

**Problem:**

The problem that will become immediately apparent is that this is not a letter about abolishing slavery.

In fact it is a letter about reconciling a slave and his owner.

Why is this fact significant?

We cannot pledge allegiance to the power structures of the age in the name of the gospel. The fact we try to do so means we do not understand the power of the gospel.

Read the following article and discuss its relevance to the above statement:

<http://www.gotquestions.org/liberation-theology.html>

**The gospel undermines worldly position from the inside out (Philemon 1-6)**

- the gospel subverts status and position by putting everyone on an equal playing field, including a wealthy slave owner, a rebel Jewish prisoner of Rome and his companion and a runaway slave. They are all part of the same family having the same Lord.

- Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 what truth do these verses reveal that level the playing field in regards to status?

- Read Luke 5:27-32 and 19:1-10 what made these people 'worthy' of Jesus' time, or 'qualified' to be saved?

**The Gospel undermines worldly power from the inside out (Philemon 7-16)**

- Read verse 7. What does Paul call Philemon?

- Read verse 16. What does Paul call Onesimus?

- So then how does the gospel subvert or undermine the power structures of the day?

- Read Matthew 5:23-24. What do you think Onesimus' motivation was to return to his master?

- Read 1 Corinthians 7:17-24. How did the gospel change Onesimus' status? Who was he now serving?

- Notice that Paul does not condemn slavery - because he doesn't need to - the gospel undermines it from the inside out.

**The Gospel undermines worldly pardon from the inside out (Philemon 17-20)**

- Paul refers to Philemon as his partner (17) and his brother (20) and asks Philemon to receive Onesimus as he would receive Paul.

- Read Matthew 10:40-42. How does this relate?

- Verse 18 is the basis for Paul's request for this reception. He wants Philemon to IMPUTE his righteousness upon Onesimus and to charge or IMPUTE Onesimus' debt to Paul.

- Read Galatians 3:13 and 2 Corinthians 5:16-21. How does Paul's imputation picture Christ?

**The Gospel undermines worldly persuasion from the inside out (21-25)**

- read verse 8 and then verse 21. How does the gospel subvert worldly persuasion from the inside out?
- verse 25 ends with a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. Read Mark 12:13-17. How does Jesus as Lord undermine worldly obedience and loyalty?
- Read 1 Peter 2:9-25. How does Christ's example dictate how we use power as Christians?
- God did not send us a conquering king...yet. He sent us a baby in a manger born in the shadow of Herod's temple.

**Here is the Main Idea:**

**The cross not only saves us, it dictates the kind of power we wield in God's name. The gospel is not the power of a conquering king but of a dying servant, not the power of a crown but the subversive power of the cross.**

- Read the following article and discuss:

<http://facultyblog.etsnbiblecollege.com/2012/06/the-gospel-subverts-every-culture/>

Discuss how the gospel undermines: abortion, pornography, abuse, prostitution, and unfair labor practices.

In what ways do you seek to wield the power of the crown rather than the cross?

Read the following definition:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Power\\_politics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Power_politics)

And then read the following article and discuss:

<http://www.faithlikethat.net/2013/03/would-jesus-boycott-starbucks.html>

How are you going to apply this sermon specifically to your life? What will change? What will you do more or less? Be specific and prayerful.

His,  
Matt Smith