Onesiphorus: A Breath of Fresh Air
2 Timothy 1:13-18 (NKJV)

- We all know what it’s like to have someone at work, at home, or in the church who when you see and talk with them, they always leave you better.
- The types of people who enrich your life, encourage you in the storm, and have the right thing to say at the right time.
- You may even be one of those people in the life of someone else here today but don’t even realize it.
- Here in First Timothy, Paul ends the chapter by pointing out that person in his life, Onesiphorus. His name means profit bearer or help bringer.
- He lived up to his name well, bringing profit to Paul’s life when he was suffering in prison.
- Let’s read verses 13 through 18 and get our bearings a bit.

Vs. 13—“Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.”

- Paul reminds Timothy to hold fast to what has been deposited to him.

Hold fast: to hold one’s self to a thing or to adhere or cling to.

- Timothy was to cling to the pattern of sound words.
- Jesus would describe this person in the parable of seed and the sower. The one who received the seed of God’s Word on the good ground, the soil of his heart was eager to receive; notice what took place…

“But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.” Matthew 13:23 (NKJV)

- When the Word of God is understood and adhered to it always bears fruit in our life.
- Notice here that Paul says, “hold fast,” or clinging to the pattern of sound words.

Sound words: whole or wholesome free from any mixture of error.
Wendi and I have been trying to eat foods that are not processed, but instead whole and wholesome, without added sugar or added preservatives. It’s all that stuff that your body does not process well. Ice cream is my struggle; a healthy scoop of Rocky Road has been a weekly part of my diet, or maybe 3 scoops. I will often eat ice cream and fruit together, makes me feel better about the ice cream. The fruit is good, but the ice cream is full of sugar. It is no longer wholesome.

- And in the same way, Paul is reminding Timothy to stick to the wholesome Word of God, don’t add to it and don’t dilute it.
- And when you do, it will bear fruit in your ministry and in the lives of those you minister to.

“Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.” Proverbs 30:5 (NKJV)

“As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the Lord is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him.” 2 Samuel 22:31 (NKJV)

- Paul says do this by faith because you love the Lord, and then he reminds him of the power that will enable him to do so. Notice…

Vs. 14—“That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.”

- Keep it by the power of the Holy Spirit within you.
- Tap into the power of the Holy Spirit who lives in you to keep what was committed to you. Don’t do it in your power, but rather in the dynamite power within you.
- It’s the Holy Spirit that enables you to understand the Word. Jesus spoke this to us in John’s gospel…

“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.” John 16:13-14 (NKJV)
• The Holy Spirit is our teacher, our tutor, and the one who helps us understand and apply truth. He is ultimately the one who will enable us to guard the truth of his Word.
• So Paul’s encouragement here in verses 13-14 is to stay faithful to the Word of God, then he moves into those who were not so faithful.

Vs. 15—“This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.”

• What a tough statement to make, to write something like this down in scripture, and then to put a couple of names to it.
• Everyone in Asia had abandoned him, but for some reason these two get their names called out, Phygellus and Hermogenes.
• Maybe it was a shocker that these two went this direction; maybe it was to shake up a few people; maybe they were leaders at one time and now they were no longer, and so Paul wanted to make sure they were not being looked at as leaders to follow anymore. I’m not sure.
• What we do know though is that these were two examples that did not hold fast to the Word of God. They were unfaithful.
• Paul mentions others in scripture that were like this…

“…for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia.” 2 Timothy 4:10 (NKJV)

• Notice Paul says the cause for Demas and his departure was that he loved this present world.
• He didn’t guard what was given to him, much like the seed that fell on the bad soil.

“But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.” Matthew 13:20-22 (NKJV)
God was faithful to give the seed, but they were unfaithful to hold fast to it, to cling to it.

Notice they all received the seed, some with joy, but when tribulation arises in their life, or the cares of this world become a greater passion than the kingdom of God, it’s choked out and taken out.

I think one of the most difficult things in ministry is to see a person who once walked with the Lord no longer doing so. They were once hanging out with the family of God, but now they no longer have time for the family of God.

But it shouldn’t surprise us when it happens—it happened to Jesus, it happened to Paul. I look back at my father’s ministry of 50 years and there were many who went to back to the old life.

And it will happen here at Wildwood. We are not better than Jesus or Paul. It still hurts watching those who we love go back to the miserable life that they were saved out of.

That’s why the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write down these two names; reminding us of how important it is in the difficult days we live in to hold fast to sound doctrine.

This brings us to Onesiphorus, one who was not only faithful to sound words, but was willing to speak those words in the most difficult of times.

Vs. 16—“The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain…”

Onesiphorus, his name means help bringer or profit-bearer. In other words, spending time with this guy is profitable; you’re always going to profit being in his presence.

Notice how he lives up to his name.

Three things about Onesiphorus:

1. He refreshed me

   • Onesiphorus was noted for bringing refreshment to Paul in tough times.

   Refreshed: to cool off, to revive, to refresh one’s spirit.
• I’m so grateful for those who are in the body of Christ that have this gifting.
• You’re always refreshed when you spend time with them because of their gift of encouragement or their heart for hospitality.

Being in ministry for 28 years, I can look back and see the people that God put into my life like Onesiphorus. Mark who was a Texas seminary student when I was a teenager, Mrs. Vincent was that person when I was in my early twenties, also my father, my father-in-law, my mother, my wife, Pastor Scott has been this in my life, and many of my staff. Larry Lockwood was this in my life for many years until he went to be with the Lord.

• We read about a few others who ministered like this in the letter to the church of Corinth.

“I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they supplied. For they refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men.” 1 Corinthians 16:17-18 (NKJV)

• Onesiphorus was not the only one in the body of Christ that was gifted in this area; you look around and you might see many that are good at this as well.
• Let me encourage you; don’t stop blessing people like you do.
• And let me also say, this is not just for the gifted—listen to what Jesus exhorted us in Matthew’s gospel…

“…for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’ Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’” Matthew 25:35-40 (NKJV)

• Notice the simplicity of their giving—“When I was thirsty, you gave Me something to drink. When I was hungry, you fed Me. When I was a stranger, you clothed Me.”
• They did not make it complicated. When they saw the need, they did what they could to meet it.
• It’s what happens when we get a new nature. In the new nature we are givers because the one who lives within us is a giver.
• Notice what we see next...

Vs. 16—“The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain…”

2. He was not ashamed of me

• Paul was in prison, and it would seem as if his critics were using this against him. Paul has to keep reminding Timothy not to be ashamed of his testimony, of his circumstances. He was reminding him that it was God’s plan, and ultimately he was in prison for the gospel’s sake.
• It was not for sin, but for the Savior.
• Last week we looked at his calling; part of that calling was to bear the name of Christ before kings, and he is going to get another shot to do that with Cesar Nero.
• I am sure it brought out more critics than ever. Paul is in prison. He has stepped over the line again with the Roman government, so more likely there are rumors going around to stay away from Paul.
• But not Onesiphorus, he is bigger than that. His love for God’s people was greater than their circumstances.
• He was willing to risk his life to find Paul, willing to risk his popularity among those who were critics.

My mother was like this; she could bless anyone, even with people that hurt her emotionally or said things about her or my father and their ministry. She still had the ability to grace them and even seek them out and be a blessing to them. She didn’t allow the rumor mill or what people might think of her with certain people keep her from connecting with others.

• It’s the heart of Jesus. Let’s remember what Jesus did before He made His way to cross. It’s one of those humble moments where Jesus washes the feet of the disciples…

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“Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray Him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, ‘Lord, are You washing my feet?’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.’ Peter said to Him, ‘You shall never wash my feet!’ Jesus answered him, ‘If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.’ Simon Peter said to Him, ‘Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!’ Jesus said to him, ‘He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.’ For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, ‘You are not all clean.’ So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, ‘Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.’” John 13:1-15 (NKJV)

- Jesus would wash the feet of those who loved Him, those who denied Him, and even rejected Him.
- Washing feet is about as humble as it gets. I’ve done it. It’s not an easy thing for anyone, but it’s an example for all of us to bless those in our path.

“Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.” 1 Peter 3:8-9 (NKJV)

- When you bless you will always be blessed.
- Paul will even make note to what extent he was willing to seek him out…
Vs. 17—“...but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found me.”

3. He went out of his way for me.

- Onesiphorus was not just refreshing people, ministering to people when it worked out, when it was convenient, but also he went out of his way. He sought Paul out very zealously.
- He was determined. He was willing to put energy into it.
- This ministers to me and challenges me.
- Listen to what David Guzik said...

“Is there not one ‘fringe’ person you know that others have forgotten about, who has no status or reward to give you back, that you can reach out and love in the name of Jesus? Is there not one person on the outside whom you can draw into your circle of friends, and refresh them in the name of the Lord?” David Guzik

- Onesiphorus, liked the one who saved him, was not concerned about his popularity, his image, instead he cared more about people and so should we.
- Notice the last verse; notice Paul’s response...

Vs. 18—“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 returned the favor by doing the most important thing he could do for Onesiphorus, he prayed for him, and it would be written down on the pages of scripture.
- Maybe it’s time you return the favor to the Onesiphorus in your life. Reach out and pray for them, maybe even write that prayer down and let them know how grateful you are for them.
- Let’s make time to appreciate those that enrich our lives, to appreciate those that are a breath of fresh air into our lives.