

“Loyalty and Disloyalty”  
2 Timothy 1:15-18  
(Preached at Trinity, March 13, 2022)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we've seen, Paul is writing this letter from prison. It was nothing like our prisons that have hot and cold running water, toilets, beds and blankets, hot food and clothing provided. Paul's prison was dirty, lacking basic sanitation. The smell would have been overwhelming. Food was scarce and the unrelenting cold was terrible. One of the things Paul requested if Timothy was able to visit was a coat.
2. Remember, Paul's purpose in writing this letter is to encourage Timothy who has come under attack by heretics in his church. Many were beginning to listen to their flattering tongues. Perhaps some of these were men and women whom Timothy had grown to love and trust. He must have felt a sense of hurt and betrayal.
3. In these verses Paul reminds Timothy of his own abandonment by many he had trusted, and at the same time he reminds Timothy of the blessing of those who continue to maintain loyalty to their leaders.
4. The ultimate focus of these verses deals with the subject of loyalty and disloyalty, the great encouragement of loyalty versus the great sorrow of abandonment. Looking back at the 35-year history of my preaching I've only preached on the subject of loyalty three times. This is amazing considering the significance of this important character trait.
5. What do you think of the subject of loyalty? Do you consider it an important character trait? Would you consider yourself to be loyal?  
Would you be able to give a definition of loyalty?
6. There are various ways to define loyalty.  
Loyalty refers to steadfast, resolute faithfulness towards a person, country, group or cause. It refers to a steadfast commitment.
  - A. The closest New Testament word that describes loyalty is πιστός. It means faithful, reliable, trustworthy.  
**2 Timothy 2:2 NAU** - "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."
  - B. Loyalty to places and things is beneficial in an orderly society. People have often been loyal to certain brands – product loyalty. Many are fiercely loyal to their particular sports team. People are loyal to their nation. Patriotism is important as citizens work for the good of the whole.
  - C. The most important, loyalty is directed towards other people – your marriage, your family, your church. Your relationship with God demands absolute loyalty.  
**Exodus 20:3 NAU** - "You shall have no other gods before Me."  
**Matthew 10:33 NAU** - "But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven."

- D. It is interesting that one of the OT words translated “loyal” is אֱמֻנָה. The best way to think of אֱמֻנָה is in the sense of covenant love. Covenant love is faithful, steadfast, trustworthy love – the sovereign love God has for us. Such loyalty is rare among men.  
**Proverbs 20:6 NAU** - "Many a man proclaims his own loyalty, But who can find a trustworthy man?" (אֱמֻנָה)
- E. Loyalty is displayed through love, devotion, dedication and commitment to another.
- I. Paul begins by describing the pain of abandonment
- A. All in Asia - "You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me"
1. Paul is referring to his arrest and imprisonment. Perhaps when Paul stood at the tribunal he called upon some of the leading Christians to testify on his behalf. He hoped they would stand by him and testify of his character, his life. But they all fled.  
**2 Timothy 4:16-17 NAU** - "At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. <sup>17</sup> But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth."
  2. They were afraid to be associated with Paul.
    - a. When Paul was under house arrest in Rome, he was allowed visitors and many came to see him.
    - b. But many who previously came to Paul were now afraid to identify with him for fear of also being arrested.
  3. Phygellus and Hermogenes are mentioned by name.
    - a. These two are mentioned only here. Often Scripture introduces and dismisses individuals with a single verse. We know little about them but God knows them intimately  
 The only true thing we know about them is their cowardice.
    - b. Perhaps they were church leaders. Paul assumes the readers of this letter knew them.
    - c. Whatever their role, apparently they were the most conspicuous and are mentioned by name. Perhaps they had become infamous in their abandonment of Paul.
- B. Paul’s abandonment testifies to the flaws of our nature
1. We are prone to self-centeredness. Whatever affects us is the highest priority.
    - a. These disciples were too caught up in their own lives. Their first concern was their own safety and the maintenance of their particular lifestyle.  
 They were too concerned for themselves to take risks.
    - b. You can still hear their voices.  
 “I can’t afford the risk. What about my family?”  
 “God will protect Paul, let us pray for him.”
    - c. It was convenient to just forget about Paul.

2. We are prone to fear.
  - a. This was the underlying motivation for forsaking Paul.
  - b. The Roman prison system was cruel – few wanted to risk arrest.
3. We are plagued by a selfish lack of gratitude
  - a. We are often blind to the labors of others.
  - b. Paul had given himself to preaching and teaching for their profit. Many were his spiritual children.  
**Galatians 4:19 NAU** - "My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you-"  
**Acts 20:20 NAU** - "how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house,"
  - c. They should have remained at Paul's side.  
**1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 NAU** - "But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, <sup>13</sup> and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another."

II. Now Paul contrasts the loyal disciple – We know nothing about Onesiphorus except his loyalty to Paul.

A. Description of Onesiphorus

1. He was most likely married, probably with children. The phrase, “house of Onesiphorus” literally means “household.” It would include all who were in his house but assumes multiple people. This is significant since many today excuse themselves from service because of their family.
2. He refreshed Paul – refresh is from a compound word literally meaning “to breathe upon” -
  - a. Onesiphorus was like a breath of fresh air - He lifted Paul's spirit. This is what loyalty does.
  - b. It is our duty to encourage one another  
**1 Thessalonians 5:11 NAU** - "Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing."
  - c. This is what loyalty does. We are comforted knowing others are standing with us. We use the phrase today, “I've got your back.”
3. He *often* refreshed Paul – He came with regularity.
  - a. It was the habit of Onesiphorus to serve.  
**Verse 18** – "and you know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus."
  - b. Some have suggested that Onesiphorus was a deacon because of the word “services.” Διακονέω which can describe the office of a deacon.  
**1 Timothy 3:10 NAU** - "These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach."  
**1 Timothy 3:13 NAU** - "For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus."  
 He embodied the office of a deacon in his great acts of service.

3. He was not ashamed of Paul's chains – Paul's imprisonment
    - a. He was not fearful to identify with the sufferings of Paul.
    - b. This is what Paul told Timothy in **Verse 8**. He was willing to risk his own safety for the sake of his brother.
  4. He sought out Paul diligently.
    - a. This seems to have been his chief reason for going to Rome
    - b. It would have been dangerous to inquire about a condemned man
    - c. He gave great effort to find and go to his brother – the word translated “eagerly” means earnestly, diligently, or seriously
- B. Paul prayed God's blessings upon Onesiphorus
1. Paul prayed for God's mercy upon Onesiphorus at the great day of judgement when all men's works shall be exposed  
**2 Timothy 1:18 NAU** - "Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day-"  
**2 Timothy 4:8 NAU** - "in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day"
    - a. It is those who have shown mercy that will find mercy  
**Matthew 5:7** – “Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.”
    - b. Those who have shown no mercy will find judgement without mercy  
**James 2:13 NAU** - "For judgment *will be* merciless to one who has shown no mercy . . ."
  2. Paul prayed for God's mercy upon the entire family of Onesiphorus  
**2 Timothy 1:16 NAU** - "The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus"
  3. At the end of this letter Paul called for the recognition of Onesiphorus' household by the brethren  
**2 Timothy 4:19 NAU** - "Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus."
- III. Paul's greatest source of encouragement came not from men but from God – This too was Paul's message to Timothy
- A. It is greatly encouraging for us to experience the loyalty of others.
1. To know the love of our brothers and sisters.
  2. To have confidence that they will stand with us.
  3. But human beings can let us down. We are all frail and filled with the weakness of our fallen condition.  
**2 Timothy 4:16 NAU** - "At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them."
  4. We don't have to look far to see examples of disloyalty and unfaithfulness in this world.
    - a. Husbands and wives are unfaithful to each other
    - b. Many members of the modern church have little loyalty to their church – Most agree today that loyalty to church is almost non-existent. People leave their church at the slightest provocation always looking for something new or better.

- c. Pastors will leave their churches for no higher reason than a better offer. On the flip-side pastors find themselves out of a job often because of pettiness with the members of the church or simply a desire for change. Where is the loyalty?
  - d. Businesses will lay-off employees who have served faithfully for years. At the same time, employees are seldom loyal to their employer. The rule of today is keep your resume' polished and send it out often.
  - e. Worst of all, as professing Christians, we often fail to show unwavering loyalty to Christ. We find it all too easy to compromise. Our highest objective too often is to do what is most pleasing to ourselves.
- B. While man may fail us, God will never forsake us
- 2 Timothy 4:17 NAU** - "But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me"
- 2 Timothy 4:18 NAU** - "The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen."
- 1. This is repeated over and over in Scripture
 

**Romans 8:35 NAU** - "Who will separate us from the love of Christ?"

**Romans 8:38-39 NAU** - "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

**2 Thessalonians 3:3 NAU** - "But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil *one*."

**2 Timothy 2:13 NAU** - "If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself."

**Lamentations 3:22-23 NAU** - "The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. <sup>23</sup> *They* are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness."

#### Conclusion:

- 1. We must see the great value of loyalty. It will be a great encouragement to others and a great blessing to you.
- 2. We must make willful choices to be loyal, even when it costs us; even when it is difficult. That's what loyalty does.  
May God be pleased to strengthen us making us faithful and loyal in all of our relationships. May loyalty be part of our character that we display in this world.
- 3. And may God grant us to give unfailing loyalty to Him.