

BIB 281 The Pastoral Epistles

Lesson 12 Philemon

Intro. The situation that prompted the writing of this letter is that a man named Onesimus was a slave of Philemon. Onesimus ended up running away and stealing from his master. He runs away to the city of Rome where he providentially meets up with the apostle Paul and is converted. We don't know how he was introduced to him, likely through a mutual companion.

Now Paul is sending Onesimus back to Colosse with Tychicus with the Epistle to the Colossians and this personal letter to Philemon. Philemon is an elder of the church which assembles in his house.

Greeting to the church 1-3 Philemon is called a fellow labourer which implies that he is a minister of the gospel. V. 24 Apphia is likely Philemon's wife and Archippus his son who is also a minister Col. 4:17 Obviously a godly family. However, Paul does not take for granted that they will be so excited to see Onesimus. Apparently he must have left with quite a bang and Paul is uneasy about how the reunion will go.

Key verse: 18

1. Paul's rejoicing over Philemon 4-7
 - A. prayer for his effectiveness as a minister 5-6
 - B. thankfulness for his effectiveness as a minister 7

Trans. Paul is laying the foundation for how Philemon can truly exhibit genuine Christianity by receiving Onesimus back.

2. Paul's request of Philemon 8-14
 - A. His approach to the request - reminiscent of Esther approaching Ahasuerus
 1. I could enjoin - 1. To order or direct with urgency; to admonish or instruct with authority; to command. It has the force of pressing admonition with authority; as, a parent enjoins on his children the duty of obedience. But it has also the sense of command; as the duties enjoined by God in the moral law. 2. In law, to forbid judicially; to issue or direct a legal injunction to stop proceedings.
 2. Instead - I beseech = call near, invite
 3. I am an old man, I am a prisoner
 - B. His appeal
 1. his representation - I beseech thee for him - finally mentions his intentions and his name but in the same sentence with his conversion while he is in prison
 2. his recovery - play upon the name Onesimus = profitable
 3. his reception - to receive him - the thrust of the request - receive him as myself
 4. his retention - I wanted to retain him but I didn't want to be presumptuous.
 5. his release - I wanted his release to be willing and not compulsory

Trans. He has given a very well thought out request and quickly follows with convincing reasons.

3. Paul's reasons for Philemon 15-19

- A. accept providence - that this was God's purpose 15-16
- B. accept partnership - him as myself 17
- C. accept payment 18-19

Trans. Paul gives three compelling reasons for Philemon to receive Onesimus back unconditionally. All three illustrate the gospel.

4. Paul's reliance on Philemon 20-22

- A. to be encouraged 20
- B. to be exceeded in expectations 21
- C. to be delivered 22 - to receive Onesimus back under his care and prepare also for Paul as he relied on his prayers for deliverance

Closing 23-25 mention of other preachers they were familiar with.

Conclusion

A fascinating picture of typology. Paul a picture of Christ, Onesimus the sinner, and Philemon of God the Father and our reconciliation. Would to God that our lives would be an example of the Father and His forgiveness.

Judging by the fact that this letter is included in the scriptures it would seem obvious that Philemon received Onesimus back with open arms.