

PRAY FOR YOUR ONESIPHORUS

2 Timothy 1:16,17

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2 TIM. 1:16-18 NIV-

"16. May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. 17. On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me. 18. May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day! You know very well in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus".

May the Lord show special kindness to Onesiphorus and all his family because he often visited and encouraged me. He was never ashamed of me because I was in prison. When he came to Rome, he searched everywhere until he found me.... (2 Tim. 1:16-17 NLT)

Second Timothy 1:15-18 speaks about friends. There are two kinds of Christian friends. One kind will forsake us when trouble comes: the other kind sticks with us even in the hour of our deepest need. True Christians are not fair-weather friends. They are friends in our time of deepest need and make sacrifices to help us.

The Lord's disciples ran away from Jesus in the hour of his deepest need. Peter even denied him three times. Paul experienced the same kind of desertion. Many ministers have experienced the same thing. Those who are truly born of God will persevere to the end and be fruitful to the Lord.

But there was one man who dared to leave Ephesus and come to Rome to assist Paul - Onesiphorus. His name means "*profit-bearing*," and he certainly was a profitable friend to Paul. It is possible that he was a deacon in the church at Ephesus ("*ministered*" in **2 Tim 1:18** comes from the word that gives us "*deacon*").

During Paul's ministry at Ephesus, Onesiphorus was a faithful minister, along with his household. Since Timothy had pastored the Ephesian church, he would know this choice saint. Paul desired to see his beloved son Timothy and be filled with joy before his expected martyrdom. Most of Paul's friends were turning away from him. Paul was encouraging Timothy to not be timid or ashamed of Paul, the Lord's apostle and prisoner.

He was telling Timothy that he must preach the gospel, suffer for the gospel, and guard the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit. Timothy should trust in Jesus, who destroyed our death and brought to light immortal life. Jesus did this for all God's elect by his life, death, and resurrection. To the believer, death is gain, for it opens the door to God's presence.

FRIENDS WHO FORSAKE US

Paul begins, *"You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes"* (v. 15). Paul knew that Timothy was aware that a group of Paul's friends had deserted him. These friends were from the Roman province of Asia (that is, western Turkey), where Ephesus was and where Timothy was ministering.

Paul was not saying that every believer had abandoned him, but only a group of prominent leaders of Asia. It is possible that these leaders deserted him when he was rearrested in or near Ephesus by Rome for some trumped up new charges against him. These leaders may have abandoned Paul and his gospel as some heretics were doing. When Paul wrote 2 Timothy, Nero was the Caesar.

Paul had earlier appealed to him before Festus to get a fair trial (see **Acts 25:10-11**) and was set free, in due time. Nero was the great-great-grandson of Augustus Caesar and the adopted son of Claudius. He became emperor in AD 54 and committed suicide at age 31 in AD 68. He was known for his brutality, murdering his mother, his wife, and several others.

ONESIPHORUS: A TRUE FRIEND

In contrast to Phygelus and Hermogenes and others who had deserted him, Paul mentions a true friend: *"May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus"* (v. 16). He was a true friend for six reasons:

Philemon had a slave by name Onesimus, which means *"profitable"*; Onesiphorus means *"bringer of profit," "bringer of blessing."*

A true believer is a bringer of the blessing of the gospel to the whole world. He is an edifier, a comforter, a strength-giver. He builds up his friends; he does not pull them down.

In verse **18b** Paul writes, "You know very well in how many ways [Onesiphorus] helped me in Ephesus." Onesiphorus was a friend of Paul and Timothy.

He was a rich man who lived in Ephesus. Like Philemon, he was a householder. He had a family, servants, and a large estate. Onesiphorus and his family belonged to the church of Ephesus in Asia. He had been ministering to the needs of the apostle for a

long time, probably beginning in Paul’s third missionary journey to Ephesus, during which Paul stayed in Ephesus, ministering the gospel for three years (**Acts 20:31**).

We can imagine that Paul had visited his home many times and received gracious ministry from him. So, Paul was recalling Onesiphorus’s service to him in the past with gratitude and a prayer, and Timothy knew about the diaconal service Onesiphorus had rendered to Paul. It is possible that Timothy had even gone with Paul to his friend’s house many times.

Here we see an example of how God rewards our good works, remembering all that we do in the name of Jesus Christ for his holy people.

Now Onesiphorus traveled to Rome to be with Paul while he was in prison. He left his family and estate in God’s hands and went to Rome to fellowship with this criminal

He may have spent two months there, expending his own time and money. He risked his own life to make the arduous long journey, bringing certain gifts—food, clothing, and money—to help the apostle. He was not afraid, like those who had forsaken Paul; rather, he was filled with the Holy Spirit. He searched for Paul, inquiring of knowledgeable people.

Being a state’s criminal. “This time it was different. Eventually, though, Onesiphorus found Paul; he was in a maximum-security dungeon. Onesiphorus visited with the apostle in the cold dungeon to encourage, comfort, and refresh him. He did so at great possible danger to himself and to his family.

When Onesiphorus first arrived in Rome, he was not able to find the prison where Paul was kept. Yet he was not discouraged. He kept on praying as he Onesiphorus did not go back to Ephesus and to his family to look after his estate after visiting Paul only once. Paul writes, “He often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains” (v. 16).

Onesiphorus was a true friend and stayed for a number of days to refresh the apostle. The Greek word for “refresh” (anepsuxen) means to help someone to breathe easier. Paul uses it elsewhere, “For they refreshed my spirit and yours also. Onesiphorus was not ashamed of Paul’s chains (v. 16).

PAUL PRAYS FOR ONESIPHORUS AND HIS FAMILY Paul writes, “May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus” (v. 16, see also v. 18). He was praying for his dear faithful friend as well as for his family.

The Christian life is characterized by mercy and grace.

We are saved by mercy and grace, as Paul himself wrote, “*But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, raised us together with Christ. . . For it is by grace you*

have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God” (**Eph. 2:4, 8**). We needed mercy before and we need mercy now. We need mercy daily. Paul says about himself, “*Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus*” (**1 Tim. 1:13-14**).

And not only do we need mercy now, but we will also need mercy on the day of judgment.

So, Paul says about his friend Onesiphorus, “*May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day,*” meaning the day of judgment (**2 Tim. 1:18**). Jesus said, “*Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy*” (**Matt. 5:7**). Onesiphorus and his household showed mercy to Paul, demonstrating clearly that they themselves had received the Lord’s gracious salvation.

Paul was praying that Onesiphorus and his family would be shown mercy on the day of judgment. We are justified here, and we also will be justified on the last day. Elsewhere Paul declared, “*But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope*” (**Gal. 5:5**).

We experience justification here and justification there, based on the righteousness of Christ. He also wrote, “*This will take place on the day when God will judge men’s secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares*” (**Rom. 2:16**). This is why we must plead with people now: “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.*”

Our good works themselves are wrought by grace in and through us. And we can be sure that Paul’s prayer for Onesiphorus and his household was heard by God because it was birthed in him by the Holy Spirit.

Eventually, Onesiphorus left his friend Paul and went back to his family in Ephesus.

And I say that God blessed him and his family and his property.

Thank God for Onesiphoruses in the church! When many abandon us in our deepest need, a few will come to help us, risking their own lives.

LESSONS TO LEARN FROM ONESIPHORUS

1. HE OFTEN REFRESHED ME PAUL:(TO COOL OFF, I.E TO RELIEVE, REFRESH)

He Encouraged Paul...how refreshing. Think about it. Paul was usually the one that is an “*encourager*” – after all, he wrote numerous letters to encourage

believers and churches. However, in this relationship, Onesiphorus was the encourager. He must have known that Paul needed someone to listen to and sit with him. He needed someone to speak words of hope, faith and comfort and he took the initiative to lift Paul's spirits.

2. HE WAS NOT ASHAMED OF MY CHAIN(UNASHAMED)

He Wasn't Ashamed...how courageous. Onesiphorus had courage and guts. Most experts agree that Paul's second imprisonment was a harsh one that took place shortly before he was martyred for his faith.

Onesiphorus didn't care that Paul was being treated like the worst criminal for preaching the gospel. He didn't care that the "officials" might associate him with Paul and perhaps put himself in jeopardy. He was willing to identify with Paul in some of his most difficult days.

3. HE SOUGHT ME ZEALOUSLY AND FOUND ME

He Searched for Paul...how faithful. Historians say that during this second imprisonment, Paul was rather difficult to locate. Onesiphorus wasn't a fair-weather friend; he searched for Paul and overcame whatever inconvenience he faced to be a source of encouragement. There wasn't much in it for Onesiphorus; he wasn't using Paul for his own benefit. Paul couldn't introduce him to anyone famous and Paul couldn't pull any strings for him. It was just a genuine love and care for Paul that motivated Onesiphorus to search for and refresh him.

Are you an "Onesiphorus"? Perhaps you have been called to encourage one of God's leaders? Has the Lord put a leader on your heart? Is there some internal God-given desire in you to be a blessing to a Christian leader? Start by praying for them and trust the Lord to show you how to provide the type of "*no-strings-attached*" encouragement they need.

Are you a "*Paul*"? Do you need an Onesiphorus in your life? Someone who really cares about you? Someone who will be there in your difficult days? Someone whom God has raised up to encourage, visit and pray for you? Ask the Lord to coordinate and knit that type of mutually beneficial relationship for you.

4. IN MANY WAYS HE MINISTERED TO ME AT EPHESUS

He Often Visited Paul...how nice. He was committed to being there for Paul – especially in his time of need. Paul was near the end of his life. He was a leader. He was alone.

Any leader will tell you that being at the "top" is wonderful, an honor, a privilege and lonely. Friends – like Onesiphorus – who reach out often, are a gift.

5. ONESIPHORUS AN EXAMPLE OF BROTHERLY LOVE

Were it not for Paul's letter, we would never know that Onesiphorus had served Paul and the church. But the Lord knew and will reward him *"on that day."* The essentials for a successful ministry have not changed: courageous enthusiasm, shameless suffering, and spiritual loyalty.

JESUS IS OUR TRUE FRIEND

But we have a friend even greater than Onesiphorus. Jesus said, "I will be with you always, even unto the end of the ages." So even if all forsake us, there is One who will never forsake us. The summary of Christ's life, death, and resurrection is found in **Romans 4:25**: *"He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification."* If God is for us, who can be against us? Paul concludes Romans 8 by proclaiming that nothing in all creation is able to cut us off from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore, I plead with you: If you are outside of Christ, if you have not trusted in Christ as your Lord and Savior, I pray that you will cry out to God today.

CONCLUSION

Prayer: *Father, I am willing to be an Onesiphorus. Show me how to encourage Your leaders. Father, I need an Onesiphorus in my life. I ask You to send one to encourage me as I fulfill Your will. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*