

Phygelus, Hermogenes, And Onesiphorus

"This thou knowest, that all that are in Asia turned away from me, of whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. The Lord grant mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus for he oft refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains; but, when he was in Rome, he sought me diligently and found me (the Lord grant unto him to find mercy of the Lord in that day); and in how many things he ministered at Ephesus, thou knowest very well" (2 Tim. 1:15-17).

Three men, with two different spirits, are named in this passage. The first two are Phygelus and Hermogenes. These men are explicitly named as among *"all that are in Asia"* who turned away from Paul. Did they turn away from the doctrine they have received from him as apparently Hymenaeus and Alexander did: men whom Paul *"delivered unto Satan that they might be taught not to blaspheme"*? (1 Tim. 1:20). The names of both Hymenaeus and Alexander appear also in this second letter: Hymenaeus *"erred concerning the resurrection"*; *"Alexander, the coppersmith"* did Paul much evil and Timothy was warned to beware of him (2 Tim. 2:17; 4:14f). But Phygelus and Hermogenes are not charged with departing from doctrine; but simply that they turned away from the apostle, a similar comment later made about Demas (2 Tim. 4:10). So, it is difficult to determine whether Phygelus and Hermogenes left the faith or were simply afraid to stand with Paul in his trials. Either course is deplorable; one demonstrating a spirit of presumptuousness, the other a spirit of cowardice. God's warriors soon learn that when the battle is pitched, many are unwilling to stand in the fight. Remember the great number who fled when Gideon dismissed all who were fearful and afraid? The parents of the blind man were unwilling to acknowledge the source of their son's healing because they feared the Jews; many rulers would not, to their shame, confess they believed Jesus to be the Christ because of their fear of being expelled from the synagogue (Jn. 9:20-22; 12:42-43). For whatever reason Phygelus and Hermogenes turned from Paul, it was to their dishonor. They abandoned him in his great hour of trial and need.

But thank God for Onesiphorus! He was apparently from Ephesus, where Timothy was, and where his family had remained behind (2 Tim. 1:18; 4:19). It is not known what cause carried Onesiphorus from Ephesus to Rome. We only know that in his visit to the Imperial City, he remembered that the aged apostle was in prison and he intended to visit and minister what comfort he could to him. Four things are said of him: 1) He oft refreshed Paul; 2) he was not ashamed of Paul's chains; 3) he sought Paul diligently in Rome and found him; and, 4) he had often ministered to Paul's work in Ephesus.

Paul was a man who often wrote of his emotions. He was jealous of the Corinthians with a godly jealousy (2 Cor. 11:2). His heart's desire was that Israel might be saved (Rom. 10:1). He rejoiced that the Philippians had remembered his plight and had fellowship with him in his afflictions (Phil. 4:10, 14). He warned the Ephesians night and day with tears (Acts 20:31). We can scarcely be unmoved at the overflowing of Paul's emotions, which, after being in chains and suffering terror of storm, sea, and shipwreck, that when brethren from Rome heard he was approaching their city, two companies of disciples went forward to meet him and when Paul saw and met them, "*he thanked God, and took courage*" (Acts 28:15). Could this visit by caring, unashamed, ministering Onesiphorus to the aged apostle (who now knew that death shortly awaited him) have been any less emotional for the apostle? Others had deserted him. His "*son*" was far away and might not even get there before the executioner's sword severed his head from his body. In the midst of the certainty of death a familiar figure appears! What tears of joy must have fallen from the apostle's eyes!

Remember those who forge the way for us -- who stand against blasphemy and insult and scorn. Our words of appreciation for such soldiers strengthen them in their dark hours of need and trial!

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