

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 2/7/93 PM
Philemon 17-21 "The Role of a Peacemaker"

Intro: The Role of a Peacemaker...

Illust: Animals that don't get along

There is a real need for Peacemakers. Jesus said in Mt 5:9, "Blessed are the Peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God."

What is a Peacemaker? What does a Peacemaker do?

A Peacemaker is a Mediator, a Go-between. A peacemaker is one who restores parties who are out of terms. A reconciler. Sometimes people get out of terms with each other, don't they?

Illust: College Roommates

Illust: Married couples

Q: Do we have a responsibility when people around us are at odds?

Q: How can we become Peacemakers? What does it take?

Proposition: In Philemon 17-21, Paul illustrates the Role of the Peacemaker. Paul's Model reveals 5 marks of a Peacemaker.

I. A Willingness to Get Involved (17)

II. Personal Risk (18)

III. Personal Respect (19)

IV. Proper Motivation (20)

V. Optimism (21)

Note: This isn't an exhaustive list, but a sampling of traits modeled by Paul.

I. A Willingness to Get Involved (17)

Let's sketch the background of this letter again. The story has to do with 3 main characters:

Philemon--a well to do Christian man living in or near Colossae

Onesimus--a slave in Philemon's household, who robbed and ran away

Paul--a personal friend of Philemon

You remember what happened. Paul had been arrested because of his allegiance to Jesus Christ. He was imprisoned in Rome. While there, Paul received an unusual visitor. God directed the runaway slave Onesimus to Paul's prison. Paul soon moved the conversation to the topic of Jesus Christ. He explained to this wayward slave how his sins could be forgiven, how his life could be changed, how he could be set free from the burden of guilt. Right there, Onesimus repented of his sins, and placed his trust in Jesus Christ.

Onesimus was quite an asset to Paul (11). He helped him in the ministry (13). In fact, the two developed an intimate father-son relationship. But there was some unfinished business that needed attention. There was a severed relationship that needed mending. Onesimus needed to go back and make things right with Philemon.

Note: When you become a Christian, you don't necessarily bury the problems from your past. But, in Christ, you do have supernatural ability to deal with the problems from your past.

So Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon. But the apostle did not say, "Good luck Onesimus. You're on your own now. Drop me a line and tell me how it goes!"
No. Paul played the Role of a Peacemaker.

Q: What does it take to be a Peacemaker?

A: First of all, a Willingness to Get Involved.

V 17 "If thou count me, therefore, a partner, receive him as myself."

Paul got involved in what could have been a messy situation. Remember, Roman law allowed Masters to punish severely runaway slaves. What's more, there were stiff penalties for those who assisted slaves who went AWOL.

But Paul knew God had not called him to be a spectator, but a participant. When he sent Onesimus back to his master, he sent him with a cover letter, the epistle to Philemon. In this letter, Paul wrote about 3 things to Philemon:

1. Words of Appreciation (1-7): V 7 "For we have...joy..."
2. Words of Appeal (8-16): V 9 "I beseech thee..."
3. Words of Acquittal (17-21):

V 17 "Receive him as myself."

V 18 "If he hath wronged thee...put that to my account."

What does it take to be a Peacemaker? A Willingness to GET INVOLVED.

V 17 "...as MYSELF."

Application: Availability is a great quality. It's also an increasingly rare quality these days. Look around and you see marriages crumbling. There's a need for Peacemakers to step in and help.

You say, "Wait a minute. I'm not a counselor. I don't have any training. What do I have that would enable me to help a struggling couple save their marriage?"

Listen. If you have Christ in your life, if you have a successful marriage yourself, and if you are willing to get involved, you can be a Peacemaker.

"But what if I don't know what to say?" Then say, "I don't know what to say! But I care about you as a brother in Christ. I'm not trying to invade your privacy, but I'm here if you need me."

Reflect with me...

Q: Are there people right now that God could use you to help?

Q: Are you willing to get involved as a Peacemaker?

Illust:

Tran: What's involved in being a Peacemaker? First, Paul demonstrated a Willingness to Get Involved.

II. Personal Risk (18)

Being a Peacemaker can be costly. There may be sacrifice involved. It demands personal risk. Listen to the cost Paul was willing to pay to see two brothers in Christ restored...

V 18 "If he has wronged thee...put that on mine account."

There is a fixed law in God's universe. Someone has to pay the price of sin. God does forgive sin. That's the glory of the gospel. But the reason He can forgive us is because the price for our sin has been paid. By Jesus Christ.

Someone has to pay the price for sin. Even though Onesimus was now a Christian, you don't find Paul saying to Philemon, "What's passed is passed. Let's just forget what happened."

No. Paul didn't presume upon Philemon. He knew Ones had a problem. It would take more than love to solve his problem. Love must pay a price (Wiersbe).

"wronged thee" = legal injustice; Ones had violated laws governing slavehood
"oweth thee" = implies financial loss through theft

Onesimus had robbed Philemon. Was it cash or property he took? We don't know. But it was a costly loss for Philemon. Watch what Paul said.

"put that on my account"

That's a technical, business term. Paul wanted to assume the debt. Just like the Good Samaritan who told the innkeeper: "Take care of him; and whatever you spend more, when I come again, I will repay you (Lk 10:35)." What an offer!

Listen. Being a Peacemaker is costly. It may involve Risk.

Illust:

Q: Is it worth it? Is it worth the risk to be a Peacemaker?

Q: Who is the Greatest Peacemaker of all time?

Jesus Christ is! What a beautiful illustration v 18 is of the doctrine of imputation. We had a great debt hanging over us, the debt of our sin. We were powerless to get rid of the debt. We were guilty before God the Father. But God the Father put our moral debt to the account of His Blessed Son. Jesus Christ paid a debt He did not owe because we owed a debt we could not pay.

See--I Pt 3:18 "For Christ also has once suffered for sins..."

Q: Is it worth the risk to be a Peacemaker?

Key: When we take a risk in being a peacemaker, we're following in His steps.

Tran: Being a Peacemaker involves a Willingness to Get Involved, Personal Risk...

III. Personal Respect (19)

This is key. Before you can be a Peacemaker, you need to gain the respect of the parties involved. Paul had done that. He had won the respect of both men.

How do we know he had? Just think of what he was asking them to do. He was asking a runaway slave to return to his Master. For Onesimus to even consider the request says to me he had a great deal of respect for Paul. Paul asked that master to

receive back that slave with open arms. For Philemon to consider that request says that he too had high regard for Paul, in light of what masters usually did with unruly slaves.

Paul had the respect of both Philemon and Onesimus. But he didn't take advantage of that respect. As a Peacemaker, he used it to reconcile 2 brothers.

V 19 "I Paul have written...I will repay..."

"I will repay." The letter of Philemon is like a Promisory Note. In fact, notice that in v 19 Paul says he "wrote it with his own hand." Philemon knew Paul had poor eyesight. When he saw the apostle's own handwriting in this letter, it surely touched him.

I doubt Paul had much money. After all he was a prisoner. But he knew that Onesimus had even less. In fact, Paul knew there was no way he could repay the debt he owed. So Paul said, "I'll pay the debt."

Look again at v 19...

V 19b "...I do not say to you how you owe me..."!!

I think Barclay is right when he says there's a flash of humor in Paul's words here. It's like Paul is saying, "Philemon, old friend, you got a lot out of me. Now let me get something out of you! You owe your soul to me, for it was I who brought you to Christ. Won't you let me make some profit out of you now?"

Q: Why could Paul make such an appeal to Philemon?

A: Because he had won his Respect.

Key: Relationships are like Checking Accounts. If you want to get anything out of them, you have to put something into them. Paul had invested in Philemon's life. He had invested in Onesimus' life. Now it was time to make a withdrawal. What he was asking wasn't easy for either. But he had earned their respect.

Illust:

Tran: A Willingness to Get Involved, Personal Risk, Personal Respect, and...

IV. Proper Motivation (20)

Q: Why did Paul want to get involved in the first place? Why did he make himself vulnerable? After all, he could have set himself up for some pain, even rejection.

Q: What motivated him to be a Peacemaker between Philemon and Onesimus?

V 20 "Yea brother..."

Q: What phrase did Paul repeat twice? "in the Lord...in the Lord"

There was Paul's motivation. He did what he did, because of the Lord.

Ph 1:21 "For to me to live is Christ..."

II Cor 4:5 "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord..."

II Tim 2:8 "Remember Jesus Christ!"

It's possible to be a peacemaker for the wrong reasons. You can puff up your ego by sticking your nose into other people's problems. You can ignore your own broken relationships by preoccupying yourself with others. But that wasn't true of Paul.

He did what he did because of Christ. Why did he want to see 2 brothers reconciled to each other. Because he was sentimental? No. Because he was nosy? No. Because it bolstered his own ego? No. Paul got involved as a peacemaker because of one consuming motivatin. He wanted to please the Lord.

Key: No sacrifice is too great when you're doing something for the Lord.

Q: Do you know why? Because He paid the Ultimate Sacrifice!

Illust:

Tran: What's it take to be a Peacemaker? Paul demonstrated a Willingness to Get Involved, Personal Risk, Personal Respect, Proper Motivation, and one more thing...

V. Optimism (21)

Optimism. What do we mean by that?

Q: What does the pessamist say?

Illust: "I know you don't want to do this but..."

Q: What about the optimist? Listen to Paul...

V 21 "Having confidence in your obedience...you will do more than I say."

Was Paul being presumptuous? No. He was being optimistic! Successful Peacemakers are that way. They know they serve a great God. They know that God is great enough to reconcile the most hardened sinners to Himself. And they have great confidence that the same God can also reconcile alienated Christians to one another.

Paul let his expectation be known. And remember, it really wasn't his expection. It was the Lord's.

Illust:

Conclusion:

We'll finish Philemon next week. But tonight...

Q: What does it take to be a peacemaker?

Paul demonstrated a Willingness to Get Involved, Personal Risk, Personal Respect, Proper Motivation, and Optimism.

Listen. Jesus Christ calls all of us to be Peacemakers. He has given us the ministry of reconciliation (II Cor 5:18). That involves helping people get right with God through Christ. That also involves helping people get right with one another.

Let's bow our heads. Think with me:

--Is there a marriage you know of that's struggling? Could it be that the Lord wants to use you to minister healing to them?

--Is there a teen who is out of sorts with his or her parents? Would the Lord be wanting you to get involved in a ministry of reconciliation?

--Do you know of two Christian brothers who aren't on speaking terms? Might you be the one the Lord would use to restore peace between them?