

Sunday School Lesson

By Bessie Wilton

INTRODUCTION

Memories can be either pleasant or painful, but we all have them. Memories of failure can discourage us, and so can memories of success. But on the other hand, memories of failure can spur us on to greater effort, and memories of success can encourage us to do better still. The value of memories depends on what we do with them.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Second Timothy was written not much later than 1st Timothy - a few years at most. But the circumstances were much different. In A.D. 64 there was a terrible fire in Rome. Much of the city was destroyed. Some citizens suspected that Emperor Nero had set the fire as a drastic kind of slum clearance. To divert suspicion from himself, Nero accused the Christians and began to punish them with prison and death. Soon the persecution spread from Rome to other places. We do not know when or where it caught up with Paul, but it seems that he was again imprisoned in Rome. This time he did not expect to be released, but thought the end of his earthly course was at hand (2nd Timothy 4:6-8). His second letter to Timothy encouraged the young man to be strong and fearless in the face of danger (2nd Timothy 1:7, 8; 2:1-3; 4:1-5).

THE LESSON

"From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, sent to proclaim the promised life which we have in union with Christ Jesus -- To Timothy, my dear son: May God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord give you grace, mercy, and peace. I give thanks to God, whom I serve with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did. I thank him as I remember you always in my prayers night and day. I remember your tears, and I want to see you very much so that I may be filled with joy. I remember the sincere faith you have, the kind of faith that your grandmother, Lois, and your mother, Eunice, also had. I am sure that you have it also. For this reason I remind you to keep alive the gift that God gave you when I laid my hands on you. For the Spirit that God has given us does not make us timid; instead, his Spirit fills us with power, love, and self-control." (2nd Timothy 1:1-7).

Separation had not dimmed Paul's memories of Timothy. The beloved young helper was in his thoughts and his prayers night and day. Paul thanked God because the memories were pleasant, and he was confident that his prayers would be answered as Timothy continued in his faithful service to God. Paul was greatly desiring to see Timothy, and anyone who has been separated from a close friend can understand that. Probably Timothy had wept at their parting, and that memory filled Paul with joy because Timothy returned his love and was also eager for reunion. Timothy's mother and grandmother were Jewish. Their faith in God was genuine, and they taught it to the child Timothy. Probably Timothy was in his teens when he first heard the gospel. Thereafter Timothy, Eunice, and Lois were firm believers in God's Son as well as in God.

It was customary to lay hands on a person to ordain him to some special service. Therefore we supposed that Timothy's gift might be the special work to which he was ordained when the elders of his home church laid their hands on him. Now we read of a gift, the same one or another, that was given by putting Paul's hands on him. Since Paul was an apostle, it may be that he imparted to Timothy some special power of the Holy Spirit. Whether Timothy's gift was some miraculous power or simply the privilege and duty of preaching the word, Paul told him to stir it up. The Greek word for "stir up" is made up of three, short words, which, taken together, mean to liven up a fire. If you have a fireplace, you can understand. When the fire seems to be going out, you stir it with a poker and it bursts into flame. Timothy was to stir his gift into flame. He was to keep it alive, vigorous, active.

God gives His Spirit to His people, and His Spirit does not lead us to be frightened into silence and inactivity when persecution threatens. Rather, His Spirit gives us power to do what we ought to do, love to give his Message to those who need it, and a sound mind. God's Spirit does not make us either timid or reckless in a time of persecution. We do not flaunt our defiance of the persecutions; we just go on with the Lord's work in a loving way.

"But you have followed my teaching, my conduct and my purpose in life; you have observed my faith, my patience, my love, my endurance, my persecutions, and my sufferings. You know all that happened to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra, the terrible persecution I endured! But the Lord rescued me from them all. Everyone who wants to live in a godly life in union with Jesus Christ will be persecuted; and evil persons and imposters will keep on going from bad to worse, deceiving others and being deceived themselves. But as for you, continue in the truths that you were taught and firmly believe. You know who your teachers were, and you remember that every since you were a child you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to Salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for right living, so that the person who serves God may be fully qualified and equipped to do every kind of Good deed." (2nd Timothy 3:10-17).

Paul did not expect to be on earth to guide Timothy much longer. He wanted the young man to remember and follow the example Paul had given in past years.

We don't know Timothy very well. He was Paul's helper, and in the record he is overshadowed by the apostle. Paul told him to stir up his gift and not to be afraid. He urged him to be strong and endure hardship.

Are you timid and hesitant about doing what you can do, even when you see it is needed? That timidity is your own; it is not what God gives you. He gives a spirit of power. When you stir up your gift and do what you can, you soon find that you can do more than you think you can.

Are you hurt when someone criticizes what you are doing? That hurt may be all your own. God gives a spirit of love. In love you want to work in harmony with others. If their way will work, you may take it rather than your own. Then they will be more energetic in helping with what needs to be done. Love is not only right; it is practical. It gets things done.

Retired Personnel

The CMS retired school personnel will meet on Wednesday, November 20, at 10 a.m. in the board room of the Education Center. George Shinn will be the speaker. Light refreshments will be served prior to the meeting.

Holiday Loneliness

A seminar series for single women begins at WomanReach on surviving the holidays with "Coping With Holiday Loneliness" on November 15, Friday, from 7-9 p.m. facilitated by Rita Arundel.

The WomanReach Center is a United Way Agency. The facilities are handicapped accessible and services are freely given and freely received. For more information, call a WomanReach peer counselor, Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., at 334-3614.

Power Of Networking

How important is networking, as a part of your job search? WomanReach will offer a seminar Wednesday, November 20, from 4:30-6 p.m. called "The Power of Using Networking In The Job Search," facilitated by Lois Dixon and Peggy Toller.

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Dynamic Environment

Ron Landau will speak on the subject, "Production Scheduling in a Dynamic Environment," at the meeting of the American Production and Inventory Control Society, Tuesday, November 19, at 6 p.m. The meeting will take place at the Quality Inn. The cost to attend this meeting and dinner is \$15 for non-members and \$12 for members. Call 597-6500 for reservations.

Time Management

The Guild of WomanReach Volunteers will hold their monthly meeting on Monday, November 18, 6 p.m., at Shoney's at Woodlawn Rd. and South Blvd. Lois Dixon will discuss "Time Management" with the group. The WomanReach Center is a United Way Agency.

The facilities are handicapped accessible and services are freely given and freely received. For more information, call a WomanReach peer counselor, Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., at 334-3614.

Landscaping Course

You can plan the perfect yard before spring planting time arrives with the help of a landscaping course at Central Piedmont Community College (CPC).

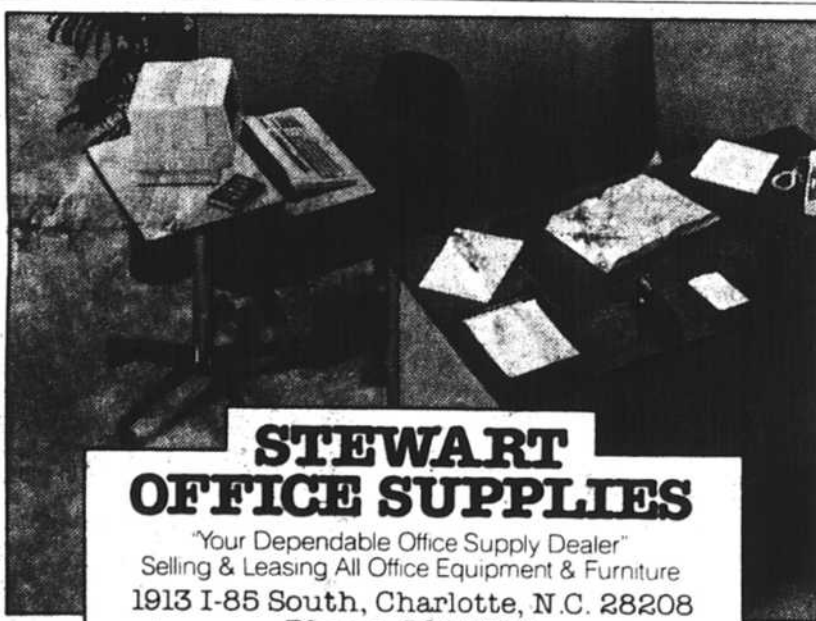
"Landscape Your Own Home" will be taught at South Mecklenburg and Independence high schools and at Derita Presbyterian Church beginning in January. The course covers designing a landscape, choosing the proper plants, installing them correctly, and caring for them properly.

The cost is \$14.75 for the 11-week course. Registration for new students will be December 9-12.



"Tiny" Streater sits comfortably in the arms of her (or is it his?) mama on a recent mild morning. "Mama" Elizabeth of Spring Terrace Lane is out for an early morning stroll with Tiny tagging along. Guess the diminutive pooch tires easily; but then, what are mama's arms for? By the way, Elizabeth isn't playing hookie. School's out for a teacher's work day. (Photo by Audrey Lodato)

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