

## Prayer

Lead us into Your will Lord God. Guide us in our pathways; show us how to speak and what to say; lighten the darkness of this world and ease the heavy loads we have to bear. We do not ask for an easy life, but for Your presence by which we know we are not alone, but loved and helped along our way. Thank You Lord. AMEN

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: Babies

*We will pray this coming week for issues concerning babies! Pray for anyone you know who is pregnant, and pray that they will receive good quality, loving treatment.*

### On-going prayers

- *Pray for local doctors and nurses who serve the local community*
- *Give thanks to God for the liberties you enjoy*
- *Pray for those who repair and renew our roads and bridges*

## Meditation

Where may the human spirit begin to find peace within this world?  
Where do you find your spiritual and mental peace within this world?

In the company of other believers?  
Whilst doing the work of the Kingdom?  
In the home where love and care abide?  
Lost in 'wonder love and praise'?  
In pursuing evil and resolving wrongs?  
On the streets where the world and all pass by?  
Speaking out for the poor and the oppressed?  
In a quiet place of Bible study ad prayer?

Or is it just within a peace found when we realise  
That God is there in every circumstance of life,  
And His peace is there when we open our eyes  
To find Him anywhere, everywhere, and all the time.

## Bible Study - 2 Timothy 1:15-18

<sup>15</sup> *You know that everyone in Asia has turned away from me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes.* <sup>16</sup> *May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.* <sup>17</sup> *When he arrived in Rome, he searched hard for me and found me* <sup>18</sup> *- may the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that Day!* *Moreover, you know very well about the many ways he ministered to me in Ephesus.*

## Review

There is no doubt that Paul is speaking personally in this letter! One wonders whether he intended what he wrote to be anything more than personal because of the way he writes about people within his letter; did he really want everyone to know what he thought about

Phygelus and Hermogenes? It is impossible to answer these questions, but what this brief text shows is that Paul was bluntly honest about what was going on around him, and in common with a number of his letters, he was not averse to stating that individuals opposed him. In addition, because of his utter belief in his own apostleship, he regarded such opponents as enemies of Christ as well (see 1 Tim 1:20). The passage is challenging because it begs a huge question; can we or should we be as direct and plain speaking, or indeed presumptuous, about our own righteousness and the faults of others?

Paul was certainly warm and generous towards those who had helped him at times of need. Here, he mentions Onesiphorus; someone who apparently came to Rome to find Paul and who diligently searched for him, possibly to bring some message or gift from Christians elsewhere when Paul was captive awaiting Imperial trial. There is some information about what happened to Paul when he arrived in Rome (Acts 28:15,16f.) in the New Testament, and it gives us a picture of his living in relative ease whilst awaiting the judicial process in Rome, which could very slow. How long Paul stayed there and the exact conditions he endured before he finally met his end, we do not know, but it should not surprise us that it would be difficult for someone to find him in the large metropolis. As far as this letter is concerned, this passage confirms that the letter was indeed written when Paul was held captive in Rome, and all of his talk about suffering for Christ (see yesterday's passage 1:8-14) was a very real personal experience.

Further, it is possible that the letter was written some time after Paul had come to Rome, and the initial ease of his circumstances (Acts 28:16) may not have lasted. Also, it seems that as time went by, some of the churches in Asia developed in their own ways and Paul felt that they had forgotten him (1:15); he says, 'everyone in Asia has turned away from me.' By referring to Asia, Paul meant the region of the world we now call Turkey, and this includes Ephesus, Colossae, Galatia and Laodicea, but not Philippi or Thessalonica (Macedonia) or Corinth or Athens (Greece). It is interesting that all the seven churches mentioned in the Revelation of John are from the regions of 'Asia' mentioned here by Paul, and all the messages delivered in that great work are cautionary and suggest a need to repent and change for the better. It is reasonable to suggest therefore that Paul was not paranoid in his belief that something was wrong in that part of the world church; for John's vision confirms it! The two people mentioned by him, Phygelus and Hermogenes, are not mentioned anywhere else in the New Testament, and we can only assume they were leaders and co-workers in the Gospel at these churches in Asia.

There is in this small passage a hint of the value of the simplest ministry of love; of the great worth of visiting and letting people know that they are cared for by the church. You can almost feel Paul's appreciation of the efforts made on his behalf by Onesiphorus, who was probably only doing his duty. What he did meant so much to Paul because this contact kept him in touch with the whole world wide church and enabled him to know what was going on. Paul, of all people was conscious of the Body of Christ as 'all God's people everywhere' and his life and his words challenge us to look beyond the comfort of our own churches to appreciate that we are all part of God's greater work. On the other hand, this aspect of the text tells us something about what it means for someone who was once a leading activist in the church to feel abandoned by people to whom he had once ministered. Paul may have felt betrayed by them, but this had not affected his attachment to Christ and the Gospel (as we saw yesterday!), and he deeply valued the efforts made to keep him in touch. This suggests the importance we should place on enabling the elderly of our church congregations who were once the life and soul of the church, to be kept in touch with what is happening. The on-going ministry to the faithful elderly is very important; they have no other means of keeping in touch with the 'body of Christ' unless people minister to them and visit them.

## Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. If you are studying this in a group, read some of the letters to the churches in the Revelation of John (chapters 1 to 3) and find out what was going on in Asia.
2. How can God's people best be aware of the whole Body of Christ, and the ministry of God's people throughout the world?
3. How can God's people best minister to the elderly within the church?

## Discipleship

### Personal comment:

*I find this passage touching because I have come across too many churches where the elderly who were once the life of the church have been abandoned and their interests and feelings about meaningful worship ignored in the rush to change things according to the world's agenda. I have met few elderly people of real faith who have not been prepared to change a great deal for the sake of the Gospel (but not for the world) and their value to the church is immense. If included, they will minister to the whole church in love and maturity.*

### Ideas for discipleship programme

- *Are you aware of elderly people in your own church who once were regular office holders and workers? How can they be ministered to, and how can they be blessed by the church of today?*
- *Where do you see real problems in the life of the church today, in a worldwide sense? Discuss with others and pray about how to discern what is godly and true Gospel work, and what is the work of the enemy in our midst.*

## Final Prayer

In Your providence, Lord God, keep our families safe from the attacks of the evil one. Grant us such a presence of Your holy Spirit that we may know Your care and love at all times; and may the whole church be blessed through the its families. Thank You, Lord God; AMEN