

Devoted Support 2 Timothy 1:15-18

(Show slide 1 as soon as Bible Reading ends)

One of my prayers for our church is that we retain the **care** and **compassion** we have for each other as God continues to grow us bigger

As the Lord by his grace increases our number it will be **impossible to know everyone**. However, it's vital that **each one of us is known**.

That is, there are brothers and sisters in our church who look out for us, check in on us and make sure we are supported as we live out our faith in a **broken world** that causes pain and in a **Babylonian world** that tempts us to become half-hearted in our love of Jesus.

The key question is, **how?** How can we grow bigger as a church and yet remain small in our fellowship?

At the end of **2 Timothy chapter 1** we are presented with a wonderful example that will transform our church if we live it out in practice.

Change to slide 2 Look at verse 15. **Read verses 15 to 18.**

Before we unpack the **beautiful actions** of this person with a very difficult name, it's worth noting the other two names that are mentioned.

Sometimes having our name appear in some important publication is a very exciting prospect. If that happens then we are normally keen to point it out to our friends and family. However, that isn't the case for **Phygelus** and **Hermogenes**.

Can you imagine their friends coming up to them and saying, “I hear you’re made an appearance in the Bible. You must be so pleased.” Well, no. **They appear as deserters in the cause of Christ.** When they were needed in public, they could not be found.

We don’t know the precise details of their desertion but it’s probably linked to what Paul says in chapter 4 of this letter.

2 Timothy 4:16, “At my first defence, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them.”

Paul was being accused of being a **dangerous political prisoner**. A man responsible for causing riots and civil unrest in the Roman Empire. What he needed were Christians to come to stand beside him and publicly declare that he was innocent of the charges.

Why would they not do that? It was dangerous! To align themselves with Paul in public could lead to **pain, imprisonment** and even **death**. It was much easier to say a private prayer or send a personal Whatsapp. But to stand with the prisoner and come to his defence could cost everything.

When Paul needed help, those who could have supported him disappeared into the night.

Why mention two people in particular by name? I imagine they had influence in the Christianity community. Perhaps they were pastors in particular churches. Paul wanted to warn people of their cowardice in case they do it again and thus hurt other Christians who are relying on them.

In contrast to the two deserters, Paul then mentions the person who had provided the **essential support** that he needed: ONey-siphorus.

I want to highlight **two** of his vital **actions**. That is, two things he **did**. Occasionally we hear the phrase, **“It’s the thought that counts.”** That;s nonsense. Just try that next time someone you love has a birthday and you don’t get them a present. But I did think about it. Yep, that will get you nowhere good.

A better phrase is, **“Actions speak louder than words.”**

That describes the conduct of **ONey-siphorus**. He was a man of action. He did things that made a real difference in the life of the apostle Paul.

What did he do?

- He brought refreshment to the soul
- He turned up when it was hard

Change to slide 3 **First, he brought refreshment to the soul**

Look again at verse 16. **Read verse 16.**

Prisoners then relied on family and friends to bring food. ONey-siphorus certainly did that. But it was more than **food for the stomach**, his presence brought **refreshment for the soul**.

ONey-siphorus is a Greek name and it means “to bring profit or to be helpful.”

As he visited Paul, he was living out the definition of his name.

Notice it **wasn’t just a once off**. Paul says that he **often** refreshed me.

And it wasn't just in Rome, look at the end of verse 18. **Read verse 18b.** This was his consistent way of life! It is beautiful.

We are not instinctively born as refreshers of others. However, the **Holy Spirit** can change us so that each one of us can bring encouragement to other Christians.

- Are you a joy-giver or a joy-sucker?
- Are you a balloon inflator or a balloon popper?

How can we be a refresher of others?

There are lots of practical ways.

- Listen more
- Talk more
- Text an encouragement
- Say thank you when you notice something
- Sharing a home cooked meal
- Picking someone up
- Driving someone home
- A hug and a prayer
- Doing the ironing for a busy family
- Sing passionately
- Being reliable in our service team

Whatever it is, let's pray for God to make us a refresher of others!

Change to slide 4 **Second, he turned up when it was hard**

Look at verse 17. **Read verses 17 and 18.**

Turning up wasn't an easy thing for ONey-siphorus to do.

For at **least two reasons**.

First, he was putting his life at risk as he aligned himself with the political prisoner. Unlike the deserters, he was prepared to do it.

Second, it was really hard for ONey-siphorus to find Paul.

There was no **ancient Roman Prison App** that told you instantly where your friend was being held. No, ONey-siphorus had to find Paul against the odds. Paul says, "...he searched hard for me until he found me." He probably asked a whole range of people and followed lots of dead ends. However, even though his **search was long and tiring, he never gave up**.

Why not? Because finding Paul was worth it. And so he kept on going, embracing the cost of searching, until he set his eyes on the man locked up for the cause of Christ.

One of the phrases that is popular in the UK goes something like this, **"If it doesn't take you out of your way."** That attitude can find its way into church, both for those of us receiving the offer of help or in those of us offering help. We need to get rid of it! If ONey-siphorus had embraced that attitude then he would never have found Paul. Instead, he lived by a different code, a manifesto that drove him to **sacrifice** and **suffer** so that his friend would be encouraged.

Let's recognise that bringing spiritual refreshment to others is costly and hard..

This is true for our families as well. However, we mustn't idolise the family in such a way that we are never prepared for them to miss out on something because we have chosen to spiritually bless someone else.

Change to slide 5 I can't do it all by myself but, with God's help, we can do it together.

Imagine what this could be like. Our small group leaders doing this. Our Treehouse leaders doing this. Our Youth Leaders. Our Ministry Team Leaders. Not just leaders. Members of groups and teams.

How about we pray this short prayer every day? "Lord, make me a refreshing and sacrificial servant in the cause of Christ."

Change to slide 6 Why should we be like ONey-siphorus?

There are lots of people in the Bible that we shouldn't be like. For example, King David when he commits adultery and then makes sure Bathsheeba's husband is killed to get rid of the problem.

What makes ONey-siphorus a legitimate example?

Doesn't he remind you of Jesus!

- Christ searched intently for us.
- Christ came to be with us even when it was hard.
- Christ wasn't ashamed to call us his brothers and sisters.
- Christ came to our prisons and sacrificed himself to release the captives from their spiritual imprisonment.
- Christ has brought us ultimate refreshment.

We now want to become like Jesus. Because ONey-siphorus is like Jesus we can aim to become more like him.

1 Corinthians 11:1, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."

That's the same for ONey-siphorus in these verses.

Let's follow his example as he follows the example of Christ.

One last thought before I finish. **How can we keep it going when it's hard and costly?**

Look at what Paul writes in **verse 16** and **verse 18**.

Read verse 16a.

Read verse 18a.

We all need mercy for the future day when we will see Christ face to face.

However, when we are assured of the forgiveness of Christ, it is **that day** that can motivate us to live sacrificially in **this day**.

Why keep going? Why not pay less cost and enjoy more comfort? Let's take our eyes off **this day** and look for **that day**.

The preacher George Whitefield once asked another pastor, the Rev. William Tennant, in his old age whether he rejoiced that his time was almost done and he would soon be in heaven.

Tennant replied, "My business is to live as long as I can, **as well as I can**, and to serve my Master as faithfully as I can, until He shall think proper to call me home."

Let's pray.