

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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Women of faith: Eunice and Lois

Have you ever heard of the concept - "clogs to clogs in three generations"? I suppose it goes back to the days of the Industrial Revolution. Men began to discover how to do things by machines rather than by hand. They were days of great progress in many ways. Men began to find it possible to provide a better way of life for themselves and for their families.

Consider this scenario. A man, let's call him Jack, begins life in very humble circumstances. He works very hard. He proves himself to be very stable, honest and diligent. He's a great asset to the firm he works for. Jack is given a more responsible job within the firm. This gives him greater opportunity to demonstrate his usefulness. He's able to bring his own ideas into what he is doing. He realises that he could find more scope for his ability if he was working for himself. Jack branches out on his own. In time, his diligence bears fruit. His little firm prospers. He is able to take on employees of his own. His firm grows. With the passage of time, Jack becomes a very successful business man on his own account. He reaps the fruit of his own diligence and endeavours. His family share in the results of Jack's progress. They have a very comfortable lifestyle.

So far, so good! Jack's children grow up in this atmosphere of well being and success. The eldest son, let's call him Tom, was given a fairly good education. He was always well clothed. He enjoyed nice holidays. He was pleased to bask in the reflected glory of his father's success. Tom leaves school and enters the firm, with the advantage of being the boss's son. Jack keeps a keen eye on Tom's progress. He gives him every opportunity to apply whatever ability he has. Time goes by. Tom does quite well. However, he suffered the disadvantage of never having had to strive and prove himself at every stage. He did, of course, remember a little of what it had been like to go hungry as a little boy, while his father Jack had worked long hours building up the family business.

All in all, Tom did reasonably well in the family firm, but somehow he didn't have the same spark as Jack had had. I suppose he had never known what it was like to suffer real hardship. Time goes by. Tom marries a nice girl from his own circle of friends. In due course baby Gordon arrives. By now, grandfather Jack has retired from the family firm. Jack is happy that son Tom has carried on the family business, but he has one or two reservations about Tom's lifestyle. Tom had learned much from his father, but, to Jack's experienced eye, Tom spent too much time enjoying the social side of life. The firm was continuing to make a profit largely because of the momentum originally instilled by Jack.

Baby Gordon grows up and develops, enjoying the lifestyle which Jack had earned and Tom had benefited from. In due course, grandson Gordon takes over the major responsibility for running the firm. Sadly, the business began to decline after the original momentum was expended. More years passed. Without the personal commitment of grandfather Jack, which had ensured the initial success, grandson Gordon was overtaken by the effect of having taken more out of the firm than he was prepared to put into it. The firm failed. Gordon was reduced to the kind of lifestyle his grandfather, by personal diligence, application and sheer hard work, had progressed away from.

Now, then, where do the clogs come in? In those distant days, poor people could not afford to wear proper leather shoes. They wore clogs, a very primitive form of footwear, in part because they were very hard wearing and in part because they were relatively cheap. Clogs became a symbol of poverty. When Jack began life, he unashamedly wore clogs, in common with most of his generation. By the time his own firm began to show a sizeable profit, he was able to afford good leather shoes. Son Tom, who could not really remember the early days of financial hardship, enjoyed the fruits of Jack's hard work. In addition to many other advantages, he had become accustomed to being provided with good quality shoes. Sadly, when the firm eventually had to close down, grandson Gordon found that he could no longer afford the lifestyle he had assumed he deserved. He was in very reduced circumstances, including having to wear clogs as his grandfather had done in his early life. In other words, clogs to clogs in three generations, from Jack to Tom to Gordon. Gordon finished up where Jack had started, in relative poverty!

Now, what has this sad tale to do with Lois and Eunice, whom we are due to think about today? It is a very sad thing that what has happened time after time in the industrial and commercial worlds can happen, and so often does happen, in spiritual things. What previous generations have worked for and enjoyed in spiritual blessing, is taken for granted and eventually thrown away as waste by future generations. The question we shall consider now is, did this

happen in the case of the family of Lois and Eunice? As generation succeeded generation, did each continue to follow the good example provided by the previous generation? Or, did they throw away the spiritual heritage they had been brought into without cost to themselves? The answer to the latter question, of course, is a resounding, "No!" as far as this family is concerned. We read very little in scripture about them, really, but what **is** said is deeply significant. The brief mention is so small that it will only take a few minutes to read. It is found in the Apostle Paul's Second Letter to Timothy, 2 Timothy 1:1-5. Here it is: "Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, To Timothy my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also."

Paul, the writer, was speaking from his own experience. He had been given the immense privilege of receiving instruction in spiritual things from some of the best teachers in the nation of Israel. He had been brought up in the fear of God, and had not wasted his opportunity. As soon as he realised that the Lord Jesus Christ was the One in Whom the Old Testament prophetic scriptures had been and would be fulfilled, he had immediately put his personal trust in Him as his Lord and Saviour. He recognised the same features in Lois (2 Timothy 1:5), and how the faith she showed was entirely without pretence or ostentation, nothing put on for effect. She, in turn, had brought up her daughter Eunice in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (see Ephesians 6:4).

The personal faith of Lois had been rewarded in that her daughter Eunice had responded to that godly upbringing by trusting the Lord Jesus as her own personal Saviour. She was rejoicing in the same salvation as her mother Lois. She exhibited in her own life the same spiritual qualities that she'd seen lived out before her at home. What a great privilege it is to have been brought up by godly parents! But that privilege brings with it a great responsibility, too!

Now, in his day, Timothy is reminded of his own great privilege (2 Timothy 1:5). Lois had taught her daughter Eunice by example as well as by instruction. Likewise, Eunice had followed the same pattern of living a godly example before her son Timothy, 'in all things shewing [herself] a pattern of good works' (Titus 2:7).

Timothy, then, is the third generation of this godly line. What do we read about him? Actually, we can trace a fair amount about his beliefs, life and Christian service by putting together, in chronological sequence, what scripture records about him. If you have a Bible which gives the date when each book in the New Testament was written, it is quite easy to build up a little biography of Timothy. This is a great help to understanding the major stepping stones of Timothy's life and service.

Timothy himself is not the major subject of today's talk. However, any meditation on grandmother Lois and mother Eunice would be incomplete, and a disservice to them, if we did not consider also the effect and result of their godliness on grandson Timothy.

The first mention of Timothy is found in Acts 14:6-7. The events probably happened about the year AD 45. We read there that Paul and his fellow servants of God preached the Gospel at Lystra and Derbe. Then, Acts 16:1-5 tell us that about seven years later Timothy is found to be well reported of by the local Christians, and begins to be useful in Christian service. He was evidently one of the young converts referred to in Acts 14:21-28. He begins to help Paul in the work of the Lord (Acts 16:3-6). How Paul must have been glad that the godly example of Lois and Eunice had provided good spiritual soil in which he could sow the seed of the word of God! Refresh your minds by reading the Lord's Parable of the Sower recorded in Luke 8:4-15. The good seed of the word of God had indeed borne fruit in the conversion and spiritual development of the third generation of the family.

There was no sign in that family of a spiritual parallel to what happened in the business life of Jack, Tom and Gordon. No indication at all of despising their spiritual birthright with the passage of time. But let us bring the lesson nearer home, in fact to ourselves, you and me. Are we first generation Christians, or even second or third generation believers? Whether first, second, third or even seventh generation believers, have we indeed put our personal trust in the Lord Jesus? Are we ready for heaven while living on earth? Do we really believe what we read for ourselves in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, that "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures". Do we firmly believe that He is now living at the right hand of God in heaven, as we are told four times in Hebrews? (Hebrews 1:3, 8:1, 10:12; 12:2) Are these truths firm, conscious beliefs, or are they mere religious platitudes? Do we merely subscribe to them in a superficial way without letting them affect our lives day by day? Are we just going along with family customs out of habit? In other words, are we despising our spiritual heritage?

If we are first generation Christians, let us rejoice in God's great salvation. Let us follow the example of Lois. She brought up her family in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (see Ephesians 6:4). She saw wonderful fruit for her faithfulness. Her daughter Eunice had seen in her mother a wonderful example to follow. In her turn, Eunice taught

and lived before her son Timothy in such a way as to encourage him in his own generation to follow the staunch example of both Lois and Eunice. He became a committed Christian himself. How glad the missionary Paul must have been to have seen the gospel prosper in these locations and families! The truth of the Christian gospel was not only taught, but exemplified in the lives of the local Christians. This resulted in further generations of committed Christians being brought to light as he moved around, preaching and teaching the Christian gospel.

If you are indeed a first generation Christian, the very first in your family to trust the Lord, what a great privilege is yours. You can set the example for future generations to follow. Potentially, you can so live before your children and grandchildren that they will be delighted to follow your good example. They in their turn can nail their colours to the mast, prepared to be known as fully committed believers on the Lord Jesus Christ. Bear in mind, too, that many older persons, including parents and grandparents, have been won for Christ by the shining example and consistent witness of a child or grandchild enjoying their first, fresh love for Christ and witnessing fearlessly for their Lord and Saviour. If you yourself are, in fact, a second generation Christian, rejoice that you've had the wonderful privilege of living in a home where God is honoured, where Christ is acknowledged, and where you have been able to see lived out what others can only read about or hear about second hand. Are you a third generation Christian, or fourth, or fifth, happily keeping the Christian witness going? Like your forbears, you can keep going, applying in yourselves what you have seen in others. If so, you will be able to rejoice that your parents and grandparents are continually giving thanks that they can see in you that to which they themselves have long been committed.

Going back to our original illustration, how sad it must be in families when things worked hard for, enjoyed and appreciated by previous generations, are discarded by either neglect, waste or even plain disregard by those who have had the opportunity to come into them in an easy way. But, how good when those who see the benefit and blessing being not only enjoyed and appreciated by previous generations, but also loved and respected, are able to see their own progeny rejoicing in the same qualities and joys. Like themselves, keeping going, applying in themselves what they have seen in others, whether older or younger than themselves!

Let us not squander what previous generations of spiritual stalwarts of the Christian faith have fought for and suffered for. Let us in our day follow the wonderful example they have left for us to take account of, and act upon. Let us give thanks to the Lord for every good example we have been allowed to see. Let us pick up the baton of faith and commit ourselves to follow the example of others we love and respect, whether younger or older than ourselves. Let us provide a worthy example for onlookers of any generation to observe. Let them see in us that which points them to the perfect example of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

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