

# Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday , July 26, 2023 – First Baptist Church Buda  
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



The Ministry of Refreshment  
*2 Timothy 1:13-18*

*“<sup>13</sup> Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. <sup>14</sup> That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. <sup>15</sup> This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. <sup>16</sup> The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; <sup>17</sup> but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found me. <sup>18</sup> 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 1:13-18 (NKJV)*

## TIMELINE OF EVENTS

*Jesus is  
crucified, rises  
from the dead  
and returns  
to heaven*  
AD 33

*Paul is put  
under house  
arrest in Rome*  
AD 62

*Paul arrested  
again, writes  
2 Timothy  
from prison*  
AD 63-64

*AD 52-57  
Paul takes his  
third mission  
trip and spends  
three years in  
Ephesus*

*AD 62-63  
Paul released  
from arrest,  
writes  
1 Timothy*

*AD 64-67  
Paul is killed  
for his faith  
in Jesus*



### **Some Key Date in Paul's Challenging Life:**

- [c. A.D. 52-57]- Paul takes his third mission trip and spends three years in Ephesus
- [c. A.D. 58]—Paul was apparently arrested in Jerusalem
- [c. A.D. 61]—This is the approximate time that Paul arrived in Rome. He had spent these three years in prison, going from one trial to another before different Roman rulers
- [c. A.D. 61–62]—Paul underwent his first Roman imprisonment. We do not have this recorded in the Book of Acts, which breaks off at the very beginning of Paul's first Roman imprisonment
- [c. A.D. 62–63]—Paul was released from prison, and during this period he covered a great deal of territory. It was during this time that he wrote 1 Timothy and Titus from Macedonia
- [c. A.D. 63-64]—Paul was arrested again. Before his death he wrote 2 Timothy
- [c. A.D. 64-67]—Paul was beheaded in Rome.

For some 2 Timothy may nothing more than a continuation where 1 Timothy leaves off. But as you can see, it is so much more. The book is the Apostle Paul's "Swan Song," his warning shot, his encouragement in the face of great opposition and obstacle. It is so practical and relevant for 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians and the church... a needed word for what we face in our day.

With that let's give the very basic background information for 2 Timothy... we'll lay the background through a few question we ask of the book...

### **Some Background for 2 Timothy**

(1) **2 Timothy is a letter written by the Apostle Paul** - By the time Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy, the young pastor had been ministering to the church at Ephesus for four years, and it had been almost that long since he had received his first letter from Paul. Timothy had been a faithful servant to Paul since he had left home with the apostle more than a decade earlier. Since then, Timothy had ministered alongside Paul for the duration of both the second and third missionary journeys, in places such as Troas, Philippi, and Corinth. Timothy was not unfamiliar to the Ephesians when he settled in Ephesus to minister, having served there alongside Paul for a period of close to three years on Paul's third missionary journey. Paul wrote again to this young leader in the church at Ephesus to provide him encouragement and fortitude in the face of difficulties and trials.

(2) **Paul wrote 2 Timothy from a prison in Rome** - Paul wrote 2 Timothy from a dark and damp Roman prison cell, just before his death in AD 67. The Roman emperor Nero had been slowly descending into madness since his ascent to the throne in AD 54, a process exacerbated by the great fire of Rome in AD 64 that burned half the city. With the residents of Rome in an uproar, Christians became a convenient target for Nero, who used believers as scapegoats for his city's own lack of preparedness. Paul was one of

those caught up in this persecution and was beheaded by Roman officials soon after writing this letter.

- (3) **2 Timothy was the last letter Paul wrote (in our New Testament)** - The second letter to Timothy offers a picture of Paul at the end of his ministry, just before his death. Certain personal details in the letter reveal a man settling his accounts and preparing for the inevitable. At the close of the letter, Paul mentioned a significant number of people—some who had wronged him and others who had served faithfully alongside him (2 Timothy 4:9–21). It is as if Paul were giving Timothy a “state of the church” address, updating Timothy on the current state of their acquaintances and friends so that the young pastor could carry on after Paul’s departure.
- (4) **The theme of 2 Timothy is to stay faithful to the good fight of faith** - Paul understood that the ministry would only become more difficult for Timothy with the apostle’s impending death. (Indeed, at some point after this letter from Paul, Timothy was imprisoned for his faith [Hebrews 13:23]). Paul knew that Timothy’s task of keeping the church within the bounds of sound doctrine while encouraging believers to live their lives well for the sake of Christ would be an often thankless and difficult task. Though hardship would come, Paul wanted Timothy to continue in those things he had learned, drawing on the rich heritage of faith that had been passed down to the young pastor, not just from Paul but also from his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5–6; 3:14–15). The most striking feature of Paul’s encouragement comes when the aging apostle used a phrase that showed up prominently in his letter to Timothy four years prior. In that earlier letter, Paul exhorted Timothy to “fight the good fight” (1 Timothy 1:18; 6:12). But in this letter, Paul turned that phrase on himself, writing that he had “fought the good fight . . . finished the course . . . [and] kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7). What a great encouragement it must have been to the young pastor of the church at Ephesus to know that his mentor boldly modeled his perseverance in the faith, even to the point of death.

### **Some Key Characteristics of 2 Timothy:**

- (1) **2 Timothy is Paul’s last will and testimony** – In our study we are referring to it as Paul’s “Swan Song.” The deathbed statement of any individual has an importance which is not attached to other remarks. This is what lends significance to 2 Timothy. It is the final communication of Paul. It has a note of sadness which is not detected in his other epistles. Nevertheless, there is the overtone of triumph. . . . *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith,”* written by Paul as his own epitaph (2 Tim. 4:7). Also, because this was his last letter, Paul was very personal. In these four short chapters, there are approximately twenty–five references to individuals.
- (2) **2 Timothy is Paul’s warning of coming times of apostasy** - In this little book of 2 Timothy an ominous dark cloud is seen on the horizon. It is the coming apostasy. Today apostasy has broken like a storm, like a Texas tornado, on the world and in the church. What do we mean by apostasy? Webster defines apostasy as “total desertion of the principles of faith.” So apostasy is not due to ignorance; it is a heresy. Apostasy is

deliberate error. It is intentional departure from the faith. An apostate is one who knows the truths of the gospel and the doctrines of the faith, but has repudiated them.

**(3) 2 Timothy speaks of the ultimate outcome of gospel preaching** - The final fruition will not be the total conversion of mankind, nor will it usher in the Millennium. On the contrary, some will believe and for some there will come about a great turning away, not unlike what we are seeing today... even a watering down, compromise, and total perversion of the gospel. Don't think that what we see going on today has caught God off guard. God wrote about it and warned us about in 2 Timothy.

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Stored in a safe place at the Library of Congress is a small blue box. The label reads: "Contents of the President's pockets on the night of April 14, 1865." As you probably know, that was the fateful night on which President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated.

The box contains five things: (1) A handkerchief embroidered "A. Lincoln"; (2) A country boy's pen knife; (3) A spectacles case repaired with string; (4) A purse containing a \$5 bill—in Confederate money! (5) Some old and worn newspaper clippings.

The clippings are concerned with the great deeds of Abraham Lincoln. One of them reports a speech by John Bright, a British statesman, saying that Abraham Lincoln is one of the greatest men of all time.

That is not news for us who live over a century later. We all know that Lincoln was a great man. But in 1865, the jury was still out. The nation was divided and Lincoln had fierce critics on both sides as he made decisions that he hoped would restore the Union. Remember, Lincoln hadn't read the history books on himself!

There is something poignantly pathetic about picturing this lonely figure in the Oval Office reaching into his pocket and spreading out these newspaper clippings as he re-read the encouraging words of a man who believed that Lincoln was a great man. It gave him the courage and strength to go on. People, especially leaders, need encouragement! (From an article by Charles Swindoll in the newsletter of the First Evangelical Free Church, Fullerton.)

Shift the scene from the Oval Office of Abraham Lincoln to a dungeon in Rome. It is dark and cold. A dim ray of light filters in through the opening at the top. Inside sits an aged, weathered little Jewish man, chained to a guard. It is Paul of Tarsus awaiting execution. Keep in mind that Paul didn't know that his life and teachings would radically change the course of world history. All he knew was that the end was near and that many of those whom he had loved and taught were abandoning him like sailors jumping off a sinking ship.

***Why do you think they might have been abandoning him (Paul) as this point in his life?***

### **3 Reasons Paul's One Time Supporters Might Have Been Abandoning Him:**

- (1) **Fear of retribution** – Perhaps there was a great fear of being identified with Paul due to his persecution. The fear of retribution of being associated with Paul may have led many of his one time supporter to abandon Him. They feared that they might be next if there were too closely associated with Paul.
- (2) **Doubt of credibility** – Perhaps some of Paul's one time supporters were beginning to question and doubt what they had once believed about Paul. Their thoughts might have gone some thing like this; "If Paul was really who He claimed to be and he was truly on God's team then God wouldn't be allowing these bad things to happen to Him," or "Paul is to blame for what is happening to him. If he just wasn't so brash, so hard, so attacking, so dogmatic. If we was just softer, less pushy, more diplomatic, and tried harder to get along with the religions leaders he wouldn't be going through this. Remember that many false teachers had entered Asia and questioned Paul's authority and motives.
- (3) **Anger of involvement** – Many of his supporter were beginning to feel the pressures being applied to Christians in Paul's day due to the spread of Christianity. Persecution and personal retribution against Christians not only by the Jews, but also by the Roman Government may have cause them to question Paul, "What has he gotten us into?" "We should never had trusted and followed Paul!" Many may have possibly felt anger and resentment toward Paul for ruining their lives by getting them involved in a movement that cost them everything.

#### ***What effects might this have had on Timothy in Paul's mind?***

Think of Paul, feeling abandoned by so many, then suddenly, there was a noise above as the guard opened the hatch to his cell. The old man squinted into the light, but couldn't see who was climbing down the ladder to visit him. But he recognized the friendly voice, "Paul, Paul, I've found you at last!"

"Onesiphorus! Is that you, my good friend?" The two men embraced warmly in spite of the stench of the prisoner and his squalid cell. Then Onesiphorus, whose name means "bringing help or profit," opened his bag and gave Paul fresh bread, fruit, cheese, and wine. He stayed a long time and he came back often, bringing good news of the progress of the gospel across the Roman Empire. Each time he came, Paul was refreshed in body and spirit.

Onesiphorus could have thought, "Paul is strong. After all, he's the great apostle, who has suffered often. This isn't his first time in prison. Who am I to try to minister to someone like him?"

But the reality is that everyone needs the ministry of refreshment at times. Even the Lord Jesus, in His hour of agony in Gethsemane, took His three closest disciples with Him and asked them to watch and pray with Him there. If Christ needed it and if Paul needed it, then

we all need it. That means that we all need to look for those in need of refreshment and minister to them.

*God has called us all to the ministry of refreshment.*

### Application Questions

1. *Is it right to focus on our own needs before we focus on others' needs? Where is the biblical balance?*
2. *Where is the biblical balance between time together as a family versus time ministering away from the family?*
3. *Since we're all different, how can we know whether a hurting person wants our presence or wants to be alone?*
4. *Is it wrong to serve in order to be rewarded at the judgment? Is this selfish?*

As you know, Timothy was not naturally courageous, able to stand against the flow of public opinion when he needed to do so. And so three times in 2 Timothy 1, Paul exhorts Timothy not to be ashamed: He does it directly (1:8); he points to his own example (1:12); and, he calls attention to Onesiphorus, who “was not ashamed of my chains” (1:16). Apart from Paul’s greeting to the household of Onesiphorus (4:19), this is the only reference to this man in the Bible. His fleeting appearance on the stage teaches us three characteristics of a refresher, as seen in Onesiphorus:

### 3 Characteristics of a Christian Who God Uses to Refresh and Restore Others:

- (1) A refresher seeks out a person in need
- (2) A refresher bucks crowd opinion to serve selflessly
- (3) A refresher will be rewarded by the Lord

#### **A REFRESHER SEEKS OUT A PERSON IN NEED**

We don’t know whether Onesiphorus was in Rome on other business and looked up Paul while there or whether he went there solely on a mission to find Paul. Even if he had other business to take care of while there, I think his main reason for going to Rome was to visit Paul. He had to risk his life to do it. The Jews no doubt had gotten Paul arrested as a man who was stirring up sedition. He was politically dangerous. Visiting Paul in prison would be like visiting a terrorist suspect at Guantanamo Bay. You would make yourself a target for arrest by doing so.

Also, as one author put it, “He went to Rome at a time when every Christian was trying to get out of it” (Albert MacKinnon, cited by Guy King, *To My Son* [Christian Literature Crusade, 1976], p. 34). Nero was covering Christians with pitch and burning them to light his garden parties. Others were being thrown to the lions in the Colosseum to satisfy the public’s perverted lust for blood. Onesiphorus deliberately went into this dangerous situation

and tracked down Paul because he had heard that his beloved friend and spiritual leader was in great need.

Before we look at the positive example of Onesiphorus, Scripture sets before us the negative example of verse 15... notice it there, “<sup>15</sup> *This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.*” Notice what verse 15 points out about a “discourager”

### **Refreshers vs. Discouragers:**

**1. A discourager turns away or ignores one in need** - Paul reminds Timothy, who was in Ephesus, the capital of the province of Asia, of what he already knew, that “*all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes*” (1:15). We do not know who these men were.

- They may have been ringleaders of the defection or men whom Paul would have thought the least likely to turn against him.
- Some think that they also turned away from the faith, but others say that they probably were just self-promoting Christians, trying to build a following for themselves by attacking Paul.
- Whoever they were, they acted with selfishness, cowardice, and unfaithfulness toward Paul at precisely the time he needed their support, when he was arrested.

It is difficult to interpret Paul’s statement that *all* who were in Asia turned away from him.

- Remember that just ten years before, Paul had a tearful, affectionate farewell with the Ephesian elders.
- Although at that time Paul predicted that from among them, some would “*arise, speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them*” (Acts 20:30), it is hard to believe that they *all* defected within so short a time.
- So how should we understand Paul’s words? It may be the hyperbole of a depressed man, so that Paul means, “many in Asia” had not been willing to risk standing with him when he was arrested.
- Or, it may refer to “all those who were in a position to help” in the aftermath of his arrest.
- The Christians who had influence with the Roman authorities, who could have gone to them and argued for Paul’s release, had instead drawn back out of embarrassment or fear.
- They didn’t want to risk being implicated with Paul on the charge of spreading sedition.
- Maybe it would hurt their business.
- So they played it safe to save themselves.

- Probably some of these defectors owed their salvation to Paul, humanly speaking.
- He had spent time nurturing them and teaching them how to live as Christians.
- He had prayed for them.

I can say from personal experience that it is discouraging when you have ministered to people, only to have ringleaders stir up a controversy in the church. Rumors and false accusations are spread behind your back. People that you have personally cared for leave the church without even coming to talk to you. But I take comfort that the same thing happened to Paul. So why should I expect better treatment? When that happens, you need a man like Onesiphorus.

**READ: Psalm 35** *<sup>1</sup>Plead my cause, O LORD, with those who strive with me; fight against those who fight against me. <sup>2</sup>Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for my help. <sup>3</sup>Also draw out the spear, and stop those who pursue me. Say to my soul, "I am your salvation." <sup>4</sup>Let those be put to shame and brought to dishonor who seek after my life; let those be turned back and brought to confusion who plot my hurt. <sup>5</sup>Let them be like chaff before the wind, and let the angel of the LORD chase them. <sup>6</sup>Let their way be dark and slippery, and let the angel of the LORD pursue them. <sup>7</sup>For without cause they have hidden their net for me in a pit, which they have dug without cause for my life. <sup>8</sup>Let destruction come upon him unexpectedly, and let his net that he has hidden catch himself; into that very destruction let him fall. <sup>9</sup>And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD; it shall rejoice in His salvation. <sup>10</sup>All my bones shall say, "LORD, who is like You, delivering the poor from him who is too strong for him, yes, the poor and the needy from him who plunders him?" <sup>11</sup>Fierce witnesses rise up; they ask me things that I do not know. <sup>12</sup>They reward me evil for good, to the sorrow of my soul. <sup>13</sup>But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting; and my prayer would return to my own heart. <sup>14</sup>I paced about as though he were my friend or brother; I bowed down heavily, as one who mourns for his mother. <sup>15</sup>But in my adversity they rejoiced And gathered together; Attackers gathered against me, and I did not know it; they tore at me and did not cease; <sup>16</sup>With ungodly mockers at feasts They gnashed at me with their teeth. <sup>17</sup>Lord, how long will You look on? Rescue me from their destructions, my precious life from the lions. <sup>18</sup>I will give You thanks in the great assembly; I will praise You among many people. <sup>19</sup>Let them not rejoice over me who are wrongfully my enemies; nor let them wink with the eye who hate me without a cause. <sup>20</sup>For they do not speak peace, but they devise deceitful matters against the quiet ones in the land. <sup>21</sup>They also opened their mouth wide against me, and said, "Aha, aha! Our eyes have seen it." <sup>22</sup>This You have seen, O LORD; Do not keep silence. O Lord, do not be far from me. <sup>23</sup>Stir up Yourself, and awake to my vindication, to my cause, my God and my Lord. <sup>24</sup>Vindicate me, O LORD my God, according to Your righteousness; and let them not rejoice over me. <sup>25</sup>Let them not say in their hearts, "Ah, so we would have it!" Let them not say, "We have swallowed him up." <sup>26</sup>Let them be ashamed and brought to mutual confusion who rejoice at my hurt; let them be clothed with shame and dishonor who exalt themselves against me. <sup>27</sup>Let them shout for joy and be glad, who favor my righteous cause; and let them say continually, "Let the LORD be magnified, who has pleasure in the prosperity of His*



*servant.”<sup>28</sup> And my tongue shall speak of Your righteousness and of Your praise all the day long.” – Psalm 35 (NKJV)*

- **What does the psalmist (David) say about his treatment of them? (*he grieved with them, fasted for them, prayed with him, he worried about them, mourned with them... he ministered to them and cared for them*)**
  - **Why is this kind of treatment and attack so hard to take, especially painful?**
  - **What does the psalmist (David) say about their treatment of him? (*they rejoiced at his adversity, they “tore at him”... perhaps verbal attacks and malignments, they returned him evil for his good and brought sorrow upon him* )**
  - **What is the psalmist response here?**
  - **Who do he turn to for find help?**
  - **What should be our response to this kind of treatment?**
  - **How may we help someone (another Christian) experiencing this kind of treatment?**
2. **A refresher seeks out the person in need and ministers to him - Onesiphorus didn't tell Paul, “If you ever need anything, let me know.” Rather than thinking about himself and how inconvenient it would be to travel to Rome and find Paul, Onesiphorus demonstrated selfless love, courage, and faithfulness by seeking out Paul.**

#### **4 Ways a Refresher Ministers to Others:**

- (1) **A refresher ministers by his presence** - He just showed up! We don't know a single word that he said, but his presence spoke volumes. Just going to be with someone in his or her time of need says, “I care about you and I'm here to stand with you.” Sometimes when someone has suffered the loss of a loved one or some other severe crisis, we hesitate to visit because we don't know what to say. The best thing is probably to say very little. Job's comforters sat silently with him for seven days, but they got into trouble when they opened their mouths and tried to explain the reason for his trials. Just ask the hurting person questions and let him talk. Or, sit with him in silence. A magazine once asked the readers for their definitions of a friend. The one that won said, “A friend—the one who comes in when the whole world has gone out.”
- (2) **A refresher ministers by his acceptance** - Paul writes that Onesiphorus **“was not ashamed of my chains.”** He didn't cast disparaging looks at Paul's chains as they clanked in that dungeon. Nor did he ignore them as if they weren't there. I'm sure that he didn't tell Paul that if he just had enough faith, God would deliver him. He didn't share the story of how God had delivered Peter from prison, thus implying, “What's wrong with you, Paul?” He didn't offer advice: “Paul, next time you need to be a little more tactful in your preaching.” He just accepted Paul, stench and wretched conditions and all. This doesn't mean that we should allow someone to wallow in self-pity or sinful thoughts endlessly without correction. There is a time when we must

help a friend think biblically and move on with life. But we all need the refreshment of a friend who accepts our chains without condemnation.

- (3) **A refresher ministers by his cheerfulness** - The text does not specifically say that Onesiphorus was cheerful. But based on the fact that Paul was refreshed (the Greek word has the idea of a breath of fresh air), I conclude that Onesiphorus didn't come under a giant gloom cloud complaining, "Ooh, Paul, it's bad out there. Nero is killing all the Christians. Many are defecting from the faith. I, only I, am left and they are seeking my life, too." Maybe it was Onesiphorus who suggested, "Paul, you may be in chains, but the word of God is not" (2:9). I'm not saying that Onesiphorus was Mr. Pollyanna Positive, who ignored reality. The two men no doubt talked about those who were defecting (1:15). But I surmise that the main thrust of their conversation was on God's faithfulness and how the gospel was changing lives. When Onesiphorus left, Paul was filled with renewed hope and encouragement in the Lord. When you minister to someone in need, you don't need to avoid reality and pretend that everything is rosy when it's not. But your overall demeanor should reflect the joy and hope that we have in Christ. Thus a refresher seeks out a person in need and ministers by his presence, his acceptance, and his cheerfulness. Also,
- (4) **A refresher ministers by his persistent focus on others** - Paul says, "he *often* refreshed me." He reminds Timothy (1:18), "*you know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus.*" This was Onesiphorus' lifestyle, to look for ways to refresh others. There is only one explanation for his track record: he was focused on the Lord and others, not on himself. Many go around thinking, "I need to have my needs met." They often leave church disappointed that others did not meet their needs. Their focus was on themselves. On the other hand, there are those that are always thinking, "Lord, use me to minister to others." The interesting thing is that these servants usually are fulfilled and satisfied with the joy of the Lord. When the tired disciples first served the loaves and fishes to the hungry multitude, they discovered that they each got a full basket of leftovers. So the first mark of a refresher is that he seeks out those in need and ministers by his presence, his acceptance, his cheerfulness, and his persistent focus on others.

### **A REFRESHER BUCKS CROWD OPINION TO SERVE SELFLESSLY**

Crowd opinion is always selfish: "Protect yourself! Look out for number one! I wouldn't get involved like that if I were you. You'll only get hurt!" But Onesiphorus wasn't swayed by such notions. This brief sketch reveals three things about selfless service:

#### **3 Pictures of Selfless Service:**

- (1) **Selfless service is based on conviction** - To do what Onesiphorus did, you must operate on the conviction that you are called to serve rather than to be served. Sometimes this means going against crowd opinion to stand alone with those who aren't popular. Some of the believers in Ephesus had turned against Paul or at least were ignoring him in his time of need. But sometimes even the Christian crowd is wrong. We need to follow

Christ, not the crowd. At church, I sometimes notice people talking to their friends, while a visitor sits alone nearby. I hear testimony all the time of those who visit a church and they will say, “Not a soul spoke to us. No one even made an attempt to welcome us.” **The golden rule would say, “Treat a newcomer as you would want to be treated.”** But to do it you have to have the conviction to say to your friends, “Let’s go over and meet that new person.” Otherwise, you’ll go along with the crowd.

- (2) **Selfless service is not always convenient for the person servicing** – Paul says (1:17), **“he eagerly searched for me and found me.”** Just getting from Ephesus to Rome was no small feat in those days. But when he finally got to that huge city, Onesiphorus had to look all over for Paul. The prison officials were probably suspicious of anyone trying to track down a prisoner, and they usually weren’t noted for their helpful customer service. But Onesiphorus persisted until he found Paul. **Some have suggested, and it may be likely, that because Paul sends greetings to the household of Onesiphorus (4:19), but not to Onesiphorus himself, that perhaps he had also been imprisoned or executed because of his association with Paul in Rome.** The main problem with that view is that then it seems that Paul is offering a prayer for the dead when he says (1:18), “The Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day.” So we must understand Paul’s words as a sympathetic desire that the Lord will reward Onesiphorus for his sacrificial service. But whether he died or not, it was not convenient for Onesiphorus to minister to Paul in these difficult conditions. It seldom is convenient to serve. Of course, there are times when we must say no to requests or opportunities to serve simply because we are finite and must juggle other demands. But we’ve all got to fight against the selfish mentality that only serves when it’s convenient. Usually, it’s not!
- (3) **Selfless service is not convenient for the family of the one servicing** - Both in verse 16 and in 4:19, Paul mentions the family or household of Onesiphorus. Paul’s request that the Lord grant them mercy shows that they had to pay a price by releasing Onesiphorus to serve Paul.

*I do not agree with those who sacrifice their families on the altar of ministry. One of the most tragic stories that I have read was written by the daughter of the late **Bob Pierce**, who founded World Vision. He was gone for months every year, preaching in Asia while his family was floundering without him in California. His marriage finally broke up and one daughter committed suicide. The daughter who wrote the book had to work through many deep problems as a result of her father’s abandoning the family.*

The Bible is clear that a man’s family must be in order before he is qualified to serve as a leader in the local church. It requires adequate time together as a family to foster healthy relationships. Yet at the same time, a family needs to be committed to serving the body of Christ. It’s not right to focus on the family to the detriment of serving Christ. That just fosters selfish living. I like the balance that Edith Schaeffer describes in *What is a Family?* [Revell, 1975]. As you may know, the Schaeffer’s raised their children at L’Abri in an open home, where many people came at all hours. In one chapter, Mrs. Schaeffer

describes the family as a door with hinges and a lock. The hinges open to welcome those in need, but the lock gives the family time to grow and be refreshed for ministry. They did not damage their family by over-commitment to ministry, and yet they instilled in their children a ministry-mindset.

Thus a refresher seeks out a person in need. He bucks crowd opinion to serve selflessly. Finally,

### **A REFRESHER WILL BE REWARDED BY THE LORD**

He will receive **“mercy from the Lord on that day.”** “That day” is the day of judgment, as we saw in 1:12. Paul was living in view of “that day.” You may wonder, “Why does a servant like Onesiphorus need mercy on that day?” Phygelus and Hermogenes need mercy! But why Onesiphorus?

The answer is, we *all* need mercy from the Lord on that day! Perhaps Paul was echoing Jesus’ Beatitude (Matt. 5:7), **“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”** It is not that anyone can earn or deserve mercy because of his good deeds. We all deserve God’s judgment, because we all have sinned. Even servants like Onesiphorus have to battle selfishness on a daily basis. So we all must cast ourselves on God’s mercy as our only hope for eternity.

I read about an 11-year-old boy who got his first job working at a garden center. His dad was anxious about his first day on the job, so he stopped by before noon to check on him. He sensed that something was wrong, especially when he saw a tear trickle down his son’s cheek. The boy explained, “When I came to work this morning, they said they’d pay me 50 cents an hour. I’ve been here three hours now, and nobody’s been around with my 50 centses!”

If you get involved in the ministry of refreshment, you need to remember that story. The rewards will be handed out in eternity. You may or may not see rewards in this life. The world may think you’re crazy to sacrifice yourself for others and the church may forget to recognize you at the awards ceremony. But the Lord does not forget! He will be merciful to you on that day.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **2 Things to Remember:**

- (1) **In one sentence, the Bible writes the biographies of Phygelus and Hermogenes -**  
They turned away from Paul in his time of need. Whether because of fear or embarrassment or selfish motives, they did not minister refreshment. ***Can your testimony be written in one sentence of what you aren’t willing to do for Christ?***

(2) In one sentence, the Bible writes the biography of Onesiphorus - He often refreshed Paul and was not ashamed of his chains. *Can your testimony be written in one sentence of what you are willing to do for Christ?*

- *How would the Bible write your biography in one sentence?*
- *Do you seek out those in need to minister refreshment?*
- *Do you serve selflessly, no matter what others are saying or doing?*
- *If so, the Lord will reward you in that day.*