation of God in Christ?

I can imagine him sitting at her feet as she told of the OT God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who reveals Himself in that multi-generational way. What a blessing to Lois the God of the Bible became the God of Lois, Eunice and Timothy! At grandma's house Timothy maybe heard the OT story of King Hezekiah who had a bad dad, but Hezekiah followed the faith of granddad who had done what was right in the eyes of God, and so there was blessing for Israel. The psalms talk of *'righteousness to children's children'* (103:17)

I'd love to hear Lois tell him of Jacob's grandsons Ephraim and Manasseh. Heb 11 highlights that as Jacob or Israel's high point, grandsons blessed by faith. I can picture Lois taking her grandson on her lap telling the story of Naomi and her grandson Ruth gave her: *'Naomi took the child, laid him in her lap and cared for him. The women living there said, "Naomi has a son."* [Naomi was a widow who'd lost her sons but now a blessed grandma ready to bless/spoil?] *And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David'* (4:16-17 NIV). Matthew's genealogy tells us Obed's grandma on Boaz's side was Rahab from Jericho, another notable grandma. Naomi's grandson Obed had the most notable grandson of all, King David. Lois could tell of a long line of grandparent-grandchild connections of faith.

What is a Grandma and what do they do? An 8-year-old wrote, "Grandmas don't have anything to do except be there. If they take us for walks, they slow down past pretty leaves and caterpillars. They never say 'Hurry up.' ... They wear glasses, and sometimes they can take their teeth out. They can answer questions like why dogs hate cats and why God isn't married. They don't talk like visitors do, which is hard to understand. When they read to us, they don't skip words or mind if it is the same story again. Everybody should try to have a grandma...the only grownups who always have time." ¹

What do we see grandparents doing in scripture? In Genesis, after Laban reconciles with Jacob, it says *'Laban arose and kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them'* (31:55 ESV). Grandparents can show affection to their grandchildren and bless them. They should see grandkids as God's blessing and crown on their life. Ps 128: *'The LORD bless you...may you see your children's children.'* Proverbs: *'Grandchildren are the crown of the aged...'* (17:6 ESV). It's been said grandkids are God's compensation for growing old. That sounds like what Bethlehem women said to Naomi when Ruth gave birth to her grandson, they said of him *'May he...be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age...'* Those ladies knew the power of a grandchild to renew and revive life, and some of you know that firsthand as you took yours on your lap and what a boost it was to your life!

A grandma or grandpa's role isn't to take the place of parents. But there's an important place for coming alongside parents to help kids place their trust in God. A dominant biblical role of grandparents is to pass on biblical truth. Ex 10:2 commands *'tell... your son's son the mighty things I have done in Egypt, and My signs which I have done among them, that you may know that I am the LORD'* (NKJV). That was a part of my own dad's testimony.

He's shared how his "Grandma Simms" introduced him to Bible stories like that and taught him how to pray, and as he read the story of the Exodus he marveled at God's miraculous signs He did in Egypt, especially the Red Sea crossing. And my dad read what his Grandpa Layton told him through his missionary memoirs in the 1900s, hearing the mighty things God did among the tribes of Congo, saving witch-doctors and cannibals, whole tribes came to faith. What my grandpa told him planted a seed in him. It bore fruit years later as my dad came to know the Lord, and was the answer to his grandpa's prayer for one of his grandkids to go the ministry and mission field, and my dad continued that legacy. And I as a great-grandson was greatly impacted reading those family history memoirs of Congo as I went to Congo to adopt.

That's the role a grandparent can play in the faith. Last week I talked about Fanny Crosby, and it was her grandmother who brought her to the Bible. I read she read Genesis, Exodus, and many other books to Fanny to help her blind granddaughter memorize whole books of the Bible, all by repetition. Fanny counted her conversion many years later but her grandma had a role. Young Charles Spurgeon in the same century was greatly influenced by his grandpa and his books planting seeds that bore fruit of faith a decade later. Grandparents, be encouraged by the role you can play and seeds you plant!

If you feel you don't have a role to play, pray Ps 71: *'Do not cast me away when I am old; do not forsake me when my strength is gone...Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come'* (v. 9, 18 NIV). We need you, my older brothers and sisters, and the next generation needs you to tell us of the God who's been your help in ages past. It's hard for some to get here, your strength may fade, but tell us of His power and might in your life

Dt 4:9 *'diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen ... teach them to your children and your grandchildren ...'* (NKJV). If you think 'I'm not a teacher, I don't have training, I haven't been educated on how to teach the Bible,' listen: this is written to largely uneducated and illiterate former slaves who came out of Egypt. Many couldn't read, but it says what your eyes have seen is what you're to tell your grandkids about. Grandparents, be encouraged. You have an important role, as Lois had with Timothy in her prayers and faith she shared. Keep enduring in your role for the sake of your children's children. Tell them the old, old stories again and again. Those of you that are still married, show us what it's like to care for a spouse in sickness and in health, till death you part. Your role is vital to us.

And we have a role to our grandparents, to hear them, to honor them, and to help them practically, even financially as needed. Paul told Timothy back in 1 Tim 5, a church should honor and support its widows in needs that can't be met by the family who should step up first to honor parents/grandparents.

1 Tim 5:4 *'if she has children **or grandchildren**, their first responsibility is to show godliness at home and repay their parents by taking care of them. This is something that pleases God...⁸ But those who won't care for their relatives, especially those in their own household, have denied the true faith [and]...are worse than unbelievers'* (NLT). The NIV says kids or grandkids as they *'provide for...family'* they *'put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents...'* As some of you here do that with aging parents or grandparents, some even in your own houses, or caring for them in other homes, know that pleases God. As Paul wrote this to Timothy, he expected him to do that for Grandma Lois

But notice 2 Tim 1:5 doesn't stop there, look at it again, Paul tells Timothy that faith *'first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice...'*

Which takes us to #2. The Remembrance of Mothers in Faith

Paul reminds or calls to mind Timothy's mother who he calls out by name. Inspired scripture remembers both his grandmother and mother by name. To put that in perspective, we don't know the name of the great Apostle Paul's mom. The Bible doesn't name the mother of Peter, James or John. But what a tribute the Spirit inspired Paul to remember and record the name Eunice as Timothy's faithful mom. Paul could have just said *your mother*, but he calls to mind her name and her legacy of sincere faith in the name of Christ. The ancient world often put down or denigrated women and their role, but Jesus and Paul² lift up and celebrate the role of Christian women and their identity in Christ. The world won't notice or honor a young mom making known to her infant the scriptures, but God noticed and honored her name in scripture

And God names her son in NT letters more than any of the 12 apostles. No one is in more of Paul's letters than Timothy; he was with Paul as he wrote Romans, 1&2 Corinthians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philippians, and Colossians. His name is in Acts, Hebrews, 2 NT books written to him (1&2 Timothy). She named him Timothy, meaning 'one who honors God.' The name shows her sincere faith, hope and prayer her son would honor God. Not that he be rich and famous or honored in the eyes of the world, but that he honor God – there was no greater joy for her than to hear her child walking in the faith.

Parents, grandparents, let that be your great hope and prayer, not academics or sports or achievements to make you proud, just humble sincere faithful ones that honor God. And Eunice didn't just wish that, she worked for it, as chapter 3 says, helping her son learn faith by training, spankings, daily life. 2 Tim 1:5 says her faith was genuine and it was dwelling in her, it lived in her. Genuine/sincere means 'non-hypocritical.' How many kids have been turned off by Christianity or turned away from the church by hypocritical parents. Some youth make it an excuse, but there's no excuse for us moms and dads to not strive by faith to live out the Christian life transparently. I'm not perfect, and neither are you, but hypocrisy would be acting as if we are.

It's pretending everything is magnificent as you walk into church but on the way to church in the car you were Maleficent. One pastor explains: 'Phony faith is the mask that is put on in front of church members or out in public, but it's set aside in the home.' It's like the mom who invited the pastor and wife over and wrote on a kitchen calendar for that date, "Pastor for dinner--Dust all Bibles." Or the pastor in the living room with a dad saying "I'm glad to see the way you're living." "Oh, pastor," replied the man, "if you want to know how we really live, you must come when *you're* not here."³

v. 5 isn't saying Eunice had a sinless faith, it says she had a '*sincere faith.*' That's not to say she aired her dirty laundry publically, but the implication is with friends or family she was honest and real, sincere, not self-righteous. A mom's genuine faith is genuine about her own sin and confesses it to her child. A sincere faith strives to sincerely and sympathetically love and relate to sinful children and let them know sin dwells in mommy, too, and dad and I and all of us need a Savior who is perfect, because we're not. Hypocritical parenting, or critical speech about church or others at church won't help our kids love the church. Yelling at our kids to stop yelling won't stop it. But a humble gentle genuine sincere asking for forgiveness when we blow it goes a long way and can be a way God softens kids hearts to make way for grace.

We don't know much more about Eunice except her Gentile husband wasn't a believer, and apparently neither was her father. But Eunice should be a big encouragement to any of you who didn't grow up with a believing father, or trying to raise children without a godly man leading your home; the sincere faith you live out can have a huge impact. The Bible doesn't say anything extraordinary about Eunice or her gifts or role in the church, but her role in her home with her son God used to pass on genuine faith. Let it encourage ordinary moms raising kids, don't buy the supermom lie, be a sincere mom.

Don't buy the feminist mistake that mothering isn't significant of satisfying. You don't have to live up to images on Pinterest, Facebook, or mom blogs, just live faithfully in the ordinary striving for more of the image of Christ. Let that be your identity, not how many likes you get on social media, but how you're becoming more like Christ. Don't underestimate the power of a praying mother and the things you're saying as you're training little ones. If you ever doubt it, look again at 2 Tim 3:14-15. Paul motivates Timothy to be true to the faith of his mother by urging Timothy to remember her who taught him from day one. Calvin said the boy 'was reared in his infancy in such a way that he could suck in godliness along with his mother's milk'.¹⁴

David wrote in the Psalms that he began to trust God when he was a nursing child. God through the prophet Hosea spoke of His people as a loved child He taught to walk, taking them by the arms, leading them with kindness and bending down to feed them (Hosea 11:1, 3-4). Never demean the role of a mother teaching a toddler to walk, holding his arms, stooping down to feed a beloved child; that's not a lowly role, that's the role God Himself portrays. Your role is no less than the man of God; 2 Tim 3 says what you do to teach your children the scripture helps makes a man of God complete, equipped. A mom armed with scripture is used of God to form the man of God (3:17).

Spurgeon said it best: 'O dear mothers, you have a very sacred trust... You are called to equip the future man of God, that he may be thoroughly furnished unto every good work... Those who think that a woman detained at home by her little family is doing nothing, think the reverse of what is true... dream not that she is lost to the work of the church; far from it, she is doing the best possible service for her Lord. Mothers, the godly training of your offspring is your first and most pressing duty. Christian women, by teaching children the holy scriptures, are as much fulfilling their part for the Lord, as Moses in judging Israel, or Solomon in building the temple.'⁵

Eunice had a genuine ministry to her son. Motherhood is a mission and real ministry, and if you doubt that, listen to how Paul described his ministry to the Thessalonians: '*as apostles of Christ...we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children...affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us...remember...our labor and toil: we worked night and day...while we proclaimed to you the gospel*' (1 Thess 2:6-10 ESV). That's manly godly ministry and the greatest illustration Paul can think for his point is a mother ministering to little ones.

In history since Eunice, mothers like her have changed the world. That book by Challies has a chapter on Eunice and others like the mom of Augustine in the early church. The most influential theologian before Luther was most influenced by his mom. Monica raised Augustine in the Christian faith, but he rebelled and rejected it and walked away from the faith of his mother and gave himself over to an immoral lifestyle. Monica kept pleading with her son and pleading with God in prayer. Months before she died, her son came to Jesus and he asked her to help understand the scriptures she tried to teach him decades earlier. His famous *Confessions* pay tribute to his praying mom and the reality as he ran from her faith he couldn't outrun her faithful prayer.

A mom writes: 'Augustine's story will comfort all the mamas who have a long-wandering child...Monica's story teaches us the value of never giving up on our kids. We should never stop praying, never stop hoping, never stop trying to influence them for Christ...Monica's perseverance in the faith while she lived with [an unsaved]...cruel husband led to his conversion, too.'

Challies writes of John Newton in 1700s, his mom shows 'spiritual strength can abide even when there is physical frailty...he would pursue...sin but he could never escape that great strength of that weak mother...chronic fatigue ...often confined her to bed.' But whatever energy Elizabeth had, she poured into her 4-year-old scripture, memorizing and catechizing until she died of poor health when John was only 6. John in his own words would become a slave trader, infidel, and a wretch, but was saved by what he would call in a song he wrote 'amazing grace that saved a wretch like me...twas grace that taught my heart...' And Newton saw that grace at work through his mother.

The book says Elizabeth Newton shows the 'feeble...can still be formidable in faith. See how God delights to use even the weakest people to preach the greatest news... make the most of every day and every opportunity, for you do not now many you...have...those early lessons are not easily forgotten, this early foundation is not easily forgotten, that this early foundation [for a child] is not soon destroyed, and your labor in motherhood is not in vain.' Decades later John wrote 'I reap the fruits of [mom's] prayers to this hour.'

A century later 'a great missionary who impacted an entire nation and the very course of Christian missions' was originally a rebellious teen but his mom Amelia Taylor prayed fervently for the salvation of her son Hudson. D.L. Moody had a single mother with 9 young children, but despite extreme poverty, her son as an evangelist saw thousands become God's children.

Wesley: “I learned more about Christianity [and life] from my mother than from all the theologians of England.”...One of history’s greatest preachers would say with affection, “I am sure that, in my early youth, no teaching ever made such an impression upon my mind as the instruction of my mother” ... An eminent theologian would state, “To our mother, my brother and myself, under God, owe absolutely everything.” A great defender of the faith would write about an overwhelming moment of doubt, “My mother [spoke to me] in those dark hours when the lamp burned dim, when I thought that faith was gone and shipwreck had been made of my soul. ‘Christ,’ she used to say, ‘keeps firmer hold on us than we keep on him’.”⁶

I close with a last thought: the responsibility of all to continue in faith

3:14 You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them,¹⁵ and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

The best way we can remember our mothers or grandparents or others who planted seeds of faith in our life, is to continue in that faith. Honor mothers and encourage them by sharing specifically their impact in your life. If you have a believing mother, thank God, and if she's living, thank her today. If you never had a Christian mom pray for you, pray for her if she's living still. It's not too late for salvation through faith which is in Christ, as mothers in this room can attest. Love her and seek to lead her to salvation as you honor

Some of you have learned biblical things from your mother or others, but if you're honest, you're not convinced of them, like v. 14 says, and you're not planning on continuing in them when you leave home. You're already gone spiritually, but you're not beyond a mother's prayers or a Heavenly Father's amazing grace. Turn from sin to Christ as your wisdom and your salvation. If you're a young person here who's been rebelling against your mom, take this day to make that right with her, take responsibility for wrong actions or attitudes toward her, confess them to God and her. If you're an older person who's been dishonoring your mother, your responsibility is the same. You're not called to obey her as an adult, but obey God who commands you honor. All of us can honor mothers in some way to honor God who honors them.

Hymn #346: give us homes built firm upon the Savior...every child taught His...favor
give us homes with godly fathers, mothers...the Bible read, precious hymns still sung
Where prayer comes first...to every tongue, and Christ sufficient is for old and young

¹ Robert J. Morgan, [*Nelson's Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations, and Quotes*](#), electronic ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000), 392.

² Paul lists some 20 women in his letters, mostly by name, and at least 11 of them he highlights their involvement in important ministry in some way. See Lars Kierspel, *Charts on the Life, Letters, and Theology of Paul* (Kregel Academic, 2012), p. 45, 50.

³ Steven Cole, "The Impact of Mothers"

<https://media.sermonaudio.com/mediapdf/99225162256230.pdf>

⁴ John R. W. Stott, [*Guard the Gospel the Message of 2 Timothy*](#), *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 27.

⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, "[The Sunday-School and the Scriptures](#)," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 31 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1885), 580.

⁶ Quotes on this page and prior page are from above book by Tim Challies.