

Times of Refreshing

Have you ever needed a breather? Maybe you've just been out running, running, and pushing, pushing, pushing, and never had a moment of respite just to kick back and take care of yourself and the things that you need for your own body and mind and physical well-being. Maybe you've even been out ministering to God's people. And there have been so many people to help and so many things to do that you take it all on yourself, and you think that "It has to be me. I've got to be the one taking care of everything. I can't ask anybody else to help." And you sometimes get into a situation where you just have depleted all of your resources in the physical world and mentally you're fatigued and you really need help.

That's why [God has given us *times of refreshing*](#).

I remember, several decades ago, I was traveling Africa to minister to believers there. And I would go on a trip, I would travel alone. I would be out there for maybe three or four weeks at a time. And I had already been to two countries for the first time, stopping in a third where we just had a handful of believers that I wanted to bless and get to know. And the night that I got there, I had dinner and then all of a sudden my temperature just skyrocketed and I went and took a cool bath and that didn't take care of it. And I was starting to hallucinate. It was like things were like in suspended animation for me, and I didn't know what was happening, and so I asked them if they'd take me to the hospital. They took me to the hospital, and they analyzed what was going on, and the diagnosis was that I had malaria and dysentery, and these are not things that you get over quickly. But anyway, I was there in the hospital.

The believers were kind and wonderful, but they couldn't be with me 24 -7. There was a nurse there who was taking care of me, and she was

really like an angel of God ministering to me in that situation where I had a temperature of 105°F and couldn't do anything to take care of myself in my own bed, and she was just wonderful. And I was thinking about how when we need times of refreshing, God can see to it that there are others who can minister His care and concern to us, be they believers or be they, maybe people that we don't even know, a man or a woman on the street, like that wonderful nurse. And I was so thankful at that time, because what happened was that I was actually healed within one day because of the love and care that I received, and I was able to continue my itinerary to several other countries before I returned home.

At times [we all need times, multiple times, of refreshing in our lives](#), not just a single instance. In

Acts 3:20:

that [times of refreshing](#) may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus,

“That times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.”
Certainly, [the LORD God is the Source of all refreshing](#).

This word “[refreshing](#)” is a wonderful Greek word ἀνάψυξις *anapsuxis*. A-N-A-P-S-U-X-I-S. It means “[drawing breath again](#).” [BREATHE IN AND OUT.] Take a deep breath. [A relieving and recovering from toil and all evils](#). That times of refreshing — drawing breath again — may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send His agent, the Christ appointed for you, Jesus.

That we have [rest and refreshing today is because of the accomplished work of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ](#). And in Matthew 11 he told his disciples

Matthew 11:28:

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

And that word means “to cause to rest up, or cause to cease or desist” from work.

Matthew 11:29,30:

Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest [a resting up, a pause, a cessation from labor] for your souls.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

That word “rest”, you will find *rest* for your souls. That same word is used consistently in the Greek Old Testament for the rest associated with the Sabbath day. And for that, I'd like to turn to

Exodus 31:15-17:

Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death [under the law, that was the requirement].

Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever.

It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.”

Does God need refreshing? I don't think so. But He rested and was refreshed to set the example for us. And don't we need it?

So God is the Source of our rest and refreshing. Christ is our minister of rest and refreshing. And God desires that we should receive this refreshing together. In Romans 15, Paul writes

Romans 15:30-32:

I appeal to you, brothers [the brothers living in Rome], by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf,

that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints,

so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company.

What's he doing? He's laying his heart on the line to these Roman believers. He's saying, I want to come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company. To do that, I'm going to need you to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf. *I'm going to need your help, and I'm going to receive your blessing, the benefit, the refreshing of your company.* That's my heart's desire that I expect to receive from you.

This teaches us that *there's a role that believers can play*. It's a wonderful role — the role of *a heart refresher*. For this, let's go to 1 Corinthians chapter 16. And we'll see in this record an example of three wonderful believers who apparently were not necessarily leaders in the church, but they were wonderful refreshers of the heart.

1 Corinthians 16:15:

Now I urge you, brothers [he's speaking to the Corinthian believers]—you know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints—

Refreshing hearts is service of the saints.

1 Corinthians 16:16-18:

be subject to such as these, and to every fellow worker and laborer.

I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have made up for your absence,

for they [refreshed](#)... [they caused my spirit, my heart to rest] as well as yours. Give recognition to such people.

Now it doesn't say that they were leaders in the church. He does say in verse 16, be subject to such as these and to every fellow worker and laborer.

The name Achaicus may indicate that this particular individual had been a slave at one time because slaves were named after the place they came from. So if they were from Achaia, they might be called Achaicus, from Achaia.

But whatever their status in life, these wonderful believers refreshed Paul's heart. And Paul thought that was valuable, that was something that needed to be recognized in the Church. And he said so. Give recognition to such people.

Where there is no rest, God is able to comfort by heart refreshers. For this, let's go to

2 Corinthians 7:2-5a:

Make room in your hearts for us. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one.

I do not say this to condemn you, for I said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together.

I am acting with great boldness toward you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy.

For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest,...

One of the reasons we need refreshing is that our bodies are physical. Our bodies need rest. We can't just go, go, go, 24 -7. There comes a point where we have to stop.

2 Corinthians 7:5b,6:

our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—
fighting without and fear within.

But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus,

So here we see Titus in the role of heart refresher.

2 Corinthians 7:7:

and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, *your* zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more.

So evidently Titus was not the only heart refresher here. These Corinthian believers, in their longing, mourning and zeal for Paul refreshed his heart.

2 Corinthians 7:13-16:

Therefore we are comforted. And besides our own comfort, we rejoiced still more at the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all [as we just saw].

For whatever boasts I made to him about you, I was not put to shame. But just as everything we said to you was true, so also our boasting before Titus has proved true.

And [his heart] his affection for you is even greater, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling.

I rejoice, because I have complete confidence in you.

Heart refreshers minister God's care and concern. For this, let's look at Philippians 2. And the heart refresher that is mentioned here is the wonderful Timothy.

Philippians 2:19-24:

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you.

For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare.

For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel.

I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me,

and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also.

He continues telling them of another wonderful heart refresher, Epaphroditus.

Philippians 2:25-30:

I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need,

for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill.

Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious.

So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.

Sure would love to meet these wonderful gentlemen, Timothy and Epaphroditus. I guess we'll have that opportunity one day.

Heart refreshers persevere in uplifting ministers who are in need. For this, we'll go to

2 Timothy 1:16:

May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains,

This word “refreshed” basically means “to revive by fresh air, to be refreshed, to cool by blowing.”

2 Timothy 1:16b-18:

... he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains,

but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me—

may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day!— and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus.

The thing I find incredible here is that he *often* refreshed him. He persevered at it. He kept going back when there were many who would not have even gone the first time because they were ashamed of the fact that Paul was in prison, but not Onesiphorus. He went again and again, and he didn't care what anyone thought or what might happen to him, he just wanted to be a minister, refreshing the heart.

Heart refreshers remind ministers where their strength comes from. At the end of 2nd Timothy, we see Paul confessing in

2 Timothy 4:17,18:

But the Lord [Who is the Source of his refreshing] stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth.

The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever.
Amen.

A heart refresher is simply a minister, but the Lord is the Source of that refreshing.

Have you ever been a heart refresher? Maybe you have. If you have, stay at it. Deliver the benefit.

The Epistle of Philemon is where Paul writes to his great friend, Philemon, who has refreshed him in the past. And he has a special request for him: that he would receive back into his good graces, his former bondservant or slave, Onesimus, who had escaped, and while he was free was converted by the Apostle Paul. And now Paul wants to send him back to his great friend, Philemon, asking him to receive him, not as a bondservant or slave, but as a brother. He writes to Philemon:

Philemon 7:

For I [Paul] have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.

Philemon had been a heart refresher. Paul writes in

Philemon 12:

I [Paul] am sending him [Onesimus] back to you [Philemon],
sending my very heart.

He's saying, "Philemon, this runaway slave of yours, Onesimus, is my very heart. That's how much I care about him." And then in

Philemon 20a:

Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord...

What was the benefit that Paul wanted from Philemon? He wanted this wonderful man, who had been a heart refresher, to be a heart refresher again; to stay at it, and to enlarge his heart to be able to receive as a brother his former runaway slave. That's why it says in the next sentence,

Philemon 20b:

... Refresh my heart in Christ.

Paul had a big ask, but we have a big God.

To be refreshed, we need to cease from our own works and recognize His.

Psalm 37:7a:

Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; ...

2 Timothy 2:1:

You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Grace, mercy, and peace bring rest and refreshing. Let's be ministers of the same.

God bless you.