

## No more Chains Pt 3

### Philemon 1-25

- Many people wrongly think that the bible doesn't address social issues only spiritual, but what they don't realize is everything to the Lord is spiritual, nothing in our lives that we'll face is to be compartmentalized away from what God's Word has said on the matter. Case in point I read a quote from an actress who said she was a Christian, but a liberal and non-judgmental one, so she supports gay marriage-gay rights, by saying this she has separated what God's Word says about homosexuality and has injected her own personal feelings into what she thinks is right.
- Many people do this to their own detriment, and it has caused a horrible rift within the church, because when the issue of sexual orientation, ethnicity, race relations, or any of the social ills of our day are brought up people tend to lean on how they feel instead of what God's Word has said. Well, the Bible addresses this by using the Apostle Paul, and two men named Philemon and Onesimus, living in a real-life drama of profound social significance that affects the church body.

### V1-25

- **V1** Paul is writing this letter to a man named Philemon who lives in the city of Colossae, he has just addressed the church there, encouraging them to reject false teachers-teachings, that encourage the church to rely on tradition, religion, or Greek mythology, only that which relates to scripture, and being more Like Jesus, causing others to experience His Grace and desire His mercy, one way for that to occur is through the act of forgiveness and kindness as we'll see.
- Paul starts the letter by reminding his friend of his situation by using word play, he's currently experiencing Roman imprisonment, but he doesn't consider himself a prisoner of Rome, of unfortunate circumstances, or of the religious leaders who had lied about him, which led to the soldiers arresting him in the first place, he regards none of these things as to why he is in his current situation, for to Paul he was in mind, body and spirit a prisoner of Jesus Christ.
- So, to Paul these weren't chains to shackle him down from doing the will of God, but an open door to a path God wanted him to go down in order to reach those in need of assistance, and whether he knows it or not Philemon is one of these people. He calls Philemon two things > **1<sup>st</sup>** a **beloved friend**, **2<sup>nd</sup>** a **fellow laborer**, that means there is nothing Philemon wouldn't do for those he loved, and he didn't mind hard work or getting his hands dirty even though he was rich.
- All of this is appropriate because the name "**Philemon**" in the Greek means affectionate or loving, so those two descriptions Paul uses for him in his intro is in unison to his name. **V2-3** mentions Aphia and Archippus, Philemon's wife and son, who is a chip off the old block as Paul calls him a fellow soldier meaning he was actively involved in spiritual warfare like his dad.

- So, on fire and dedicated to the cause of Christ was this young man that Paul would single him out and say in > **Col 4:17**- “**to take heed to the ministry which you have received from the Lord and fulfill it**”. Also were told the church is in his house and therefore his family, his home and his actions are even that much more important to the cause of Christ and thus far it seems Philemon and his family are living up to the standard of hosting a church in his home.
- **V4-6** Paul lets Philemon know that although he prayed regularly for the church in Colossae, that he often singled him out specifically in his prayers, and that he was well known for practicing three very important Christian traits which are > **1. Love 2. Faith 3. Evangelism**, the first two he did toward the Lord and the body of Christ, the last was displayed to the unbelievers he came into contact with. **V7** all of this has brought great joy to the body of Christ knowing that someone is sacrificing themselves like this so that others may be refreshed in their service.
- **V8-9** here is where the rubber meets the road, as many can love on the lovable, and accepts compliments and encouragements about what they’re doing that is a blessing for others, but what happens when a rebuke or correction comes your way, that’s when you see what is really in your heart, and whether it needs to be corrected in how you feel or think, or in the actions that you take. Paul tells him that what he is about to ask, “he actually could command him to do it” telling him that he could be so bold as to say do this for this is what’s right.
- But he doesn’t take that approach, instead he appeals for love’s sake, you know I’ve found “**a loving appeal is usually better than an authoritative command**”, this is wisdom as Paul wasn’t afraid to give a command when needed > **1Cor 5:4-5**, but in wisdom he knew when to use a loving appeal. **V10-12** were introduced to the central figure a man named “Onesimus”, he tells him something that he knows all too well that “Onesimus was once a scoundrel being unprofitable, but he sandwiches that with two things Philemon has not observed.
- **1<sup>st</sup>** he’s now a believer- Paul led him to Christ while being imprisoned in Rome **V10**, **2<sup>nd</sup>** he is now profitable **V11**, he no longer is just looking out for himself but for others. Up to this point this doesn’t seem like that big of a deal, Onesimus was unsaved in his first dealings with Philemon and things didn’t go well but now that he’s a Christian Paul wants to send him back to make things right, this seems like a not too complicated deal right wrong! **V13-16** we find out that he was once a slave of Philemon and that he had stolen money and ran away with it.
- Paul is asking Philemon to not only forgive him of what he’s done but to also trust him now as a brother, this is very interesting, and I’ll tell you why. Before conversion Paul was a respected Jew who rose in Judaism beyond anyone else, Philemon was a wealthy Asiatic Gentile respected because of his money and reputation, but Onesimus was the most despicable of creatures according to their society, for not only was he a runaway slave who welched on his debts, but a thief also as he stole from Philemon using his master to fund his getaway. In that time there were **60** million slaves in the Roman empire, and many volunteered to be slaves just to survive.

- This was not seen as a bad way to make a living, so many not only sold themselves into slavery but also their children, and they would call themselves bond servants, willing slaves. In Onesimus case he was on the registry, as a runaway so Paul makes an appeal on three things 1<sup>st</sup> on Onesimus salvation **V10**, 2<sup>nd</sup> On Onesimus value in the ministry **V11**, 3<sup>rd</sup> on the providence of God that this runaway thieving slave would come to him imprisoned and get saved, it's clearly the Lord **V15-16**. This is something as Philemon has blessed and served others but what about now, when it comes to someone who's wronged him, and he could possibly be holding a grudge.
- **V17-19** Paul includes himself asking Philemon to charge whatever Onesimus owed to his account, both financially and emotionally, for if you care for me then do this for him, how many of us would put our friendships on the line for others? Many won't vouch for people who are deserving much less unproven, yet Paul does this for this new believer who needs support. **V20-22**, Paul gets even bolder by not only expecting Philemon to accept Onesimus back but also believing that he will do more than what Paul asked of him, even telling him to prepare a room for him when he comes to visit. **V23-25** he smartly lets him know that Epaphras the one who started the church at Colossae is with him and in agreement and says hello along with others.
- Paul has played three roles in this story > **1**. The beloved friend, **2**. The beseeching intercessor, **3**. The burdened partner, these are the roles all of us will play in some capacity if we are to take on the ministry of intercession, as people who have been either wronged or have wronged others will come across our paths and we are going to be put into the middle of some things and called to intercede and bring peace where there once was a divide amen!