

Reconciled

A STUDY IN PHILEMON

A Heartfelt Appeal
Philemon 8-20
November 17, 2019

Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you... - **Philemon 8**

I. FOR LOVE'S SAKE

- Salutations and introductions behind him now, Paul moves to his appeal and the heart of this letter (vss. 8-20).
- Paul pleads for Onesimus like a father for his son. He is a prisoner for Christ, Philemon's own salvation is due (at least in part) to Paul's ministry, and Paul loves Onesimus. These realities make for a strong appeal (vss. 10, 12, 19).
- Onesimus "profitable" was once useless to Philemon. Now, in Christ, he is useful to both Paul and Philemon. Christ's work radically changes human nature (vss. 18-19; 2 Cor. 5:16-21).
- Paul would have Philemon do what is proper out of his own redeemed nature, not merely as an act of obedience (vss. 8, 14, 17).
- Paul is clear; he is asking for something special. He would prefer to be repaid in this instance for the work he has contributed to Philemon's own salvation and ministry.
- Paul utilizes great tact in this letter. It is a skill all believers should acquire (2 Tim. 2:24-26; 1 Pet. 3:15).

II. THE QUESTION OF SLAVERY

- What does God think about slavery? (Gen. 21:13; Ex. 3:7, 21:20-32, 23:12; Deut. 23:15, 24:7; 1 Tim. 1:9-11; Rev. 18:11-13).
- What did the apostles think about slavery? (1 Cor. 7:20-24, 9:19; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27-28; Eph. 6:8; Col. 3:11; 1 Pet. 2:18-21).
- Paul and Peter were primarily interested in one thing—the proclamation of the gospel. Slavery (and other social evils) were secondary issues (Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22-25; 1 Tim. 6:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:18-21).

III. PAUL'S PLEA - AN ECHO OF CHRIST'S PLEA

- Jesus pleads for his followers to also be set free. To be guarded, sanctified and loved until he returns (John 17:6-26).

KNOW: Paul pleads for Onesimus like Christ pleads for the church. Philemon likely has a receptive ear for Paul. God the Father always has a receptive ear for God the Son.

DO: Accept Christ's plea on your behalf. Be reconciled to God.

Suggested Reading:

Amazing Grace in the Life of William Wilberforce by John Piper (LifePoint Library #BIO WIL) [Wilberforce was the British Parliamentarian and Christ-follower who worked to end the slave trade in the British Empire]

The Radical Disciple by John R.W. Stott (LifePoint Library #284.4)

Questions/Discovery Points for Life Groups/Families

Please Read Philemon 8-20

1. What is Paul's approach here? How does he broach the subject he wants to address with Philemon?
2. Paul doesn't command when he could. Why?
3. What do you think Paul wants from Philemon?
4. Why is it better to serve out of desire rather than out of compulsion? What correlations do you see here as it relates to your relationship with Christ?
5. Why do you think that the New Testament does not demand an end to the institution of slavery?
6. What are your takeaways from this lesson?