

# 2 Timothy 1:15-18

Instructions to Timothy  
Guiding, Growing, Guarding!



**Deserted/Supported**

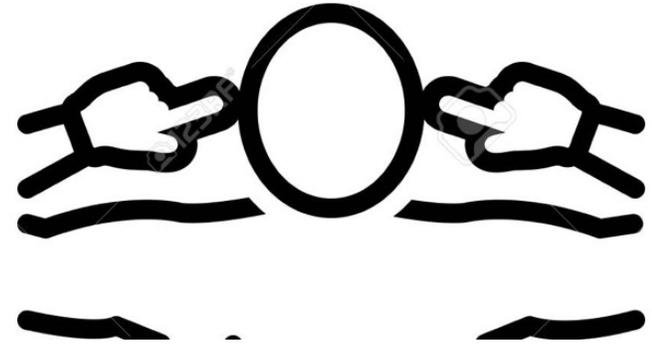


Paul writes here a bitter truth – that he felt that the churches of Asia had deserted him in his greatest hour of need. I mean, this was **IT** for Paul! He was not squirming his way out of trouble this time. [Acts 20:24,25, 37-38] It would have required an angel, or an earthquake, or a rebel uprising to have gotten out of his dungeon this time. It was also not like only a couple of years before, when he was put under house arrest in deference to his Roman citizenship, and treated quite well, and allowed to have visitors – pastors, church leaders, old friends, anyone who wanted to meet with the great man. This time, under the crackdown against the Christians that Nero one who made the request as a Christian – and they were seeking Christians quite diligently now – **TO ROUND THEM UP, IMPRISON, AND KILL THEM IN THE INFAMOUS ARENA, IN THE MOST HORRIBLE AND TERRIFYING WAYS IMAGINABLE!** No matter how brave a person they were, not one of them wanted to be caught up by government henchmen and killed in this way! Can you blame them?! I wouldn't have wanted to! I hope there are a lot of things I would be willing to do for Jesus, but there are some things I know I would drag my feet on. This, definitely, would have been one of them!



Still – even knowing the risk that people would be putting themselves in to ask to see him, Paul sounds bitter because basically **only one person** has been brave enough to come and see him and to meet some of the needs he has. So he feels alone, isolated in a way that he has never experienced before. Paul always had had people around him! It was part of the genius of Paul that he never went around **alone**, but always had a partner, and often an entourage besides having a partner! I don't feel like I had partners in ministry for the first decade of pastoral ministry. It was hard! Paul is depressed, anxious, and does not understand how he has been abandoned. He tells Timothy that the churches of Asia have forsaken him. The seven key churches of Asia are listed in John's book of Revelations, chapters 2 & 3 – Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. The list includes Timothy's church – **Ephesus!** I figure this is a round-about means of scolding Timothy for not coming to him in his imprisonment. Of course, it is only 1,145-plus driving miles from Ephesus to Rome, which today would take would take 17.5 hours of driving in a car. But traveling by horse or donkey – the means of transportation in Paul's day – it would certainly take a couple of months or more of grinding, hard travel – and **a lot** longer on foot!

Now – although Christians are being thrown into prison/work camps in a number of countries on the other side of the world, here in the USA that has not happened – YET! So we don't have something equivalent to Paul's sufferings in our own experience. But still, even in first-world settings, people can suffer intensely when relationships break down or fail completely! I have to say that there were times – especially in my earlier years of pastoral ministry – that I felt oppressed, alone, abandoned, and experienced depression and anxiety because of it. I was 25 or 26 years old and going to the doctor for what felt like heart palpitations! The people in my churches wouldn't understand - I couldn't even tell them! After all, pastors only work one day a week – right? How many times have I heard *that* one! But I understand – the job might sound pretty cushy (to me too) if I didn't know all that it entailed! But I remember in those early years that I had people criticizing my sermons, my teaching, my personality – which only drove the internal insecurities of a young man, and feelings of inadequacy, and aloneness! I actually listened to those criticisms and it helped to shape my preaching style, and probably contributed positively to my personality - but still,.. the unkind way it was done created layers of scarring on my soul that took years to overcome. My brother observed that when I was a boy, I could be the most stubborn person he has ever met in his life! That trait served me well, actually, as I had to put that inherent stubbornness into overdrive just to keep from giving up/quitting! I knew there were Christians out there who would have found value in my sermons, my teaching style, and my personality – and I had to cling to the hope that God could use me. In the meantime I had to rely on the fact that I knew that God had put His call upon my life to serve Him in pastoral ministry. I couldn't just go do something else! Fortunately, I was right. This people of this church have upheld and encouraged me for 30 years! Did you say 30 years, when the average stay of a pastor is 3 or 4? Yes! Why would I want to leave unless God issued an unmistakably clear call to go elsewhere to minister? What a difference that makes in desire and energy to do ministry – to do this often messy, discouraging, frustrating job! I mean, I'm working with people! People can be troubled, two-faced, disingenuous/not genuine, and turn rebellious against God! It is devastating to see! But I can continue in my role because from time to time I see the beautiful, powerful hand of God in one life who truly surrenders to Him, and then another life, and then,.. another – and I am encouraged beyond words, and energized to see it happen again!



So, Paul names two men, in particular, who he feels had abandoned him – which means they had been there and had left him in the lurch, so to speak, in his dungeon in Rome - Phygelus and Hermogenes. There are no details included here, but he must have told them he needed them, and they must have responded that they had to go. Now, it could have been that they had obligations where they came from and had to get back to fulfill them. It could have been that they were afraid and just wanted to get out of Rome! Rome was a dangerous and dark place – a real snake pit of vipers! It is impossible to say. This rift in relationship had happened before to Paul when he had a sharp disagreement with Barnabas about his cousin John Mark, which cause the two of them to break up as a team. He had the idea that Mark had quit on an earlier missionary trip, and to Paul, loyalty to Christ and to the mission was paramount! It trumped personal concerns. I think I remember that he later made up with Mark. At any rate, The Spirit of God used Mark to write “**the Gospel of Mark**” - the earliest of the synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke – Mark was the gospel from which Matthew and Luke borrowed extensively!



But in any given church, faithfulness has an effect on leadership – and actually on the entire congregation! Speaking from experience, nothing encourages a pastor more than leaders and lay people in the church that prioritize the purposes of God in their lives – that serve Jesus at church and in the community to the best of their ability, not half-heartedly but whole-heartedly, even enthusiastically throwing themselves into it! But on the other side of the coin, nothing is as *discouraging* as when members just kind of fade away, disengage, disappear. Or when a Committee head/deacon does little of what they were tasked with doing, or nothing at all – so that little, if any, progress is being made in that area. That’s discouraging for everyone, starting with the committee members that feel stranded and frustrated! There is a ripple effect upon the congregation, and discontent begins to percolate in the ranks! It happens sometimes. When it happens a lot, that church and that pastor are probably soon to part ways.

Paul also singles out one man, Onesiphorus, because his story is one of encouragement. He came to Rome from Ephesus – a long and arduous journey, sought out the location of Paul’s dungeon, found him, and ministered to his needs. It appears that he has left at this point, but he blessed Paul when he sorely needed encouragement! That remained in Paul’s mind and psyche. But now he appears to be alone, and no one is seeing to his needs. Back in that day, you were not cared for by the state. You had to have people on the outside bringing you food, candles, blankets, clothes, or you didn’t get those necessities. The authorities were not going to spend good tax dollars on a prisoner! No – prisoners had to fend for themselves – which, of course, they could **not do!** Onesiphorus obviously was able to brave the dangers of having contact with Paul and meet some of his needs, and bring him companionship along with news of the churches that he so desperately craved! He was a drink of cold water for a man who was baking in the desert, and Paul loved him for it and called forth God’s blessing on both he and his family – **[2 Tim. 4:19]**



We really need to be aware of our ability to bless others. It is an important part of our daily spiritual life. There are needs everywhere! There is discouragement. There is loneliness. There is someone reeling from failure of some kind. There is someone suffering from anxiety and unrest! There is someone whose faith is wavering. There is someone that needs someone to pay attention to them, to value them, to show them that they matter. If you, yourself, have ever felt discouraged, lonely, like a failure, anxious, doubting, etc..., then maybe you can be that person who can seek out the one who needs encouragement. That is why Paul wanted Timothy to come to him. Tim had a reputation of bringing encouragement and help. He was an instrument of God in the lives of many, and now Paul needed him one last time.

**[Ph’p 2:19-21] [Prov. 11:25]**