



The Park Church: Corporate Bible Study

BIBLE JOURNEY: PHILIPPIANS AND PHILEMON LESSONS 4&5

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Review: Looking Back, Moving Forward

Looking Back:

Philipians:

- ▶ As we continue in the life of a believer, we will have to suffer or the sake of the Gospel, as Paul did, and this is to be expected. We are to exhibit unity in the body as we struggle and serve together. To live is Christ, to Die is Gain

Philemon:

- ▶ Paul is dealing with the reality of his day, and teaching the church how to relate to each other on the issue of slavery, and how we as Christians should operate in a broken society. We are all one family in Christ

Moving Forward: Now that we have seen some of the basis of his discourse, lets look deeper to see Paul's views of slavery, his use of the metaphor, as well as the liberty we have in Christ

Foundational Text: Philemon 8-22(NIV)

- ▶ ⁸Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, ⁹yet I prefer to appeal to you on the basis of love. It is as none other than Paul—an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus— ¹⁰that I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains. ¹¹Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me.
- ▶ ¹²I am sending him—who is my very heart—back to you. ¹³I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the gospel. ¹⁴But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do would not seem forced but would be voluntary. ¹⁵Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever— ¹⁶no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord.

Foundational Text: Philemon 8-22(Cont.)

- ▶ ¹⁷So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. ¹⁸If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. ¹⁹I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back—not to mention that you owe me your very self. ²⁰I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ. ²¹Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask.
- ▶ ²²And one thing more: Prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers.

Paul and Slavery

- ▶ If you recall some of our earlier studies, Paul often uses Slavery as a metaphor for our states both in sin, and in Christ, and places it both in a positive and negative light. Some examples are:
 - 1 Corinthians 9:19 (NIV): Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. (Positive)
 - Romans 8: 15(NIV): The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.”(Negative)
 - Romans 6: 17-18(NIV): But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. ¹⁸You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.(Positive)

Slavery as Metaphor

Verses referencing slavery	Positive or negative?
Romans 8:15	Negative
Romans 6:18	Positive
Titus 3:3	Negative
Romans 6:22	Positive
1 Corinthians 9:19	Positive
Galatians 4:8	Negative
1 Corinthians 7:23	Negative
Romans 7:25	Positive

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In | Slaves of Christ LECTURE

Behind | Slavery in the Roman Empire LECTURE

(Lesson 4)

Comparative Conditions of Slavery

Conditions	Old Testament	Rome	17 th -18 th Cent
Holiday	yes	no	no
Enough Food	yes	no	no
Legal Redress	yes	no	no
Sexual Protection	yes	no	no
Kidnapped	no	yes	yes
Chained	no	yes	yes
Tortured	no	yes	yes
Physical Abuse	no	yes	yes

OT Texts repudiating Modern Slavery

- ▶ Genesis 15:13-14: Then He (God) said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions."
- ▶ Exodus 21:16: He who kidnaps a man and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death.
- ▶ Deuteronomy 5:12-15: Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns, so that your male and female servants may rest, as you do. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

Is the New Testament Light on Slavery??

- ▶ Why doesn't the NT take a harder stance on Slavery? There are many reasonable explanations, of which here are some :
 - Lack of Political Power: The growing church simply didn't have the power to change the societal structure of Rome, and to promote a slave revolt would lead to military suppression and execution
 - Freeing Slaves was restricted by law: A law dating to 2 BC, the lex Fufia Caninia, promoted by Caesar Augustus, limited what percentage of slaves an owner could free, depending on how many they owned.
- However, the Christians could work to effectively abolish slavery inside the body of the church. The evidence we have from the first century shows that this was the case, as their new belief system would radically change their view of interpersonal relationships

Is the New Testament Light on Slavery?? (cont.)

- ▶ As the Church developed, the new believers would refer to each other as “brother” and “sister,” breaking the strict hierarchy of slaves and masters. All believers would look to Jesus as their common “Lord,” and be equal in standing. By coming under Christ as their new “master” and submitting to Him as “servants,” they gain a new unity and freedom in their new identity.
- ▶ This new status is shown in Philemon : “Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever—**no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother.** He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, **both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord.**” Philemon 1:15-16 (NIV)
- ▶ Through passages like this, we can observe that, while Christians were limited in social and political power to change the culture of slavery in Rome, they still lived out their Christian convictions in a way that demonstrated their radical difference and allegiance to Christ in the community around them.

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In Front | Use & Misuse of Slavery Texts
(Lesson 4)

Translation Choices and their impact on our understanding

- ▶ The differences in the meaning of the biblical language for slavery and our modern understanding of this term have been exacerbated by recent translations of the Bible.
- ▶ KJV(1611) translations of EVED as “Slave”: 2
- ▶ NIV(1970) translations of EVED as “Slave”: 130
- ▶ NRSV(1989) translations of EVED as “Slave”: 166
- ▶ Often, the same word translated in different manners can change our impression of the Biblical text and the message it is trying to convey. Recent translations of the Bible have become more comfortable rendering the word "slave" in the Bible text.

Gospel as a Liberating force

- ▶ Many modern Christians aren't completely satisfied with how Paul handled the topic of slavery. Maybe his interest in spiritual slavery and freedom avoided the issues? Often times, we wish that Paul, and the Bible in general, would be more definitive on specific issues? However, Paul's message is clear that the Gospel liberates from all sorts of slavery, emotional, physical, mental., etc.
- ▶ The Gospel has a destabilizing effect on abuse of power wherever it goes, causing people to realign their interpersonal relationships and treat each other as siblings and children of God. This should help us to understand how revolutionary the church's unity and family of diversity truly is. The letter to Philemon is a practical example of how the in Christ we are all brothers and sisters, and should therefore be careful in exercising our freedom and being in submission to each other.

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**In Front | How Does Paul Respond to Slavery? LECTURE
(Lesson 4)**

Social Impact of the Bible

- ▶ As we have seen through the issue of slavery, the Gospel at its core always has a sizable impact on the society it has been brought to. As we continue our study, Let's go further and try to make sense of how the Gospel and the Church are meant to make a difference in this world.
- ▶ The social impact of the Bible is of vital interest, especially in a world where believers are often blamed for how Scripture has been used to suppress people, and these misuses are used as evidence against God.
- ▶ While there are many honorable causes to pursue that pique our interests, it is important to note the visions and worldviews behind them. For Christians, every good cause is subordinate to God's character, vision, and mission as shown in Scripture. Our concern for society and the action that it sparks should all be sourced from our deepest theological convictions.

Examples of Social Impact

- ▶ **Women's rights**— Based on Genesis 1 & 2, Paul's work on unity in Christ
- ▶ **Opposition to slavery**— Inspired by the equality of all men and women evident in these same passages
- ▶ **Worker's rights**— Echoing many of the Levitical laws in the Old Testament, Christians sought to bring to bear the biblical concepts of justice, charity, and mercy into the economic arena. Seeking fair wages and working conditions, they argued for better treatment of marginalized workers as well as being good stewards of the environment.
- ▶ **Hospitals:** Christians carried by their conviction to care for the destitute and sick, created centers for free medical and end-of-life care, leading to the modern hospital system
- ▶ Further Reading-- *How Christianity Changed the World*, by Alvin J. Schmidt.

American Civil Rights

- ▶ One of the better-known relationships between the Bible and social activism is found in the ministry and work of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In his famous “I Have a Dream” speech given at the 1963 march on Washington D.C., he quotes from Isaiah 40:4-5, casting a vision of a biblical society transformed to mirror the harmonious communion of God:

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

-Martin Luther King, Jr.

- ▶ There are many other references to the Bible in the works of Civil rights leaders, such as Modjeska Simkins and James Lawson, who when faced with persecution insisted:

The politics of Jesus and the politics of God are that people should be fed, that people have access to life, that people should be treated equally and justly. Especially the marginalized. The poor, the illiterate, the jailed, the hungry, the naked—those are all terms Jesus uses.

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In Front | The Gospel as a Liberating Force LECTURE

Lesson 4

Misuse and Abuse of the Bible

- ▶ Unfortunately it doesn't always work that way. Sometimes the Bible gets tangled up in harmful social causes and misused for corrupt agendas. The motives are more obviously self-serving at the expense of social good.
- ▶ Examples-
 - ▶ Ku Klux Klan: thinks of itself as a Christian organization and its literature is full of biblical texts and often-ridiculous interpretations of Scripture.
 - ▶ Apartheid: the state-legislated segregation of South Africa, was driven by white supremacists that called themselves "born Christians."
- ▶ Defenders of the transatlantic slave trade were adept at distorting Scripture to their ends (Ex. Slave Bible). You are beginning to see the Bible on *both* sides of most social movements and institutions.

Personal vs. Social impact

- ▶ Often it feels like we must have the right opinions about all the big issues, but It is important to be consistent in our worldviews. God wants us to seek Him in all things, but sometimes it's easier to think about and handle external, societal issues than to deal with the the real people in our lives.
- ▶ However, it is also important not to lose track of the larger problems and issues of society in dealing with our personal relationships. It is important to maintain a balance
- ▶ We often only think of our impact in large-scale events, but the social impact the Bible promotes is most often in the local sphere. We have the most impact amongst our family, friends, co-workers, and others we encounter in our daily lives. The Bible is seeking for the Church to heal society and its many ills by being a redemptive presence in our everyday encounters with others, spreading the love of Christ as we live our lives faithfully.

Questions to Consider

Which of the following gets you more excited and engaged?

a) A sensitive viewpoint regarding the #metoo movement. **OR**

b) Loving your mother-in-law

a) Promoting better policies through your neighborhood association
OR

b) Having healthy personal interactions with your annoying neighbor

a) Responsibly expressing your socio-economic convictions **OR**

b) Responsibly expressing the love of God in you

True Biblical Activism

- ▶ Biblical social activism always involves the most immediate level, with the people you share space with and encounter on a daily basis. It then extends to broader social initiatives because of the *same kind* of love and passion for justice.
- ▶ Biblical activism is not limited to freestanding causes but rather originates with a worldview that seeks a fully reconciled society grounded in healthy personal relationships.
- ▶ 1 John 3:18 (NIV): “Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth”

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Wrap-Up CONCLUSION · Lesson 5

Final Thoughts

- ▶ Consider the entirety of the Biblical when addressing hard to discuss issues
- ▶ Remember the primacy of Christ in the midst of our inter-personal relationships
- ▶ Think about our source of convictions: Spreading the Gospel, or furthering personal power.