

THE GOSPEL OF PRACTICALITY

Philemon

INTRODUCTION

- A. Why is it even in the Bible?
 - 1. It has no doctrinal discussion.
 - 2. It has no single classic memory verse.
- A. The letter to Philemon.
 - 1. Respect for Philemon and his faith.
 - 2. Shares a brief account of Onesimus as slave and his conversion.
 - 3. Encouraged Philemon to receive him back.
- B. It answers the question, “What does it mean to be a Christian?”

I. BACKGROUND TO PHILEMON.

- A. The Apostle Paul.
 - 1. Currently under house arrest.
 - 2. Recognized as “a prisoner of Christ Jesus.”
 - 3. He is in the later years of his life, v. 9.
 - 4. Writing to appeal to Philemon to do the right thing.
 - 5. Timothy was the “co-sender”.
- B. Philemon.
 - 1. A leader in the church.
 - 2. Fairly wealthy – a slave owner.
 - 3. Hosted a church in his house.
 - 4. Probably a convert through the ministry of Paul, v. 19.
 - 5. Paul’s fellow-worker and beloved brother.
 - 6. Other recipients:
 - a. Apphia – probably Philemon’s wife or sister.
 - b. Archippus – (Col. 4:17) brother of Philemon or Apphia, or maybe their son.
- C. Onesimus.
 - 1. A runaway slave (from Philemon).
 - 2. While in Rome (?) was converted to Christ by Paul.
 - 3. Returning to Philemon as a fellow Christian.
- D. Two Letters.
 - 1. Colossians – the letter to the church (in Philemon’s house, Col. 1:2).
 - a. The greatness of Christ and how nothing else compared to Him.
 - b. Addressed husbands and wives, parents and children, slaves and masters.
 - c. Onesimus [slave] right in the room with everyone.
 - d. The relationship with Christ changes the relationships with others.
 - e. Tychicus (Col. 4:7-9) finished with the greeting from Paul, v. 18.
 - 2. And then a second letter to Philemon.
 - a. A private letter encouraging the right thing be done.
 - b. A public letter addressed to the church (v. 2), making known Philemon’s personal struggle.
 - 3. The Christian faith is personal, but not private!
 - a. Discussion about the Lord’s Supper (Angie M.).

- b. While sharing..., what you do as an individual impacts the body.
- c. If I choose to align myself with the world during the week, it has an impact on the body [as a whole] of Christ.

II. PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY...

- A. ... Practices Christian Love.
 - 1. Love ties us together in fellowship. vss. 1, 2, 12, 16
 - a. The tie that binds. John 13:35; Rom. 12:15; Col. 2:2
 - b. It gives strength, joy, and comfort.
 - 2. Love edifies the brethren. vss. 7-9
 - a. “Refreshed” means “rested”.
 - b. Tired hearts of the poor and persecuted found rest, cheer, gladness in Philemon’s presence.
 - c. 1 Thess. 5:11-14
 - 3. Love accepts unconditionally. vss. 17
 - a. “Accept” refers to special interest in and full acceptance of another.
 - b. A special welcome extended to another.
 - c. As Christ accepts us, Romans 15:7.
 - 4. This “love” requires effort and energy.
 - a. It is too easy to neglect.
 - b. Love must be practiced.
- B. ... Practices Forgiveness. vss. 17-19
 - 1. Philemon had legal rights to prosecute Onesimus.
 - a. He had been wronged, embarrassed, and robbed.
 - b. Paul asked him to forgive. v. 21
 - 2. Forgiveness is assisted by remembering we also suffer failings.
 - 3. Ephesians 4:32; Lk. 23:34

CLOSING

- A. Practical Christianity must be practiced!
 - 1. What is lived on Sunday, must be lived each and every day.
 - 2. Parable of the “Good Samaritan” – Luke 10:30ff
 - a. Go and do likewise.