

## Loyalty

### 2 Timothy 1: 11-17

“Jackie Robinson was the first black person to play major league baseball. While breaking baseball's color barrier, he faced jeering crowds in every stadium.

“While playing one day in his home stadium in Brooklyn, he committed an error. His own fans began to ridicule him. He stood at second base, humiliated, while the fans jeered.

“Then shortstop "Pee Wee" Reese came over and stood next to him. He put his arm around Jackie Robinson and faced the crowd. The fans grew quiet. Robinson later said that arm around his shoulder saved his career.”<sup>1</sup>

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“In the December 31, 1989 *Chicago Tribune*, the editors printed their photos of the decade. One of them, by Michael Fryer, captured a grim fireman and paramedic carrying a fire victim away from the scene.

“The blaze, which happened in Chicago in December 1984, at first seemed routine. But then firefighters discovered the bodies of a mother and five children huddled in the kitchen of an apartment.

“Fryer said the firefighters surmised, "She could have escaped with two or three of the children but couldn't decide whom to pick. She chose to wait with all of them for the firefighters to arrive. All of them died of smoke inhalation."

“There are times when you just don't leave those you love.”<sup>2</sup>

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“Has any athlete had more fans than Michael Jordan? Probably not. Even so, Michael Jordan said something surprising about his need for emotional support to columnist Bob Greene. When

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<sup>1</sup> Craig Brian Larson, ed., *750 Engaging Illustrations*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 330.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Greene asked why he wanted his father to be in the stands during a game, Jordan replied, "When he's there, I know I have at least one fan."

"Even the great Michael Jordan needs support. Loyal support. How much more do the rest of us need regular reminders that others are behind us—even when we aren't at our best."<sup>3</sup>

Our text for today is 2 Timothy 1:11-18 NET:

*For this gospel I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher. Because of this, in fact, I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, because I know the one in whom my faith is set and I am convinced that he is able to protect what has been entrusted to me until that day. Hold to the standard of sound words that you heard from me and do so with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Protect that good thing entrusted to you, through the Holy Spirit who lives within us.*

*You know that everyone in the province of Asia deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes. May the Lord grant mercy to the family of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my imprisonment. But when he arrived in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me. May the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day! And you know very well all the ways he served me in Ephesus.*

We saw in 2 Timothy 1:8-10 that Paul lists some of the essential truths that we must have in our arsenal when we do battle with the enemy: God's power, salvation, holy living, God's purpose and grace.

Paul's declaration in verse 9 that it is *not because of anything we have done* emphasizes Paul's awareness that salvation is by God's grace alone. Our faith in the work of Jesus makes us eligible to receive God's grace of salvation. Where there is true faith God grants salvation. Yet we must always remember salvation is a gift and that it only comes through the power of God. Salvation has nothing to do with our works. Another gift that God gives us is that He will provide whatever strength we need in order to minister for Him or even, if necessary, to endure suffering for His glory.

Paul further expands on the topic of grace by revealing that it has been in God's plan since before the earth was even formed, and it was revealed through Jesus Christ during His ministry on earth. It is the same Christ who has destroyed death.

1 Timothy 1:10 NET:

*But now made visible through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus. He has broken the power of death and brought life and immortality to light*

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

*through the gospel!*

Jesus has revealed the mystery of salvation by grace through our faith.

2 Timothy 1:11 NET:

*For this gospel I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher.*

Galatians 1:11-12 NET:

*Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. For I did not receive it or learn it from any human source; instead I received it by a revelation of Jesus Christ.*

2 Timothy 1:12: NAS:

*Because of this, in fact, I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, because I know the one in whom my faith is set and I am convinced that he is able to protect what has been entrusted to me until that day.*

“That day” refers to Judgment Day. “That day” is a phrase that occurs twice in this chapter. The first occurrence is here in verse 12.

It seems apparent that Paul’s purpose in telling Timothy these things was to encourage him. If Paul is expected to suffer for the Gospel, it would certainly follow that Timothy should be prepared to do the same thing. If we look back at 2 Timothy 1:8 we see that Paul is urging Timothy not to be ashamed. Now in verse 12 we see Paul saying that he is *not ashamed* of his suffering. Why not? Because he knows that God will protect him since he has completely submitted himself to God and Christ. But what has Paul *entrusted* to God? Everything, his entire life. That is the kind of faith I long for! The words *until that day* again refer to the Second coming of Christ.

Titus 1:9 NLT:

*He must have a strong belief in the trustworthy message he was taught; then he will be able to encourage others with wholesome teaching and show those who oppose it where they are wrong.*

2 Timothy 1:13-14 NET:

*Hold to the standard of sound words that you heard from me and do so with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Protect that good thing (treasure) entrusted to you, through the Holy Spirit who lives within us.*

The **“treasure”** is the Gospel.



**Message of Salvation**

2 Timothy 1:15 NET:

*You know that everyone in the province of Asia deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes.*

“Everyone in the province of Asia” is most likely hyperbole (exaggeration: deliberate and obvious exaggeration used for effect, e.g. “I could eat a million of these;” “Everyone hates me.”) Not everyone deserted Paul but a great many did.

2 Timothy 1:16-18 NKJV:

<sup>16</sup> *May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain;*

<sup>17</sup> *but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found me.*

<sup>18</sup> *The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day--and you know very well how many ways he ministered to me at Ephesus.*

Paul expresses gratitude for a man named Onesiphorus (O-nes-i-foris), and for his loyalty to Paul. Onesiphorus was a man who had risked everything for Paul. The reference to the “household” of Onesiphorus, rather than to Onesiphorus himself, suggests that he had already become a victim of persecution.<sup>4</sup>

Theologians are divided on the meaning of Paul’s words about Onesiphorus, “The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day.” There are two ways to understand this prayer for Onesiphorus:

(1) Onesiphorus was dead at the time of Paul's writing. This may be inferred by the verb “grant mercy” in verse 16 and to “on that day” in verse 18. This view is uncertain because of the mention of his household.

But if one accepts this interpretation, then Paul is praying for a dead person. Indeed, those who advocate prayers for the dead use this passage to justify the practice, which is in no way supported by the Bible.

(2) Another possible explanation is that Onesiphorus was separated from his family at Ephesus for quite a while as he did missionary work. Warren Wiersbe points out that Onesiphorus had been in Rome with Paul, but was no longer there when Paul wrote this letter to Timothy. Since Paul also apparently knew Onesiphorus was not at his home at the time, Paul only sent greetings to his household.<sup>5</sup>

Paul prayed for God's blessing and mercy on his family and he wanted God to remember at the judgment these good things Onesiphorus had done for Paul so that he might be

<sup>4</sup> John Phillips, *The John Phillips Commentary Series – Exploring the Pastoral Epistles: An Expository Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2004), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 361.

<sup>5</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *Be Faithful*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books. ©1981. P. 136.

rewarded. We do something similar at times when we are expressing gratitude for something a person has done and say, "May the Lord add extra stars to your crown."

Paul now elaborates on the tangible ways Onesiphorus expressed his loyalty to Paul. "*He often refreshed me.*" One could conclude from this comment that Onesiphorus visited the market frequently to pick up supplies for Paul and then looked for a chance to bring them into the prison.

*"He... was not ashamed of my chain."* The word translated "*chain*" is halusis, which means "*handcuff*." Paul was literally chained to a Roman soldier twenty-four hours a day. It, therefore, took a lot of courage to bring supplies to Paul's cell because not all of the soldiers chained to Paul could have been very friendly. This would have been a high risk undertaking. Can you imagine your mood if you were the soldier whose job it was to be chained to a prisoner and have to go through that all day long, perhaps several times a week? Some of the soldiers probably believed Nero's lie that the Christians, of whom Paul was the leader, had been responsible for the burning of Rome. Perhaps a number of them had lost loved ones in the fire. The guards would probably have reported Paul's conversations and the names of his visitors to the authorities. In spite of all this, Onesiphorus refused to be frightened and continued providing for Paul. Paul prayed that the Lord would "*grant mercy*" and protect "*the household of Onesiphorus.*"<sup>6</sup>

2 Timothy 1:17 NET:

*But when he arrived in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me.*

"Onesiphorus lived in Ephesus, but for some reason had been in Rome and, while there, had gone out of his way to search for Paul until he had found him. If Paul had been largely "abandoned" by others, Onesiphorus may have had difficulty finding anyone who would even admit to knowing Paul's location. Besides, a stranger to the city may simply have had problems getting through the red tape and bureaucracy of the Roman penal system. In any case, the aging apostle saw in Onesiphorus a brother who allowed neither inconvenience nor potential embarrassment to keep him from tracking Paul down. Onesiphorus's visits had refreshed the lonely prisoner."<sup>7</sup>

2 Timothy 1:18 NET:

*May the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day! And you know very well all the ways he served me in Ephesus.*

No doubt "*that day,*" also used in verse 12, was speaking of the day of the believer's

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<sup>6</sup> Op. Cit., Phillips.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

judgment, when every child of God will stand before Christ to give an account of his life.<sup>8</sup>

2 Corinthians 5:10 NRSV:

*For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil.*

Paul prayed that his friend would receive mercy from the Lord on that final Day of Judgment. He was certain that there would be an accounting of each person's life, and that service for Christ unrewarded in this life would be openly rewarded in Heaven.<sup>9</sup>

Timothy was familiar with Onesiphorus and his service in Ephesus. Onesiphorus not only provided faithful service; to Paul in Rome but he also had a record of service in Ephesus as well.<sup>10</sup>

Paul's expression "*mercy from the Lord on that day*" conveys deep appreciation to Onesiphorus, rather than a formal request to God for his fate in eternity. Paul was telling Timothy to imitate those, like Onesiphorus, who were faithful to Christ and unashamed to be associated with servants of Christ who were suffering or who were in prison.<sup>11</sup>

Onesiphorus had remained loyal to Paul when others forsook him. And in doing so, more importantly Onesiphorus was demonstrating his loyalty to Christ.

In verse eight of chapter two Paul told Timothy not to be ashamed:

2 Timothy 1:8 NAS:

*Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God.*

Actually, that is a theme of this entire chapter: not to be ashamed of the Gospel or of those who preach and teach it. We have seen how Timothy struggled with timidity and possibly with anxiety. We've seen that Paul encouraged him to overcome it by exercising his spiritual gift and by relying on God's power within him in the form of the Holy Spirit.

When God has done so much for us, it only seems right that we should remain steadfast and loyal to Him. Yet have you ever been reluctant to speak for the Lord or to witness for fear of what others would think of you? That, in reality, is being ashamed of Christ and the Gospel.

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<sup>8</sup> Glen Spencer, *The Expository Pulpit Series – Second Timothy: The Making of a Good Soldier*, (Tunkhannock, Pa.: WORDsearch Corp., 2000), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 45.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

Do we only act and talk Christian when we are with our fellow church people? Or do we maintain our walk and our testimony out there in the world, even when it gets hostile? Paul's words to Timothy are also words for us: "*Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord.*" Christ put it even more strongly:

Matthew 10:33 NAS:

*"But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven."*

But God also equips us so that we may take a stand for Christ without shame. He gives us the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts, just as He gave to Timothy. Furthermore He gives us His promise that He will never leave us, nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). So let us go forth boldly and take our stand for Christ, being loyal to Him in word, in thought, and in our actions.