

Onesiphorus the Refresher

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Date: 18 January 2009

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[0:00] 2 Timothy chapter 1, we're going to be reading verse 3 through verse 18. This is God's word. I thank God whom I serve as my forefathers did with a clear conscience as night and day.

I constantly remember you in my prayers. Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice.

And now I am persuaded lives in you also. For this reason, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline.

So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord or ashamed of me, his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life, not because of anything we have done, but because of his own purpose and grace.

[1:18] This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

And of this gospel, I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. That is why I am suffering as I am.

Yet I am not ashamed because I know whom I have believed and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day. What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching with faith and love in Christ Jesus.

Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you. Guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Philegius and Hermogenes.

May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me.

[2:37] May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day. May the Lord say, you know very well in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus. We like illustrations, don't we?

Pictures of truth that more firmly fix that truth in our minds. Sometimes we judge the effectiveness of a sermon on how well illustrated it was.

Illustrations from our lives, pictures from nature or the world around us or accounts from Scripture. Cement that message. Especially resonating with us are those pictures with which we're most familiar.

Things that we can relate to. Things that we understand and know about. Some illustrations, if you listen to preachers from another country, sometimes they're lost in translation between cultures.

Or between languages. But when an illustration works, it's something that we're familiar with. The preacher's talking about something that we've experienced, that we have seen, something that we know about.

[3:45] So it works. It clicks. And we remember what he was preaching about. And so when James, for example, is writing about faith, he gives us some examples. He doesn't leave it out in the abstract of false faith and genuine faith.

He gives examples that we've been hearing about. He gives the armchair philanthropists and the demons as an example of faith that isn't genuine. And he gives Abraham and Rahab as an example, an illustration of faith that is genuine.

And we understand what he means. And as you read 2 Timothy 1, we're reading along and there's exhortations for Timothy. And we've been away from it for some time.

But he comes and he's exhorting Timothy. Hammering away at him really in this letter. Don't quit, Timothy. Hold on to the truth that you've received from your mom and your grandma and from me. And don't be ashamed of Christ.

And don't be ashamed of me, Paul, his servants. And live for Christ and his Gospel that's been entrusted to you. Hold on to that Gospel. Proclaim it to others. All of these things. Hitting them with truth after truth after truth.

[4:48] Don't be ashamed of the Gospel. We're servants of the Gospel, Timothy. Don't give in. And then we get to verses 15-18. And they seem very out of place to us.

It's not an exhortation. It's not direction to Timothy. He starts talking about how he's been deserted. And how there was this one man that was faithful to him. What does that have to do with anything, Paul?

It's an illustration. It's a picture of what he's just been talking about. He said, don't be ashamed, Timothy. Here's an example of someone who was ashamed of me. Phygelus and Hermogenes. They deserted me when I needed someone. And here's an example of someone who wasn't ashamed. Onesiphorus. A marvelous example of a faithful servant who stood by Paul in his time of need.

And so instead of just hammering away, hammering away at Timothy, he pulls back for a moment. Says, this is what I'm talking about. These are things that you know about, Timothy. These examples might sort of roll off our back because we can't even pronounce their names.

[5:52] Let alone understand who they are because we don't know. And so we go, that's kind of strange that Paul put that in there. But we want to look at those illustrations tonight a little bit closer and learn a little bit about them.

To make the point, don't be ashamed of the Gospel. And of God's servants. Of the Gospel. We want to see that some people are ashamed. Some people are not ashamed.

And then see which one we are. Are you ashamed or not ashamed? Some are, some aren't. Which are you tonight? Some people are ashamed. And he begins in verse 15.

You know, Timothy. You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phagelus and Hermogenes. This is something that was not news to Timothy. He's reminding him of something that he already was aware of.

Don't forget what you've seen. Don't abandon me now, Timothy. Don't be ashamed of me because you know that I already have been abandoned. People have been ashamed of me. People have forsaken me. Don't you join them, Timothy.

[6:53] Everyone in Asia has deserted me. Probably a little bit of hyperbole. Exaggeration to make a point. Everyone in Asia hadn't, everyone hadn't abandoned Paul.

There was still Onesiphorus. And there was still Timothy that hadn't abandoned him. And likely others. But he's making a point that many had forsaken him. We don't know exactly who he's talking about.

There were some Asian Jews that stirred up trouble for Paul in Jerusalem. In Acts 21, maybe it was them. Or later in chapter 4 of this book, in verse 16, he'll say, At my first offense, no one came to my support.

But everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. Maybe he's talking about some people in the church at Ephesus that didn't come to his trial. Didn't come to support him. When he was on trial at Rome.

And you can imagine Timothy. He said back in verse 8, Don't be ashamed to testify about our Lord or ashamed of me as a prisoner. What does he mean by that? What do you mean, Paul?

[7:51] Don't be ashamed. And then he gets down here and goes, Oh, you mean like this group of Jews from Asia? Or like Phygelus or Homogenes? Oh, that's what it means to be ashamed of you. To forsake you.

To turn my back on you. To leave you when you're most in need. And Phygelus and Homogenes, perhaps the foremost of this group of Jews that forsook him in Asia, or perhaps the ringleaders of that group, regardless, they don't have a good name, do they?

We've seen from Proverbs, the name of the wicked will rot. And here's the name of two men rotting away before us. It's the only time they're mentioned. And we should say that just because they deserted Paul doesn't necessarily mean that they deserted the faith.

They could have remained followers of Christ and just didn't support Paul in his time of need, and were still believers. When he talks about those in chapter 4 that forsook him, he said, may it not be held against them.

But all that we know about them is something negative. It's that they didn't stand with Paul when he needed it most. And that's what we remember about them. It's not how you want to be remembered. Not how Timothy should be remembered.

[9:01] And so they serve as an example. Their crime was simply turning away from him. Not being there when they needed him. Something that wasn't unique to Paul.

It had happened to Jesus too. John 6, verse 66. From this time, many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. They abandoned him.

They gave up on their leader. And sadly, it happens in our day as well. People turning away from the truth and turning away from the faithful preaching and teaching of it. We see it in children abandoning the faith of their parents.

Former church members leaving their church families, speaking against their pastors without cause. And sometimes, followers of Christ, they follow for a time, but eventually they give up and turn away.

Now, you can't turn away from Christ and still be a follower of Christ. You can turn away from Paul and still perhaps claim Christ, but you can't turn away from Christ. And many turn away from Him.

[10:04] Don't be like these people, Timothy. You know this, Timothy. Don't forget. You know this, people of God. Don't be among those who are ashamed of the truth and ashamed of servants of the truth and abandon it.

Don't be numbered among them. Some are ashamed. But secondly, thankfully, that's not His only example. There's not just an example of what not to be, Timothy. There's a good example. A positive one.

One of what you should be like. Not everyone is the same. Some are not ashamed. There's more to the story. A man who stands out in the mind of Paul and whose Timothy should remember as well. He says in verse 18, You know very well in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus. Again, it's something Timothy knows. As soon as Paul writes Onesiphorus' name, Timothy goes, Oh, that's what I should be like.

That's what it means to not be ashamed of Christ and of His servants. Onesiphorus had been the very opposite of Phygellus and Hermogenes. He had refreshed Paul and he had done it many times.

[11:06] And his name is remembered well here. The memory of the righteous is a blessing. So the memory of this man is a blessing. And he comes and he is a refreshment to Paul. Whatever kind of refreshment it was, Onesiphorus was not the kind of guy who soothed his conscience respecting service to others by just doing something once.

Oh, I've done a good deed for the Apostle Paul and so I can say that I've served this man and I can move on. Oh, it says he did it often. He refreshed him often, frequently, many times.

He came to Paul and it was a blessing to him. Likely both spiritual and physical refreshment. It seems that he had left his home in Ephesus to travel to Rome in order to be of service to Paul. And wouldn't that be refreshing in and of itself?

Here's Paul. He's been sitting in a Roman prison. Dark, dank, a dungeon likely. He's in chains. He's surrounded by profane, godless men who cared nothing for Paul and his God.

He's in a miserable situation. And then one day, out of the blue, unexpected, unknown to Paul, in walks Onesiphorus. You can imagine what that did for Paul's heart just seeing him.

[12:16] How it must have refreshed him. How his heart must have leapt for joy. What a blessing to him. I imagine it to be like the joy of a missionary who's been gone for a long time in a foreign country, receiving a visit from a beloved member of his sending church.

Or a family member. What an encouragement to have contact from home. To hear how the church there is doing. And just to see a familiar and friendly face. And you add to that the element of surprise here.

And Paul must have been overjoyed. Refreshing indeed, like a cold drink on a hot day. Or maybe better for the weather we have now, like a warm fire and a cup of hot chocolate after you've been out shoveling the snow.

It refreshes you. It invigorates you. It makes you feel better. And so, this man was to Paul. He refreshed him. And he wasn't ashamed of Paul or his chains. What a difference from these others. Few, if any, had come to visit Paul in prison of all places. But this man, Onesiphorus, was glad to see him. And so we begin to understand Paul's exhortation in v. 8.

[13:19] Don't be ashamed of me, his prisoner. He's in prison writing this letter. He's in chains. Timothy, don't give up on me now. And you can bet Timothy was under pressure to do that. He's in Ephesus. And the truths he's proclaiming are under attack.

And Paul is under attack. And people are going, really, Timothy? You're still clinging to the Apostle Paul? If you get another letter from him, Timothy, just throw it away. Don't even read it. Can't believe you're still listening to that guy. And Paul writes and he says, Timothy, don't listen to them. Don't be ashamed of me, his prisoner. Just because I'm in prison doesn't mean that I'm in the wrong.

He's falsely on trial. Don't be ashamed of me. Even though everyone around you is telling you that you should get rid of me. That you should have nothing more to do with me.

Don't give in. So this example of Onesiphorus, an encouragement to Timothy. He refreshed Paul often. He wasn't ashamed of his chains. On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me.

[14:21] Required significant effort to find Paul. Would have been no small task just to make the journey from Ephesus to Rome. But he does this. And then, a lesser person might have given up.

Well, I did my best. I came all the way to Rome, but I can't find Paul. It's too hard. He's in prison. The governing authorities aren't going to let me near him. And so I did my best and so my conscience is soothed.

And some people might have quit then, but not Onesiphorus. He worked hard. He diligently. He labored until he found me. He did whatever it took.

That's how Paul instructed Titus to serve. Titus 3.13, Do everything you can. That's our word. Hard. Diligent. Work hard to help Zenos the lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they have everything that they need.

Do everything in your power. Don't stop short. And this man didn't. He did whatever it took and he found Paul. Faithful service to the kingdom can be hard work.

[15:20] And when you find somebody ready to do that kind of work, it's refreshing. So Paul's glad to see his brother in the faith. And he says, now he holds him before Timothy. Follow this example.

Imagine he was a breath of fresh air to Paul in that dungeon of stale and stinking air in the prison. What a relief to see this man. And one more thing, Timothy.

You know very well how many ways he helped me in Ephesus. Literally, how many ways he served in Ephesus. It doesn't say how many ways he served me. Paul just says how many ways he served. And Paul likely here has in view much more than just his service to Paul, but how he had been a servant in the church at Ephesus. He's been a blessing to you. And Timothy, you know this. He's calling his attention to his regular pattern of service.

What he does for Paul here isn't surprising because it's not out of character. We know his track record of faithful service. And so we are almost expecting that he would be faithful to Paul.

[16:22] And he is. Another reminder to Timothy. Timothy, you need to serve faithfully there in Ephesus as well. You've seen what Onesiphorus has done. He wasn't put off by false teachers. He wasn't put off by people who disagreed with me.

He pressed on in service there. You do it too, Timothy. And I can tell you that such servants are refreshing to the heart of a pastor. People that are willing to labor and work for the cause of the Gospel.

People that aren't ashamed of the Gospel and of servants of the Gospel. To have people in the church that labor tirelessly for the sake of the Kingdom is an immense blessing. And I think of that. I can't help but think of our deacons right here in this church. And I thank God for you men. The way that you have served. I have to say that there aren't other servants in the church.

I thank God for you as well. It's an encouragement to the heart of your pastors when you labor.

When you labor in many ways as Onesiphorus did in Ephesus. It's refreshing.

[17:21] So there's this one who is not ashamed. And what does Paul wish upon him? What does Paul pray for him? He pronounces a blessing on him. Mercy to his household and to him.

May the Lord, verse 16, May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus. Interesting that he pronounces a blessing on his household. Before he pronounces a blessing on the man himself. And we begin to think that his household must have made sacrifices and made an effort to reach out to Paul as well. They had to sacrifice. If Onesiphorus was to travel to Rome to find Paul, then they had to give up a husband and a father for a period of time.

And likely they had shown hospitality to Paul when he was there. He had been a servant. His family had been a servant to Paul. They had refreshed him by their labors and showing kindness and hospitality.

And so the blessing, mercy comes to them as well. But also to the man himself, verse 18, May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day.

[18:26] Onesiphorus, verse 17, Found Paul in Rome. May mercy find him. Verse 18. Simply a reflection of the words of Jesus. May find mercy in that day.

And Jesus talks about what it will be like in that day for those that have been faithful servants. Matthew 25, verses 34. And following 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. For I was hungry. You gave me something to eat. Bet the household of Onesiphorus had done that for Paul. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.

I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me. I was sick and you looked after me. I was in prison. And you came to visit me. So Paul says, He showed me mercy. May mercy be shown to him in that day of judgment. Now his showing mercy to Paul didn't earn him mercy from God. But he showed mercy because he was blessed of God. One who had received mercy himself, he had received mercy.

[19:30] And so he shows mercy to others. And he will receive mercy as well. Jesus is talking to those who are blessed by God. Whose inheritance was prepared since the creation of the world.

Before they had done anything good or bad. Their inheritance was prepared. So they couldn't have earned it. But, mercy is shown to those who have received mercy and shown mercy.

And you show mercy because God has shown grace to you. So may mercy come to this man in that day, in the day of judgment. And what an encouragement then. What a challenge to Timothy and to us.

You know, it probably seemed like the path of least resistance to Timothy would have provided the greatest blessing. He's in Ephesus. He's facing all of this pressure. People wanting him to abandon Paul and his teaching.

And maybe that seemed like a good option to him. Life would be much easier if I would just give up. If I would just be ashamed of Paul. If I would just forsake him. If I would just go along with these false teachers in Ephesus.

[20:34] I wouldn't face all of this pressure. I wouldn't face all of this trouble. And life would be so much easier. If he would just give in and be ashamed of the crazy apostle. Life would be good.

Go with the flow. And not be so hated and oppressed. But things are not always as they seem. That's what Satan wanted him to think. And isn't that what he does? Doesn't he portray the way of wickedness and the way of evil is something other than what it is?

He holds out some blessing. Some benefit. Life will be better for you. Life will be easier if you go down this way of being shamed of the Gospel and of Christ. But that's never the case.

He holds out that bait. But there's something sinister behind it. It's like we do when we find that there's been a mouse in the house or in the garage.

We put out a trap. We put some peanut butter on that trap. Or we put some cheese on that trap. All the while going, mice are really, really stupid. We don't even disguise the trap so much.

[21:33] We just put something that's attractive on it. And we go, man, they're stupid. I can't believe they would go for that. It's a mouse trap. And that's obvious. Until the bar snaps and it breaks the little mouse's neck.

And it really was stupid. But you know, are we any smarter? When we take the bait and Satan holds out before us, he's holding out before Timothy this easier way.

This way that will make life much better. And it's really very thinly veiled and Scripture exposes Satan's ways before us. But still, it looks so good and we like peanut butter or cheese or whatever it is so much that we take the bait and snap.

The bar comes over. And it's more than just our neck that's broken. It's our soul. And we've lost our way. And we've forsaken Christ and gone astray because we thought it would be easier. Don't go that way, Timothy Paul says. Don't go that way, people of God. Don't go down that path. Don't give in. See Satan's deceit for what it is.

[22:41] And instead, take the hard road. Stand up for the Gospel. Stand up for the servant of Christ. And you will receive mercy in that day of judgment. Isn't that again what Jesus said in the Beatitudes?

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown merciful. Paul's simply praying for that very blessing to come to Onesiphorus and his house. And in doing so, he's reminding his beloved Son in the faith and us of the one true way to blessing.

And that is through faith in Christ. Faith that isn't devoid of good deeds. Faith that is demonstrated by obedience and showing mercy to others.

You say you have faith, are you showing mercy to people around you like Onesiphorus did? Some people are ashamed. Some are not. Which are you tonight?

Timothy is challenged with this and God puts it in His Word to challenge us as well. What kind of Christians are we? Ashamed or unashamed?

[23:45] It will show in our response, our reaction, our attitude towards Christ, His Gospel, and His servants. Sometimes it will show up in our attitude towards other Christians at your school.

You're afraid to stand with them because you know that they've faced ridicule before. And so, you hide in the shadow so that other people won't know that you're a Christian. And you let them suffer alone like Paul suffered alone.

It will show in how you act towards your parents. No, parents are not apostles, but they are God's messenger of truth for you. How do you feel about your parents' kids?

Do you love them? Do you thank God for them? Do you pray for them? Or are you ashamed of them? I think of kids being ashamed of their parents. They don't want to go out in public with them sometimes because their parents aren't as hip as they are and they dress like old people and they act like old people and they're not as cool as you are.

Actually, your parents are much cooler than you are kids, but it doesn't seem that way, does it? And so, they're ashamed sometimes even to be seen in public with them. And I can remember having feelings like that.

[24:58] That's a sad thing though. I hope that you kids don't feel that. I hope you love to go out with your parents and to be seen in public with them and delight that they would want to take you out and be with you. I hope that that's not your attitude, but sometimes, and I can remember feeling the shame to my shame now.

Not just being seen with my parents, but whenever we prayed at the Hoke House at home, we held hands around the table when we prayed and gave thanks for the food.

And you know what? When we went out to eat somewhere, which wasn't terribly often, it was an event, it was special, but when we did that, nothing changed. You still held hands around the table and you still prayed and still gave thanks.

And I remember thinking as a child, what are these people going to think of us? And I had shame in my heart of my parents. And that's exactly what Paul is saying we can't have.

Don't be ashamed. Don't be ashamed of the Gospel. Don't be ashamed of people like Paul that are faithfully proclaiming that Gospel. And if for you that's your parents, don't be ashamed of them.

[26:00] Be thankful for them. Stand with them. Gladly. And if somebody thinks you're crazy for holding hands around the table and thanking God for the food, oh good, you've made a stand for Christ and it's a witness for Him, a testimony for them.

It'll show in our attitude towards people all around us. Towards classmates, parents, co-workers, people that claim the name of Christ.

Will we avoid people who are suffering for the cause of Christ so that we won't have to suffer with them? Many Christians do that. There's a lot of Phygelus and Hermogenes types. I think often more than there are Onesiphorus types.

But we need a church full of Onesiphoruses who are unafraid to stand with those who are suffering for the Gospel. If there's somebody in your class taking heat for a stand that they took about creation or about homosexuality or some other important biblical issue that comes up, abortion, and they take a stand and they're taking heat from everybody else in the class.

And you sit and you just sort of keep your mouth shut. You duck and you hide in the shadows. Think what an encouragement you could be to that person by standing with them. Like Onesiphorus stood with Paul.

[27:16] Instead of being ashamed and turning away from them. Think of how you could be a blessing to strengthen those who are ministers of the Gospel. Let's think about minister types for a moment.

Not apostles because we don't have apostles anymore. But think of pastors and missionaries. Are you looking for opportunities to strengthen the hands of those who labor in the ministry? Looking for ways to refresh them like Onesiphorus did for Paul. Looking for ways to be of service and of help to them. It can take place right here at home with your own pastors or with pastors of other churches or with missionaries.

You want to talk about things that surprise us. Things that we can praise God for. Onesiphorus was not some really unique, special guy. We don't have any evidence that he was an officer in the church.

He was just an average Joe. And what a surprising thing that God can take average, everyday, ordinary people like Onesiphorus and use them to refresh the souls of His ministers.

[28:20] Praise God for it. He can take every one of you sitting here tonight and use you to be a blessing to your pastors, to missionaries all around the world.

It'll take hard work. It'll take diligent work. Do it by praying for them. Do it by giving them a word of encouragement. You can do that by email or phone. You say, I can't find our missionaries. Oh, that didn't stop Onesiphorus, did it?

He searched for them until he found them. And you don't even have to go all the way to Rome to find Paul now, do you? You can find him on the internet. You can find him on the email. You can find him by picking up the phone.

Giving them a call and encouraging them. I don't have their phone numbers. Do you think that would have stopped Onesiphorus? Come find him. I've got him. There are some of them anyway. If I don't, I can find him.

Do the diligent work to be an encouragement. Ask yourself this question. Could any minister of the Gospel, pastor, missionary, any minister of the Gospel say about you, he often refreshed me.

[29:22] Like Paul is able to say about Onesiphorus. He often refreshed me. Could somebody say that about you? Or could they say about you, he searched hard for me until he found me. That will take hard work.

And sometimes we won't ever know some of that work that you do in your prayer closet. In your giving. That's ways that you can refresh the hearts of pastors and missionaries. But reach out and do that work.

Find them. Be creative. To be an encouragement to those around you. Maybe the laborers that we know aren't in prison. But maybe they're suffering for the Gospel in other ways.

Stand with them. Show them kindness. Show them hospitality. I've got missionaries that pass through here fairly often. More often, I think, than any other church I've ever been a part of.

And it's a blessing to be able to open your home to them. Stan usually organizes that. Go see them. He says, next time we've got a missionary, I want them in my house. So that we can not just benefit from them and it will be a blessing to you.

[30:25] But so that you can bless them. So that you can refresh them. So that you can encourage them. I debated whether or not to say this. We must say it. You know that there's a laborer, a pastor right here in your own midst who faces extraordinary challenges every day.

And he's not here tonight. Because he's facing those extraordinary challenges. And we need to be refreshing him often with words and deeds.

Not just his family members doing that labor of love. But all of his brothers and sisters in Christ, don't be ashamed of his suffering. Be thankful for his labors for the cause of Christ.

And do whatever you can to find him and refresh him. May it not be said of us that we have deserted him. And many of you have. And I don't mean to imply that he has been deserted.

But we can come alongside and be a refreshment, an encouragement, a help to him. Let's do it by God's grace. Let's be an Onesiphorus to our pastor. Many of you have done these things for your pastors.

[31:33] And you are to be commended. And may mercy be shown to you and your households. As it was to Onesiphorus. These few verses of illustration from the pens of Paul begin and end with, you know.

You know, Timothy. Everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me. You know very well, Timothy, how many ways he helped me. Timothy knew of these examples.

And the question is, Timothy, what are you going to do with it? Are you going to be like Phagellus and Hermogenes who abandoned Paul? Are you going to be like Onesiphorus who was a faithful servant?

You say, I don't know those guys. You're right. We don't know them. We know a little bit about them from what we see tonight. But you do know of other examples. You know people around you that have been like Onesiphorus.

Will you be like them? I think of our team that just went down to Lakeshore, Mississippi. Here's a group of people who went, some of them sacrificing time off of work in the middle of economic hardship to strengthen the arms of Pastor Don Elborn and the church there in Lakeshore, Mississippi.

[32:45] May you receive mercy for having shown mercy to the people down there. You came and you refreshed them by your labors. You went and you found them and you refreshed them. You say, I don't know Onesiphorus.

Okay, you know somebody on that team that went down to Mississippi. You go and do likewise. You find someone that you can encourage in the way that they did. We need more of that spirit to infect more of us, brothers and sisters.

We need unashamed friends sharpening and encouraging their friends. We need people like the woman who anointed Jesus' feet and refreshed Him. We need saints like those that prayed for Peter when he was imprisoned and were unashamed of his chains.

We need to be like this. We need people that pray, that refresh their fellow Christians around them. Maybe some of you have personal experience with someone who is ashamed to stand with you for the cause of Christ.

Maybe you know what it is to be abandoned by someone like Phygellus or Homogenes. They told you in secret that they too were a Christian. And you thought you had an ally.

[33:46] A friend in the classroom or the workplace or in the neighborhood. And you took a stand one day and you're thinking, this person will come alongside. They'll make a stand with me. And we'll stand together.

And they kept their mouths shut. And you felt the sting of what it is to have their backs turned on you. You know what that feels like. Don't ever do it to someone else. You know.

You know what it is to know someone like Onesiphorus. Maybe you know what it is to know someone like Phygellus and Homogenes. Learn from those examples. Take those illustrations from your own life and let them come home to your heart.

The things that we know should affect the way that we live. In this case, it should inspire us to serve Christ and His servants, never being ashamed of them or the Gospel.

And if by God's grace we find ourselves faithful servants like Onesiphorus, then we can be confident because of the promises of God's Word that we will find mercy. Not because we're so great.

[34:50] Not because we've done such wonderful things. But because God has been merciful to us. Will you find mercy in the day of judgment? Will you be counted among those that have shown mercy to others and cast yourself on the Savior?

Matthew Henry says, the best thing we can seek either for ourselves or for our friends is that the Lord will grant to them that they may find mercy of the Lord in that day.

When they must pass out of time into eternity and exchange this world for the other and appear before the judgment seat of Christ, the Lord then grant unto all of us that we may find mercy of the Lord in that day.

Will you find mercy of the Lord in that day? Have you cast yourself upon the Savior? Do you have faith in Christ? Faith that has been demonstrated in mercy towards others. Mercy from God is what you must have if you would have eternal life and blessing.

This is the way. Walk in it. God, be merciful to me, the sinner. I pray that you've cast yourself on the Savior and are trusting in Him. Don't turn away from Jesus tonight.

[35:53] Don't turn your back on Him. He's the one place of refuge and safety. Some did turn away from Him. And after that happened, Jesus says, You do not want to leave too, do you?

Jesus asked the twelve. Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. If you turn your back on Christ, you can go to the world and you can find some temporary comfort there from your friends and all sorts of things, but you won't find eternal life. You won't find blessing if you turn away from Christ. Don't turn your back on Him. But one more note of good news. Even if you have been like Phygelus and Hermogenes, you can still find mercy. You can be forgiven for your lack of mercy and service. Do you remember Peter and the other disciples? They look a lot to me like Phygelus and Hermogenes on the night when Jesus was betrayed.

When Jesus most needed someone like an Onesiphorus in the courtyard before His trial, where were the most likely candidates? One of them had betrayed Him.

[37:06] Ten of them had already deserted Him. And the one that was still there in the courtyard with Him then denied Him three times. Sounds like a bunch of Phygelus and Hermogenes, doesn't it?

They were ashamed of Jesus' chains. They were ashamed of His suffering. And they turned their back on Him for a time and they went away. But you know what?

What did God do with them? Did He write them off? He said, you know what? That's it for them. I'm done. They didn't show mercy. They didn't stand with My Son. I'm not going to stand with Him. No, you know what He did?

He brought them back. He restored them. That's the nature of God's glorious mercy. It's undeserved. And in fact, it's shown when we deserve the very opposite.

Peter and the others are restored. And so can you be. What a good thing it was that when we had our backs to Christ and were running away from Him, that God didn't give up on us.

[38:04] He didn't say, I'm going to let Him go. No, He grabbed us and He brought us to His Son, Christ. And so if you've been ashamed of Jesus for your whole life or for a moment, you've thought about turning your back on Him, come and repent tonight and find mercy.

Then go and be bold for Christ. Don't be ashamed of Him or His servants. What a blessed Savior we serve. May we serve Him boldly. May we serve Him diligently with hard work like Onesiphorus did.

May God make us to be faithful servants to one another and for the cause of His Gospel. Let's pray together. Our Father, we pray that when Jesus does come again that we might find mercy in that day.

We pray that You would give us grace to show mercy to others around us. Give us grace to stand for truth and to be unashamed of Your Gospel and to stand with others who stand for the truth, to not abandon them in their time of need and suffering and persecution.

We pray that You would enable us to be servants that work hard for the cause of Your Kingdom, that work hard to support Your servants. Give us hearts that run out in love and so then run out in service to our brothers and sisters around us.

[39:22] Make us to be more like Onesiphorus. We pray that You would forgive us for the times we have been ashamed, when we have hidden, when we haven't stood with someone who stood for You, when we haven't opened our mouths to speak for Christ.

We pray that You would make us bold, that You would make us diligent, and we pray that You would enable us to do these things. We are not sufficient, and so show us mercy.

Enable us to show mercy to others around us, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.