

Philemon – 21 April 2024

“Love’s Intercession”

Introduction

Read Vs 1-2

1. In writing this very personal appeal, Paul takes no other title than ‘Prisoner of Jesus’
 - a. Although Paul sits in a Roman prison; he doesn’t see himself as a victim of the world
 - b. Paul wants Philemon to be reminded that we all are in a spiritual authority structure
2. This Archippus is mentioned in Colossians along w/ the rest of the names in Phil 23-24, so it seems reasonable that Philemon lives in Colosse
 - a. We know Tychicus & Onesimus delivered the Colossian letter, therefore this letter also
3. Philemon is the master of the slave Onesimus
 - a. Paul says Philemon is a believer & disciple
 - b. Seems reasonable that Apphia is his wife and Archippus is their son

Read Vs 3

1. Whether addressing an individual or large group the common “entering in” is based on God’s grace (gift to us) & that He has brought us peace

*This letter is Paul performing a picture of Jesus Christ's High Priestly role of intercessor on our behalf

*As we go thru each verse, consider how Paul represents Jesus interceding to the Father (Philemon) on our behalf (Onesimus)

So today, we'll see 3 keys to being a good intercessor

#1 – Rally them with love not law (Vs 4-9)

Read Vs 4-5

1. When Paul recollected Philemon, it was a cause for thankfulness and joy
2. Paul was thankful b/c the fruit of the H.S. was evident coming thru Philemon's good works
 - a. Love & faith being works of the H.S.
 - b. Do other believers think of us this way?
 - c. Notice this love & faith isn't just vertical with God but also horizontal with others

Read Vs 6

1. This is where the spiritual effects the physical

- a. The ‘distribution’ or ‘sharing’ of our faith & godly character may be effective as we share
- b. God’s equipped us w/ personal story to tell

Read Vs 7

1. Complementing someone isn’t “buttering them up” for deception if what you’re saying is true
 - a. If he’s “buttering him up”, it’s from a position of truth to remind Philemon that he’s already show how to be successful in this arena

Read Vs 8-9

1. Paul could’ve “enjoined” him (command), but knew it was better to “beseech” him (intreat)
2. There are 3 great motivators for all things
 - a. Promise of consequence (fear)
 - b. Promise of reward (joy)
 - c. Promise of relationship (love)
3. By authority, Paul could’ve commanded obedience, but knew this wasn’t the best answer
 - a. Read Rom 2:4 - Love is always a greater motivator than Law

- b. Relationship is always > Requirement
- c. In II Cor Paul says it's the love of Christ that constrains us to do what we do

#2 – Recognize indebtedness (Vs 10-14)

Read Vs 10-11

1. So Paul finally mentions the name Onesimus
 - a. This would've stirred lots of past emotions
 - b. So Paul is specifically mentioning 'the big change' – He's my spiritual son now!
2. Paul admits Onesimus's past failures but wants to stress the repentance & fresh new life
 - a. Make no mistake, runaway slaves deserved death
 - b. II Cor 5:17 – He's a new creation by God's grace

Read Vs 12

1. "Receive him" is a pretty general ask of Paul
2. Approaching Philemon w/ love not law allows Philemon to determine the way God would have him receive Onesimus

Read Vs 13-14

1. Onesimus's service belongs to Philemon
 - a. Paul didn't want to force Philemon to give to the Lord in this way, but wants Philemon to willingly give to the Lord thru allowing Onesimus to serve
2. Of all our Christian giving; (effort, money, status) it should always be from a willing heart
 - a. Read II Cor 9:7 – cheerful giver

#3 – Remember to identify (Vs 15-19)

Read Vs 15

1. This is the story of the Prodigal Son
2. God knows how to use sin's pain to provoke a permanent change of heart unto eternal life
3. God knows how to bring us to the end of ourselves, so we can begin with Him

Read Vs 16

1. Paul says that Philemon can now receive Onesimus not just physically but also spiritually

2. The Onesimus you're getting back not just a servant, but a brother who will help in more ways

Read Vs 17-18

1. Paul is appealing, not for justice, but grace
2. Paul's identification with Onesimus the sinner
 - a. Paul's willing to pay debt, while Onesimus receives the reward of reputation as if Paul's
 - b. This is the Great Exchange Jesus did for us
 - c. If you consider me in the fellowship, then consider him in the fellowship
3. Jesus intercedes for us
 - a. Read Rom 8:34-35 – Our sin was against God & paid for by God, so God is the only one that can forgive it
 - b. Read Heb 7:25 – Difference between Paul & Jesus - Jesus never dies, so His intercession for us will never end lasting to the utmost

Read Vs 19

1. Even though Philemon spiritually owes Paul, Paul is willing to materially pay Philemon

2. Paul wanted to do justly by Philemon in order to show grace to Onesimus – that’s intercession!
 - a. Read Micah 6:8 – This is the call to all men
 - b. Do justly & show grace to others b/c there IS a God

#4 – Relationship with the authority (Vs 20-25)

Read Vs 20-21

1. In Christian love, Paul anticipates receiving a good response from Philemon
2. Paul is expressing great confidence in the character of Philemon to do this and more

Read Vs 22

1. This shows the closeness & friendship that Paul and Philemon already had
2. Paul only looked to the future in dependence on God in prayer and coveted prayer as real and meaningful

Read Vs 23-24

1. This list confirms that Paul wrote and sent this letter at the same time as his Colossians
2. Sad that Demas later forsook Paul (II Tim 4:10)

Read Vs 25

1. Not a throw away verse, but very needed to be experiencing the grace of God
 - a. As we've been given God's grace, so we should be hurried to give it out

Conclusion – Prayer for Prodigals

So, what does intercession look like?

1. **Parties are rallied together by love not law**
2. **There is a real debt that needs paid**
3. **Intercessor identifies w/ the guilt**
4. **Intercessor has relationship w/ the authority**

So not only is this Paul's intercession for Onesimus, not only is this a picture of Jesus' intercession for us, but this is how we should intercede for others

(Have special intercessory prayer for our prodigals)