

PHILEMON - CHRIST CHANGES EVERYTHING



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GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IN PHILEMON

Philemon 1:15 *For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever,*

Genesis 45:4-8 *So Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, please." And they came near. And he said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. 5 And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. 6 For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. 7 And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. 8 So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt.*

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT PHILEMON

- v2 Apparently well to do
- v2 “beloved fellow worker” of Paul and Timothy
- v4 Paul thanks God for him and remembers in his prayers
- v5-7 Paul has heard about his love for the saints and how he has refreshed their hearts
- v17 Paul saw him as a “partner”
- v19 He was someone who owed Paul his very self and his eternal welfare
- v21 Was someone who Paul has confidence in his obedience in the matter Paul is writing about
- v22 He is so close to Paul that Paul feels the liberty to invite himself to stay with him on an upcoming trip to Colossae.

1 Corinthians 12:26-27 *If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.*

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT ONESIMUS

- v16 Was a slave or bondservant of Philemon
 - Slavery in Israel in the Old Testament, Greco/Roman slavery in the time of the New Testament, and the slavery practiced in America were not the same.
 - The slavery that Paul is addressing here is not based upon race, usually was for a specific period of time, had freedoms we don't usually think of in regards to slavery, and slaves often had the opportunity to purchase their freedom.
 - More like what we would think of from American History as an indentured servant.
- **Colossians 4:1** *Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.*
- Something bad happened (v11 Onesimus was useless, v 14 Philemon had not given consent for Onesimus to leave and v 18 Onesimus owed Philemon something).

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT ONESIMUS

- v10 Paul calls Onesimus his child – he was born again!
- v11-12 he has been useful to Paul, was his “very heart”.
- A faithful and beloved brother who along with Tychicus, Paul entrusted with the delivery of the letters of Colossians, Philemon and Ephesians. (Colossians 4)
- Paul wants Onesimus’ and Philemon’s relationship restored.

THE IMPACT OF CHRIST AND THE GOSPEL ON ALL OF LIFE

- Christ mentioned by name 11 times in 25 verses.
- v3 & 25 Lord Jesus Christ
 - Lord – master and supreme governing authority in the universe
 - Jesus – who has come to save his people from their sins
 - Christ – the messiah, who was anointed to his great redemptive work as Prophet, Priest, and King of his people.
- **Philippians 1:27** *Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ...*

TRANSFORMATION OF RELATIONSHIPS

- **Matthew 10:37** *Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*
- Examples:
 - Paul refers to Philemon as “our beloved fellow worker” in v1, “my brother” in v7, and “brother” again in v 20.
 - v2 Paul calls Apphia “our sister”
 - v10 Onesimus as “my child whose father I became”, in v 12 “his very heart”, and in v 16 “beloved brother”.
- Paul, Philemon and Onesimus are bound together forever because of the gospel (v15-16).
- **Revelation 7:9-10** *...a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"*

FELLOWSHIP AND HOSPITALITY

- v6 (Gk. koinōnia) – sharing or fellowship of your faith.
 - v7 Results in God working through us to refresh the hearts of the saints
- **1 Peter 4:8-9** *Above all, keep loving one another earnestly...show hospitality to one another without grumbling.*
- **Romans 12:10-13** *Love one another with brotherly affection... seek to show hospitality.*
- Through hospitality we are serving the Body of Christ in a uniquely personal and sacrificial way. We are sharing our family, our home, our resources, our food, our privacy and our time.
- Practical thoughts regarding hospitality:
 - Plan the when
 - Plan the who

FORGIVENESS AND OBEDIENCE

- **Philemon 1:17** *So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me.*
- **Philemon 1:9** *yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you...*
- Philemon must do what Paul is asking, must do it out of the right heart, and with the right motivations.
- Who is making the appeal? Paul, but also Philemon's fellow worker (v2), partner (v 17) and someone instrumental in his conversion (v19).
- Because of Christ and the gospel, Onesimus is expected to seek forgiveness and reconciliation even though it could cost him his life.
- Because of Christ and the gospel, Philemon is expected to forgive because of what he had been forgiven.
 - **Colossians 3:13** *bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.*

FORGIVENESS AND OBEDIENCE

- What if I don't "feel" like it?
 - Because of God's love for you go in faith and obey what God has commanded, go and be reconciled to your brother or sister, or in faith receive the one coming and seeking reconciliation.
- Christian love begins with a love for God and a desire to please Him which results in the determination to do good for another person because of what God has done for you and God has told you to do it.
- Not saying that Christian love is without feeling or emotion.
- As Christians, we act in obedience based on truth and God's love for us, but this is not God calling you to a heartless/mechanical obedience. As Christians, we hear and recognize the words of our Savior and we follow them un-begrudgingly (though at times it may be difficult and a struggle, but we have the promise that He who commands us to obey provides the power to be able to obey).

FORGIVENESS AND OBEDIENCE

- Paul's commitment to restoring their relationship:
 - v 17 Receive Onesimus, as you would receive me.
 - v 18 If he owes you anything – charge it to my account.
 - v 19 If there is anything due – I will repay it.
 - v 20 By his being reconciled to Onesimus, Philemon will actually refresh Paul's heart in Christ.
 - v 22 Paul is hoping to be able to travel the 1,200 miles to personally follow up on this process of reconciliation.
- If we have true Christian faith:
 - We will be peacemakers like Paul.
 - We will seek reconciliation no matter what the cost.
 - We will see what we have been forgiven and in light of that receive and forgive those seeking reconciliation with us..

THE NEW BIRTH

- **Philemon 1:10** *I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment.*
 - Describing new birth/regeneration.
- The gospel transforms every area of our lives because it is NOT moral living but it is a miracle of a new creation being made.
- **2 Corinthians 5:17** *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*
 - Does your life evidence that sort of radical heart change that has manifested itself in a change of life?
 - Is your faith a living faith that saves and results in a transformed life, or is it dead faith – just mental ascent?
- **Matthew 7:22-23** *On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' 23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'*
- Does your life testify that you are not one of these people?