

Charge That To My Account

The longer Paul walked with Jesus, the more he treated others how Jesus treated him. That's never more clear I think than in a little letter Paul wrote to a Christian friend of his on behalf of a man named Onesimus.

WHAT PAUL DID FOR ONESIMUS PICTURES WHAT CHRIST DOES FOR THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN HIM.

What Paul did can be summed up in 3 statements.

Statement #1 - Receive him as you would me. v.17

17 So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me.

Did Philemon consider Paul his partner? Absolutely. We know Paul viewed Philemon as a partner - a teammate in the work of the Lord. Someone who shares the same interests - the things of God. Shares coming feelings and common work. In verse 1, Paul said Philemon was a fellow worker. In verses 7 and verse 20, Paul saw Philemon as a brother. There's no doubt Philemon viewed Paul as a partner.

“Paul says, I know you’re my partner, Philemon, If you see it the same way, would you receive Onesimus like he is a partner? Receive him like he’s me.”

Notice that Paul didn’t say forgive him. Forgive is implied, but when he said to receive, that goes further than forgive. Receive is forgive and welcome back with open arms. Like the prodigal son who came home to his dad running towards him to welcome him back.

If the apostle Paul came to visit you, how would you receive him?

The Good News Gospel message of the Bible is a message of forgiveness (Acts 10:43), but do you realize there’s more to it? God not only forgives men and women who put their confidence in Jesus, but He reserves a spot in His home for them (John 14:2-3)

Statement #2 - Charge the wrong to me. v.18

18 If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account.

I like that Paul didn’t go into too many details. He doesn’t go on and on about the sins of Onesimus, but he simply says, if he has wronged you at all.. Had Onesimus

wronged Philemon? Yes. But Paul says, “Whatever it was, charge it to me.”

Satan is the accuser of the brethren (Rev. 12:10), but Jesus is our advocate and propitiation (1 John 2:1).

Advocate = defense attorney. While Satan accuses us of wrong before the Father, Jesus stands in our defense, having paid for our wrongs. Why can Jesus do that? Because He is the propitiation for our sins.

Propitiation = satisfactory payment. Jesus made a payment that God the Father was happy with. When Jesus hung on that cross, a sinless perfect man made a choice to be sacrificed on behalf of sinful men and women like you and me. That was an act of love.

On the basis of Jesus’ act of love, God will forgive sinners.

Paul didn’t just say, if he owes you anything, I’ll pay it back for him. It’s more than that. Paul said to charge it to my account. In other words, I think Paul is telling Philemon, “Don’t even view Onesimus anymore as the one who did the wrong. Don’t charge him of that anymore, just charge all of that to me.” Philemon would have to look at Onesimus as though he had never done anything wrong in the first place.

Justify = to declare righteous. To declare righteous means that God has to make a mental decision. Even though God knows what you've done, He chooses to say, you are righteous. He justifies you. He views you just as if you never sinned. How can He do that? It's an imputed righteousness.

What is Imputation? Impute is a word we see in the King James Bible. It's a rare Greek Word of the Bible. We only see this Greek word two times in the Bible. One is in Romans 5:13 (counted), the other is here in Philemon 18 (charge).

What does impute mean? In Biblical terms: God calculates one person's condition (sin or righteousness) another person's account. God is willing to make a mental transaction. God will place on you the righteousness of Jesus while placing on Jesus the sins of your life. 2 Corinthians 5:21 - *He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

The Bible discusses 3 imputations.

#1 - All mankind has an imputed sin nature through Adam's sin (Rom. 5:12-13, 18).

#2 - All mankind's sin has been imputed to Jesus on the cross (Rom. 5:15-18; 2 Peter 2:24).

#3 - Jesus' righteousness has been imputed to those who put their faith in Him. (Rom. 1:17; 5:17; 5:19; 2 Cor. 5:21, 1 Cor. 1:30)

*For further reading on this subject, see Lewis Sperry Chafer's Systematic Theology Vol. 7, Imputation.

Statement #3 - I'll pay the debt in full. v.19

19 I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self.

Was Paul trying to guilt Philemon to cancel the debt completely so that Paul wouldn't have to pay? I don't think so. The reason he is wording it this way is because he is saying it delicately. He's not putting stress on this. I do wonder if Paul was saying, "hey Philemon if you ever feel that you owe me for anything, here's what you can do: Let me bless you in this way. It would bring great joy to me if you would let me pay for the wrong of Onesimus and see the two of you reconciled together."

Hebrews 12:2 says about Jesus, "*Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross.*" Why was Jesus willing to pay such a high price of suffering the wrath of God for the sins of the world? Because he looked forward to the future joy. What was that Joy? Warren Wiesrbe said Jesus went through the pain of the cross because he knew the

future joy of presenting believers to the Father in glory (Jude 24).

I think Paul is saying, Philemon, it would bring me joy to do this for you and for him, so that I can present him to you blameless. Why would Paul do that? Because this is what Jesus did for Paul.

What Paul did for Onesimus is only a small picture of what Jesus does for those who believe in Him.

Jesus said, “I’ll pay the debt in full,” and He did.
Jesus said, “Charge the wrong to me”, and it was.
For those who trust in Him, Jesus says to the Father,
“Receive them as you would Me,” and God does.