An Intercessory Epistle

Lesson 15: Philemon
April 12, 2020
History

• Written from prison, probably along with Colossians
• Paul writing as a mediator similar to Christ
• Paul appeals for Onesimus, but for what?
• Commands in the letter
  • 17 accept him as you would me
  • 18 charge that to my account
  • 20 refresh my heart in Christ
  • 22 prepare me a lodging
Outline

• 1-3 Introduction
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Introduction
Philemon 1-6

1Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,

To Philemon our beloved brother and fellow worker, and to Apphia our sister, and to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: 3Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

4I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers, 5because I hear of your love and of the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints; 6and I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ’s sake.

• While others are mentioned, the letter is written to Philemon
• Characteristics of Philemon
  • Beloved brother
  • Fellow worker
  • Love
  • Faith
• Prayer for increased fellowship
Appeal
Philemon 7-11

7 For I have come to have much joy and comfort in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother.

8 Therefore, though I have enough confidence in Christ to order you to do what is proper, yet for love’s sake I rather appeal to you—since I am such a person as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus—

9 I appeal to you for my child Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my imprisonment, who formerly was useless to you, but now is useful both to you and to me.
Appeal
Philemon 12-16

I have sent him back to you in person, that is, sending my very heart, whom I wished to keep with me, so that on your behalf he might minister to me in my imprisonment for the gospel; but without your consent I did not want to do anything, so that your goodness would not be, in effect, by compulsion but of your own free will. For perhaps he was for this reason separated from you for a while, that you would have him back forever, no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother, especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

• Goodness needs to be done freely
• Relationships through Christ are the most important
• Slavery wasn’t the issue, but that Onesimus was now a brother
Appeal
Philemon 17-22

17 If then you regard me a partner, accept him as you would me. 18 But if he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything, charge that to my account; 19 I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand, I will repay it (not to mention to you that you owe to me even your own self as well). 20 Yes, brother, let me benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ.

21 Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, since I know that you will do even more than what I say.

22 At the same time also prepare me a lodging, for I hope that through your prayers I will be given to you.

• Financial terms
  • Owe
  • Charge
  • Repay
  • Benefit

• Paul was confident in Philemon

• As in Philippians, Paul expected to be released
Closing
Philemon 23-25

23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, 24 as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers.

25 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

• All these are also in Colossians
• Mark was now serving with Paul again
Summary

- We should obey, and help others to obey, not from compulsion, but willingly
- The highest relationship is to be connected to others in Christ
- We should be willing to cover any wrong done by a fellow Christian
- We are to accept others as Christ has accepted us
- As ambassadors of Christ we may be called on to be a mediator