

Injustice and My Christianity

The Epistle to Philemon

"So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me... Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. **Refresh my heart in Christ.**" (Philemon 17, 20)

"For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you." (Philemon 7)

"Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. ... Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven." (Col. 3:22–4:1)

"Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one **endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.**" (1 Peter 2:18–19)

God does not tell us to solve the problem of injustice in this world – but He teaches us to respond rightly to injustice.

The Lord allows injustice in our lives in order to test our faith through it.

"In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that **the tested genuineness of your faith**—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:6–7)

I. Godliness Is Not a Guarantee Against Injustice

A. Philemon has faith in the Lord Jesus

"I hear of **your love** and of **the faith** that you have **toward the Lord Jesus** and for **all the saints**..." (Philemon 5)

B. Philemon loves all the saints

"If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen." (1 John 4:20)

C. Philemon serves with what God has given him.

"And I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ." (*Philemon 6*)

"the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you." (*Philemon 7*)

"For this is a gracious thing, when, **mindful of God**, one endures sorrows while **suffering unjustly**. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you **do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.**" (*1 Peter 2:19–20*)

II. God Allows Injustice for His Own Purposes

"For perhaps he was separated from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord." (*Philemon 15–16*)

A. Onesimus became Paul's spiritual son

"I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten while in my chains..." (*Philemon 10*)

B. Onesimus became useful for ministry

"Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me; I am sending him back to you—sending my very heart. I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel..." (*Philemon 11–13*)

"When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, 'It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him.' ... But Joseph said to them, 'Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, **you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good**, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive.'" (*Genesis 50:15–20*)

"Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they **speak against you as evildoers**, they may see your good deeds and **glorify God on the day of visitation.**" (*1 Peter 2:11–12*)

“Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth. When He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly.” (1 Peter 2:21–23)

III. The Church Helps in Resolving the Consequences of Injustice

“Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our beloved fellow worker, ² and Apphia our sister, and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house: ... ⁸ Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, ⁹ yet for love’s sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus— ¹⁰ I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus... ¹⁷ So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. ¹⁸ If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. ¹⁹ I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it... ²³ Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, ²⁴ and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.”
(Philemon 1–2, 8–10, 17–19, 23–24)

A. Accountability

B. Instruction

“Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, ⁹ yet for love’s sake I prefer to appeal to you...” (Philemon 8–9)

“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for **they are keeping watch over your souls**, as those who will have to give an account.” (Hebrews 13:17)

C. Help in Restoring Relationships

“If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self.” (Philemon 18–19)

D. Prayer

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers... The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.” (Philemon 3–4, 25)

I. Godliness is not a guarantee against injustice

II. God allows injustice for His purposes

III. The church helps in resolving the consequences of injustice

God does not tell us to solve the problem of injustice in this world—but He teaches us to respond rightly to injustice.

“For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. . . But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.” (1 Peter 2:19–20)

Questions for prayer:

- Am I ready to continue living godly while encountering injustice?
- Am I ready to see God’s sovereign will in the injustice that happens to me?
- Am I ready to seek help in resolving the consequences of injustice in the church?