

Philemon

Has anyone here

- Been wronged?
- ...By a loved one?
- ...By a loved one who then is born-again?
- Wronged a loved one?

I was in professional sales and marketing for over 20 years

Over the years I have

- written countless proposals
- given innumerable sales presentations
- asked for a multitude of orders

So the Lord showed me this letter from that perspective

This is a master proposal regarding a runaway slave

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From...To

v1-2 **From:**

- Paul
This “proposal” was written in a Roman prison during his first imprisonment.
Paul would be released but later arrested again and executed.

Paul is a prisoner of...Jesus Christ, not a prisoner of Rome!
Bound by the love of Christ...not the chains of Rome
The world cannot thwart the working of the Holy Spirit...
The sovereign God has as a plan
So Paul is not bummed out...he is rejoicing!
- Timothy
later he will be dispatched to Ephesus to put that church in order
and to contend for sound doctrine

To:

- Philemon (“Friendly”)
 1. A dearly beloved brother in the Lord
 2. A fellow-laborer in the Gospel of Grace
 3. was wealthy home owner living in Colosse, near Ephesus
- Apphia:
probably Philemon’s wife
- Archippus:
mentioned in Col 4:17, it is speculated that he is
Philemon’s son
or
The pastor of the church at Colosse
- The church that meets in Philemon’s house
the early (first 200 years) church: where 2 or 3 are gathered in His
name...usually in a home...opened up for any and all who
wanted to worship the Lord and study His Word

then, now and forever, the church is not a building...
it is a fellowship of like-minded people

Executive Summary

- v3 Grace...and peace:
The “bottom line” of the proposal
The proposition...Grace
its benefit...Peace

Relationship Definition...making the connection

- v4 I thank my God...in my prayers
the Primary Relationship...is with God
- built on His love, for which we are thankful
 - developed and nurtured by prayer
- regarding prayer...
1. Because it is not constrained by space and time...prayer is not constrained to a specific locale, as are other ministries
 2. Don't wait until you are in prison or incapacitated to develop a vibrant prayer life and develop this Relationship
 3. God uses men of prayer, who realize the power of prayer...if you want God to use your life, become a person of prayer
- v5 Hearing of thy love and faith
Paul also had a relationship with Philemon...having led him to saving faith in Jesus Christ and helping him develop The Relationship with God
- he is encouraged to hear how Philemon is maturing in the Lord...
Philemon's reputation was that of
- a man of faith
 - who loved the Lord and God's people
love...a word of action and denial of self, not just a feeling

- v6 acknowledging of every good thing:
Paul's prayer for Philemon:
- that his sharing of the faith will be powerful (Spirit-filled) because he lives it for all to see...
 - that his faith is not just "lip service" but real and dynamic... it has feet and hands, not just a mouth
 - that his faith be seen louder than it is heard
 - that his good works be evidence of his saving faith
 - that his character...who you are when you are alone...be genuinely Christ-like
 - that his life be governed by God and fruitful
 - that he be cognizant of the spiritual riches available to him in Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:3)

this prayer is both

- an "acknowledgment of what is"
- a "desire for what will be"...

Paul is about to propose a fruit-bearing opportunity to Philemon

- v7 great joy and consolation:
"Your witness...your track record of walking the talk...gives me and all the saints great comfort."

Notice the concluding "brother" by Paul

- A term of endearment
- A term of connection/relationship

The Proposition

v8-9 enjoin thee that which is convenient...yet for love's sake:

Paul is direct...“to beseech” Philemon to do what is “proper”

Remember, this letter is also be read out loud to the church meeting in his house...so

- “notice is served” to make a decision
- accountability is instant in place
- the call is broader than one man

“I have a stick...and I know how to use it...but I offer you a carrot!

I could pull rank and, as an apostle, ‘order’ you in the name of the Lord to comply with my request.

But I won’t.

Instead, I plead with you as a brother...to make a Godly choice.

I am giving you a chance to show your character and bear good fruit... and receive a reward when you stand before the Lord.”

Paul does not “play the apostle card” in this letter like he does in 9 letters

not Philippians a letter of encouragement

1 & 2 Thes his earliest letters

Paul...as a prisoner of Jesus Christ...chooses to beg and to appeal to the nature of Christ’s love...instead of exercising lordship over Philemon

this is a very important issue...God’s way instead of the world’s way

Matt 20:25-27

2 Cor 1:24 not that we have dominion over your faith but are helpers of your joy

1 Peter 5:1-4

Rev 2:15-16 letter to Pergamos...the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes

the Lord hates the man-made hierarchy where a select few rule over the many...because

- When He died on the Cross, the Father the veil in the Temple so every man could personally go to the Throne of grace in time of need!
- He and He alone is the Mediator between the Father and man
- This is a corruption of His order and HIS Lordship

- v10 I beseech thee for my son Onesimus:
after all the praise of the “Relationship Definition” comes...
- the Attention Grabber...
 - the “hook”

Philemon: “This proposal is about...a runaway slave!”

Onesimus (“Profitable”) was from Colosse (Col 4:9), in fact he was Philemon’s brother/blood relative...slave probably out of some debt...

What has happened to result in this Proposal? Onesimus

- ran away...
- went to Rome...
- heard the Gospel from Paul...
- and was saved.
- Now Paul is interceding for him with Philemon

- v11 in time past...but now:
“He was a real drag, only a burden to you.
But the Lord changed all that!
He is now a blessing!”

in my “BC” state, I was worthless...a real drag
But the Lord changed all that!
Now, I am priceless and precious!

- v12 I have sent again...receive him...mine own:
“Having exhorted him to do the right thing, I am sending him over
1000 miles back to you...he has an obligation to you to honor.
My heart is that you receive him...not as he left but as he is now, my son
in the faith.”

This “property” of Philemon has returned with

- New ownership tags (Jesus Christ)
- Sealed and Delivered (Holy Spirit)
- Son-ship (God the Father, Apostle Paul)
- “Good Housekeeping” approvals (Jesus Christ, Apostle Paul)

truly the value of the “property” has been radically changed!

...we are also that property...

v13-14 I would have retained.....but without thy mind would I do nothing:

“If you were here, you would have ministered to me.

Onesimus stood in your place.

I would have preferred to keep him here with me, so that you could serve me in prison...for I see no difference between him and you.

But then I would be taking that which is rightfully yours without your consent.”

“I desire Onesimus, but only if you so chose for him to be here.

If you are willing to minister to me in my need, send him back to me.”

“But I don’t want to force you, I want you to be willing, with no strings attached.

I want you to receive a reward from the Lord.”

Paul puts the weight of his relationship with Philemon on the line for

Onesimus, a runaway slave...

Jesus put the weight of His relationship with God the Father on the line for sheep who had gone astray

The Benefit

v15-16 perhaps...departed for a season...receive him forever:
the Benefit is: Reconciliation...Restoration...now and forever

Is 55:8-11...God's plan at work
Using a slave's decision to risk his life and run away...
To reveal His Son and the gospel of grace to him...
That he would be saved and...
Transformed into a child of God...a new creature in Christ

Because God is in control, we too can cling to "perhaps" with the hope
that our lost or estranged loved one will also come home

not as a servant but above:

"Do not receive him as a slave but as a beloved brother...a brother both by
your parents blood and by the Lord's blood."

God does not recognize man's social position...we are equal in His eyes.
In Christ, we are all brothers...there are no hierarchies...because

- Jesus transforms slaves into brothers
- Jesus elevates our relationships to heavenly levels!
- Jesus changes interpersonal relationships, breaking down
man-erected barriers and "leveling" equal parts of
the Body

1 Cor 12:13

Gal 3:27-28

Born-again believers have a higher order relationship...even if they do not
know each other or even if they are estranged...than

- Born-again believers have with blood related unbelievers
- Unbelievers have amongst themselves

That is why "unequally yoked" is so vitally important

The spiritual connection is real and immensely significant!

we have a higher order relationship...we are no longer

- rich or poor...staying on our side of the tracks
- white or black or Hispanic...clinging to others of our race...

we are brothers and sisters in the Lord...children of God...

We are parts of the Body of Christ

- needing all other parts to be healthy
- serving all other parts toward that end.

The Close

v17 receive him as myself:

There were over 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire...outnumbering the free citizens by more than 20:1

To maintain social order and the survival of the empire, slaves were horribly oppressed...not even considered to be human runaway slaves were punished severely

- By a lenient master...branded with “F” for “fugitive” on the forehead
- By the typical master...put to death

“If you love me...if you are in fact a fellow-laborer in the Gospel of Grace...take Onesimus back...without punishing him. Instead, love him as I do, as a brother. Love him as you love me.”

Paul adds the weight of his office and his relationship with Philemon to the request...a masterful proposal with a powerful close!

By the way...Onesimus is the letter carrier...standing before Philemon and the church that meets in his home!

Paul is “going for the jugular”
What is Philemon going to say?

Note: Who is the Author of this proposal?
this is the proposal Jesus Christ...Who with the weight of His office and relationship to the Father intercedes for us with the Father...makes us to heal our broken relationships!
What are we going to say?

v18-19a if he hath wronged thee...put that on my account:

Suddenly this sounds like a letter Jesus would write about us!

“If Onesimus had previously stolen from you, I will personally make restoration.

If you are suffering any loss due to his absence, I will personally make restitution.

I desire you to be “made whole” financially and materially because Onesimus has been made whole spiritually.”

v19b I do not say how thou owest unto me:

“I’ll pay the debts...but remember you owe me everything you have.”

Philemon was also saved thru Paul’s ministry...

the debt is so large it cannot be repaid

Herein lies the issues at the heart of this proposal:

- forgiveness

Matt 6:14-15 If forgive, will be forgiven. If not, not.

Matt 18:21-35

Luke 23:34

Ps 32:1-2 transgression forgiven, sin covered,
Lord has not imputed iniquity

- restoration/reconciliation

Heb 2:11, 17 not ashamed to call us brothers...

High Priest to make reconciliation for sins

2 Cor 5:18-20

Which of us are pure an innocent, not ever having offended another with our unkind, critical, condemning words or our self-centered, callous, spiteful actions?

Which of us have never been offended?

Which of us do not need to forgive or to seek forgiveness?

Which of us do not have a relationship strained by unforgiveness and bitterness?

Which of us don’t have an irritant in our life that needs covering with God’s love?

Matt 13:45-46

v20 let me have joy of thee:

“Brother, prayerfully consider my words and grant me my request.

Yes, Onesimus has caused you pain and sorrow, but let it go.

Give it to the Lord so it does not become bitterness, which is a self-inflicted wound.”

2 Cor 2:10-11 unforgiveness is a devise of Satan

1 Peter 5:6-8

you know what to do...humble yourself and do it!

v21 having confidence in thy obedience:
as a professional salesman, this is what is known as a presumptive close!
“What color would you like that in?”

“I know you will seek the Lord regarding this and will obey.
In fact, I am confident you will do even more than I have asked...
for yours is a heart after the Lord’s.”

we can forgive others when we stop and consider the depth and breadth of
the forgiveness given us by Jesus

v22 prepare me also a lodging:
to top it all off...a hard close...”I am coming soon...”

“I think I am going to be released so prepare me room. Get ready for me
to visit you.”

So Philemon will see Paul face-to-face AFTER he makes his decision
regarding Onesimus...what will his decision be?
Especially after Onesimus read it in public to the church?!

A masterful proposal!

God has also written a masterful proposal...the Gospel of Grace
And He is coming soon...and all men will see Him face-to-face...
What will your decision be?

Acknowledgements

v23 Epaphras:
another Colossian (Col 4:12)...aware of the issues and decisions facing
Philemon

v24 Mark...Luke:
at this point in time, Timothy, Mark, Luke, Demas, and Aristarchus are
with Paul (also mentioned in Col 4:10, 14)

- soon, only Luke remains (2 Tim 4:11)
- Timothy was sent to Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3)
- as was Mark (2 Tim 4:11)
- Demas returned to the world (2 Tim 4:10)
- in the Scriptures, Aristarchus is MIA

Executive Summary

v25 grace...amen:

forgiveness and reconciliation are built upon...the grace of God
be gracious with one another, not

- critical
- condemning
- unforgiving

Paul has delivered a powerful proposal to Philemon...

- Intercession for a runaway relative
- Forgiveness
- Reconciliation/Restoration

Next steps:

- a decision is required
- action must be taken...
- faith and love must be exercised

Jesus Christ is delivering the same proposal to us...

The Next Steps are the same

What is next? Hebrews!