

Onesiphorus: The New Testament Ebedmelech.

by Andrew Bonar

The sermon highlights the faithful and supportive nature of Onesiphorus, a friend of Paul who showed kindness and sympathy in difficult circumstances, and encourages listeners to follow his example.

Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:16

Topics: "Support for One Another", "Living in Light of Eternity"

Description

Andrew Bonar emphasizes the profound impact of Onesiphorus on the Apostle Paul, illustrating how this faithful friend provided support and encouragement during Paul's imprisonment. Onesiphorus, whose name means 'one who brings profit,' exemplified true Christian love by visiting Paul in prison, unashamed of his chains, and ministering to him with kindness and practical help. Bonar draws parallels between Onesiphorus and Ebedmelech, highlighting the importance of standing by God's servants in times of trial. He encourages believers to actively support one another, regardless of their gifts, and to live in light of the coming day of Christ's return, where mercy will be fully realized. The sermon concludes with a call to reflect on our own faith and actions in anticipation of that day.

Transcript

2 Timothy 1: 16-18 and 4: 19

Paul had a heart that felt everything keenly. It is from his pen that 'Rejoice with them that do rejoice and weep with them that weep' comes. It is he who wrote in Phil.4: 8: 'the bowels of Christ Jesus.' Many times he speaks in this way, 'desiring greatly to see thee.' No wonder, then, that he so felt the kindness of Onesiphorus, and has recorded it all. This name means 'one who brings profit,' not unlike 'Onesimus,' perhaps given by his parents with the hope, 'may he prove a helper to many!' He lived at Ephesus, but business took him away at times from his family to Rome. Perhaps he was converted during the revival at Ephesus, (Acts 19: 1-20). He was :

I. A helper of Paul, though not a preacher.--He did not leave his profession after his conversion, but he and his 'household' confessed Christ in their place. He 'refreshed' Paul often, by kind deeds and words, and brotherly intercourse, and prayed with him. He cheered him when he felt (as he sometimes did), like 2 Cor. 2:13, 'no rest in his spirit,' etc. He paid him little attentions, sent some of his family to run messages for him, or to take him little comforts. Also he 'ministered' to him--the very office of the women in Luke 8:

3--giving him of his substance. All this is recorded because of Heb.6:10.

II. A visitor of Paul in prison.-- He was not ashamed of my chain. Now that passage, in Matt. 25: 36-43, tells of times of trial and temptation to friends to shun the risk of helping the prisoners. But this man won the prize which Christ speaks of. Simon of Cyrene may have done what he did willingly, but at any rate Onesiphorus did, for 'he sought me out diligently, and was not ashamed of my chain.' Paul had been thrust into a Roman prison-cell among many scores of criminals, himself branded as the worst because he was a 'Christian,' one of those whom the Emperor had stigmatised as burners of Rome! Yet this faithful friend lets it be known that he is Paul's friend, finds his way into his cell--sits down and converses with him--bears reproach for him. By this sympathy so practical he proclaims, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.' Our deeds tell where our heart is; and is it not deeds rather than words that Christ judges by in Matt. 25: 36,43?

III. Paul's prayer for him and his.--Paul does not narrate the story in his usual style, but in a curiously abrupt way bursts into a fervent prayer for Onesiphorus. 'The Lord have mercy on his household, may he himself find mercy in that day.' Does this contain much? Yes, everything. If once the barrier to the outflow of mercy be removed, everything good and heavenly may come in. 'Have mercy on me' has a very wide meaning in the Psalms. But specially observe it is 'in that day' --the day of Christ, the day of recompenses, just as in Jude 21 'mercy unto eternal life' is at Christ's appearing to bring the full store of blessing.

This is a case like Ebedmelech's in Jer. 38. Remember how the Lord took notice of that Ethiopian having shown himself not ashamed of God's servant (chap. 39: 16, 17, 18).

In the fact that Paul specifies the 'household' we may read that they were very dear to Onesiphorus, and were possibly left at home without him at the time Timothy was to carry the message (4:19), and tell of this prayer. Parents, see how the Lord feels for your children!

Now let us look back and glean a few lessons.

1. See how one saint may help another.--Even one who has no gift of utterance may help a great Apostle. Brotherly love expressed in any form has wonderful effects--a look, a word, a prayer, a taking part by sympathy and acknowledgment.

2. Learn not to wait till others come forward.--Work yourself and let others follow. On this occasion 'no man stood by' Paul, but all the more was the noble conduct of Onesiphorus felt. So in common work for Christ. 'I go a fishing' (John 21: 3). This is your part ; and let others seeing you, follow. 'We also go with you.'

3. Do much for saints.-- Refresh them, 'minister to' them, 'do good unto all men (Gal. 6: 10), especially unto them who are of the household of faith. Remember the Master's words (Matt.10: 40, 42).

Think of 'that day' spoken of here and elsewhere,-- so present always to Paul's mind that he does not specify it. Has your faith led you to love that day? Are you of those who love His appearing? Do you do all as under the light of that day? 'That day' begins eternity, and our day of grace now decides our state 'in that day.' Will you 'find mercy in that day'? Have you already 'in this your day' found mercy at the mercy-seat through the blood of atonement?

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