



2 TIMOTHY

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This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. 2 Timothy 1:15

“This you know” introduces a new thought which will be explained as he writes the verse, but it shows that Timothy is already aware of the matter which Paul will relay. The specific thing is “that all those in Asia have turned away from me.” The area of Asia is not what we think of as “Asia” in the modern sense. Rather, it is a vague description for the churches around Lydia, Mysia, Phrygia, and so on. It could also be speaking of the area referred to in Revelation 1:4. If so, it includes Ephesus where Timothy is at as Paul writes. With that in mind, he says that in this area everyone had turned away from him.

It is obvious that this was not the case in the absolute sense. Entire churches had not turned from Paul, and Timothy was in Ephesus receiving Paul's letters. And so what it is believed to mean is that Paul, in prison in Rome, was accompanied by representatives from Asia. In their time with him, they had turned away from him. Although entirely conjecture, it is believed by some scholars that they had been sent to Rome to testify of Paul's character, but due to the increased pressure on Christians, and the possibility that they too could be caught up in the persecution and imprisonment, they had turned away from him. They were unwilling to stand and defend him in order to save their own skin. This certainly seems likely, and it gives a good reason why Timothy would already be aware of it.

Paul then names two of these offenders, Phygellus and Hermogenes. This is the only time these two are mentioned in Scripture, and so nothing more is known about them. However, Phygellus' name comes from the word *pheugó*, meaning to flee, or shun. What an appropriate name for the situation. Hermogenes comes from two words. The first is *Hermes*, the

messenger of the Greek gods. The second is a word meaning “come into being.” In essence, “born of Hermes.” Did Paul choose to name him here to indicate that he was more of a herald to Hermes than he was of one for Christ? He chose two names out of all of the people who had deserted him, maybe in order to tie their names into their actions. Either way, it is probable that Timothy personally knew them because Paul has mentioned them by name.

Life application: Your life is being recorded, and you will be remembered for something. In this verse, the only remembrance of these two people is that they were unwilling to stay with Paul but instead turned away from him. This is the entire record of their lives. If you are to be remembered, and you will be, what is it that people will say about you?

The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; 2 Timothy 1:16

In the preceding verse, Paul spoke of those who had turned away from him – Phygellus and Hermogenes. Now he contrasts their faithlessness to the faithfulness of Onesiphorus. He is mentioned only here, and in 2 Timothy 4:19. In both instances, Paul writes of “the household of Onesiphorus.” For this reason, some scholars feel Paul is conveying that he is now dead, and he is asking for mercy upon his household. Others disagree and say that he was still living (citing verse 18 as a proof) and that he was simply absent from his home at this time.

The reason for supporting the second view is because Paul’s words of verse 18 almost sound like a prayer for him. If this is so, then it would supposedly be evidence that one can pray for the dead. However, Paul’s words in that verse are no different than anyone else who simply refers to the dead in a manner similar to this. It is not necessarily a prayer, but an acknowledgment that their lives were well lived, and we are entrusting their judgment to the Lord’s wise discernment.

Either way, living or dead, Paul desires that “The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus.” He trusts that the benefit of mercy hoped for because of Onesiphorus’ life and actions be granted upon his whole household. And the specific reasons for this are given by Paul:

- 1) For he often refreshed me. Onesiphorus was kind to Paul, ministering to him while others had abandoned him. He lifted Paul up when things were grim and difficult. It is reflective of the words of Jesus in Matthew 25:26 which say, “I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.”
- 2) [He] was not ashamed of my chain. Paul was a prisoner for the sake of the gospel, but this meant that he was an enemy of the empire. By tending to him as a prisoner in this

capacity, Onesiphorus was aligning himself with Paul, and he was thus risking himself in the process. And yet, he was more concerned about Christian charity for Paul than he was for his own safety. While others walked away, Onesiphorus stuck fast to his duty to the chained apostle.

Life application: How faithful are you willing to be to those who have been faithful to the Lord? There may be a time when Christian friends are sick at home, laid up in the hospital, or facing some sort of trial or difficulty. Are you ready to refresh them in their time of distress? Or will a simple post on Facebook, hoping for them to get better, be the extent of your effort? People do remember such things. When your time of trouble comes, they will probably respond in kind to how you extend yourself for them.

...but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found me.

2 Timothy 1:17

Still speaking of Onesiphorus of the previous verse, Paul continues to relay the remarkable nature of the faithful brother. He had come to Rome, an exceptionally large city, and he had searched out Paul. Unlike his first captivity, where he was kept in a house with a guard (see Acts 28:16), he was probably now confined in a prison. In order to find him, he would have had to go to each prison and ask if he was there. Paul also may have been kept in some other place related to state prisoners, rather than a common prison. No matter, there had to be a lot of asking around. As Paul says, "he sought me out very zealously."

Paul knew the amount of trouble that Onesiphorus must have gone through in order to find him, and his heart must have been overjoyed when he came in and gave a brotherly Christian greeting. Imagine the questions! Imagine the joy! And for Onesiphorus, imagine the relief! The quality of Onesiphorus' faithfulness is set in stark contrast to those who knew Paul, knew where he was, and yet abandoned him. Take normal life, add in a bit of trial or trouble, and what is the standard result? It is normally a parting of the ways and a, "Best wishes to you." Onesiphorus was not such a person.

Life application: How caring are you about those who are down and out? Are you there for hospital visits? Are you there for the good times and the bad? How strong your ties are depends on how willing you are to expend yourself for them. And that takes advanced planning and conviction that you will stand fast and be true. God could have left us all captives, and it would not have changed His lot one little bit. But He didn't just care and speak comforting words. Rather, He came to our prison and took our place in our deserved execution. Think about that as your fellow Christian sits alone and miserable.

The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day—and you know very well how many ways he ministered to *me* at Ephesus. 2 Timothy 1:18

As noted in verse 16, the words of Paul are taken by some that Onesiphorus was dead at this point, and so Paul is actually making a prayer for the dead. This is the Roman Catholic opinion which is used to justify praying for the dead and the like. Others disagree and state that this verse shows that he is alive and simply not with his household at the time. Thus, the doctrine of praying for the dead cannot be found here.

Regardless of which is true, using this one verse to build an entire doctrine of praying for the dead is not wise. The words could merely be Paul's way of saying something in writing that expresses his great appreciation for the efforts of Onesiphorus. One might write to another about Paulinus Maximus and say, "The Lord grant him mercy that he may stumble upon a treasure chest of gold for all he has done to help me." The meaning would carry the same intent of Paul's words now. Understanding this, Paul begins the verse by saying, "The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day."

The more unusual aspect of this isn't whether he is speaking about someone who is alive or who is dead. Rather, it is the mentioning of "the Lord" twice in one verse. What is probably the case for doing this is the highlighting of the action to be taken. The psalms will do this by repeating the word Lord in one verse after another. It then is a way of showing the all-encompassing hand of the Lord, from beginning to end, in what is being relayed.

The words "in that Day," are speaking of when the saints stand before the Bema seat of Christ to receive judgment for things done in the body (see 1 Corinthians 3:8-15 & 2 Corinthians 5:9, 10). Some scholars speak of "that Day" as the great white throne judgment found in Revelation. That is not the case. Believers in Christ will not be judged for salvation or condemnation which is found in that scene. Instead, they will be judged for rewards and losses as is noted in the letters to the Corinthians.

After this, Paul takes the time to remind Timothy of the marvelous care that Onesiphorus had provided to him, even before coming to Rome. He says, "and you know very well how many ways he ministered to me at Ephesus." Onesiphorus was a faithful soul all along. He was there to minister to Paul at Ephesus, and he followed through with that same care in Rome. As a note, some scholars see this as care for Paul after Onesiphorus had left Rome, meaning he tended to things requested to be done upon his return. This is explained by Paul having written first about Rome and then about Ephesus. Either way, Onesiphorus was a faithful guy in Paul's times of need.

Life application: How great is the burden you are willing to bear for others? Are you actually willing to go out of your way to help someone when it may inconvenience you a bit? We get so caught up in time schedules, anticipated projects, lunch engagements, and the like, that we often forget that people's needs may be a bit more important than getting home to watch a football game. Keep your priorities straight and use Onesiphorus as an example of how you can be considered a faithful friend as well.