

Call Me - Jeremiah 33:1-3
Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

The book of Philemon is a personal, private letter from the apostle Paul to a man named Philemon who lived in the city of Colossae. Philemon was a wealthy believer with a household that was fairly substantial, and as such he was able to host a church in his home. From prison, Paul wrote this letter to Philemon with a very humble, heartfelt attitude of brotherly love that contains a rather groundbreaking request.

Owning a substantial household in the Roman Empire often went hand-in-hand with owning a number of slaves, and Philemon was no exception. This was not uncommon, as slavery in the Roman Empire was a widely accepted practice tightly woven into the fabric of their society; a Rome with no slavery could be likened to a fantasy land where work simply got done by magic. Roughly one third of the population of the Roman Empire were slaves. So, for Philemon to own slaves was nothing strange.

While scripture does not give us all the details we would like, God has given us enough to discern Paul's primary intentions for this letter and to see him live out gospel-centered discipleship in very practical ways. We know that a slave named Onesimus left the household of his master Philemon, possibly as a runaway slave - he may have even taken some money or possessions from Philemon for his journey. Through God's sovereignty, as part of his journey, Onesimus found himself under the ministry of Paul, through which he became a believer. This meant that Onesimus, with his newfound identity in Christ, was now an adopted son of God, a saint, and a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven, just like his new brother in Christ: Philemon.

Paul knew that under Roman law, as a runaway slave, it was right for Onesimus to be referred back to his master. But the fate of a captured fugitive slave was left to the discretion of the master; many were beaten or branded, and some were even crucified. Since Paul had grown to love Onesimus as a brother, he chose to speak into how Philemon received him back by sending an appeal on behalf of his spiritual child to encourage Philemon to see him as more than a bondservant - as a beloved brother.

What we see here at work is the reconciliation of God, in two forms. First, God reconciles His people vertically through His son Jesus Christ. Secondly, God reconciles His people horizontally through each other. These two themes echo different definitions of the word "reconcile".

In banking, to reconcile means to make one account consistent or in balance with another, and a ledger would be a book in which one would keep track of such transactions in the form of debits and credits. All religions share the concept of a ledger, where red ink signifies wrongs or sins, and black ink denotes good or virtuous deeds. Biblical Christianity differs from all other religions in that it specifies that people can only add red ink to their ledger; all other religions believe humans can balance out your red ink with black ink, in the hopes that you will end your life with at least slightly more black than red ink in your ledger by your own actions. In Christianity, however, God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, alienated from God with ledgers gushing red ink, Christ takes our sin upon himself, gives us not only a clean slate, but one filled with his perfect righteousness, such that we can stand before the one true holy God and be judged as blameless through the work of Christ on the cross.

We see this beautifully pictured in Philemon verses 17-21, where Paul acts as a Christ-like mediator figure, encouraging Philemon to receive Onesimus as he would receive Paul. Further, Paul says if Onesimus has done anything wrong or owes anything to Philemon to put it on Paul's account, he will repay it. That's exactly what Christ does for those who believe in him: he takes our sin onto his own account, and gives us his perfect righteousness, making us able to stand blameless before our holy God.

Additionally, to reconcile means to restore a relationship to friendship or harmony. And verse 5 shows us that our faith in Jesus is meant to inform and affect how we show our love

for all the saints. In Corrie Ten Boom's book *Amazing Love*, she succinctly says: "Why should we hold on to the sins of others while our own sins have been cast into the depths of the sea?" Once you have been reconciled to God through His son Jesus Christ, the peace you experience of having your sins cast into the depths of the sea enables you to turn and forgive others in love, as each person you see has at one time (if not currently) been an eternally dead man walking with a ledger filled with red ink. Through our mutual participation in the faith (koinonia), Christians are called to share in everything and receive our brothers and sisters in love just as God has received us through Christ. This call to become agents of reconciliation impacts all circles of our lives, just as Jesus points to in Acts 1:8, and our applications of this text can be impact ful in both close, personal relationships, and also global paths.

This horizontal reconciliation is not always as simple as it sounds, though, and when (not if) we fail to live out the implications of this call perfectly, we must remember Christ has paid for every failing, and God forgives. We must first know deeply the peace God gives us in reconciliation through His Son Jesus so that our hearts can be refreshed in order to love those around us as God calls us.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

| Sun | Mon | Tues | Weds | Thurs | Fri | Sat |
|----------|----------|----------|---------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Esther 5 | Esther 6 | Esther 7 | Esher 8 | Esther 9 | Esther 10 | Psalms 1 |

Reading from this past week: Philemon 1:1-25

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Romans 8:1-17

Family Worship

Song - *King of Kings*

<https://youtu.be/Of5lcFWiEpg>

Gospel Project

Story: Children of God

Story Point: Children of God love one another with their actions.

Answer: One day, all Christians will see Jesus in His glory and live with Him forever.

Scripture: 1 John 2-3

New City Catechism

Question #30: What is faith in Jesus Christ?

Answer: Receiving and resting on him alone for salvation as he is offered to us in the gospel.

Verse: Galatians 2:20

Scripture

Philemon 1:1-25

- What is the basic problem that Paul addresses in this short book? What are the people's names and what are Paul's instructions?
- What are some reasons we should know that slavery is wrong?
- What does it mean for two people to be reconciled? Why is reconciliation between believers a picture of the Gospel?

Prayer

*Pray that we as God's people would be marked by our love for one another and for the ways we seek reconciliation.

*Pray for the Shining Light Ministry Center in Charleston, MO and Director, Pastor Dean Wallace.