

2 Timothy 1:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.

Analysis

This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. Paul informs Timothy of painful reality: "all they which are in Asia be turned away from me" (apostrephēsan me pantes hoi en tē Asia, ἀπεστράφησάν με πάντες οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ). The verb apostrephō (ἀποστρέφω) means "turn away from, desert, abandon." This likely refers to Asian Christians in Rome who, when Paul was arrested, distanced themselves from him to avoid guilt by association. The "all" is hyperbolic (Onesiphorus remained faithful, v. 16-18) but emphasizes widespread desertion.

Paul names two deserters: Phygellus and Hermogenes. These men, previously associated with Paul's ministry, had abandoned him in his hour of need. Their specific mention suggests they were known to Timothy and their defection particularly painful or influential. Naming them serves as warning—their desertion exemplifies the cowardice and worldliness Paul wants Timothy to avoid. Some commentators suggest they may have been teachers who not only abandoned Paul personally but also corrupted doctrine.

This verse provides sobering realism about Christian ministry. Even apostles experience betrayal, abandonment, and desertion by former friends and coworkers. The fear of persecution and suffering causes many to compromise, retreat, or abandon faithful leaders. Paul shares this painful reality not to embitter Timothy but to prepare him for similar experiences and demonstrate that faithful

suffering for Christ often involves loneliness and abandonment by those expected to remain loyal.

Historical Context

The Roman province of Asia (modern western Turkey) included Ephesus and the seven churches of Revelation 2-3. Paul had ministered extensively there during his third missionary journey (Acts 19-20), establishing numerous churches. His farewell to Ephesian elders (Acts 20:17-38) was deeply emotional, reflecting strong relationships. The widespread desertion of Asian believers was thus especially painful. Several factors likely contributed: Nero's persecution made association with condemned Christians dangerous; Paul's imprisonment suggested God had abandoned him (ancient assumption); false teachers may have turned believers against Paul's theology. Whatever the reasons, the desertion fulfilled Christ's warning that believers would face betrayal (Matthew 10:21-22).

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How do you respond when Christians you trusted abandon you during trials or when standing for unpopular biblical truth?
2. What temptations toward cowardice and compromise do you face when association with faithful but suffering Christians might cost you socially or professionally?
3. How can Paul's example of naming deserters while forgiving them (he doesn't express bitterness) guide your response to betrayal by fellow believers?

Interlinear Text

Οἶδας	τοῦτο	ὅτι	ἀπεστράφησάν	με	πάντες	οἱ
thou knowest	This	that	be turned away from	me	all	G3588
G1492	G5124	G3754	G654	G3165	G3956	
ἐν	τῇ	Ἀσίᾳ	ᾧν	ἐστίν	Φύγελλος	καὶ
they which are in	G3588	Asia	of whom	are	Phygellus	and
G1722		G773	G3739	G2076	G5436	G2532

Ἑρμογένης
Hermogenes
G2061

Additional Cross-References

2 Timothy 4:16 (Parallel theme): At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.

Philippians 2:21 (Parallel theme): For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

Acts 19:10 (Parallel theme): And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.