

Loyal Onesiphorus

Reading: 2 Timothy 1:13-2:2 *What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.* ¹⁴ *Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.* ¹⁵ *You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes.* 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.* **Chapter 2** *You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.* ² *And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.*

Introduction

Being loyal quite often requires sacrificial devotion and can be costly. When you have such a person in your life, they are worth their weight in gold. Being a Christian means being loyal to Christ.

Jesus said in Mark 8:38 *If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the*

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Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels.

In his second letter to Timothy, Paul made it quite clear that loyalty to Jesus is expressed through loyalty to the gospel of Jesus **and** those who proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul was in chains in Rome when he wrote this letter. This wasn't house arrest as he was when he wrote Acts where he was able to live in a hired dwelling place and have visitors come freely as and when they wanted. He was now in a dungeon living in horrendous conditions and it was extremely difficult for visitors to see Paul. Paul was now expecting to be executed as a criminal.

Paul commended Onesiphorus to Timothy as someone who had shown amazing loyalty to him and to the gospel. We may struggle to say his name but we can learn a lot from Onesiphorus.

This man expressed his loyalty to Christ and the gospel in his loyalty to those who taught it. He had travelled from Ephesus, left his family behind, to search for Paul in Prison and to come to minister to him.

2 Timothy 1:16 ***May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed***

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me and was not ashamed of my chains. He often refreshed Paul. This ministry of Onesiphorus of refreshing Paul started back Ephesus. His family had faithfully supported Paul there. His family made many great sacrifices for Paul.

I wonder sometimes if we realise as Christians just how refreshing we can be to others. Faithfulness and loyalty are highly valued by God and such a blessing to others. I pray this will abound at OCC.

Onesiphorus wasn't ashamed of Paul in chains. It is so important that people are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ and those that preach the gospel. Disloyalty to the preacher can often bring disloyalty to the gospel. Onesiphorus risked shame and disgrace of being associated with the Apostle Paul. He also risked being arrested and punished with him for associating with him. But his loyalty to Jesus made him loyal to Paul.

I thank God for people like Onesiphorus over the years who have blessed us as a family and refreshed us. Every Pastor and preacher of the gospel needs people who are loyal to the gospel and to them; to strengthen them and refresh them in difficult times.

Paul wanted Timothy to learn from Onesiphorus. He had

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searched for Paul in every prison and did not give up until he found him. ¹⁷ *On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me.*

He helped Paul in many ways. 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.* We don't know exactly in what ways Onesiphorus helped Paul. We don't really need to know. The point is he was helpful in all sort of ways, in whatever ways he could.

Every church needs people like this, with the same attitude, to help in all sorts of ways, in whatever ways they can. We need people like this at OCC, people who look for ways to help and in doing so assist the preaching of the gospel. People like this are a joy to a pastor and the leadership. The truth is, this is a ministry of refreshment that is vital to spreading the gospel.

It was costly for Onesiphorus and his family. He was separated from his family whilst he searched for Paul and ministered to him. Serving the Lord can be costly in time, energy and finances.

Paul contrasted his loyalty to the disloyalty of others. *You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in*

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Christ Jesus. ² And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others. Paul wanted Onesiphorus' example to inspire Timothy.

Paul encouraged Timothy to choose reliable men to teach future generations. To be careful to choose loyal men not just men who could preach the gospel.

We can learn from Onesiphorus the importance of supporting those imprisoned for their faith. Hebrews 13:3 *Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.* Paul was facing torture, and death in prison. He needed someone to minister to him and to encourage him. There are many people today who are suffering for their Christian faith in prison. People that desperately need people to minister to them and to pray for them.

Jesus taught in Matthew 25: 34-40 *Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and*

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you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?’³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?’³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’⁴⁰ The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

As Christians we need to be willing to pray, lobby, give and where possible to visit those who are imprisoned for their faith.

In Pakistan today, for example, Christians are crammed into the over-crowded, disease infested prisons built by the British, and our brothers and sisters are systematically tortured for their faith.

Suffering is normal in the gospel ministry. Paul encouraged Timothy to be ready to join him in suffering for the gospel. People who choose to live a godly life will suffer for the gospel somehow. We can't abandon the Christian faith because we suffer.

The rewards of faithful ministry are primarily in the life




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to come. So often we want everything down here to be comfortable and problem free. But Jesus never said this would be the case.

The gospel is a promise for eternity with Jesus in His Heavenly Kingdom, only then are we guaranteed a life free of pain and suffering. Until then Jesus said there will be suffering and persecution for identifying with Jesus.

So Paul encouraged Timothy to join with him in his suffering. 2 Timothy 1:8 *So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.* In doing so he also encourages every one of us to be loyal to the gospel of Jesus Christ and join with him in suffering for the Gospel.

Personal Study Questions on Onesiphorus

-  How can we refresh those who preach the gospel?
-  How can we avoid being ashamed of the gospel and those who preach it?
-  How can we help those in gospel ministry?

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✚ How could we support those imprisoned for their Christian faith?