



# The Online Library of T. Austin-Sparks

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## Qualifications For Which the Lord Looks

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

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Timothy was a young man. It would seem that he was little more than a boy when Paul first found him. On Paul's second missionary journey, Timothy's mother made the great sacrifice of giving him to the Lord and to His servant, Paul. He was very young, and then evidently of a very timid and shrinking disposition and temperament, anything but self-assertive, self-sufficient; one who could easily be put down by anyone who was assertive, and walked over, despised, both for his youth and because of his timid disposition. And perhaps because, as the reason for, or an extra to that, he was evidently not physically robust. "Use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments" (1 Tim. 5:23). Young, shrinking, timid, physically weak, yet the apostle looked at the lad - and Paul was not one to act impulsively without thought and care and discernment - he looked at that lad and said, 'I want that lad with me.' Then we find that young man's name joined with the great apostle - we must not make invidious comparisons or comparisons at all, but it would be easy to say, the greatest of the apostles. His name is joined in association with the apostle in the superscription of both the letters to the Thessalonians, the letter to the Corinthians, the letter to the Philippians, the letter to the Colossians, and then two whole letters written by the apostle to himself, so that he was connected with each of the four groups of Paul's letters. Then, after Paul's release from his first imprisonment, Timothy is found with him, and they are going on a journey, and Paul leaves him at Ephesus in charge of the church at Ephesus.

If you were seeking a 'call', as they call it today, to a church, you would not have chosen Ephesus for various reasons, especially if you knew your own weaknesses as Timothy knew his. But Paul put him there in charge of the church at Ephesus because there was very serious need there, very difficult

situations, and yet Paul put Timothy there, left him there, and read these letters to him there at Ephesus. That is the church where Timothy has to set things in order, where the apostle gives him all that is in these letters.

Why? If we look to see why Paul did it, we see no natural grounds at all for doing it, in the first place for choosing him to be with him, taking him about, appointing him to that great responsibility - no natural ground at all for it. Paul must have seen something, and I think we are able to discern some of the things that accounted for it.

### **Devotion to the Lord**

There is no doubt that one thing characterised Timothy, and that was genuine devotion to the Lord. That is the first thing - real devotion to the Lord. You see, there are tremendous possibilities where there is that foundation. There may be many deficiencies and weaknesses, but real devotion to the Lord is a ground upon which the Lord can build big things and can do a great deal.

### **Energy in the Things of the Lord**

Another thing about Timothy clearly was his energy; out of his devotion his energy in the things of the Lord. I leave you to trace the life of Timothy from the day Paul took him away, and see what Paul says about him, and see where he is and what he is doing and everything that you can trace, and you will find that what I am saying has plenty of support. He was not in any way slothful. Paul was at one time far away from him and in need, and he sent for Timothy and Timothy hastened with the cloak and the parchments that Paul had left at Troas, and Timothy got under way to reach the apostle as quickly as he could. There is this mark of businesslikeness about Timothy, real energy.

### **Unselfishness**

I think another thing is perfectly clear - his absolute unselfishness.

Three things which amount to this - that Timothy, with all his natural handicaps and disadvantages, was a young man who meant to be no second-rate servant of the Lord. He was on stretch to be the fullest that it was possible for a man to be for God, and you know that it is remarkable and very true that the spiritual value of a man or a woman can more than make up for a great deal of natural lack. How often we have to say of So-and-so, "Well, there is this and there is that, they are not this and they are not that, and there is this and that about them," and those are things which would go against them, would really rule them out, put them out of the running, but their spiritual value more than makes up for that. I am sure that is how it was with Timothy, and that is what Paul saw, that from his conversion and from his early life, here was one who was utterly for God, who really meant business. There is no survival of the fittest here. A young man like this, no natural leader, with these fellows at Ephesus trying to ride over his head - Paul said, "Let no one look down on your youthfulness" (1 Tim. 4:12). With all that weakness and handicap, he is the man in the job, he is the man who is drawing out all this from the apostle what a man, with many limitations, can account for on behalf of the church for many centuries to come because there are some things about him which just entirely supersede all his natural limitations. I think that is the message here.

If you look at it the other way round, there are plenty of people full of assumption and presumption who are always pushing themselves forward, always too ready to be in the limelight, to do the

talking and so on, who are fairly sure of themselves and have no hesitation and certainly no shrinking, but you do not always find the real goods there, the real spiritual value. You meet them and they are self-sufficient. On the other hand, this is a tremendously encouraging thing because I suppose most of us here are aware that if the Lord was really looking for a good fellow, He would not look in our direction, and yet you see, "The Lord looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7), and if He really sees a meaning business, a selfless devotion to Himself, and a real energy, that will count with the Lord. It is something upon which He will build, and so it comes about.

I think it is one of the most remarkable things - if all this is true of Timothy, he might just have been set aside if Paul was looking for the robust type naturally - he would not have looked a second time in Timothy's direction, he would have ruled him out, and said, "That will let me down" - but no, it comes about that this young man of whom these things are evidently true, who does need a good deal of encouragement, support, reassuring, and yet such a young man for some reason - there are reasons for it - becomes in this way for all time linked with the great apostle Paul. Do you not think that it is remarkable that Paul should link Timothy's name with his like that? "Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to..." It says something very encouraging, that there are certain things which make a tremendous amount possible with the Lord, and when you look to see what those things are, there is not necessarily anything natural at all. It is just pure spiritual value. Anything is possible when the Lord has in us spiritual measure. It outweighs everything else.