

Be Faithful
2 Timothy 1:13-18
Pastor John Miller

Paul is in a dark, dark dungeon in the capital of Rome. He was certain that he was going to die. The book of 2 Timothy is Paul's last will and testament. Some have called it his swan song. I don't know how accurate it is that a swan sings just before it dies, but Paul knows he's going to die. He has the sentence of death within himself and so is writing to his protege, Timothy, this young man who's a pastor in the city of Ephesus, which is kind of one of the main cities of Asia Minor. He knows that he's going to die, so he's wanting to encourage, strengthen, and equip Timothy to pass the torch to him.

Now, I can only try to imagine...and I believe 2 Timothy is a book that must be read with your emotions. There are those books of the Bible that you can't just read, you have to try to get into the situation. Think of Paul, over 30 years of faithful ministry. He had given himself tirelessly, relentlessly to serving the Lord, to preaching the gospel. He had ambitions and desires to take the gospel to Spain, but now he's been arrested. He's not under house arrest like his first imprisonment, he is in chains and in a deep, dark dungeon. He's writing to Timothy and calls him to come before winter and, "Bring my coat, my parchment, my books, and bring John Mark with you. He's a help to me in the ministry." I really believe that when you read 2 Timothy, you have to read it with that pathos, that emotion and sense of urgency that Paul felt knowing that he was going to soon go the way of all flesh.

I try, to some degree, without being morbid or negative, to think in terms of coming to the end of my life or coming to the end of my ministry. I think it's beneficial for every one of us to think about the end of life—to think about we don't know how many days or how much time we have—and what we're doing for God. We need to be more heavenly-minded and eternal focused, "Am I doing what God has called me to do? Have I been faithful to the ministry that God has entrusted to me?"

The title of my study tonight in this passage, by the way, is simply: Be Faithful. That's what Paul is going to encourage Timothy to do—to be faithful to the faith, the gospel, and to keep true to the truth of God's Word. Secondly, he's encouraging him to be faithful to Christian friends and to work together with other believers in the promoting of the gospel. Thirdly, in 2 Timothy 2:1-2, to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Let's read 2 Timothy 1:13-18, and I'll begin to unpack it for you. It's a marvelous section. Paul tells Timothy to, "Hold fast," now there's again some series of these commands or what are called imperatives. The first one is for him to "hold fast." What is he to hold fast? "...the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. 14 That good thing which was committed unto thee," here's the second command, "keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us." It seems like it's almost a break here, but I think there's a tie-in here. Paul wants Timothy not to follow the bad example of those who had turned away and were not following in the faith. He says, "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be

turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. 16 The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: 17 But, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. 18 The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well.”

There's really no break between chapters 1 and 2, so I want to read verses 1-2 of chapter 2. He says, “Thou therefore,” this is really a wrap up of what has just been read at the end of chapter 1, “my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” This is the third injunction or command or imperative, so “Hold fast the form of sound words,” keep or guard the thing that has been committed to you, and he says then, “...be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” Go back with me to verses 13-14.

The first section is be faithful to the faith (verses 13-14), and the command is that he should “hold fast,” to cling tightly to. What is he to “hold fast” to? The form of sound words. In the King James Bible it's translated “form,” but that word “form” is interesting. It actually has the idea of a standard, a template, or a pattern. It would be used of kind of a pattern, a template, a standard, or a design that he was to follow. What he's talking about there is the biblical truth that was imparted to Timothy from Paul. Now, Paul was an apostle. He spoke with apostolic authority, and what he passed down to Timothy was the faith. Jude tells us we're to, “...earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” Let me explain something. In the New Testament, when you have the reference to “the faith,” it's not talking about your trust in God. It's not talking about your faith in God or what we would call subjective individual faith in God. It's talking about the body of truth that we believe as Christians known as the Bible or Christian doctrine or what we would call orthodoxy. Orthodoxy is the idea of correct or right belief or right doctrine. He's telling him here that, “You have an example, you have a pattern, you have a template.” You lay a template down and draw out the shape.

I haven't done it in years, but I used to actually make surfboards. Anybody who makes surfboards or shapes surfboards knows that you start with a template. You have the outline of the board, lay it on the blank, trace, and cut it out. It gives you the design or the shape of that board. This template, this design, is actually the Word of God. This is why this thrills me so much because he's talking in context to pastors, and it's so very important that pastors give heed to sound doctrine—that they follow the pattern, that they follow the template, that they follow the guide or standard that was laid out by the apostles.

A few weeks ago we studied Acts 2 as we looked at the elements of a true church, and the Bible says there, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine,” which is the faith. The text says, “the apostles' doctrine.” By the way, the word “doctrine” means teaching. That's what the word doctrine means. We get the idea that it means dogma or what different groups believe, but it just means teaching. Sound doctrine is healthy doctrine or healthy teaching. He says, “Hold fast,” to this. By all means, it's so essential, and I think that we live in a day, in a time, in an era (although it's been something that has been true for the Church Age, all through

the Church Age) that Christians have departed or drifted away from the apostolic doctrine, the truth of God's Word; and we do get into church dogma, church tradition, or experience becomes the authority and we drift away from the true teaching of God's Word. We're to hang onto that, not only is the pastor but the people are to hang onto that as well. I would say that I actually feel kind of a greater commitment than I have ever before in my life in ministry to be committed to sound doctrine and doctrinal preaching, and to be committed to the truth of God's Word when so much of the church today is preaching kind of a feel-good, relevant, cultural, sensational kind of a pep talk doctrine and not really preaching the Word. I can't wait to get to chapter four where Paul has commanded Timothy to preach the Word.

Look again at verse 13. "Hold fast the form of sound words," that's another way of just saying the doctrine, the biblical truth that I have imparted to you. He says, "which thou hast heard of me." I'm going to come back to what the sound doctrine is, but how are we to hold this sound doctrine? In two ways, in faith and in love. That's not just enough to have the information in our heads, we have to believe it in our hearts. When he says you hold onto this, you hold onto it in two ways. You hold onto it in faith, in other words, believe what you believe, and he says to hold onto it in love. We're to be compassionate, kind, and loving. The Bible says the world will know that we're Christ's disciples by our love. It's been true, again, throughout the church, that sometimes people might have right doctrine and be orthodox but they're unloving in their behavior. Sometimes Christians don't really believe what they believe. Sometimes, "Well, I believe the Bible." Do you really, really, really believe what you believe? I'm going to cover about 13 things that we should believe, that we should hold onto, but do you really believe these things? Do you really hold onto these things, and do you hold onto them, "...in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."

In verse 14 Paul says, "That good thing," I believe that the "sound words" are the same as "that good thing which was committed unto thee." He's telling him in verse 13 to hold onto sound words and then describes it as, "That good thing which was committed unto thee." That word "committed unto thee" is the word used of depositing money in the bank for safekeeping. Some of you may put it in your mattress, some put it in your sock drawer, some of you may bury it in a jar in the backyard, I don't know, but most people put their money in the bank. I don't know how safe it is in the bank. You certainly don't get any interest for any money in the bank anymore. They charge you to keep your money. It's pretty bizarre, really. It's the idea of God has deposited something to us. So we have the "sound words" and now we have this "good thing," no doubt, he has in mind the gospel which he's been talking about throughout this first chapter.

What is he supposed to do? Well, in verse 13 he's to hold it fast, and now in verse 14 he's to keep it. The word "keep" is the word to guard or to protect. It carries the idea of to watch over. Do you know what it was used for? It was used for shepherds who watched over their sheep. What would you think of a shepherd that didn't keep an eye on his sheep and let the wolves get them. That's not a very good shepherd, right? A good shepherd keeps his eye on the sheep, but the word "guard" there, some translations have it translated "guard" not "keep," means to watch over and protect. It would be like somebody saying, "Will you hold money for me?" And you're going to be real careful because it's not yours and you want to make sure that you don't

lose it, so you're going to guard and protect it.

God has given every one of us a treasure. He has deposited something with us. Do you know what that is? That's His Word. That's the gospel. It's a very, very wonderful treasure, and we have it to share with other people. It has eternal consequences, that's why Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation," so you have, I have, been entrusted with this sacred trust, this deposit that we call the gospel. I think in terms of as a pastor that God has given me His Word to faithfully dispense to God's people, the household of God, and I shouldn't add to it, take away from it, delete it, dilute it, or twist it. I should just give the Word—nothing more, nothing less. God has entrusted that to us. "Timothy, you've been entrusted," so he's to do two things: hold fast and guard or protect the truth of God's Word.

Notice in verse 13, it was to hold it "...in faith and love," now in verse 14, it's to "...keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us." You think of God giving us this very valuable deposit and you're kind of freaking out thinking, Ohhh, I don't want to drop it. I don't want to lose it. I don't want to blow it. I want to be faithful because when I get to heaven I'll have to give an account to God for what I did with what He gave to me. Remember the parable of the talents? God gave talents and we had to give an account back to Him of what we did with them, so I'm going to have to give an account to God of what I did with my gifts, my abilities, and with the gospel He entrusted to me. It's a very frightening thing, unless we depend upon the Holy Spirit. He tells us here that we are to rely upon, to tap into, and depend upon the power of the Holy Spirit. He makes an interesting statement in verse 14. He says, "...which dwelleth in us." This is a clear reference to, and there are others in the New Testament, that every Christian has the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit doesn't indwell just super saints, you know, the pastor and the evangelist and the head deacons, "They have the Holy Ghost, but I don't really have it." I've met Christians that don't know they have the Holy Spirit. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit. The question is: Does the Holy Spirit have you? You have the Spirit, but sometimes He's all boxed up in a little place that you don't want Him to go anywhere. Are you yielded to Him? Have you tapped into His power? Paul says in Ephesians 5:18, "...be filled with the Spirit." That, by the way, is a command and it means be controlled by the Spirit. It just kind of blessed me to think that we're not only to "hold fast" in faith believing what we believe and do it in love, so we need to speak the truth in love, but we also need to keep or guard and we have to do that by relying upon the Holy Spirit which dwells in us.

What is this faith that we're to guard or protect or to keep? I've done this before, and I'm doing it again tonight. I'm going to try not to get bogged down, but if you're taking notes (I wish I would've got them thrown on the screen for you) I want to cover about 13 things that we are to believe in faith and love and we are to rely upon the Spirit and protect and guard these things. This is what Christians believe. These, by the way, are nonnegotiable. This isn't like some Christians believe it and some Christians don't, some Christians think this is right and some don't. No. If you don't believe these things, then you don't have Christianity. I'm going to talk about essentials. I'm not going to talk about mode of baptism. I'm going to talk about what is Christian truth, what is Christian belief. It's not completely exhaustive, but I think that it covers

all the important areas.

First, God's unity. The Bible teaches—Christians believe—there's only one God. Christians are monotheistic. I realize Muslims and Jews are monotheistic, by the way, the Muslim god Allah is not the God Jehovah in any stretch of the imagination. He's not the God of the Bible. He's a god of their own making and their own design. What do Christians believe? We believe there's only one true and living God.

Secondly, Christians believe that God is manifest in three Persons, that is, God's triunity—God's unity, one God; secondly, God's triunity. There's one God, but He's Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. So many Christians are confused about the triune nature of God. I've even met Christians that believe that the Father became the Son and the Son became the Spirit, that they took on different modes. It's known as modalism. It's a false doctrine about the nature of God. This is basically what Christians believe. We believe there's one God, three Persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—three separate Persons but one in essence. If you get that word written down and understand it, it makes it clear—one in essence, three in Persons—three separate Persons, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit; one in essence. There's only one God. There's a Father who is God, a Son who is God, and a Spirit who is God.

Now, if you are kind of freaking out a little bit saying, "I don't quite understand it," welcome to the club. You don't have to understand it. You just have to believe it. If God were small enough for my brain, He wouldn't be big enough to meet my needs. Now, I'm not saying that we don't use our brains or that we don't try to think deeply and understand, but God is transcendent. God is beyond our comprehension. We can only understand about God what He chooses to reveal, and God has revealed Himself as God the Father, God the Son, and there's God the Holy Spirit. All three of them have the same divine attributes—they're all-eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing, all-wise, all-loving because they have the same essence. They're all divine, so the Holy Spirit is just as much God as Jesus is.

Anyone who denies the trinity, as the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mormons, and most of the cults do, is not Christian doctrine. It's not Christianity. What Paul is telling Timothy to "hold fast" to is the doctrines, the theology, that he has given to him. Let me move along. I said I wouldn't get bogged down, but I am.

The third thing is the deity of Christ. Anyone who denies that Christ is God, it is antichrist. Again, the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons do this. They believe He was a demigod—a smaller, lesser God. All the cults do this. One of the main doctrines that false teachers and cults get wrong is the doctrine of Christ. We believe, and the Bible teaches, that Christ is God, John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," or God was the Word.

The fourth thing that Christians believe is Christ's full humanity, John 1:14. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," so we believe that Jesus was God incarnate, that He was

fully God and fully man in one Person.

The fifth thing we believe is the virgin birth. You deny the virgin birth—you don't "hold fast" to the virgin birth, you don't hang onto the virgin birth—you do not have Christianity. You don't have Christian doctrine. That's not what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches that Christ was born of a virgin; therefore, He was fully man and fully God but sinless humanity.

The sixth thing is Christ's sinless life. We can't compromise that. That's not open for discussion. Jesus never sinned. He was born of a virgin, so He didn't inherit sin. He lived a sinless life, so He never acquired sin. All Christians believe in the sinless life of Christ.

Seventh is Christ's substitutionary death. Each one of these can be a whole sermon and doctrine within themselves, and I've been telling myself for 40 years that I'm going to preach a doctrinal series on these someday. I haven't done it yet, so pray for me that I get it done. We believe in the substitutionary death of Christ. What does that mean? It means that when Jesus died on the cross, He actually took your place—that God the Father substituted God the Son in the place of sinners—and that your sin and my sin were placed upon Jesus Christ, and He died on the cross for our sins as a substitution.

Eighth, we believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus died a substitutionary death, was buried, and three days later He rose from the dead. You need to add the word "bodily" resurrection. It wasn't a spiritual resurrection. The Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jesus rose spiritually. If you talk to them on your front porch they'll say, "We believe in the resurrection," but they use the same word but have a different dictionary. They define it differently. They believe it was a spiritual resurrection. You know, the Bible teaches that He physically, bodily rose from the dead, that He was resurrected in a glorified, immortal, eternal body.

Ninth, we believe Christ's bodily ascension. This is a fine point that many people skip over, but we actually believe that Jesus ascended back into heaven. He didn't ascend mystically or spiritually. He didn't just disappear. He physically, bodily ascended up into heaven (Acts 1), and they actually physically watched Him go right back into heaven. The angels that appeared said, "...this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." He's going to return bodily.

We believe in His bodily resurrection, His bodily ascension, and tenth is Christ's present priestly intercession. Where is Jesus right now? He's in heaven interceding for us. I didn't just write these down to share them with you, I wrote them down because this is essential Christianity. This is Christianity 101. This is what Christians believe.

Eleventh, we believe in Christ's bodily Second Coming. It's possible to be a Christian and not hold to the doctrine of the rapture. I believe it's taught in the Bible. I think it's biblical, but Christians can disagree on whether there's a rapture, whether it's midtrib, pretrib, posttrib. I happen to be a pretribulationist. I believe the rapture is before the tribulation. What we cannot

disagree on is the fact that Christ promised to come again, and we believe that He will come back physically and bodily and set up His Kingdom upon the earth.

Here's the twelfth, that as far as salvation, it's by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. I wanted to just get all this down for the record—faith alone, grace alone, in Christ alone. Paul said in Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast." We're saved by grace, not by works. We're saved by faith, and that faith has as its object, Jesus Christ.

Lastly, thirteenth, all of this is based upon our doctrine of Scripture, that is, the inspiration of Scripture. We all, as believers, believe this book, the Bible, to be the inerrant, infallible, inspired Word of God. When I say "inerrant," it means it has no mistakes. There are people today that say, "Oh, well, it's not perfect. It has mistakes. It has geographical mistakes," or "It has other mistakes," and so forth. In the original writings, there were no mistakes. It's inerrant and infallible. The translations that we have today are accurate and very, very, very, very, very close to those originals. We believe that the Bible is the inerrant, infallible, inspired Word of God. In 2 Timothy 3:16, we're going to get there in a few weeks. Don't miss it. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God," it means it's God-breathed, so there's the classic passage on inspiration.

You haven't turned in your Bible, but go with me to verse 15 and let's wrap up our study tonight. We're to be faithful to the faith. We just covered 13 points of what the faith is, and we're to be faithful in our friendships. You think, "Well, what kind of a bizarre connection is that?" He's talking about being faithful to the Words, the sound words, to be faithful to "that good thing which was committed unto thee," to protect and guard it, to garrison, and now he's going to tell us that we need to be faithful in our friendships. Basically, he's going to point out those who were unfaithful, so they didn't do what he just told Timothy to do, and then he's going to talk about a man who was faithful. It's an interesting contrast. Notice verse 15. "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me," these are verses that you need to look at and feel with your emotion. Paul's in prison, a faithful servant of the Lord, and there are those that were in Asia...Asia is a reference to the Roman Asia or Asia Minor in which Ephesus is one of the main chief cities. It's modern-day Turkey. When he says, "...all they," he's speaking probably in hyperbole, not literally every person in Asia but a select group of people that had turned away from him, "...which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes."

These two individuals are named nowhere else in the Bible. You don't read about them anywhere else. This is all we know about them, so we can only theorize. We don't really know a lot about them, but evidently they turned away from Paul. We're assuming, we can't be clear on this so take it with a grain of salt, but possibly they had turned away from the Lord, that they turned away from the "sound words," that they turned away from the truth and had broken Paul's heart. I don't think anything can break the heart of a pastor sooner than somebody who turns away from sound doctrine, turns away from the truth—somebody that you've taught, somebody that you've mentored, somebody that you've ministered to—and they drift away into false doctrine, false teaching, or they turn their back on Jesus Christ. That's something that breaks a

pastor's heart. Paul doesn't seem to be angry at them or bitter toward them or have any hatred toward them, he just lets Timothy know that he shouldn't follow their example. He wants Timothy to be faithful, so he gives him a negative example, "Don't follow these guys. They've turned away from these precious truths."

Paul then turns to another individual, from the believer who was a burden to the believer who was a blessing. What we want is our lives to be a blessing. We have this man in verse 16 named Onesiphorus. "The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus," his name means profit bringer or man who is of profit. He says, "for he oft," and he used the word, "refreshed me." The word "refreshed" has the idea of it was like a cool fresh breeze. You know we use a figure of speech for people that are a blessing. We say, "They're a breath of fresh air," right? "Oh, they're just a breath of fresh air." That's what we want our lives to be. We don't want to be a bum, we want to be a blessing.

I used to hear my dad sing that old hymn all the time. He used to go around singing it all the time. It was one of his favorite songs, Make me a blessing, Out of my life may Jesus shine. What a beautiful song. He would just sing it all the time, "Lord, make me a blessing, make me a blessing. Out of my life may Jesus shine." I think, what could we want more than to go through life and be a blessing. Amen? I want to be a blessing to you. I don't want to be a burden to you. I don't want to be a bum to you. I don't want you to be a burden to me, okay? I want you to be a blessing to me, so out of my life I want Jesus to shine. I want to be like an Onesiphorus, a fresh breeze, a blessing. Paul says, "The Lord give mercy unto," his household because this is what he often did, he "refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain."

In verse 8 we have a reference to not ashamed of the witness of Christ, of the gospel of Christ, and of Paul the prisoner. In verse 12, we have the reference of, "...for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day," but he says, "I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed," that's the second time that phrase appears. Here's the third time in chapter 1. Three times in chapter 1 you have the statement, "not ashamed." We shouldn't be ashamed of the gospel, the gospel messenger, and he was not ashamed of Paul's chains.

Do you know what chains can do when you suffer for the sake of Christ? They can lessen your friends. Go to jail, you'll find out who your real friends are. Get in trouble or get arrested and you'll find out who your real friends are, right? Paul says, "Now that I'm in prison, now that I'm in jail," and it's not house arrest, they can't come over and sit on a comfy couch, "I'm in a dungeon and all my friends have bailed on me." It broke Paul's heart, but there was this one man. His name was Onesiphorus. He was a breath of fresh air. He was a blessing, and Paul says, "You know how often he refreshed me and was not ashamed." It says in verse 17, "But, when he was in Rome, he sought me out," it's believed that he is from Ephesus, and we'll read about him in the last chapter of this epistle, that he left Ephesus, traveled all the way to Rome and it took him days, if not weeks, to "very diligently," seek out and find Paul. Why did it take him so long to find Paul? Because Paul wasn't under house arrest, and Paul wasn't in the normal prison. He was in the Mamertine pit, the dungeon. The Romans probably weren't very

helpful to try to point out where Paul was, and no one wanted to talk to him about where Paul was because any association with Paul could be off with your head. You could be in big trouble, but this man (I can't wait to shake his hand when we get to heaven) was a blessing to Paul.

You know, it's such a blessing when there's somebody that's serving the Lord in the ministry and doing the work of the Lord when others come along and encourage and help them, are a blessing to them. I think of many times in my ministry individuals that have come into my life at just the right time to be a breath of fresh air, to refresh me and pray for me, encourage me, and to strengthen me in the work that God calls me to do. We should all want to be a blessing to others. So, "...he sought me out very diligently, and found me," indicates that he had to go searching and look hard to try to find Paul. It says, "The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well." In the text, Paul puts all of his ministry of Onesiphorus to himself in the past tense. He puts it all in the past tense, so when Paul was writing these words, Onesiphorus had already been to Rome and ministered to Paul. It's believed that he was maybe en route back to Rome and hadn't gotten back yet, even didn't beat the epistle back yet, but while he was in Ephesus, he encouraged him; while he was in Rome, he encouraged him. He was just an encourager. He was a blessing and encouraging, "...he ministered unto me."

The word "ministered" in verse 18 is the word served. It's tied in with the word deacon, diakoneo. He served me. He assisted me. He helped me, and we can't do the work of the ministry alone. We need to foster friendships, and there will be people that will disappoint us, but we still need to make a commitment to do two things: we need to be devoted to the Word of God and devoted to the people of God. If we're going to stay faithful in serving the Lord, we need to be devoted to God's people, developing good Christian friendships, and encouraging one another in our ministries. The Bible says that we should, "...provoke unto love and to good works." Too often we just provoke one another, not to love and good works, we just provoke one another. I see this is so interesting that Paul, this great man of God, this great apostle, this great theologian, wasn't too busy for friendships. You're never too busy for friendships, and you must invest time and energy in friendships. Yeah, you can get hurt, you can be disappointed, yeah, it's costly, but the dividends outweigh the hassles. Don't be a lone-ranger Christian. Invest in Christian friendships. Find men and women of God that you can follow their examples and that you can be a team with in serving the Lord.

I love the way Paul kind of pronounces this petition or desire. Some see it as a prayer. I don't know if you can really call it a prayer, it's just a desire, "The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day," there are some that think Onesiphorus had died and was executed, that he was actually arrested while there with Paul and put to death and is dead while Paul is writing these words. There are some that even take a second step, and this is not biblical or Christian at all, and say this is the basis for praying for the dead. They say he's dead, and Paul's praying for him. First, we don't know he's dead. Secondly, Paul is not praying for him. Thirdly, there's nowhere else in the Bible that he ever prayed for somebody that is dead, which, by the way, I never really talk about.

People sometimes ask me, but I run into Christians all the time that think you can do that. It doesn't do you any good to pray for people that have died. Their eternity is fixed. You pray for people who haven't died. You pray for people who are left. When somebody dies, you don't pray for them, you pray for the family. You pray for people that are left behind. Don't be so foolish to think that you can pray for somebody that has died. There's no indication in the Bible whatsoever that you can do that. It's just not biblical or scriptural or makes any theological sense at all, but you do pray for those that have been left behind because they're grieving and are bereaved and need to be strong and need to trust the Lord and praying that God works in their hearts.

Paul is just expressing this desire that come that day, and I'll wrap it up with this, "that day" is a reference to when the Lord comes back and rewards His servants. I tend to believe that it's a reference to the rapture, not the Second Coming, because I believe that when the Church is raptured that we're going to have the Marriage Supper of the Lamb in heaven, and we're also going to have what's called the Bema Seat or the rewards seat where we're going to be rewarded for our service in heaven. Here's a cool thought: Humble, faithful men like Onesiphorus who encouraged Paul in the ministry and others who just simply come alongside pastors and ministers, missionaries, and other fellow servants and strengthen them and encourage them, they're going to get a crown when they get to heaven. They're going to be rewarded when they get to heaven. We should actually all pray, "God, make me a blessing to the members of my church, to the pastors of my church. Help me not to be a thorn in their flesh. Help me to be a fresh breeze on their face and on their back, to encourage them." He prays that God will reward him. Serving others brings a blessing. How wonderful that is.

There are people that have been in my life that have actually gone to heaven. There's been a lot of people in 45+ years now in my ministry that have gone to heaven, and I think of what a blessing they were to me and the prayers that they offered for me. I pray that when they got to heaven, they got a big crown, they got a great reward for how encouraging they were.

Next time we get together in chapter 2, we'll look at those verses which we are to "...be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Let's pray.