

2 Timothy

I. Introduction

A. **2 Timothy 1:15-18** . . . You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus (*fiH JEL uhs*) and Hermogenes (*huhr MAHJ ih neez*). [16] The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus (*ahn ih SIF oh ruhs*), for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains; [17] but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me – [18] the Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day – and you know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus.

B. Prayer

II. Fear/shame driven self-preservation in contrast to standing with God and our fellow believers.

A. **[15a] You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me.**

1. This is an example of Christians, giving in to fear or shame, and as a result, choosing self-preservation over standing with God and their fellow believers who are being persecuted for righteousness sake.
2. Paul gave a fuller account of this in **2 Timothy 4:16-18**, “At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. (*The probable reason these Christians deserted Paul was what it might cost them in relation to their standing in the community, their economic well-being, their freedom, or even their life. In His parable about the four soils, Jesus said some believers would respond this way. Mark 4:16-17, “In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; [17] [yet] they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away.”*) [4:17] But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth. [18] The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.” So, though many Christians deserted Paul in his time of need, God didn't!

3. Therefore, before returning to **2 Timothy 1:15**, we will look at what God did for Paul – according to Paul’s own words as found in **2 Timothy 4:17-18** – and apply it to ourselves.
4. [17a] **The Lord stood with me and strengthened me** –
 - a. Paul experienced what God promised the Israelites He would do for them before they entered the Promised Land and faced the walled cities, well-equipped armies, and giants.
 - b. We read this promise in **Deuteronomy 31:6**, “Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid (*so as to turn away*) or tremble at them (*that is, be excessively anxious so as to shake with fear*), for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you.”
 - c. This doesn’t change the harshness of our circumstances. But when we know we are safe in God’s hands, and when we know that God is with us and in us, it changes how we perceive our circumstances, how we endure them, and how motivated we are to continue on in spite of them.
 - d. One last thing on being strengthened by the Lord in these kinds of situations. God strengthens us so that we can accomplish a specific goal that He has for us. With Israel, the goal was to clear the Promised Land. In this context, the goal is to be God’s light in the world around us.
5. [17b] **I was rescued out of the lion’s mouth** –
 - a. For Paul, being rescued out of the lion’s mouth did not mean being rescued from the harsh realities of persecution, such as being beaten, imprisoned, or made to suffer in other ways. It meant that God brought him through all those things in a way that allowed him to continue being God’s light for another day.
 - b. For example, in **2 Timothy 3:11-12**, Paul talks about enduring severe persecutions at Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, yet God rescued him out of them all – and as a result, he was able to continue the work God gave him to do.
 - c. The same holds true for us. We may have to endure persecution in one form or another, but until God allows our persecutors to put us to death, He will rescue us in a way that will allow us to continue being His light in our world.
 - d. Yet as with Paul and so many other Christians, the day may come when God allows our persecutors to kill us, at which time He will bring us safely home to glory.

6. [18a] **The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom –**
 - a. Once again, being rescued does not mean God saves us from having to experience the evil deeds of others, but that their evil deeds cannot prevent God from bringing us safely to His heavenly kingdom.
 - b. As Jesus said in **Matthew 10:28-32-33**, “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. [32] Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. [33] But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.”
 - c. Who or what do you fear in relation to being God’s light in the world? True, the devil and earthly powers can harm you and make you suffer in a variety of ways, but only God has the power to determine your eternal destiny.
7. The reality is, fear, shame, and self-preservation are powerful forces. Of the three, a commitment to self-preservation exists in everyone, Christian and non-Christian alike. And this force either works for our good or it works to our detriment. Yet either way, we are the ones who decide the direction self-preservation will take us.
 - a. The most prominent factors in making this decision, even when made in a short amount of time, are our beliefs and values.
 - b. Self-preservation becomes destructive
 - (1) When we value what is earthly and temporary over what is godly and eternal;
 - (2) And when we value what is self-serving over love and the good of others;
 - (3) And when we value ways and means of feeling safe and secure that negatively effects those who are near and dear, and damages our relationship with them.
8. However, (1) when we believe that God is our greatest good, (2) when we value eternal life with God as our greatest treasure, and (3) when we value standing with and for God as one of the best ways to love those around us, then self-preservation – even in the face of persecution – works to our good by freeing us to be God’s light in the world, because then we are preserving what is eternal, rather than temporal.

9. Now you may be thinking this is nice information, but it isn't relevant to situation here in the US.
 - a. It is true, we live in a country with impressive religious freedom. And yet, when we look carefully, we can see that our religious freedoms are under assault and being threatened more than ever before. Therefore, we ought not rely on what has been, because it may not continue to be.
 - b. Jesus said something over two thousand years ago that we are wise to take into consideration today. He said that in our sin-filled world, His gospel and His ways will not bring peace on the earth, but rather open opposition and conflict. He went on to say that His gospel and His ways will set a son against his father, and a daughter against her mother – with the result being that a Christian's enemies will likely include the members of his or her family (**Matthew 10:34-36**).
 - c. On another occasion, Jesus told His disciples, "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" (**John 15:18, 20**). This is as true now as it was when Jesus said it.
 - d. And Paul tells us that if we make it our aim to live godly in Christ Jesus, we will experience persecution (**2 Timothy 3:12**).
 - e. The point is, we need to be prepared for more serious forms of persecution. They may not come in our life-time, but if we do not prepare, if we do not count the cost now to see if we are willing to pay the price demanded, then when the time comes, it is likely we will choose those forms of self-preservation that are temporary and self-destructive, rather than choosing to preserve what is truly valuable – such as that which pleases God, loves those around us, and lasts forever.
 - f. Think about it this way: based on your current beliefs and values, it is likely you would endure the suffering of surgery and chemo therapy to fight off the invasion of cancer in your body.
 - g. If you would do that, then the question is, have you developed the beliefs and values necessary to endure the suffering of persecution in order to fight back against further incursions of sin into our world?
 - h. If so, that is good and commendable. If not, then I urge you to consider moving in that direction so that you are not caught unprepared if and when serious persecution comes for standing with and for God.

- B. [15b] Among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. This is the only place these two men are mentioned in the Bible. We don't know exactly why Paul singled them out other than they withdrew from Paul after he was imprisoned for preaching the gospel – so we will leave it at that.
- C. [16] The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains; [17] but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me –
1. Onesiphorus is an example of a Christian who did not allow earthly fear or socially imposed shame to get in the way of standing with God or supporting another believer – in spite of the fact that doing so meant risking being identified as a Christian.
 2. In response, Paul showed his gratitude for Onesiphorus' commitment to God, the gospel, and Paul's well-being by expressing a desire for the Lord to grant mercy to Onesiphorus' whole household.
 3. It is probable that Paul based his desire for God to bless Onesiphorus' family on the OT scriptures that speak about God not only blessing the righteous person, but also his family. For example:
 - a. **Deuteronomy 30:15-20**, “See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity; [16] in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the LORD your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it. [17] But if your heart turns away and you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them, [18] I declare to you today that you shall surely perish. You will not prolong your days in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess it. [19] I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, [20] by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.”
 - b. **Psalms 103:17-18**, “From everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him, and His righteousness with their

children's children– (18) with those who keep His covenant and remember to obey His precepts.

- c. Jesus said it this way in **Matthew 10:40-41**, “He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. [41] He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.”
 4. Do you see what this means for you, your children, your grandchildren, and anyone else you take into your home and treat as a family member?
 5. True, living a godly life includes taking risks in order to stand with and for God. And true, these risks may cost you in an earthly, temporary way. But serving God in this way enriches you and your family in ways money cannot buy – because it brings God’s blessings on your whole household.
- D. Paul did not stop with wanting earthly blessings for Onesiphorus and his family, he wanted God to show Onesiphorus mercy on judgement day in accordance with the kindness and mercy he showed Paul.
 1. [18] the Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day – and you know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus.
 2. Do you take the time to ask God to bless those who do good to you?

III. Conclusion

- A. Because we all believe in self-preservation, the question I want to leave you with is, “What part of self are you determined to preserve – your temporal, earthly self or that part of you that is eternal and heavenly?”
- B. And though we have not as yet experienced any serious persecution for being Christians, I urge you to prepare now for the possibility of persecution in the future.
- C. **1 Peter 4:13,15-16**, “To the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. [14] If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. [16] And if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in [the name of God].”