

*Onesiphorus: the Loyal Friend*

*2 Timothy 1:15-18*

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*O God of our fathers, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we rejoice to know You as our God and our Father, the God who was and is and is to come, the one true and living God, and so we pray that you would speak now to us, through Your Living Word, in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Our text this morning comes from 2 Timothy, chapter 1. Please turn in your Bibles to 2 Timothy chapter 1, verses 15 through 18.

Our series is called Unsung Heroes, those men and women who are heroes of the faith in the Word of God and yet lesser known than Abraham or Esther, Moses, or David. Their songs are not so widely sung and yet there is much to learn from them. We come to one such man in this paragraph this morning, [2 Timothy 1](#), beginning at verse 15.

“You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains, but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me— may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day!—and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus.”

Here is a good, simple prayer I encourage you to pray for yourself this week, and it would be a good prayer for any week: Lord, make me a loyal, refreshing, diligent servant in the cause of Christ.

It's a good prayer for this week, any week, for you, for anyone in Christ. Try, just a few times this week to pray this prayer, "Lord, make me a loyal, refreshing, diligent servant in the cause of Christ."

That in a sentence was this man, Onesiphorus. Or if you like, One Sip Hours, that's what they called him as they gathered their sweet tea together.

Onesiphorus. Like most of the unsung heroes in this series, we don't know a lot about him, but what we do know makes him worthy of praise and emulation. Onesiphorus is a Greek name, so likely this is a gentile. His name means "bringing profit," or "useful," or "helpful."

Try that sometime with a new child. I've never baptized a young man named Helpful, but that's sort of putting all your cards, all your chips into the table with that one.

Helpful, useful, bringing profit. And indeed, that's what he was. Not just one time but many times. Note the word here "often," he often refreshed me, Paul says.

Now this man is mentioned only two times in the Bible, here in 2 Timothy chapter 1 and then again in chapter 4, and that's not much. We don't know of any books that he wrote. We don't know of any reformation he sparked. We don't know of any large donation he made. We don't know of any great civic reforms he enacted. According to the Greek Orthodox Church, he was later a bishop in Asia Minor. According to the Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church, said that he was martyred. But we don't know that to be the case for sure.

What we do know for sure is what we have in these few verses that Onesiphorus was a loyal, refreshing, diligent servant in the cause of Christ. Those four words form our outline this morning, and a prayer that I hope you'll pray this coming week.

So first of all, Onesiphorus was loyal.

This is an attribute and a virtue we don't hear much about and we don't think much about until you need someone to be loyal to you.

Tomorrow's the Fourth of July, Independence Day, we think about our nation's history and I've been on a bit of a reading kick through the Revolutionary War period and various founders and you perhaps know the name Benedict Arnold. Now Benedict Arnold is one of those persons in history who had the unfortunate occurrence of living too long. If he had died in say the late 1770s, he would probably be one of the great heroes in American history. There would be monuments to him and colleges named after him. He helped to capture Fort Ticonderoga in 1775. He was instrumental in what some say was one of the turning points in the Battle of Saratoga in 1777. He was a valiant soldier on the side of the American Revolution.

Yet, now he's come to us and his name is synonymous with one thing – being a traitor. So if you ever call someone a Benedict Arnold, at least in this country, I don't know what they say over there in the British Isles, but here it's not a compliment. Because he went over to the other side.

There is a monument in Connecticut that says there in the memory of the brave patriots massacred at Fort Griswold on the sixth of September 1781 under the command of the traitor Benedict Arnold, who burnt the towns of New London and Groton, and spread desolation and woe throughout the region.

May there never be a monument in your honor which says such things, “to the traitor Benedict Arnold.” His very name is synonymous with being dis-loyal.

Well, we have this man Onesiphorus who is quite the opposite. Paul says you are aware, verse 15, all who are in Asia, and remember here, Asia think Turkey roughly, all who are in Asia are deserting him. Now not everyone, he's writing to Timothy, he'll mention Luke, but there was a defection on a large scale. Some left simply because they had other ministry opportunities to go to. We don't fault them for that. But others left for less noble reasons.

Turn to the last chapter, 4. You get a sense for this if you look at chapter 4, verse 9. Paul writes to his young pastoral protégé Timothy in Ephesus, which is part of Asia Minor, he says, “Do your best to come to me soon. For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia. Titus to Dalmatia. Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. Tychicus,” who we saw two weeks ago, “I have sent to Ephesus. When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments. Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message.” And then this line in verse 16: “At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me.”

Paul is writing this letter toward the very end of his life, in prison, under Nero, and he says about this incident in the past, “When I most needed somebody to come and stand up for me, when I was standing there, facing my trial, these false accusations,” and just to use a little sanctified imagination, and the judge said, “Is there anyone who would come to speak in defense of this traitorous man?” Paul says the room was silent. Nobody was there. They had all left.

Now some of these he had sent off to other places in ministry, but he names names. Demas, in love with the present world. Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm. Back in chapter 1 he mentions Phygelus and Hermogenes.

Many of these deserters were probably scared of what would happen if they associated with a criminal, if they openly declared themselves to be on the side of the Gospel. This is why Paul starts this letter with an exhortation not to be ashamed.

Now we hear that language in Scripture and we know famously Romans chapter 1, “I am not ashamed of the Gospel,” and we might put it on a bracelet or put it somewhere on a wall or we put it on a book cover and that’s great. They had many reasons to be tempted to be ashamed of the Gospel, and increasingly we do so in our day. Shame is a powerful emotion.

Sometimes Paul uses shame instructively. There are some things that we ought to be ashamed of, certain behaviors. But yet the world tries to give to us a sense of embarrassment, humiliation, and shame for the very contours and convictions of the Christian faith.

That's what's happening with Paul. Look at verse 8 of chapter 1: "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share in suffering for the Gospel by the power of God."

He knew that as he was in prison, it would be a risky thing for anyone to associate with him. He mentions in verse 15 those who turned away, Phygelus and Hermogenes. How would you like this to be your legacy? Forever memorialized in Scripture as those who deserted the Apostle Paul. Now these were leaders or close friends, which is why they needed to be named. They were cowards. Their passivity hurt the Church, hurt Paul personally. Sometimes we think the only way to really do damage to someone is if we actively are trying to be a mean person, or if we are actively going after something, doing something wrong.

Well, that's true, but just as often we can be hurtful to our friends, we can be hurtful to the cause of Christ, by being passive, by being cowards. It's one of the first sins mentioned in [Revelation 21](#) when it talks about those who are outside of the gates of the New Jerusalem. Cowards.

Now it doesn't mean that one time when you had your Bible open in Starbucks and you didn't share your faith with somebody or they asked you. It's not talking about that, though it'd be good to share our faith. It's talking about the person who in that moment of crisis, in that moment when all of the Christians must be counted for, he or she deserts.

And so it happened with Phygelus and Hermogenes. Oftentimes, Christians believe the right things, they want to do the right things, but they refuse to stand and be counted. Do not be a deserter. Leaving people when times are rough, giving up on the

cause when opposition is fierce, chickening out on your friends because your neck is on the line.

So considering all that was surrounding Paul in prison, you can see why he is so thankful for this man Onesiphorus. Verse 16: May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.

This, in the first century, was an even more severe cancel culture. We can see the same things in our day. You can just imagine how Paul would have been labeled, “The controversial Apostle Paul,” “The man from tarsus has been dogged by allegations from the very beginning,” “This man has been credibly accused of various sins and scandals.”

The Jews, many of them thought he was a hater of the Temple. He despised their traditions. The Romans thought he was a rabble rouser, a threat to the well-being of the Empire.

Now, of course, parentheses here, of course unthinking loyalty, blind support, is no virtue. Our friends, our leaders, our heroes, do sometimes let us down. Sometimes they are accused of things for which they have done wrongly. Faithful are the wounds of a friend. True love, actually true loyalty sometimes looks like correcting those who are in fault. So this is no excuse for circling the wagons when the one in the middle of the wagons is a fake or a phony.

But think about that image, circling the wagons, sort of a wild west shootout and who are you after and all the wagons circle to protect. Well, that’s a bad thing, circling the wagons, unless, of course, the person that you’re protecting is, in fact, innocent, in which case you would be very thankful to have some wagons encircling you.

What if the person is like Paul? Condemned by the ruling elite, suspected of wrongdoing by his culture, held in derision by most people who knew his name. What then do you need?

Well, private reassurances are nice. If somebody walked by and just whispered, “Praying for you, Paul.” That would be nice if somebody could send just a secret text message to Paul, “Just wanted you to know we’re all pulling for you.” Well, those private assurances would be nice, but what you need when the mob comes are public friends.

Prisoners in the ancient world were often dependent on the kindness of friends and family. They’re not getting three square meals. They’re having people to have to come by and through the gates or the bars or the stocks, give them food. The Empire is not going to spend their money to help provide for these people, so you, if you care for them and you know them and you love them, you come take care of them or they die. That’s how it worked.

Turn over for a moment to Hebrews. You can get a sense for this in Hebrews chapter 10, [Hebrews 10](#), verse 32. You just read between the lines and you get an understanding of how this prison deal worked. “But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated.”

All right, you’re friends with the wrong people. You’re connected to the wrong people. Okay, I don’t know if you did anything wrong, but your friendly with some of these people who we know did something wrong.

Verse 34, and here’s their fault: “For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.”

Some of these Christians were suffering not because they had been thrown into prison, but because they showed compassion to their brothers and sisters in Christ who had, and you can understand how this works. People in the town square see: What are you doing? You're bringing bread and water, slipping it through the bars for this man, who's in prison, because he's a cannibal and drinks the blood of his God, or because he's a sexual malefactor having love feasts, agape feasts, with brothers and sisters in Christ. Or he's not a good Roman because we know that the gods of the Romans you can see. You Christians, you don't have any gods you can see.

They called the Christians atheists because they didn't have any statues, they didn't have any gods you could visibly see. So when they see you provide a meal, a cup of cold water, to one of these brothers and sisters, everyone starts whispering, "Did you see that? Did you see who they associated with? Did you see who they cared for? Ah, let's go after them tonight. Let's take their property tonight."

Onesiphorus put his own life on the line by coming to search for Paul when he was chains. He was a loyal friend. He knew who Paul was even when others had maligned him or had forgotten, had deserted him.

Maybe you remember from way back learning in school and reading the tales of Odysseus that when he returns home after 20 long years, disguised as a beggar because he's going to try to rid his household of all of these suitors and it's overrun, and there, do you remember? The only one who recognizes Odysseus in disguise, it's his dog, a man's best friend, Argos recognized him, and he's overrun with fleas and he soon will breathe his last because the poor dog has been neglected. But you can read there in The Odyssey it says Argos had just enough strength to droop his ears and wag his tail because he knew that this was his master. He alone could recognize who had really returned.

Onesiphorus knows who the Apostle Paul really is and he's not the person that everybody says about him, all the allegations.



Are you loyal in the same way to your friends? Again, not unthinking, not that we don't correct people when they need correction. You understand. But are you loyal to your brothers and sisters in Christ? Are you eager to defend their honor before others? Or do you help cut them down? Or do you stand in silence? Would you deliver a meal to them in prison if it meant that your possessions might be plundered that night for doing so?

We all want friends like Onesiphorus. Loyal friends who show up.

I remember when I was just starting to preach as a young man and the first sermons I did were at the Holland City Rescue Mission, because they would let somebody like me come and preach. I didn't know what I was doing, those poor men heard some really bad sermons, and then they got a meal, so they were there. I was so excited because I was getting a chance to preach. I remember going, and I did it a few times, this was maybe my last year in college, and sure enough when I would go to the Rescue Mission and I would preach these sermons, I would see two or three or four of my friends who were there to listen and encourage me and support me.

Then later when I had opportunities during some of the summer months when I was in seminary or before seminary to preach at churches in the evening service usually, during the summer, there would be some of my friends. Whether I was any good or not, it was such an encouragement to see them there.

I have had the experience before as a pastor, rushing to a hospital room to pray for somebody, to be there, something joyful has happened, a baby has been born, or something very bad has happened, an accident, and sometimes you rush there as a pastor and it's a wonderful occasion when the room is already packed. Now I understand that often can't be the case and maybe it was packed 10 minutes before I got there, so if your room's not packed the next time, don't feel discouraged.

But, boy, that's what'd we'd want in our hour of need, isn't it? Here comes the pastor to pray. There's already 12 people here praying.

I've heard many times, from the nurses on charge, "There have been people in and out of this room. We have heard hymns being sung all day long." You want friends who are loyal.

That as Onesiphorus. He was not ashamed of Paul's chain. We will have occasion, many of us, if we live long enough in these days, to prove that we are not ashamed to be called brothers and sisters in Christ with one another, and with those who may be mistreated for the cause of Christ, in this place or around the world.

He was loyal.

He was, second, refreshing.

That word, you go back to chapter 1, "He often refreshed me." That's almost a word you don't expect to find in the Bible. It sounds like a commercial for a soft drink or as I grew up calling it "pop." That's what it sounds like, refreshing. But it's here. It's a good word. It means to cheer up.

Now for Onesiphorus it probably meant he brought Paul food, sustenance. He physically gave him refreshment. But it also means spiritual encouragement. He probably came, prayed with his friend in prison. This was not a one-time thing. It was a mark of his character, "He often refreshed me."

Are you a refresher? Or a depresser? In people's lives. Some people are joy-givers, and some people, how shall we put it, are joy-suckers. They [sound effect] they suck it out of you.

Don't be a spiritual mosquito. It's often, it's a real theological conundrum. Were there mosquitoes before the Fall? If there were, they just sang in your ear and brought you nectar or something. But no longer. And when you have one of these nice summer nights and you sit out on the back porch, you put a chair in your driveway, and maybe you'll do it in these coming days and you'll do some fireworks, on these warm summer nights, sometimes you get a lovely breeze, and even when it's hot and humid,

that breeze, that summer breeze at night, is refreshing. Other times, a stagnant air sits in and you're out there swatting yourself the whole time with mosquitoes.

Friends, would you be a summer breeze instead of summer mosquitoes? The sort of person that you want to be around. Ah, this person is a blast of some cool air in a summer sweltering heat rather than a pesky mosquito.

Trisha and I used to be better at this when we were younger and able to get out more, had fewer kids, but we would go to someone's house and our prayer in the car along the way would be simply, "Lord, let us be refreshers. Let us be a refreshment. Let us be de-odorants, not odorants."

Now what does that mean for you? Well, you have different personalities. Some of you are introverts, some of you are extroverts. Some of you love to host people, some of you it's more difficult. For some of you to be invited over to someone's house would be the greatest refreshment, for others, that seems like a stressful undertaking. So the Lord understands we were wired differently. Maybe to be a refreshment means that you talk a little less, or maybe it means you talk a little more. Maybe it means you give people the gift of your curiosity and you ask them good questions. Maybe it's a home-cooked meal. Maybe it's a gift card. Maybe it's a baby-sitter. Maybe it's giving somebody peace and quiet. Maybe it's learning to smile.

Calvinists smile. We should. Of all people, we should smile. We're saved from our sins, we know that God's in control from beginning to last. You've heard the joke before: The Calvinist wakes up in the morning, he stubs his toe and he says, "Well, I'm glad I got that out of the way." [laughter] We have every reason to be cheerful.

Of course, life is difficult, filled with suffering. But perhaps being a refresher is simply to smile, to laugh, to think of others before yourself.

You think of the difference. When you come to a hot car. Sometimes I'll drive somewhere, I'll go on a run, and I'll come back and no matter how long I'm gone in

these summer months, the car is just sweltering hot. Sometimes I'll have thought ahead and I'll have a water bottle and I'll have ice in it, and you get back and it's still cold and you see the water running down the side. Oh, I'm making you thirsty right now.

You know when I was growing up, at one point my church switched from a nice wooden pulpit to a plexiglas pulpit. We're not going there. They had a plexiglas pulpit and they had a little plexiglas stand that the pastor put his water bottle on there. It was actually a glass of water. I remember many summer Sundays, now I'm only giving you one thing to think about, but I would, I would look at that and it was just the condensation was coming down and [sound effect] [laughter] I just thought, "He's not even drinking it. He's just taunting us with his wonderful, cold glass. It looks to refreshing. I wish we all had that glass."

Well, you come back to a hot car, you have that, or sometimes I've forgotten to get a cold glass of water there and I have like a, you know, half-drunk through can of Mountain Dew that's been boiling in the sun. I think, "I'm desperate but I'm not that desperate." It's not refreshing.

If you've ever had in your mind, your mind plays tricks on you, you think you're grabbing one thing, a glass of cold water, and it's room temperature milk or something. [sound effect]

Would you be, to your brothers and sisters, to your family and friends, that cold glass of water, not a baked, flat can of Coke?

It was said of John Eliot, the famous missionary to the American Indians, by one of his friends, "I was never with him but I got or might have got some good from him."

Some good from him. You walked away and you felt spiritually better. You felt like serving Christ more. You felt a little extra spring in your step. And as C.S. Lewis famously wrote one time, "When you meet someone like that, a humble person, you

don't walk away thinking, 'My, they were so humble,' like they talked about how humble they were. No, you walk away feeling encouraged and refreshed and then you realize, 'Oh, it's because they cared for me, they asked questions about me. They served me rather than themselves. They didn't get bent out of shape about how everything was situated. They were thinking of others.'"

Wouldn't it be great when we were on somebody's calendar, it was a get-to and not a have-to. How might you be a refresher this week? Or this summer? Or as a way of life?

I remember a pastor early in my ministry, and I'm sorry to say I have not kept up with his good habit, but I commend it to others who are better than myself. He would write a handwritten note to someone. I think he said he did two notes first thing every Monday morning. I've continued years later to still get one or two of those, so he's still doing it. Might it be a handwritten note, might it be an e-mail to a missionary. Maybe you plan a night out with another couple and you find the baby-sitter, or maybe you organize something, a movie night, a fishing trip, a basketball game, scrapbooking, I don't know. Or you visit, you visit your aging parents, you visit someone in the hospital. It doesn't have to be long. Don't worry what you'll say.

Or maybe it's simply putting into your vocabulary "thank you", "that was really nice," "that was so thoughtful." Give good Gospel compliments. Love others as you would want to be loved. Honor others above yourselves. Rely on the Lord's grace to refresh even difficult people. Live a contagious life of resurrection hope. May we be the sort of people that when our presence is gone, they say, "Boy, that was a cold glass of water on a hot day."

He was loyal. He was refreshing. He was diligent.

Notice it says, "He often refreshed me, was not ashamed of my chains," verse 17, "When he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me."

We don't know why he came to Rome. Maybe he had other business. Maybe he just came to find Paul in prison. He had to search for him earnestly. This took some work, some digging, some danger, some inconvenience.

We like to think it's the thought that counts. Ha, ha, I've tried that before on birthdays or anniversaries. [laughter] Honey, whoo, lots of really good thoughts. I thought of doing some amazing stuff for you. But of course we know it's rarely the thought that counts, it's the effort that counts.

Would we show up in Rome to look for Paul? Now we can't do everything. You can't be everywhere. You can't encourage everyone, write a note to everyone. We understand that. But if everyone else abandons your friend, would you still be there?

There is the undeniable importance of simply working hard for others. He searched for me, and he found me. It didn't come easy. He had to make an effort to get there and find Paul. He wasn't going to take no for an answer.

When I was in seminary I had to do some clinical pastoral education, which was a unit of hospital calling. This was scary anyway. Now I'm a young man, I haven't done a lot of, been in a lot of hospitals. I was born there and I didn't want to go back. So it was intimidating, and there I was at a hospital in Boston and I wasn't calling on people from the church or people that I knew. I would go each night and you'd look up the census and people when they were admitted, could put Protestant or Catholic, and most of them put nothing. It was Boston, so if they put something, most of them put Catholic, but there was a few P's there, a few Protestants, and when I was on duty, it was my job to go through and find the little P for Protestant. They didn't ask for a chaplain, they just happened to mention, they were soon to regret, that they were Protestants. So I would knock on the door, and being somewhat intimidated of the whole experience, I know that sometimes I poked my head in the door and said something like, "I'm the chaplain on duty. It looks like you're busy. We'll try to come back soon." [laughter] "I'm sure you would rather have a real chaplain come and visit

you.” Usually the person would say, “No, no. I’m not going anywhere. So come on in.”

It was the first year that the Patriots won the Super Bowl and I spent a lot of visits talking about Tom Brady, at least had something to converse with, trying to move into spiritual conversations. I was looking for an out.

So sometimes we are in serving others, but not Onesiphorus. He would have an easy out. Oh, it’s a long ways away. He’s in prison. There’s danger. But he searched for me and he found me.

Do you have people in your life who would drop everything, you know they would get in a car, they would hop on a plane, they would come to be with you, in your moment of deepest need? Are you that phone call for someone? That they would call you because they know, marriage is falling apart; he’ll come. I’m absolutely at the end of my wits; she’ll run over.

Now you may feel like in those moments you don’t know what to say, or you aren’t good at praying, or your uncomfortable in funeral homes or hospitals or prisons. Many people are. But the old adage is true – very rarely will they remember what you said, but they will remember that you showed up. They will remember not some great theological soliloquy, but you were there. You made a point.

Young people, young people. It’s amazing how far you can get in life by showing up and working hard. We just had this missions conference here and one of the things that they said about missionaries that they’re looking for, usually it’s young people who are going to this training school, two things. Of course you want spiritual maturity, you want theological acumen, all that, but if you simply can find someone who is teachable and will work hard, and then they added and has semi-normal social skills.

You show up. Do not neglect all the good you can do in your life, in your church, by simply showing up, because most people don't.

And older adults. Your opportunities maybe are different. Your energy level is different. Your health is not what it once was. Are you still doing what you can? Diligently? With whatever providential limitations you may now have?

George Whitefield once asked the preacher William Tennant in his old age whether he rejoiced that his time was almost done and he would soon be in heaven. Tennant replied, "My business is to live as long as I can, as well as I can, and to serve my Master as faithfully as I can, until He shall think proper to call me home."

Is that your mindset? My business is to live as long as I can, as well as I can, to serve my Master as faithfully as I can until He calls me home.

He was diligent.

Finally, he was a servant.

You notice he has a reputation for this service. He was probably a Gospel co-laborer with Paul. They had had some good times together. We read in verse 18, "You well know, Timothy, his reputation precedes himself. We all know the service he rendered at Ephesus."

Perhaps Paul wasn't even surprised when Onesiphorus showed up in Rome, because it was keeping with his whole life and his well-earned reputation. Paul thought, "If anyone's going to show up and knock on my door, it's good old One Sip Horus."

You know the saying that character is who you are when no one's looking. That's true. But you could also say character is whatever people are not surprised to find you doing. Character is whatever people are not surprised to find you doing. Here, when Onesiphorus showed up, I imagine Paul said, "Onesiphorus, my friend, my brother. I thought you might come."



You know well all the service he rendered. His reputation was well-established. Every church I've had the privilege of being a part of has had these servants. I could mention many of you by name, but you're the sort of servants you would want me to mention you by name, but you can think, I hope, of some of these brothers and sisters in our body at Christ Covenant. When you hear their names, you immediately think, "Oh, he's wonderful. She's the best. Oh, they are so kind. They are so helpful. Always with a word of encouragement. Always with a smile. Always with a good handshake, a pat on the shoulder, with a meal. They are there. Dependable, trustworthy, kind." We have many such people in this church.

In one sense being a hero, now that's a big word, but being a hero is quite simple – sacrifice self to serve others. Sacrifice self to serve others. That's a Christian hero. You could even say in a common grace way that that used to be how the world understood heroes. Sacrifice self to serve others.

Our world is in the process of completely reversing that, so today's heroes, "Express yourself and then demand that others affirm that expression." You express yourself, and you expect everyone else to affirm and change the world around you to support that expression and that is a hero. It's not a biblical hero.

Sacrifice self to serve others. Consider praying this week, "Lord, make me a loyal, refreshing, diligent servant in the cause of Christ."

We're here on this Fourth of July weekend, spend some time perhaps thinking about our own country's history. There are many heroes. And all of them are flawed. But we lose all of our heroes at a great cost. We need people to inspire us. When a child or a culture or a church doesn't have heroes, they end up with anti-heroes, cynics, scoffers, late-night talk show hosts. If you don't have a hero, you will find another hero and that's the hero who's too cool for school and knows how everybody has all the flaws and he's a cynic.

The Bible makes no apologies for telling us to have heroes.

[1 Corinthians 10](#) lays out good and bad examples, and says follow this, don't follow that. You have a whole chapter, Hebrews chapter 11, the famous hall of faith, all of those men and women. Or you think of Paul saying "follow me as I follow Christ." That is fundamentally a Christian hero. Someone worth following because he or she follows hard after Christ, and we need those heroes. Yes, all but one will have many faults, and we will be honest about their sins, and yet we will aspire to that which is truly good and virtuous, and we have such a man here in Onesiphorus.

Do you see, let me say in closing, do you see how this man points us to the hero of the story? How he followed Christ? Think about what Christ did. [Hebrews 2:11](#) says Christ was not ashamed to call us brothers. He had a lot of reasons to be ashamed, to take on human flesh, and all of the suffering that comes with it? All of the persecution, the mockery, the derision, and scorn? To be mistaken in His identity? To be crucified because of false accusations and a sham trial? He had reason to be ashamed. Why would the God of the universe want to come to earth and say, "Yeah, that's my family"? But He was not ashamed to be called our brother.

Did he not, like Onesiphorus, search for us? And He found us when we had no ability to be free in ourselves, no opportunity to go search and find Him. We were completely dependent upon His mercy, His grace, His initiative, and not only that, but He died for us. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. When we were slaves to sin and unrighteousness, when we deserved, in fact, His punishment, He came and He found us, imprisoned in our sin, and He said, "Come to Me, all you who are weary, heavy-laden. Come to Me. My yoke is easy. My burden is light. I have a meal for you – it's My body. I have a glass of cold refreshing water for you, and I will be crucified, but I've come to refresh you."

Will you, friends, welcome Christ into your sin-sick, weary soul? You don't have to live in prison. You don't have to feast on the dregs of the world. There is One searching for you, to find you, to give to you that food which will truly satisfy, and that water which will never run out. And He means to refresh your souls.

Let's pray. *Our gracious heavenly Father, we thank You for the Lord Jesus who, indeed, sought us and found us, died for us, saved us, and now ever lives to make intercession for us. We pray that we might come to Him*

