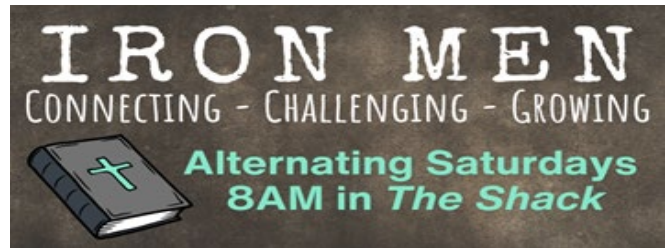


Final - Lesson 5

Philemon 1:18-25

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Study Notes



*** Start the Recorder ***

Introduction:

This is our final study in the book of Philemon. We will be covering eight verses Philemon 1:18-25.

Philemon 1:18 (NOTES)

- “if he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything” - It has been suggested that Onesimus had possibly stolen from his master - food, clothing, or even money, or something else of value, such as a weapon, or a beast of burden, in order to make his getaway.
- “IF” - Onesimus may not have told Paul everything. Paul wants to cover every possible avenue of iniquity or indebtedness, so that nothing remains standing between Onesimus and his master.
- “wronged you in any way” - Stolen, probably. But perhaps something worse, like physical violence. They could have fought, or Onesimus might have attacked Philemon, or his family members, employees, or other slaves, in order to make his getaway.
- “owes you anything, charge that to my account” - Paul doesn’t care what the sins were, or how great their cost. Paul is assuming the debt of Onesimus, whatever he may have stolen, or whatever damage he may have caused. Paul commits himself to pay the price and offers, essentially, a blank check.

- From the tone of the letter, it would be easy to conclude that Philemon likely would not have prevailed upon Paul for actual repayment, due both to their personal relationship and to the matter of Paul's imprisonment. But Paul doesn't know that. His offer to settle all of Onesimus's debt is real and with no stated limit.

Philemon 1:19 (NOTES)

- "I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand, I will repay it" - This is Paul's official promissory note - his IOU, signed personally in his own hand. He is guaranteeing payment.

Discussion: Why is Paul assuming Onesimus's debts? Isn't it enough that Paul led him to Christ? Does Paul owe this obligation? Do we assume the obligations of those we lead to Christ?

- No, we do not assume the debts of those whom we lead to Christ. Paul was not responsible to Philemon for the debts incurred by Onesimus's escape and prolonged absence. That's on Onesimus. Responsibility for one's sin falls on the one who commits it - "The person who sins will die." (Eze 18:20)
- Moreover, we should not promise people that God will solve all their problems if they would only trust in Christ. That is a form of Prosperity Gospel. Jesus promised us "In the world you have tribulation" as believers (John 16:33). What we can promise is that whatever troubles this world brings, we have His power to endure and the hope of eternal life.

- Paul wants one of two things:
 - he wants Onesimus returned to him because he wants him at his side that “he might minister to me in my imprisonment for the gospel.” Paul wants Onesimus to help him during his imprisonment and to serve with him as a co-laborer for the ministry; or
 - he wants Onesimus released to him as a co-laborer in the ministry when Paul comes back to Colossae.
- “(not to mention to you that you owe to me even your own self as well)” - Philemon was led to Christ by Paul, just like his slave Onesimus was led to Christ by Paul. Master and slave are on equal footing in this respect. Paul is placing himself in debt on behalf of Onesimus, but Philemon owes Paul much, much more (his own eternal life with Christ) than whatever Onesimus could possibly owe Philemon. Two points here:
 - Nothing trumps eternal life. There is no earthly debt that compares to the debt created by one’s sin. There is no forgiveness of an earthly debt that compares to the forgiveness of our sin debt. There is nothing of greater value to a human being than his salvation.
 - *“For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?”* (Mark 8:36)
 - Paul asks (doesn’t command) Philemon to be gracious toward Onesimus in forgiving any debt he has incurred, as Christ has been exceedingly more gracious in forgiving Philemon. One’s salvation does not cancel one’s debts or relieve one of his obligations.

Discussion: However, in the present instance, is it reasonable for Paul to ask Philemon to forgive Onesimus’s trespasses and debts? Why or why not?

- Matt 18:21-35 *“Then Peter came and said to Him, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times? 22 Jesus said to him, I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. 23 For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. 24 When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. 25 But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. 26 So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, Have patience with me and I will repay you everything. 27 And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. 28 But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, Pay back what you owe. 29 So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, Have patience with me and I will repay you. 30 But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. 31 So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. 32 Then summoning him, his lord *said to him, You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 33 Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you? 34 And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. 35 My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.”*

- Luke 17:3-4: *“Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. 4 And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ forgive him.”*

Philemon 1:20 (NOTES)

- “Yes, brother, let me benefit from you in the Lord” - Paul, with a twinkle in his eye, uses one more ploy to soften the heart of Philemon. He uses a play on words, as the word translated as "benefit" shares the same root with Onesimus (Gr. *oninemi* = to be useful, to profit from). Paul is saying, "Let me profit from you, by receiving back him who is "profitable" to me (Onesimus). Or, "Be useful to me by returning to me him who is useful."
- “refresh my heart in Christ” - Just as in verse 7 *“the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother.”* (Gr. *anapauo* = to give or receive rest, to cease from movement) In the present context, Paul is saying, "By your obedient response (see next verse), may you cause me to take rest in the Lord in this matter, that is to cease from my labors of concern, uncertainty, uneasiness, fear of disappointment, and prayer."

Philemon 1:21 (NOTES)

- “Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you” - Paul writes as having trust in Christ whose Spirit indwells Philemon. He believes that the Holy Spirit will so move Philemon to not only grant Paul’s request for reconciliation, but.

- “since I know that you will do even more than what I say” - Paul is asking for reconciliation and forgiveness, yes, but he is hoping for ("even more than what I say"), that is, Onesimus’s complete release from bondage as well. Paul’s complimentary "confidence in your obedience" is yet one more inducement to Philemon’s compliance.

Philemon 1:22 (NOTES)

- “I hope that through your prayers I will be given to you.” - Paul seems to have some confidence in the eventual release from his imprisonment.
- prepare me a lodging” - Paul will be coming to stay with Philemon. Philemon can’t simply ignore Paul’s letter, or respond that he doesn’t plan to forgive and release. He will have to face Paul directly.

Philemon 1:23 (NOTES)

- These gentlemen were covered in the Colossians study.

Philemon 1:24 (NOTES)

- These gentlemen also were covered in the Colossians study.

Philemon 1:25 (NOTES)

- Perhaps the most important aspect of Philemon is its typology, which is a method of biblical interpretation where an OT “type” (a person, place, or thing) serves to foreshadow an antitype (a person place or thing) in the NT. For example, in the OT, David (a type of Christ) was the true king of the Jews, but persecuted Saul, a type of Satan. In the NT, the Body of Christ was persecuted by Saul (Apostle Paul).

- Acts 9:1-5 *"Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, 2 and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. 3 As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; 4 and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" 5 And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting."*

Discussion: Paul is serving as a "type" of Christ, Philemon as a type of God the Father, and Onesimus as a type of sinner. What are some ways you see Paul's heart, desires, and actions, serving as a "type" of Christ?

- He doesn't hold Onesimus's sins against him and forgives him.
- He loves Onesimus. c. He works to reconcile a sinner (Onesimus) to God the Father (Philemon).
- He intercedes as a priest with Philemon for Onesimus.
- He appeals to the virtues of Philemon.
- He assumes the offender's debt as substitutionary atonement.
- He pays the debt of the offender personally as a redeemer.
- He brings salvation to Onesimus as a savior.

Discussion: In what ways can you see the portrayal of Onesimus in this book as representative of all sinners?

- He was the property of Philemon.
- Onesimus was running away from his master.
- He was rebellious.

- Has sinned against his master.
- He created a debt he cannot pay.
- He is in desperate need of mercy and grace.
- He needs reconciliation.
- He needs some way of paying what he owes.
- He needs someone to intercede for him.
- He was once useless, but became useful, as his name declares.

Discussion: In what ways can you see the portrayal of Philemon in this book as representative of God the Father?

- Philemon (Gr. - phileo is the root = “one who loves/kisses/shows affection”).
- He is the offended party.
- His wrath needs to be appeased (propitiation).
- He alone is in the position to forgive Onesimus.
- He is the dispenser of mercy and grace.
- He gives rest and refreshing to the saints.
 - Acts 3:19-20 *“Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; 20 and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you.”*

Questions or Comments?

Small Groups