

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 2/14/93 PM
Philemon 21-25 "Wrapping It Up"

Intro:

Philemon is a great book. We began our study 5 weeks ago. In our first message, I told you where we were going. Now in our last, to wrap it up, let's take a look at where we've been.

The Characters in Philemon:

Paul--author of letter (along with Timothy)

Onesimus--runaway slave

Philemon--the owner of the slave

Apphia--wife of Philemon?

Archippus--son of Philemon? Pastor of church?

Tychicus--delivered this letter and Colossians

Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke--ministry associates of Paul (23-24)

What have we learned from Philemon?

Sharing: What truths have you learned?

1. We have learned about Forgiveness.

Q: Why did Paul write this letter?

A: Obviously the issue at hand was how to treat a fugative slave, Onesimus.

Philemon had a dilemma. In that day, Roman law permitted slave owners to execute a rebellious slave. In fact, owners were encouraged to do so. There were 60,000,000 slaves in the Roman empire. Slave holders constantly guarded against the danger of revolt. If a slave ran away, at best he was branded with a red-hot iron on his forehead, with the letter "F" (standing for "fugitivus" =runaway). At worst, he was crucified.

But Philemon was a Christian. What should he do with Onesimus? If he forgave him, what would the other Masters and slaves think? If he punished him, how would it affect his testimony?

That was the intent of Paul's letter, to tell Philemon how to handle this situation in a way that would honor the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul appealed to Philemon to forgive Onesimus. Why? Because he felt like it? No. He undoubtedly felt "burnt." Because it would be a popular thing to do? No. Philemon would not be too popular with other Masters if he forgave this wayward slave. He was to forgive because of Christ.

Philemon teaches us about forgiveness. When a person has been forgiven by God, what are we to do? Forgive.

Illust:

2. We have learned how Christ can make Useless people into Useful people.
V 11 "Who in time past was...unprofitable, but now profitable..."

Philemon reminds us not to look at people for what they are, but what they could be, in Christ.

Illust:

3. We have learned about the Difference Christ makes in our Relationships.

Vv 15-16 "...receive him...not as a servant...but a brother..."

Paul's counsel to Philemon shows us how we can impact our Pagan Culture, how we can do something about social injustices. How? By Modeling. By showing the world an alternative.

Slavery was an accepted practice in Paul's day. He did not organize a campaign against slavery. As we discussed, that would have been disastrous for the early church. Rather, his approach was a grassroots one. Let the world see the difference Christ made in the relationship between one master (Philemon) and one slave (Onesimus). He exhorted Philemon to MODEL Christianity.

Challenge: Let the world SEE Christ in the way you treat someone who has wronged you. Illust:

4. We have learned How to be a Peacemaker.

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

A Peacemaker is a person who, like Paul, is willing to get involved (18), to take risks (19), and has the proper motivation (20).

The church needs Peacemakers.

Illust:

There's more we can learn from Philemon.

Proposition: Paul wraps up his letter in verses 21-25 by highlighting two things that were very important in his life.

I. What Prayer Meant to Paul (21-22)

A. What did Paul pray for others?

1. Paul prayed that Christians would know God better.
2. Paul prayed that Christians would live a life that pleases God.
3. Paul prayed that Christians would be Fruitful.

B. What did Paul ask others to pray for him?

1. He needed prayer for Boldness in spreading the Gospel.
2. He needed prayer for Opportunities to Minister.

II. What People Meant to Paul (23-25)

I. What Prayer Meant to Paul (21-22)

Listen to Paul's optimism.

V 21 "Having confidence in your obedience..."

Now remember, Paul is in prison. But watch his request.

V 22 "At the same time prepare me also a lodging."

Q: Why would Paul need lodging in Colossae if he was in prison in Rome?

A: Apparently, what did he expect to happen soon? To be released!

Q: Why was the apostle so confident that he would be set free? Did he have inside connections? Well, sort of...

V 22 "...through your prayers I shall be given unto you."

Q: Do things really happen when people pray?

I want us to spend a few moments thinking about what prayer meant to Paul. Paul prayed a lot. And he was indebted to the prayers of others. Let's scan his other letters with 2 questions in mind:

A. What did Paul pray for others?

B. What did Paul ask others to pray for him?

A. What did Paul pray for others?

I find very little mention of prayer requests for physical needs, for money, for jobs, and the things for which we usually pray.

1. Paul prayed that Christians would know God better.

Eph 1:17 "That the God of our Lord...may give you the spirit of wisdom in the knowledge of Him...that you may know..."

Wait. Don't Christians already know God? Yes. But often we shortchange ourselves. We know ABOUT God, and settle for that. We can spout off a few facts about God to impress others. But we really don't know God intimately. He's not real in our lives. We don't practice His presence.

Q: If we really know God, what will we grasp?

v 18 The Hope of His calling

v 18 The Riches of the Glory of His inheritance

v 19 The Exceeding greatness of His power

Challenge: Pray for your children, that they would know God practically.

Illust:

2. Paul prayed that Christians would live a life that pleases God.

Col 1:9-11 "...pray...that you may walk worthy of the Lord in all pleasing..."

Q: What does it mean to "walk worthy" of the Lord?

Once we get to know God properly, we'll want to please Him. If a person says, "I know God," yet violates God's commandments in life, he is not walking worthy. Our walk must match our talk.

Paul prayed specifically for people. "Lord, help the Christians living in Colossae to walk worthy of you."

See: II Th 1:12 "That the Name of Christ may be glorified in you..."

Challenge: S.S. teachers pray, "Lord, help Joe to walk worthy today..."

3. Paul prayed that Christians would be Fruitful.

Ph 1:9-11 "And this I pray...being filled with the fruits of righteousness..."

If we are in Christ, we have great potential. But we must tap into that potential. We must get a handle on what we are and have in Christ. We must cooperate with the Holy Spirit so that He can produce the Fruit of Christlikeness in us.

Paul prayed in those terms for believers. "Lord, help them to become the people You want them to be in Christ."

See: Eph 3:16-17 "That...Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith..."

B. What did Paul ask others to pray for him?

Paul did not view pray as a "good luck charm" or a "Genie in a bottle." Yet he was convinced of the power of prayer. He prayed. He was indebted to the prayers of others for him.

1. He needed prayer for Boldness in spreading the Gospel.

Eph 6:19-20 "And for me, that utterance may be given me..."

That encourages me. There were times when even Paul felt intimidated. Do you think he ever "clammed up" when he had an opportunity to share Christ?

He needed prayer. "Pray that I'll be bold, that I won't waste an opportunity to speak up for Christ."

If he needed prayer, how much more do we!

Illust:

2. He needed prayer for Opportunities to Minister.

Rom 1:10 "Making request if I...by the will of God to come to you."

Paul wanted to go to Rome and minister. His practice was to go to the large urban centers of the world, and evangelize there: Ephesus, Thessalonica, Corinth, Athens, Philippi. But he wanted to go to Rome.

Q: Did he ever make it to Rome?

A: Yes, in chains!

Paul didn't ask people to pray for his convenience or his comfort. What mattered to him was knowing Christ, and making Christ known. That's what he prayed for others. That's what he wanted people to pray for him.

And people did pray for him. Like Philemon and Apphia (plural "you," v 22).

V 22 "that through your prayers I shall be given to you."

God will answer your prayer. So get the guest room ready! That's confidence!

Q: How's your prayer life? Do you pray? Do you pray for others? For what do you pray? We all need to fine tune our prayer lives from time to time...

Illust:

Tran: We've seen what Prayer meant to Paul. We can see one more thing in Phile.

II. What People Meant to Paul (23-25)

Five of Paul's ministry associates sent their greetings to Philemon...

Vv 23-24 "There greet thee..."

People mattered to Paul. For this reason. People matter to Jesus Christ. There's more to life than bank accounts and building castles. You can't take them to heaven with you. But you can take people with you.

Notice the people Paul mentioned (similar list as in Col 4)...

1. Epaphras--"my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus"

He was probably the pastor of the church in Colossae. He was a faithful minister there (Col 1:7). He was a prayer warrior (Col 4:12). Apparently he left Colossae to go to Rome and assist Paul. Whether he was a voluntary prisoner or was actually imprisoned with Paul in Rome, we don't know.

2. Mark--that's John Mark.

What do you remember about him? He was Barnabas's nephew. He was the young man who failed Paul on his first missionary journey. Remember that? Apparently he got homesick or disillusioned. But whatever, he let Paul down.

What happened later? The man who was once unprofitable Mark became profitable Mark! Paul forgave Mark and allowed him back into his life.

Q: Why is that important in light of Paul's request of Philemon?

A: What Paul asked Philemon to do with Onesimus, he did with Mark.

3. Aristarchus

4. Demas

Does that name ring a bell? His name appears 3 times in the NT. Here, in Col 4:14, and one other time.

II Tim 4:10 "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world."

Just think. John Mark failed, but was restored. Demas seemed to be doing well, but then he fell. Take heed lest you fall.

Illust:

5. Luke--"my fellow workers"

Luke was quite a faithful servant. He seems to have been a great second man. He's constantly there, at Paul's side, helping when needed, supporting, encouraging, contributing to the ministry. He was the Beloved Physician. He wrote the Gospel of Luke, and the Book of Acts.

People mattered to Paul.

Q: Are you investing your life into people? Do you love people?

Notice Paul's benediction.

V 25 "The grace of our Lord..."

Paul ended his letter magnifying the grace of God. After all, salvation is impossible apart from God's Grace. Life is impossible without grace.

Role Play