

BOOK OF PHILEMON - VERSES 8-25

*Our lesson last week ended with Paul writing how assuring it was to know that the "hearts" (bowels) of the saints were being refreshed by his beloved brother, Philemon, in love.

*Paul was telling us that our actions and words affect others. We never know sometimes how our influence will do good to one needing Christ in their life.

*The Christian has the tools to combat the evil things in the world by the "fruits of the Spirit" within their inner parts.

Galatians 5:22-23 - But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Gal. 5:23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Galatians 5:25 - If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

**Paul makes a gracious plea in the remainder of this personal letter to Philemon, requesting him to accept his runaway slave, Onesimus, back in grace and brotherly love.

Philemon - Verses 8-9 - Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, Phm. 1:9 Yet for love's sake I rather beseech *thee*, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

1. Paul now comes to the main purpose of the letter. He is about to intercede for Onesimus. Paul needs to approach Philemon diplomatically and lovingly - as an apostle or, as an appeal as a brother in Christ.
2. Paul could have used his authority as an apostle in verse 8 to command Philemon's response. Instead, Paul wanted him to choose the right course of action. We will see Paul's plea in verse 14 to determine Philemon's willingness to choose for the right reasons.
3. Paul appeals to Philemon "for love's sake" in verse 9, because of his relationship that Paul shared with Philemon as brothers in the faith. This shows the love of Paul and he preferred to appeal rather than order him.
4. [as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.] Paul was probably around 60 years old at this time and qualified as an old man.

*Because of all Paul had suffered and had been persecuted for as a missionary for Christ, this had prematurely aged him. Think of all the sufferings Paul had encountered.

II Corinthians 11:24-27 - Of the Jews five times received I forty *stripes* save one. 2Co 11:25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; 2Co 11:26 In journeyings often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils by *mine own* countrymen, *in* perils by the heathen, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; 2Co 11:27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

5. Being a prisoner of Jesus Christ, it was evident that he could not come to Philemon in person. Also, by mentioning this Paul was not asking for sympathy. He hoped Philemon would make the right decision when Onesimus returned to him.

Philemon - Verse 10 - I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds:

1. Here Paul now pleads for his new son in Christ and mentions him by his name - Onesimus.
2. Paul had led Onesimus to the Lord Jesus Christ, even though he himself was a prisoner at the time. Paul hopes his remark in his letter to the Colossians would help them give Onesimus, as a new convert Christian, forgiveness and to accept him back.

Colossians 4:9 - With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is *one* of you. They shall make known unto you all things which *are done* here.

Philemon - Verse 11 - Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me:

1. The name "Onesimus" means "useful" or "profitable". Paul seems to have a play on words here and probably was good at it in his ministry.
2. Paul is saying, in effect, "Yes, he was useless to you in the past, but now he is useful to you and to me."
3. After Onesimus' conversion, he helped Paul as a personal attendant for witnessing the grace given to him. He became profitable to Paul and could be also for his master Philemon.

Philemon - Verses 12-13 - Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels:

Phm. 1:13 Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel:

1. The deep affection which the apostle Paul had for Onesimus is expressed in the words sending from his "bowels", or from his heart and strong feelings.
2. Paul is asking Philemon to receive Onesimus just as if he were receiving Paul himself. Again, this shows how important he was as a co-laborer in the grace gospel for Paul.
3. Paul had wished to keep Onesimus with him in Rome as his helper, but Paul knew that he could not take advantage of Philemon. He needed to send Onesimus back to his master.
4. The law permitted a master to execute a rebellious slave. Even though Onesimus was converted, he did not cease to be a slave - he was legally required to return to Philemon.

Philemon - Verse 14 - But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly.

1. So Paul writes this letter to persuade Philemon to receive Onesimus with a willing and joyful heart. For Paul to keep Onesimus with him would be wrong and he would not do that without Philemon's consent.
2. Paul wanted Philemon to make the right choice from a genuine heartfelt desire to do good. This goes well in our giving to the church in II Corinthians 9.

II Corinthians 9:7 - Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

Philemon - Verse 15 - For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever;

1. The mark of spiritual maturity is to be able to look beyond the difficult circumstances of the moment. We need to see God working all things together for good.

Romans 8:28 - And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.

2. This is the foundation stone of every believer in our trials of life. God is in control.
3. Paul is suggesting a divine purpose behind Onesimus' escape from his master Philemon. Perhaps it was God's will that the slave depart for awhile, so he could be converted and be received forever as a brother in Christ.

Philemon - Verse 16 - Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?

1. Paul is telling Philemon that not only are you getting Onesimus back as a servant/slave, but in a new relationship as a brother in the Lord.

*Onesimus was now more than a slave. He was a beloved brother. He is still a slave according to Roman law, but now a brother both in the flesh and in the Lord.

2. In biblical times, slavery did not target a specific race. All people of color often became slaves for economic or financial reasons.

*Some were laborers, educators, doctors, or skilled artists. They were sometimes better off than being free men. They were required to do their master's will through their talents.

3. Paul's main goal was not to overturn the Roman institution of slavery, but to see individual hearts changed by the gospel of Christ.

Philemon - Verse 17 - If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself.

1. Paul makes a third and final appeal to Philemon. On account of their partnership in the faith, what God had done to reconcile you (Philemon) to Christ should cause you to reconcile with Onesimus.
2. If Philemon considered Paul as a partner and in fellowship, then the apostle Paul asks him to receive Onesimus on the same basis.
3. Paul doesn't require that Onesimus be treated as a special guest, but be received as a servant in the home as a brother in the faith.

Philemon - Verse 18 - If he hath wronged thee, or oweth *thee* ought, put that on mine account;

1. This verse gives a great illustration of imputing on one's behalf. Onesimus' crime is not mentioned here, but probably he had stolen from his master, Philemon.
2. Paul is saying to "put that on mine account". Paul offered to pay on Onesimus' behalf so that the master and slave could be reconciled.
3. The Bible gives us several verses dealing with sin being imputed for humanity to what Christ did on the cross!

Romans 4:24-25 - But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Rom. 4:25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

II Corinthians 5:21 - For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

4. We cannot read this without being reminded of the enormous debt which we had contracted as sinners. Jesus Christ took all those charges of our sins on His account at Calvary, so we can be reconciled and made righteous to God.
5. Because of Christ's D.B.R., the cause of our enmity has been removed and believers are reconciled to God.

Philemon - Verses 19-20 - I Paul have written *it* with mine own hand, I will repay *it*: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides. Phm. 1:20 Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord.

1. Ordinarily Paul would dictate his letters to someone else, but here this is a personal letter to his brother in Christ - so he writes it in his own hand.
2. Paul is pleading that Onesimus be received graciously and be forgiven, for him to be restored to his place of service in the household - not as a slave but as a brother in the family of God.
3. Paul's heart desires to see Philemon and Onesimus reconciled.

Philemon - Verse 21 - Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say.

1. Paul had every confidence that Philemon would do even more than was requested. Here we see Paul's trust and faith in Philemon that he would show what a believer's character should be.
2. Ephesians 4:32 - And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Philemon - Verse 22 - But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.

1. Paul expected to be released from prison. He had hoped to visit Colosse and be a guest in Philemon's home. Paul requests prayers for the purpose of his being released by the civil authorities.
2. We really do not know if Paul was able to get to Philemon's house at Colosse. All we can do is assume that the guest room was ready for him.

Philemon - Verses 23-25 - There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus; Phm. 1:24 Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers. Phm. 1:25 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit. Amen.

1. These are the names mentioned in Paul's closing letter to the Colossians. This letter concludes with these personal greetings to those with Paul to the faithful at Colosse.
2. This letter closes with Paul's characteristic benediction. The Book of Philemon is all about grace - God's grace of forgiveness and reconciliation for man's sinful nature.