

Philemon: Coming Home

Philemon 1:18-25

Philemon 1:18

(KJV) If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account;

(NIV) If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me.

Beloved, isn't this the picture of Jesus? Isn't this the voice of Jesus to God on *our* behalf? *Dear Father, if my son or daughter has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge it to me. Thank You. Jesus.*

Romans 5:6-11

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

Scripture itself declares our verdict before holy God: guilty!

Romans 3:23 *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*

And no religious or self-righteous offering will appease the wrath of God against our sin. Our own righteousness is as filthy rags to God. (Isaiah 64:6) In order for this sin debt to be paid acceptably, something must die:

Romans 6:23b *For the wages of sin is death;*

Hebrews 9:22

In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

If God is tugging at your heart today, you are experiencing the conviction of the Holy Spirit:

John 16:7-8

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

Also, if you have walked away from God and are standing at the periphery of church looking in, He is waiting with open arms to receive you back. (see Luke 15:11-32)

And do not delay, for *today* is the day of salvation.

2Corinthians 6:2

(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)

The wonderful thing about salvation is that it is a gift from God. We need only accept it, receive it, and open it. Jesus died on the cross of Calvary for each of our sins, and was raised three days later unto eternal life. He stands today offering this gift to every man, woman, and child. He says to God on your behalf:

Charge it to me.

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Paul believed in and practiced discipleship, and discipleship involves sacrifice, the giving of oneself on behalf of another:

Romans 5:6-9

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

While many today in the Body of Christ may shy away from sacrificial love through discipleship, the Holy Spirit still reminds each of us that we are to walk as Jesus walked (1 John 2:6) and are therefore called to make disciples. Our obedience will mean the difference between spiritual life and eternal death for the precious soul God has placed in our path.

*STUDY POINT: Look up passages in the New Testament that describe the Biblical process of discipleship.

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: How might you activate today the process of discipleship with someone in your sphere of influence?

Philemon 1:19

(KJV) I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides.

(NIV) I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back—not to mention that you owe me your very self.

Paul would often write salutations with his own handwriting in cases where he wanted to convey a deeper heart sentiment, as in this verse:

Colossians 4:18

The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen. Written from Rome to Colossians by Tychicus and Onesimus.

He reminded Philemon - though not to manipulate him in any way - that Paul himself had led him to Jesus. There was a sense in which Philemon owed Paul his very life. We each have died to self and owe our lives to Jesus, whose life is in us:

Galatians 2:20

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Philemon 1:20

(KJV) Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord.

(NIV) I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ.

When we bear fruit for the Lord, He is glorified (John 15:8). The expectation of God is such that as He performs His work in us and through us (Philippians 1:6), we will grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus His Son (2 Peter 3:18), and *bear spiritual fruit*. This was also Paul's expectation of Philemon, knowing as he did about his dear friend's Christ-connected life. Paul also expected Philemon to encourage Paul's own heart, as Philemon was an encourager:

Hebrews 3:13

But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

And so all of us can be encouragers, in big and small ways, and thereby fortify the unity of the Body, through accountability and love:

James 5:16

Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

1Timothy 2:8

I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: Encouragement is often intentional. We each can *choose* to reach out and encourage a fellow saint with a gift, a text, a letter, or a call. Ask God to reveal to you someone who would be blessed by your encouragement today, and then *reach out!*

Philemon 1:21

(KJV) Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say.

(NIV) Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask.

Here again Paul appeals to and is confident in the Christ-like character and commitment of Philemon. This character includes going the extra mile for an enemy, then how much more for a brother in Christ?

Matthew 5:38-42

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

Philemon 1:22

(KJV) But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.

(NIV) And one thing more: Prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers.

God answers prayer! Paul had experienced this fact over and over, and was often the recipient of the faithful prayers of his fellow saints! Paul fully expected by faith (Hebrews 11:1) that God would free him from prison and restore him to fruitful fellowship and ministry. Why was Paul so hopeful? Because the saints were praying for him! Let this be a tremendous encouragement to us today to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17) for those in chains for the Gospel, and indeed for all believers everywhere!

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: None of us would say that our prayer life is all that it can be. What steps might you take to cultivate a deeper connection with Christ through prayer this year?

Philemon 1:23

(KJV) There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus;

(NIV) Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings.

Paul was not the only one in chains for the Gospel, but his Christ-like conduct in captivity was an encouragement to fellow prisoner Epaphras, whether he was in chains with Paul before or during the writing of this letter. In a very real sense, each of us by the Holy Ghost is now held captive as a slave of Christ Jesus, purchased through His blood, and called to His service forever:

Romans 6:18 *You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.*

We are not chained any more by the law but are now sealed by the Holy Ghost!

Ephesians 4:30

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Beloved, you and I may not literally go to prison for the Gospel, as Paul and myriad millions throughout time and history, but Jesus promises that we will experience persecution to some degree as we walk with our Saviour, Lord, and Teacher.

2Timothy 3:12 *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*

The good news is that Jesus is the One who speaks through us! He encourages, empowers, and emboldens His children through the anointed Word of God and by the power of the Holy Spirit!

Luke 12:11-12

And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.

So, dear Christian, stay connected to Jesus through prayer, and continue to meditate on His Word day and night. (Psalm 1:2)

Philemon 1:24

(KJV) Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers.

(NIV) And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.

Truly, this is Paul's ministry team, and more than that, these are his dear brothers and sisters in the Lord. Paul knows that ministry happens, not through solo efforts, but through the *Body of Christ*:

Ephesians 4:11-16

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Philemon 1:25

(KJV) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Written from Rome to Philemon, by Onesimus a servant.

(NIV) The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

A fitting close to a open-hearted book. God, by His grace, continues to call the prodigals home, and by grace many precious souls are saved and added to his household daily.

We once again thank God for revealing His extravagant grace and Christian love through this one short letter, and through three transformed lives.

Hallelujah!

- Reverend Darren McClelland