

# A Refreshing Servant

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Many times, our study of the Scriptures involves an investigation into the lives of well-known individuals: Abraham, Moses, Job, Paul, Peter, and of course, Jesus. There is much to be learned from each of their examples. However, I would like to bring to your attention a man for whom little is written in the Bible. However, the little that is written speaks volumes! His name is Onesiphorus. Through his service in the body of Christ, he obtained a marvelous testimony in the word of God. Consider what Paul wrote about him in his second letter to Timothy.

*The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains; but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me – the Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day – and you know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus. (2 Timothy 1:16-18).*

Paul asks that the Lord would grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus. A similar statement is found at the close of the letter, where the apostle writes, “Greet... the household of Onesiphorus” (2 Tim. 4:19). That the man’s house is mentioned in these ways, has led many to conclude that Onesiphorus (at the time this letter was written), had passed away. We do not know for certain whether or not he was dead, but it does seem like a logical conclusion.

Think what these encouraging words of appreciation and thanks meant to the family of Onesiphorus. To have one like the apostle Paul, speaking so glowingly about their loved one, must have been very comforting. Notice the wonderful things Paul said about this man and his service to the body of Christ, and specifically to Paul.

**“He often refreshed me.”** This doesn’t mean that Onesiphorus brought Paul a cool glass of lemonade. The Greek word rendered “refreshed” in this verse (anapsuchō) is an interesting word. As one resource noted, “The basic sense is ‘to cool and refresh by a breath...’” When you were a child and got a cut or a bruise, did your mother ever blow on the wound? Somehow, that would make it feel a little better. Interestingly, along these same lines, this word was used in a medical sense for treating a wound by exposing it to fresh air.

Another idea of the word is revealed when we consider that one of the words with which it is formed, is a form of the Greek word for the soul. The Greek word for soul can have reference to the life force within man, his breath, or his physical being. In this way, the word anapsuchō (refreshed) was used in the Septuagint for the regaining of physical strength (cf. Ex. 23:12; Judges 15:19). We are not told how Onesiphorus did this for Paul, but the apostle says he did it “often.” Paul, as strong as we picture him, cape and all, had times when he needed refreshing. The Scriptures show us this in a number of different places (Acts 18:9; 2 Cor. 1:8; 11:23-28; 12:7).

**“Was not ashamed of my chains.”** Paul was imprisoned for the cause of Christ, and

while ALL in Asia had turned away from him (2 Tim. 1:15), Onesiphorus was not ashamed of the apostle, and the Gospel he preached. It may be that Onesiphorus' boldness in this matter was what cost him his life.

The fact that Onesiphorus was not ashamed of Paul's chains was refreshing in and of itself. Think about it, isn't that what you would want in a friend, one who would not be ashamed of your chains? One who would stand up for you, when standing up for you was not the popular thing to do?

**"He eagerly searched for me."** Onesiphorus was determined to find Paul, so he could he refresh him. Think about that. Paul was imprisoned in Rome for being a Christian. In Rome, Nero sat as Emperor. The same Nero who regularly filled the center of the coliseum with Christians. Despite the danger, Onesiphorus, was walking around Rome asking if anyone knew where he could find a Christian prisoner named Paul! Again, it is not hard to imagine that such actions eventually cost the man his life.

**"You know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus."** Not only was Onesiphorus one who refreshed Paul, but he was also a diligent worker in the church at Ephesus. For Onesiphorus, there was no complaining, no quitting, no regrets, no desire for personal glory or attention, just a strong desire provide refreshment to the body of Christ. What a refreshing example.

Praise God for those like Onesiphorus in the body of Christ! Let's face it, there are times when we could all use some refreshing. When the pressures of life find us stressed out and "hot under the collar," we need someone to provide some cool and comforting refreshing. The refreshing might be a kind word of inspiration or encouragement when we're down. It might be a hand of assistance when we are not physically able. In light of the medical idea of the Greek word, the refreshers provide healing from the bruises of life. They blow on the welts and wounds life's trials inflict upon us. The refreshers make us feel better by helping to ease the pain.

Here is the real beauty of what I am getting at here: Anybody (even you) can do this! You do not have to be one who is up front and leading all the time, such as a Paul. You do not have to be an elder, deacon, or preacher. Oftentimes, it is those who are leading in some capacity who need the refreshment!

We might think of one who refreshes as one who goes beyond what others might normally do. The one who refreshes recognizes the need that others may not see, and without even asking, they proceed to provide refreshment. They don't need to be told there is a need because they are observant about those types of things. They don't need to be assigned to handle the matter; they just refresh.

Do you know someone who needs some refreshing? If so, it's time to get busy.