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Here's Hope
by Rev. Jerry Rea

Onesiphorus

Who in the world is Onesiphorus? Admittedly the Bible has very little to say about him. There is one verse, however, that speaks to my heart of hearts. At 2 Timothy 1:16 Paul said this man "oft refreshed" him. That means that he served as an encouragement to the apostle who was an encouragement to so many in the Word. You might say he was the man behind the man. We used to use the terminology you are "the wind beneath my wings." They are the great crowd of unsung heroes who lift up and keep going those whose names and deeds are well known. They are the prayer warriors who no one even knows are serving. They are the people who work behind the scenes... faceless. Their names (also) you will never hear. Their contribution is small, or is it.

Have you ever noticed the names of Paul's companions? Paul had his Timothy, and his Silas, and his Titus. Had it not been for Barnabas, I'm not even sure Paul would have been used of God. Peter served, but not alone. The Bible has a snapshot of Peter and John serving in Acts chapter 4. Moses was powerful, but Moses did not serve alone. Until the relative end of his life Moses had his Joshua. He was there, and served, but did not take center stage until just the right moment. The little boy with loaves and fishes is mentioned in only one verse in Scripture, but had it not been for him, the multitudes would not have been fed (at least on that day, in that way). At the end of Romans (chapter 16 to be exact) Paul gives a list of his co-workers. Often they are just named with little recognition and the list serves to only spark questions. Who are these people? What happened to them? They appear in brilliance like a shooting star, and then disappear just as quickly.

Onesiphorus served God, but he served God in at least one way mentioned here. He served God by holding up and helping and encouraging Paul. So that means that every letter Paul wrote, "O" had a part in. Every miracle that Paul performed "O" helped make possible. What would Paul have been without him? We don't know.

He "refreshed" Paul. What in the world is that? Did he simply refresh Paul by taking care of his bills, or his meals? Did he carry messages back to and from churches? Or... did he simply refresh Paul by being there. There is no substitute for "being there." There is no substitute for "not being there" either. Most pastors have someone who held them up in prayer. There are those who are so faithful that they have earned the title "dependable." You know, of course, it doesn't matter how gifted you are if you're not "there." By their presence they encourage the leadership, but also encourage the church to also be dependable.

Some pastors have persons in their circle of friends who have made the whole thing possible. It is hard to place any sort of value on what they do. My wife is such a person. She has been

greater than any co-worker or co-soldier or deacon. By her constant presence and encouragement she has furthered the gospel... through me. It may seem small to those of you who read, but believe me, this is big.

You may not be called to be an apostle Paul. Your calling may be even more important. You may wear the name "Onesiphorus." Your job may not be on the nominating committee's list of services. Your job may be bigger than that! Without the "O" there may not have been a Paul.

This is Big!

Jerry Rea