

Conclusion of Philemon

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[0 : 00] It's good to see everybody this morning. Nice to be able to come and worship with my good friends. Praise the Lord. And I just want to tell you all this so that you won't think that I've got mad and wandered off or something.

You're not going to see Becky and me for the next three Sundays. And I can't believe that she talked me into this. We had our 45th wedding anniversary last November.

And she said, let's do something really special. I thought about it and said, okay, let's go to Carol Lynn's for the day. Well, she upgraded that idea a little bit.

And we're leaving this week. We're going to go to see, to visit in England and Ireland and Scotland. I don't know who's going to pay for it. But we're going.

And so we're going to be gone about three whole Sundays here. And we'll pray for you. You pray for us. And so I just wanted to tell you that ahead of time so you wouldn't say, Matt has backslid.

[1 : 04] Now, that might happen while I'm gone. But pray for me. Okay. You're going to work on the house while you're gone. That's a real good question. I've been showing Julio how to do some things.

And he said, you'll have to carry on. Okay. Okay. Well, let's have prayer. Lord, thank you so much for a chance to get together and worship and to be with these good brothers and sisters in Christ.

Lord, this word koinonia that comes out a lot in the book we're studying right now. We have this wonderful fellowship of love. This koinonia, that's the spirit of God is among us.

And because of that, we can love each other. So bless this sermon now with your presence. Speak to our hearts. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Well, now, some of you may not have been here for the first two Sundays that we've been discussing and going through the book of Philemon.

This is a book I've basically ignored most of my Christian life. It's only one chapter. And I just, you know, I've read it before, but I never paid much attention to it. But my goodness, somehow we've squeezed three sermons out of this, you know.

[2 : 20] And so we are down to the last sermon. And why don't I, just for the sake of some of you that may have missed some of that, let me back up and give you the back story so you know what's going on before we finish it up today.

And the story is Paul is in Rome. He's in prison. He has a good friend named Philemon who lives about 700 miles away in Colossae, which is a part of Greece.

And so Paul's writing him this letter. Philemon, there's three characters, Paul, Philemon. Philemon had a slave named Onesimus.

Onesimus, we don't know what happened, but he got upset or whatever, and he ran away. He's a runaway slave. And apparently, the letter doesn't actually say it, but it implies that he probably stole a bunch of money before he left.

And so Philemon has every reason to be pretty mad at this slave. Well, somehow, using the money he stole or whatever, Onesimus gets all the way from Colossae to Rome, 700 miles away.

[3 : 34] And I looked up the population of Rome around 100 AD, a million people. So we're talking one of the biggest cities in the world back then. It would be a good place to go and disappear in the crowd.

They're never going to be able to come and find this runaway slave and bring him back home. But somehow, by God's working, he ends up bumping into Paul.

Paul's in prison, but somehow, only the Lord knows how. There's no explanation. He meets him, and Paul leads him to Christ. He becomes a Christian.

He starts helping Paul. Now, Paul's in jail, so I guess he's running errands for him, getting him some food to eat, taking messages to people, just, you know, whatever.

Can you go wash my shirt and bring it back tomorrow? Whatever. Onesimus is helping him and becoming a very good friend of his. But at some point, apparently, it starts to maybe bother Paul's conscience that he has the slave of a good friend of his that has a church that meets in his house. [4 : 40] Philemon is a really good guy. And so, he decides, and probably tells, I'd love to have heard the conversation. He's saying, Onesimus, I don't know how to break this to you, brother. The right thing, you need to go home and face the music.

I mean, I could see Onesimus saying, Paul, Philemon will throw me in jail. He might have me whipped. I mean, I'm a runaway slave. Are you crazy?

Let me stay here and help you. But Paul somehow persuaded him and said, look, I'll write him a letter and we'll trust God. You're either going to trust God in this life or you're not.

So, Paul wrote this letter. It's only one page. One of the shortest books in the Bible. And in this letter, Paul says, Onesimus is coming back to you.

I imagine Onesimus coming up, bringing this letter, coming up to his master's house, scared to death. And here's Philemon. And he says, a letter from Paul.

[5 : 46] Quick, read it. So, he reads it. And in the letter, Paul says, listen, Onesimus is your slave and he's run away. But he came to know Christ.

He's now coming back to you, not as a slave, but as a brother in Christ. And I'm asking you to treat him that way and to forgive him.

It's a really big ask that he's asking Philemon to do. But that's what he's doing. And by the way, I really think that this book, I never really thought about it.

But this book is probably one of the main reasons that everywhere Christianity has gone, slavery has been done away with. When a country became predominantly Christian, they outlawed slavery. Because Paul said, if somebody's your brother in Christ, how will you treat him? And so, it just overwhelms.

[6 : 47] And it does away with slavery, the truth of the gospel. Well, let's read today's. And I think for the first time in many years, I didn't get a PowerPoint done.

So, just turn to the book of Philemon. It's right before the, it's way over in the New Testament. You can use your phone or the Bible in the pew in front of you. Or your own Bible if you brought it with you.

And so, the book of Philemon. And I'll give you just a minute to find it. And we've already read the first two thirds of it. We've just got a few verses to read and look at today.

Are you with me? We're going to start with verse 17. Here's Philemon starting with verse 17. So, if you look upon me as your partner in this mission.

Hold on right there. John, the first sermon on this, he talked a lot about koinonia. And I looked this up in the Greek. And that word partner is something like koinonon.

[7 : 52] So, he's really saying, if you consider me to be your beloved brother in the faith. A partner in what Christ has done. So, he's using this word koinonia.

He's appealing to love one another. Fellowship. Share with one another. By just using that word right there. So, if you consider me to be your partner.

Then I ask you to open your heart to Onesimus. As you would welcome me. If he has wronged you or owes you anything.

Charge it to me. Look, I'll put it here in my own handwriting. I, Paul, promised to repay you everything. Should I remind you that you owe me your very life?

Indeed, brother. I want you to do me this favor out of obedience to the Lord. It will refresh my heart. This letter comes written with the confidence that you will not only do what I've asked.

[8 : 55] But you will also go beyond all that I've asked. One more thing. You should go ahead and get a room ready for me. I hope to be released soon.

And come to visit again in answer to your prayers. Also, Epaphras, my fellow prisoner here in Jesus, sends you greetings.

As well as my co-workers, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke. May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. Amen. So, that's the reading of the scripture.

And Paul has, again, as I've said, he's put out a big ask here. Now, as I was studying and meditating on this this week, I'll tell you when I got my best sermon preparation done this week, I was waiting at Julio and Emily's renovation house they've been working on for the inspector, who was supposed to be there that morning, and I had some things to do there.

But he didn't show up until about 2.30. So, I was sitting in the car with my Bible. I was glad I'd take some notes with me. And I just really, really thought a lot about this. And I realized, Paul sounds a lot more like Jesus right here in this last, this whole book, than I've ever seen him be like Jesus in any of his other letters.

[10:17] Think about it this way. He is saying to Philemon, okay, Onesimus owes you a lot of money. I'm asking you to forgive him.

Because you owe me so much more. I have introduced you to Christ. You have eternal life because of what I have done for you. You're going to live in heaven forever because of what I've done for you.

I'm asking you in return. Would you just forgive this guy who has done a small thing to you in comparison? You're indebted. But for my sake, or he's indebted.

For my sake, please forgive him. And then I thought it was interesting. He says, look, I'm going to write this in my own hand. And most of the time, they suppose, scholars don't know, they think maybe Paul had visual trouble.

Because in several of his letters, he talks about, look, I'm signing this with my own hand. Or he talks about the thorn in the flesh. Some people think it was that he just had really trouble seeing.

[11:20] Some think it probably happened one of the times when he got stoned that a rock hit him in the head or in the eye or something. And after that, he couldn't see very well. So in his letters, he usually just dictated them.

And somebody else wrote it out. But when he got to this part in the letter where he says, I owe you and I will pay you, he said, I'm going to write this with my own hand.

In other words, he's saying, look, this is an I owe you. I wrote it myself. I promise I'll pay you anything Onesimus owes you. Period. In all likelihood, he's never going to see five even again.

But I know that he had every intention of making good on this debt if Philemon asked him to. And then at the very end of this, he adds a real weird little note.

He says, go ahead and get your guest room ready. I'm going to come back and see you soon. Pray as you keep praying. I'm going to come see you again. Get your guest room ready. Well, how does all of this sound like Jesus?

[12:24] Jesus is the one who said, you owed a debt that you could not possibly pay. And he says, but I will pay it for you.

And he says, I'll sign the debt, the check with my own blood. In fact, back in Isaiah chapter 49, verse 16, it's a prophetic word about Jesus Christ.

And it says, your name is engraved on his hand. I think engraving means scratching into something, right?

I think that scripture in Isaiah is saying the nails that will be in Christ's hands, sign your name there. That's his blood is paying for your sins.

And so Jesus is saying, I will pay your debt with my own blood. Just as Paul was saying, I will pay Onesimus' debt out of my own pocket.

[13:31] Now, there's a song that most of you probably know. It's called, I Oued a Debt I Could Not Pay. He paid a debt. He did not know that, right.

Anyway, it's a great song. I've listened to about 20 different versions of this on YouTube this week. And something about, just to help this really stick in your mind, I'm going to play you this version.

And now, I hope you'll enjoy this. A Jamaican woman, I'm asking Glenn to help me with this because I don't know anything about this machinery. Anyway, I can barely turn on the radio.

So, don't start it just yet, but get ready. You ready? Glenn's kind of scary looking on his face because he says, have you ordered pizza?

This is not what we thought would come by. So, Glenn, you need to get closer so you don't mess up the other TV. He had it all set up ahead of time, all ready.

[14:34] So, I'm going to keep killing time while Glenn gets this ready. Okay, now it's all going crazy. This is part of why I don't like technology.

Anyway, so, this particular lady, while Glenn entertains you, the singer in this thing, is from Jamaica. And what I like about how she does this song, she does it with more energy and excitement.

I'm pretty sure she's a Pentecostal. And this Pentecostal sister really lets it rip. And so, but look, it's already about two-thirds of the way.

Is that the start? All right. You can do it, I'll start. Start it, brother. Okay. Thank you. Thank you. You're screwed. He made a dance.

He made a song. I made a dance. I made a song. I made a song. To watch my seats out there. [15:35] And now when I sing a brown song, I made a song. I made a song.

I made a song. Listen to me. Listen very well. He paid your debt He did not owe you all the debt For you could not pay Can you leave that someone He can't help To watch your sins And now you see A brownie sword Is a blessing grace Now Jesus paid the debt That you could never pay He paid the debt He did not owe you all the debt And you could not pay Now you needed someone To watch your sins And now you see A brownie sword Is a blessing grace Now Jesus paid the debt That you could never pay

He has paid the price of your sin He has the first price Of all the days You have to pay the price Why not give your life to Jesus He is the truth He is the life He does stand yesterday Today after ever Accept Jesus in your life And he shall be left to see God bless you Okay That's her That's her by the way I don't know I don't know what her name means N.K. God I have no idea But she's from Jamaica And she's a fireball for Jesus And no extra charge For getting to hear her speaking tongues A little bit in the middle there She's obviously loves the Lord Well I just find that That song is just so true And really very moving He paid a debt We weren't able to pay it We owed it And Jesus paid the debt So that's the first application I think of this book Paul pays a debt

For Onesimus That he didn't know Jesus paid a debt for us That Jesus didn't know it We were not able to pay it He paid it for us But now there's another application In this Now I think we can Put ourselves In the role of Philemon Has anybody ever done you wrong?

Has anybody ever mistreated you? Have you got some friend Maybe That you're not getting along with? Maybe a family member Maybe even your own spouse You've had a little fuss Or maybe somebody at work Maybe it's a neighbor Maybe I mean there's a thousand ways That we offend each other And I think that As Paul said to Philemon For my sake Would you forgive him?

[19:07] That Jesus now says to us For the sake of Jesus Forgive That person That you're having trouble with Forgive them By the grace of God Forgive them Now Paul also added And I'll If you've still got your Bible open But anyway It's a short part here I'm going to back up To verses 8 and 9 And he added this Paul said Although I am bold enough In Christ To order you To do the right thing Instead I choose to appeal to you On account of love I do this Because I Paul Am an old man And I'm a prisoner From serving Jesus And so Paul says I could have ordered you I am an apostle I'm over your church In the hierarchy of the church At that time I could tell you That you have to forgive him

But I'm just going to ask you That's how God operates You know the scripture says Jesus says Behold I stand at the door And knock If anyone opens the door I will come in Jesus does not come to your life And slam your door open He doesn't invade your life And force you to obey him He comes to you And as a gentleman Says I love you I want to Serve you I want you To serve me I want to have this Koinonia fellowship With you I no longer Jesus used these exact words Like Paul here I no longer call you servants I call you friends And so Jesus comes And says I'm not going to order you To follow the scripture But you should Because it's the right thing And as we And this is my closing point Short sermon today As we

Obey Jesus Christ We are preparing A place in our heart For him And Paul said To Philemon Get that room ready I'm coming back Jesus says to us Get your life ready I promise you I'm coming back And so there's so much Of the gospel That somehow Is in this letter Jesus will come again I wonder When Paul wrote If he even understood How clearly This lined up With the gospel And what Jesus Had done Even that part About Jesus Coming back And get a room Get ready I mean Did he understand I don't know If he did He was writing A letter God was inspiring Him what to say His main intention Was I've got to help My friend out My friend here Is in trouble And I'm going to Ask my other friend To forgive him But God has a marvelous

Way of working Through the scripture Through you know Men of old Wrote As the Holy Spirit Gave them utterance And the scriptures Are inspired Well I'm going to ask Our musicians To come And let us sing And Brother Glenn At the end When we get ready To pray Come on up Musicians Our Good friend Brian Our brother in Christ Is going to be Leaving us So Why don't we As As you finish Leading us In the prayers Why don't we all Come up with Brian And pray Asking God To bless him As we send him out Okay Alright So first We'll have the song Oh yes Thank you Thank you Thank you