



PHILEMON.

**A STUDY ABOUT ETERNAL REDEMPTION AND COMMUNAL
RECONCILIATION**

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MINTS COURSE ON PHILEMON

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MINTS COURSE ON PHILEMON

JUSTIFICATION

An inductive as well as topical study will be made of Paul's letter to Philemon in order to understand the social dimensions of the Christian teachings on redemption and reconciliation.

OBJECTIVES

1. Participate in the study of Philemon.
2. A verse by verse study of Philemon.
3. Become familiar with Christian social ethics literature.
4. Write an essay on a current social-ethical theme, incorporating the apostle's argumentation.
5. Show knowledge of key concepts of the study.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Class attendance (15%).
2. Complete lesson's home work (25%).
3. Read 300 pages for BA or 500 pages for MA studies (25%) and write a reading review.
 - 3.1. required reading: BA. Anthony J. Carter. *On Being Black and Reformed*. Phillipsburg, NJ: PR Publishing, 2003. [153 pages] plus 147 pages of other source. A three page book review.
 - 3.2. required reading for MA: both Carter's book and Michael O Emerson and Christian Smith. *Divided by Faith*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. (153 and 212 pages plus 135 of another source. A five page book review.
4. Write a 10 page essay on a Biblical-ethical reflection of a current social theme for BA, or 15 pages for MA studies (25%).
5. Take final exam (10%).

BENEFITS OF TAKING THIS COURSE

1. Discovery of the rich Biblical resources and heritage Christians have in social ethics
2. Expand one's mind in terms of the implications of the gospel for social issues.
3. Challenge to address social issues from a Christian perspective.
4. Be prepared to teach this Bible book to others.

CLASS RECORD

Name of student	Level of Study	Attend. (15%)	Homework (25%)	Readings (25%)	Project (25)	Final Exam (10%)	Final Grade

LESSON ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

INTRODUCTION

The eternal redemption of God's people has a profound effect on the communal composition and ethics of the Church. Not only are people saved, but fallen sinners are restored in their personal, family, work, and ministry responsibilities.

REDEMPTION

The greatest event in the history of humanity is the cross of Jesus Christ. On the cross, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man, paid with his life and blood the ransom for God's sinful people (Ephesians 1:7; Romans 3:24-25; Col. 1:14-20). Believers know that one result of the Christ's payment is eternal salvation. Does it go further than heavenly security? Paul writes to the Colossians:

“For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him; whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross” (1:19-20).

The thesis of this course is that the letter of Paul to Philemon, in which he pleads for the forgiveness of Onesimus and implies that he should be freed, demonstrates the ethical fruit of the doctrine of redemption, as in Christ every thought and every action is taken captive, redeemed, transformed, and presented to God for His glory.

The presentation of this thesis runs a grave risk of being misinterpreted. If one ounce is detracted from the eternal redemptive act of Jesus Christ for the salvation of His people, then we have failed Him miserably. However, if communal reconciliation is seen as a fruit or an extension of Christ's redeeming work, then we have given God more glory.

There are at least four ways to look at the relationship between the eternal redemption of God's people and the process of communal reconciliation among believers. *Position one* is that eternal redemption and communal reconciliation are not related. *Position two* is that eternal redemption influences communal reconciliation in the church. *Position three* is that eternal redemption demands that communal reconciliation takes place. *Position four* is that communal reconciliation is the same as eternal redemption.

Positions one and two are extremes and do not have Biblical support. The absolute separation between eternal redemption and communal reconciliation among believers is warned against in the Lord's Prayer (Mt. 6:11), as well as the parable of the ungrateful servant (Mt. 18:21-35). Position four is a humanistic perspective that equates human deeds with the deeds of God. It is a salvation by human works, rather than a redemption based on the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. The difference between positions two and three is one of emphasis. Position two speaks about the “influence”

between the two types of redemption, while position three talks about one demanding the other.

This study holds that Paul's letter to Philemon takes the *position three* perspective. In a very loving, yet diplomatic way, the apostle Paul calls for reconciliation between Philemon and Onesimus. So strong are the arguments and metaphors of Paul in this letter that the reader is left with the distinct impression that if Philemon did not reconcile with Onesimus then this would rank right up there with the greatest contradictions in the New Testament. It would be comparable to Peter's denial of Jesus, or Peter's rejection of the Galatian Christians, or Paul's refusal to reconcile with Mark and Barnabas. Philemon's refusal would have required another letter, like the one the Corinthians needed. But, a second letter was not needed. Philemon and Onesimus embraced and forgave; communal redemption was accomplished as "all things" are reconciled to Christ.

COMMUNAL RECONCILIATION

The letter of Paul to Philemon will be studied as an authoritative charter for Christian social ethics. Paul's writings in this letter directly or indirectly address the values of four institutions: the church, the penal system, slavery and the government. The letter of Paul snips the roots of the age old slavery system and presents the church as a community of reconciliation.

The radical character of the Christian gospel is seen in the liberating influence it has in a sin bound world. Paul advocates for Onesimus, a run away slave, to be reconciled with his master and be granted unexpected and unimaginable liberties for a slave in the Roman world.

The gospel does not only transform a sinner into a saint, but it also shows that in an oppressive world system there is a redemptive community of believers. Paul did not call for the immediate emancipation of slaves in the Roman Empire, but laid a Christian ethical groundwork for the humane treatment of slaves, as well as providing logical arguments for emancipation within the Christian community and total abolition.

Being freed from the Roman system of slavery cannot be directly compared to other systems of slavery. The Hebrew slaves were treated with more respect than in Gentile societies. For example, the Hebrew slave was freed after 6 years of service. Nor was the Roman slavery system the same as the ethnic African slavery of the 13th to the 19th century. Despite the differences in the systems of slavery, they all have one element in common: the loss of personal freedom in favor of obligatory service. Paul presents another form of slavery and service; he shows what it means to be "a prisoner of Jesus Christ."

Contemporary slave systems generally do not go by the name of slavery. However, the conditions persist today. Even in the "free world" there is obligatory military service and prison work gangs. In totalitarian countries, the loss of personal freedoms and obligatory service go beyond military service. There are countries where many of the citizens are employed by the government and receive less than normal wages.

Then, there are the non-documented immigrants. How should the Christian community handle such situations?

When Christians are challenged to restore broken relationships in the home, at work, in church and in society, what response is true to the gospel and pleasing to God?¹ How does the doctrine of redemption help us to come to grips with our social responsibilities?

The letter of Paul to Philemon gives the Christian excellent principles by which to address the difficult social issues of the day.

SOCIAL ETHICS

The term “social ethics,” as used in our study, refers to how one behaves in society. It is the belief in values and practice of moral duties.² While academia would leave such issues to the anthropologists, philosophers, and sociologists, the letter of Paul to Philemon shows that social ethics is the deep concern of theologians and church leaders as well.³

Whereas ethics is the practice of values, ethos refers to the system or network of values.⁴ In Philemon the ethos of slavery is addressed in particular.

Biblical ethics is founded in the character and revelation of God.⁵ All human values are to conform to the communicable attributes of God, such as His love, kindness, justice, mercy, and grace. Prior to the fall of humanity into rebellion against God, God gave the personal, cultural, and religious mandates. People are to reflect the image of God (Gen. 1:26). Human cultural activities are based on the family, work and government (Gen. 1:28). The direct and vertical relationship between God and humanity is defined according to God’s commandments and man’s faithful response (Gen. 2:15-17). The letter of Paul to Philemon addresses issues such as imprisonment, slavery, and death. These conditions did not exist before the *fall*.

The entrance of sin and evil into the world and the human heart necessitated a redemptive response on the part of God. The promise of a deliverer was given (Genesis 3:15) and this promise would be expressed in history through the People of God (the

¹ John Chrysostom, *Homily I, Philemon 1-3*: “Considering these things, then, let us also be merciful and forgiving towards those who have trespassed against us. The offenses against us here are a hundred pence, but those from us against God are ten thousand talents.”

² Robert McQuilkin, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics*, Wheaton: Tyndale, 1989. p.9. “Ethics might be called a system of moral values and duties. It has to do with ideal human character, actions and ends. What ought a person do or refrain from doing?”

³ Eugene Nida. *Custom and Cultures*. p. 230. Ethos is the system of values. Louis J. Luzbetak in *The Church and Cultures*, writes: “he (the anthropologist) must also inquire into the “motivation” that unifies the cultural content into a single whole, “the values, goals and premises,” “the philosophy,” “the psychology” or “mentality” of the people in question – in a word, the configuration of the particular culture....The totality of a life-way includes not only actual behavior but also theoretical standards, in other words, both the ideal and the real culture.” (p. 63).

⁴ Henry Stob in *Basic Christian Ethics* defines ethos as “the spirit” of the people “that animates its institutions and practices,” it is “the unique perspective in which things are customarily viewed.”(p. 2, 3).

The biblical usage of ethos is seen in Luke 1:9; 2:42; 22:39; John 19:40; Acts 6:14; 15:1; 21:21; 26:3; 28:17.

⁵ R.C. Sproul, *Making Tough Moral Decisions*.

seed), which would exist in enmity with the Evil One and a rebellious world. Both the Old and New Testament as well as the history of the Christian Church show the conflict between the “seed of the woman” and the “seed of the Evil One.” The Messiah came into human history, accomplished what was necessary for the salvation of His people, and gave injunctions as how to live and serve God and man.

The conditions of the *fall* are not morally normative. Due to the *fall* and human personal and collective sin, prisoners exist; but the Good News of Jesus sets in motion the liberation of the prisoner. Jesus said: “He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners” (Luke 4:18). The authentic liberation of persons and slaves begin with a spiritual liberation that also has ramifications for communal transformation.

The institution of slavery was, in part, a response to unfulfilled obligations and unpaid debts. The good news of redemption is that Jesus has paid the full price for the spiritual redemption of God’s people. Does the redemptive payment of Jesus also cover the debts of the social slaves? The letter of Paul to Philemon shows that it does. Paul offered to pay the outstanding debt of Onesimus as part of the request that communal reconciliation be accomplished.

The greatest command (love God above all else) is reflected in the second command (love your neighbor as yourself).⁶ Paul showed his love for his non-Christian neighbor, Onesimus, the run away slave, by sharing the liberating gospel with him. Upon conversion, Paul continued to show his love by acting as an advocate and intercessor between Philemon and Onesimus, so that communal reconciliation could take place.

All of the great Christian ethical principles are put on display in the letter to Philemon. It remains for the reader to put them into practice. In fact, Paul leaves the letter’s conclusion to the reader. The reader is left with the unanswered question: “did Philemon free Onesimus? “Would you and I free Onesimus?” One day, on the Day of Judgment, each person will have to answer to Jesus’ question, “What did you do with the least of these my brothers?” (Mt. 25:40).

If it is true that Christian social ethics requires that the “least of the brethren” be ministered to, then the Christian must become involved in world wide missions. Then will ethics move from individual rights and personal needs to serving people in need, in the name of Jesus, the supreme servant.

HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLES

Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation. Biblical hermeneutics consists of a variety of logical principles that are governed by the written Scriptures. The overriding hermeneutical principle for Biblical interpretation is described by the Protestants as “*sola scriptura*.” The Scripture interprets the Scripture and the Scripture is the maximum authority for its own interpretation. Let us briefly review some of the principles for interpreting the Bible that are relevant to the interpretation of this epistle.⁷

⁶ O’Brien, *op.cit.* p.272. Philemon is called beloved and has demonstrated his love (*agape*) in the past (vv. 5, 7). “Paul now hopes that “for love’s sake’ 9vs. 9) Philemon will grant his request, so that Onesimus will be accepted as a “beloved brother” (*adelphos agapatos*) (vs. 16).

⁷ Taken from Hegeman, *Hermeneutics*. There are more principles than those mentioned here. R.C. Sproul, *Knowing Scriptures* is also recommended.

1. *Apostolic.* Paul, the author of the letter (vs. 19), is an *apostle*, whose teachings are part of the foundation of the Christian Church (Eph. 2:20).

This letter is more “apostolic” than it is “Pauline.” Bible critics would seek to compare and differentiate between the Pauline, Petrine or Johannine view of the church, government, and the institution of slavery but the apostles present a united view in both doctrine and ethics and this is due to their common inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The letter to Philemon is not Paul’s personal opinion to be accepted or rejected according to *our* determination, but it is inspired instruction for the Church. The reader who exalts his own opinion over the clear reading of the inspired Word of God is a naive humanist who thinks he knows better than God’s Word.

The letter is not culturally tied to an ancient culture but contains teachings that transcend all cultures. Those who claim that Scripture is culturally conditioned want to suggest that its teachings are only valid for the original author and original readers. However, Scripture defines itself as trans-cultural and valid for the ages (II Tim. 3:16).

It is not only significant *that* the author of the letter to Philemon is one of the original apostles, but it’s also instructive *how* Paul teaches Philemon to reconcile with the run away slave. Paul did not legalistically command Philemon to obey but he passionately persuaded the master to reconcile with his slave.

2. *Biblical.* Paul is used by God to write *Scripture* (II Peter 3:16). By inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the writings of Paul will be in harmony with other Scripture (II Tim. 3:16). As Paul’s letter is being read and discussed, it needs to be interpreted by using other Scriptures. In the homework assignments the students are asked to look up all the Bible cross-references. Surprising truths will be discovered as Scripture is interpreted with Scripture.

The Old Testament had a lot to say about one of the major themes in the letter to Philemon, and that is slavery.⁸ The Hebrew slaves were protected by Mosaic Law. Slaves were to be freed after 6 years of service. It was not a permanent ordinance in the OT and the apostle Paul shows to Philemon that it is not a permanent condition in the NT.

3. *Christ centered.* The letter to Philemon is placed in its Christological context in verse one. Paul identifies himself as a prisoner of Jesus Christ. The opening verse sets the tone for the whole letter. As prisoners of Jesus Christ, Paul, Philemon, Onesimus, as well as the readers, are to obey their Lord Jesus Christ. The reconciliation between Philemon and Onesimus honors the Lordship of Jesus.⁹

⁸ Exodus 20:10; 21:2-11, 20-21; 26-27; 32; 22:1-3; 23:12; Leviticus 19:20-22; 25:39-55; Deuteronomy 5:14; 15:12-18; 21:10-14; 23:15-16; 24:7.

⁹ As to the Christological content Martin Luther observed: “Even as Christ did for us with God the Father, thus also does Paul for Onesimus with Philemon; for Christ also....by love and humility induced the Father to take us to His grace for the sake of Christ, who lovingly pleads our cause and with all His heart lays Himself out for us.”

4. *Didactical.* Didactics refers to the teaching function. Paul is instructing not only Philemon, a leader of a house church, but through the inclusion of this letter in Scripture, this letter instructs all Christian leaders and the Church of all ages.

5. *Exegetical.* Exegesis is the practice of interpreting the Bible. A study of the ancient manuscripts and comparison of manuscripts collection is a useful study. The *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* shows that there are few major textual differences between the major collections of manuscripts.¹⁰

6. *Historical content.* Acts 21:27-36. Paul was actually rescued from the Jewish mob in Jerusalem by the Roman soldiers. The rebellion of the Jews was so great that they were willing to kill the servants of the Lord, as they had done with Jesus. The ministry of Paul from his Roman prison is addressed at the end of the book of Acts and mention of Onesimus is made in the letter to the Colossians (Col. 4:9). The commentaries generally agree that the letter was written between 60-62 AD. The student can glean important historical data from the Lukan text, ranging from Paul's imprisonment, Philemon's house church in Colosse, ethics concerning slavery, as well as the content of the good news of Christian salvation.¹¹ It's interesting to note that Luke visited Paul in prison and he undoubtedly knew about Paul's letter to Philemon (vs. 24).

The interpreter will also be influenced by his knowledge of church history. Commentators such as Chrysostom, Luther, Calvin, Henry and Gill interpreted Paul's letter prior to the abolition of slavery in the 19th century. Bruce, Hendrickson, Muller, O'Brien, Perkins, and Wall interpret the letter during the 20th-21st century, years after the abolition of slavery.

7. *Inspiration.* Paul's letter to Philemon is part of the 66 inspired books of the Bible (II Tim. 3:16). Paul's strong statement and principles about forgiving a run away slave is part of the Christian canon, and it exists for the edification of the Church. Prisoners, slaves, and believers living under totalitarian governments have been deeply inspired and encouraged by the message of Paul to Philemon. The message of reconciling all things and all relationships in Christ continues to be the way in which God is building His kingdom world wide.

8. *Literary devices.* Besides writing a personal letter, Paul uses a very effective literary device, namely, the rhetorical question. As Paul gives argument after argument as to why Philemon should forgive Onesimus, the reader is not given the obvious response of "of course, Onesimus should be forgiven." Not only that, Paul's principles should lead to another unasked question about whether Onesimus should be freed from slavery. That unasked question leads to another obvious, "of course!"

Paul did not legalistically command Philemon to obey but he chose to teach and lead Philemon into obedience and taking captive every thought and action to Christ.

¹⁰ *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*

¹¹ The 21st century reader has knowledge about the rise and fall of the institution of slavery. A good question to ask is, "why did the apostles not call for the abolition of the institution of slavery?" Why did that event have to wait until the 19th century? One possible reading of the letter to Philemon was that Paul was writing the obituary for the slave system among Christians.

9. *Redemptive.* Redemption literally means to pay the debt owed by a slave in order to free the slave.¹² The Old Testament uses the term to designate the recovery of land, family and servants. The whole Bible is a history of God's redeeming acts in which God's servants fell into the slavery of sin and were bought by the blood of Jesus Christ in order to be true servants of the Lord. Redemptive applications can also be applied to the experiences of Onesimus. Onesimus was not created to be a slave. Due to living in a sinful world he became a slave. In his restoration he became a servant of the Lord, while he was a slave to Philemon and as a free man. History tells us that he may very well have become the bishop of Ephesus.¹³

10. *Sociological implications.* Like the letter to James, the letter of Paul to Philemon is filled with cultural and sociological implications. The letter raises the question whether Paul is seeking the abolition of the institution of slavery. For the 21st century interpreter, who has witnessed the abolition of the African-American slave system, it would be easy to equate the Hebrew and Roman slave system with the African-American ethnic slavery system. The Roman system of slavery was not necessarily ethnic but more related to the military conquest, the penal system, being born of slave parents as well as debt repayments.¹⁴ For Paul to outright call for the abolition of slavery in the Roman Empire would have been to call for the overthrow of the existing empire. However, Paul's argumentation is to appeal to the Christian's conscience as to what the implications of the gospel of reconciliation are for spiritual and social freedom (I Cor. 7:20-22; Col. 3:11, 22, Eph. 6:5-9; Gal. 3:28; I Tim. 6:1, 2). The relationship of soteriological and social reconciliation exists in an "already and not yet situation."¹⁵ The principles for freeing slaves exist but not all Christians applied the principles in the same way.

11. *Theological.* Appendix A reviews the major loci of systematic theology, where questions such as these are discussed in relationship to the letter of Paul to Philemon.

12. *Year of the Lord.* Another theme to consider is to see Christianity in terms of the Sabbaths. Slaves were freed in the 7th year (Exodus 21:2; Dt. 15:12, 18). Slavery debts were cancelled and one's inheritance was restored. Hebrew slaves could be redeemed or purchased from foreign masters (Lev. 25: 39-43, 47-55). In gratitude to being delivered from the bondage of Egypt, the Israelites were called to obey God's law (Exodus 20:1-17).¹⁶ Jesus announced His ministry in terms of the "acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke

¹² From *lutron*, to redeem, to ransom (*Strong's Concordance*), #3084,3885.

¹³ Justo Gonzalez in *The Story of Christianity* (Harper, 1984) makes reference to the visits Ignatius received on his way to Rome. Among them was an Onesimus, bishop of Ephesus (p. 42).

¹⁴ The South African Muller writes: "The condition of slavery-whether it was desirable or not-was not incompatible with Christianity, and could be sanctified by the Christian faith (verse 16). Philemon is not requested to set Onesimus free, but-what was more difficult- to love him, and to see in the converted slave his brother in Christ" (*op.cit.* p.169). Hegeman argues that Paul, the prisoner, is reasoning and implying that, when possible, Christians free the slaves in order to glorify God's plan of reconciliation. The fact that Paul offered to pay Onesimus' slave debt suggests total liberation.

¹⁵ For slavery and the Reformed in the Caribbean and Latin America see Hegeman, *Mission to the People....* and for slavery and Christianity in the USA see Emerson, *Divided by Faith...*

¹⁶ K.A. Kitchen, "Slavery in the Old Testament." In *New Bible Dictionary* (Eerdmans, 1962), pp. 1195-1198. E.A. Judge, "Slavery in the New Testament." *Op.cit.*, pp. 1198-1199.

4:19). In the New Testament the apostles taught that the servant was to submit to their master and if possible seek their freedom (I Tim. 6:1f). The spirit of freedom in Christ and in the Church abounded (I Cor. 7:21; Gal. 3:28).

Evangelists and preachers remind the unbeliever that “today is the day of salvation.” “Today hear my voice.” This applies not only to eternal salvation but also to the application of the good news of salvation to all areas of life.

12. *Worship of the true God.* The true God is identified at the beginning of the epistle. He is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father is known through the Son. The Spirit is known through His works of illumination, purification, service, and among other spiritual attributes, reconciliation.

As one reads the arguments of Paul, he is made aware that the true God leads, guides, forgives and liberates.

BIBLE STUDY METHODS

The study of the passages in Philemon will use inductive, expositional, an analytical, as well as a devotional approach in order to consider the message of the Bible texts.

1. *Inductive study of the text.* The student will read the assigned passage in at least two Bible versions. The differences should be noted. Then the student will make observations about a series of facts related to the text.

Important words: jot down key words of passage and define them

Grammatical annotations: observe the verb forms and connecting words

Translation method: it is a literal, dynamic equivalent or paraphrase translation. The introduction to the Bible version usually identifies that.

Original author and hearers: identify the author and who the original readers were.

Cultural context: identify cultural factors related to family, society, values, etc.

Historical context: identify dates, historical events and people in the passage.

Biblical context: Briefly state how this passage is related to other parts of Scripture.

Proposed title for the passage. Give you own title for the passage

Major themes for the passage. Identify the main issues the author is seeking to address.

2. *Expositional study.* The second Bible study method is an expositional review of each Bible verse in the passage. At this time identify the cross-reference Bible verses and show how Scripture interprets Scripture.

3. *Literary analysis.* A review of how the text fits into the literary context of the passage and book is important. What kind of literature is it? Is it history, legal document, letter, prophecy, parable, poetry, prose, song or other type of literature? How does the text fit into the thematic outline of the passage and book? Does the passage have a thematic outline? How are figures of speech used in the text?

4. *Logical analysis.* The third method is a simple dialectical approach. I call it an evangelical dialectic. Identify the main truth of the passage and that will be the thesis.

The antithesis is a declaration that is opposite to the thesis. The synthesis is the reaction of the thesis to the antithesis. The evangelical synthesis is the response of the truth of the gospel (believe in Jesus) and the rejection of the antithesis (repent from sin). When the evangelical synthesis is not obtained, syncretism sets in. Syncretism is the contradictory co-existence of the thesis and antithesis. The purpose of using the dialectical method is to apply the gospel message to Biblical truths in order that such truths may be put into practice.

5. *Devotional study.* The final method is a devotional response to the content of the passage. As the passage is part of God's Word, God speaks to us through Scripture and we can respond to God on the basis of the Scripture.

The lessons in this study are accompanied by the full commentary notes of John Chrysostom, John Calvin, John Gill and Matthew Henry.¹⁷ Partial commentary observations are given by 20th century commentators.

Summary statement. The student finalizes the bible study by drafting a summary statement about the passage that reflects the conclusions of the variety of study methods applied to the text.

CONCLUSION

The seemingly short personal letter of Paul to Philemon is filled with life changing instructions that have influenced Christian theology and the Christian's view of social ethics. In order to do justice to the meaning of the Biblical text, the student will apply a variety of hermeneutical skills and Bible study methods and conduct his own examination of the text.

THOUGHTS ABOUT SOCIAL ETHICS

1. What is your definition of reconciliation?
2. As we begin the study of this epistle, what is your perspective about the relationship between God's eternal redemption and reconciliation in the church?
3. What is the distinction between personal and social ethics?
4. What is your view of social ethics?
5. Why does Bible relate to social ethics?
6. As you read about the principles of interpretation (hermeneutics) did you observe how they will relate to social ethics issues?
7. What Biblical basis do you have for your view of social ethics?
8. If Christ is reconciling all things to God, what is your role in such universal reconciliation?

¹⁷ For distance education purposes the student is pointed to resources available on the internet: John Chrysostom (347-407); John Calvin (1509-1564); Matthew Henry; John Gill (1697-1771). For other commentaries see eword.gospelcom.net; ccel.org.

MODEL WORK SHEET FOR BIBLE STUDY

LESSON (work sheet)

READING OF vs.	Read the passage in two versions and Show the difference
<p>INDUCTIVE STUDY of vs.</p> <p>Explanation of important data (from your reading of the Study Bibles and Philemon itself, please jot down what you know)</p> <p>Important words:</p> <p>Grammatical annotations:</p> <p>Translation method:</p> <p>Original author and hearers</p> <p>Cultural context:</p> <p>Historical context:</p> <p>Biblical context:</p> <p>Proposed title for the passage</p> <p>Major themes for the passage</p>	
VERSE BY VERSE EXPOSITIONAL STUDY	Show how other Biblical texts are related to our passage
Vs. 1	
Vs. 2.	
Vs. 3	
Jot down notes from commentaries	
<p>LITERARY ANALYSIS</p> <p>-What kind (genre) of literature is the text?</p> <p>-What is the thematic outline of the passage and how does it fit into the structure of the book?</p> <p>-Have are figures of speech used?</p>	
<p>DIALECTICAL STUDY of</p> <p>Thesis:</p> <p>Antithesis:</p> <p>Synthesis:</p> <p>Syncretism:</p>	
<p>DEVOTIONAL STUDY</p> <p>Prayer and Action</p> <p>-Praise to God</p> <p>-Confession of personal sin</p> <p>-Confession of social sin</p> <p>-Special requests</p> <p>-Thanksgiving to God</p> <p>-Communication of truths of the passage</p> <p>-three main truth statements</p> <p>Your own final summary</p>	

LESSON TWO

GOD'S RECONCILIATION TRANSFORMS ONE'S PURPOSE IN LIFE. vs. 1-3

INTRODUCTION

The letter of Paul to Philemon is closely related to the letter of Paul to Colossians. Both were written from jail and sent by similar messengers and in the same time period. The letter of Paul to the Colossians is more Christological (doctrine of Christ) while the letter to Philemon addresses several sociological issues from a theological perspective. Both letters exalt the truth of reconciliation:

“For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But how he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant” (Col. 1:19-23).

The letter of Paul to Philemon shows how the truth of Christ reconciling all things to himself through regenerating hearts and instructing believers to live in obedience in all areas of life. The “all things” in context of the letter to Philemon include the imprisonment of Paul, the run away slave status of Onesimus and the responsibilities of Philemon as a believing master.

Philemon vs. 1 identifies Paul as being in prison for the Lord.¹⁸ The opening statement contains the essence of Paul’s perspective about God’s sovereignty in his imprisonment. In all stations of life believers are to believe in and apply the truths of God’s plan of reconciliation, a plan that will transform all areas of life.

THE TRANSFORMATION

1. *A different purpose in life* (vs. 1)

Life had changed dramatically for Paul. There was a time when he, then known as Saul, persecuted Christians and had them thrown into jail. Now the tables had turned, Saul became a Christian and he was in jail. Most commentators agree that Paul was in jail in Rome about 60-62 AD.¹⁹ But Paul is not giving us many details. He wants us to

¹⁸ A literal prisoner. O’Brien, *op.cit.* p. 271. Kittle, TDNT. 2, 43.

¹⁹ 61 or 62 A.D. in Rome, J. Muller, *op.cit.* p. 165. Muller observes three reasons why the imprisonment was in Rome: 1) Acts mentions the two year imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28:16, 30-31); 2) the tradition of the Church has signaled Rome; 3) the Roman imprisonment allowed for visitors and preaching. It can be added that Luke, the author of Acts, visited Paul in prison (Phil. 24). O’Brien, *op.cit.*, p. 269. Opts for Rome.

concentrate on another fact....He is in jail because of Jesus, he is a prisoner of Jesus Christ.²⁰ The content of the letter has to do with seeking reconciliation for a run away slave. It is not certain whether Onesimus visited Paul voluntarily or that he too was imprisoned.²¹

There are certain theological truths about being a prisoner of Christ Jesus.

One, when you belong to him, you are not your own. You are of Christ. Your life is not all about you but its all about Him. You have been bought with a price of the blood of Jesus.

In the words of the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day One.

Question: What is your only comfort in life and death?

Answer: That I, with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ; who with His precious blood has fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil, and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation, wherefore by His Holy Spirit He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me heartily willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto Him"

Secondly, you belong to Christ. Christ is the Greek name from Messiah and it literally means anointed one. When you belong to Jesus it means that you are to be anointed by the Holy Spirit. You must receive the Holy Spirit so that you can have new spiritual life. You are born again, made new, and you receive a spiritual nature. You live by the fruit of the Spirit and enjoy the gifts of the Spirit in order to be part of building the church. Unless you have the Holy Spirit you are not "of Christ."

Thirdly, you belong to Jesus the Savior. He does not only save you once, but as you believe in Him day by day, He saves you from yourself, the world and Satan. Now, if you are not able to call upon God and repent you must seriously ask if you are "of Jesus." Not only are you to repent, but, as we shall see with Philemon and Onesimus, you will be asked to forgive others for sinning against you. If you fail to do that, there is reason to believe that you are not "of Jesus" (Mt. 18:21f).

Finally, the believer is a prisoner of Christ. Jesus is not your prisoner. You cannot make him do whatever you want, pray for, claim and demand. But you belong to Him. You must do what pleases him since you have been captivated by him.

2. A change in setting (vs. 1)

Paul's imprisonment may have been in a rented house (Acts 26:18) but it was a confinement never the less. His confinement was transformed into a part time headquarters for the mission movement among the Gentiles; it became a publishing house for the Pastoral Epistles; through the epistles and Paul's personal teaching he would train

²⁰ In other Epistles Paul begins his salutation from prison identifying himself as an apostle (Rom. 1:1; I Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1,2; Col. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; I Tim. 1:1; II Tim. 1:1; Tit.) or as a slave (Rom. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Tit. 1:1) In Ephesians 3:1, Paul defines the sovereign reason why he was in prison, "for the sake of you Gentiles."

²¹ Lightfoot, *op.cit.* p. 313, observes that Onesimus may have visited Paul and was not imprisoned, for he was able to travel freely.

young leaders in the church, like Timothy. It was here that Paul would pray for world rulers, world kingdoms, the church, and God would answer. And if that was not enough, Paul took the time to counsel a run away slave, like Onesimus.

3. *A new social identity* (vs. 1)

Paul is a prisoner of Christ, not of Rome. Paul recognizes that in order to further the gospel God wanted him to be a prisoner (Eph. 3:1). He does not complain about being in jail because He knows who God is and what His calling as apostle to the Gentiles is.

Paul believes a sovereignty of God is in control. According to the sovereignty of God, God is able to take an evil human deed (the imprisonment of Christians) and use it to God's glory (the advancement of the kingdom and church). God is not on the same level as evil, he is above it and he is able to use man's evil deeds for His good.

This is seen in the persecuted church today. In the places where the restrictions and persecution of the church is strong, the Christian community continues to flourish. Attempts to restrict the Christians result in a deeper commitment to the gospel and the growth of the church.

4. *Paul's spiritual family* (vs. 1-2)

Paul identifies Timothy as a spiritual brother. Timothy was not only "my brother" but "our brother." He is also the spiritual brother to Philemon and Onesimus. In Christ we are a spiritual family, regardless of class, social distinction or legal problems we are facing.²²

One of the reasons that during the 17th to 19th century some American Protestant Christians refused to allow African slave believers to be members and leaders in the Church was the threat that equality in church would lead to the claim for equality in society. Colonial Christians lost sight of the Biblical truth of apostolic brotherhood.²³

Timothy came from a cross-cultural family. His mother, Eunice, was a Jewess believer (II Tim. 1:5) and his father was a Greek (Acts 16:1). His grandmother was Lois. The grandmother and mother were believers and it is thought that his father was not. Timothy was instructed in Scripture (II Tim. 3:15) and came to faith under the ministry of Paul.

It appears that Timothy was visiting in prison and serving as one of his messengers to Philemon.

b. He had a beloved friend and worker, Philemon

²² John Gill (Philemon 1:2) states the brotherhood is not according to the flesh or regeneration, rather in ministerial vocation. If this were so, then Onesimus would not be included, since he was not a minister yet (history tells us he became one later).

²³ For the Caribbean slave situation and the Christian church see Hegeman, *Mission to the People*, chapter 2. For the North American scene, see Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*. pp. 21f.

Philemon was the owner of the run away slave. It appears that he became a Christian under the ministry of Paul (vs. 19).²⁴

Paul does not immediately address the “issue” but identifies Philemon as to his status in Christ. He is loved (agape) unconditionally by His heavenly Father. Philemon also worked together with Paul and the church to bring this message of the Father’s love to us through His Son to other people. Soon, his love will be tested as Paul seeks to restore Onesimus to him.

c. Apphia was his beloved sister

The family of God includes both brothers and sisters. Both Philemon and Apphia are described as “beloved.” Paul identifies and treats his spiritual brothers and sisters with the same agape and unconditional love. Paul, Apphia, Philemon (and Onesimus) are unconditionally part of the same spiritual family. Philemon and Apphia may also have been husband and wife in whose house the church met. If this was the case, the reconciliation of Onesimus back into the Philemon household would have to meet the approval of Apphia as well.²⁵

d. Archippus, the fellow soldier at the local house church

The church consists of all those “called out” (ek-klessia). The nature of the church is not identified with a piece of property, a church building or an altar. It consists of those who are captivated by Christ. The early church met in homes.²⁶

Archippus is identified by Paul in Colossians 4:17 as worker for the Lord. He is encouraged by Paul to keep going. Paul serves as a motivating example, as he is in chains for the work of the Lord (Col. 4:18).²⁷

Notice that Paul uses military language.²⁸ He is not afraid, in the face of military imprisonment, to identify a new army, the army of God’s people. Indeed, the early church was far more powerful than the Roman Empire army. This small band of jail birds is part of a kingdom that would long outlast the Roman Empire.

5. *The household becomes a church* (vs. 3)

It appears that the house church in Colosse was at Philemon’s home. The early Christians did not need a church building, pulpits, baptismal fonts, Lord Supper table, collection

²⁴ If Philemon was converted to Christ under the ministry of Paul, it must have happened outside of Colosse because Paul had not been there. J.Muller suggests it was in Ephesus (p. 161). See Acts 19:10, 16.

²⁵ To identify Apphia as a church leader would be contrary to Paul’s teaching on women leadership in the church (I Tim. 2:12)

²⁶ Most commentators place the church in Colosse in the home of Philemon. Gill holds that Paul is identifying the Christians in the household of Philemon who may have been offended by Onesimus’ action.

²⁷ O’Brien, *op.cit.* pp. 272-274 says that Apphia and Archippus are mentioned out of courtesy. That is undoubtedly part of the reason, but since they are mentioned in the salutation, most certainly they would have also read the letter and served as a witness in Colosse to the freeing of Onesimus.

²⁸ See Gill (vs. 2) for further military imagery.

bags, pews, organs, pianos and all the things we associate with church. The church is far bigger than that! It was free from the temple, now the church can meet whenever there are two or three gathered in His name.

The house church in Colosse would soon become a place of reconciliation.²⁹ Instead of being exiled, Onesimus would take his place among the members of the house church and would be accepted, not as a slave, but more than a slave, as a brother.

The house church movement is still massive throughout the world. There are more people meeting in house churches in China than Christians worshipping in church buildings in North America.³⁰ As Paul perfectly understood, a prison confinement as well as a house can be converted into a house of worship, teaching and reconciliation.

6. *A new relationship with God* (vs. 3)

As is his custom in other epistles, Paul salutes Philemon in the grace and peace of God.³¹

Paul salutes Philemon in the name of *God our Father* and the *Lord Jesus Christ*.³² Paul is an ambassador for the Lord. He does not come in his own name, or with his own agenda. Paul speaks in the name of the God who directs him.

Now, why is it so important to believe in both “our Father” and “the Lord Jesus Christ?”

First of all, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the true God. God is one in three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one God. Yet, each person has an eternal and distinct personhood as taught by Jesus in the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20).

Paul’s statement would infuriate non-believing Jews, since he calls Jesus Lord and that identifies Jesus as God. This was Paul’s prison ID card, the reason why he was in confinement (Acts 21:27f).

Paul’s belief in the Lordship of Jesus would not sit well with Roman nationalists who could permit the idea that God exists but demanded that their subjects confessed Cesar as Lord, something many early Christians, as well as Paul, were martyred for.

Secondly, one cannot come into the presence of God the Father without the intercession of the Son. The High priestly intercession of Jesus: his perfect sacrifice and his advocacy before the Father, is part of the soteriological reconciliation with God. All those who believe in the Son also have God the Father as their heavenly Father. We were taught to pray by Jesus, “our Father.” The Holy Spirit works in our heart so that we may truly communicate with God the Father.

²⁹ Henry, “This one evil servant (Onesimus) did not hinder Philemon’s house from being called on, his word is read, his Sabbaths are observed...Wicked families are nurseries for hell, as good ones are for heaven.

³⁰ It is estimated by missionaries that there are between 60 and 100 million Christians in China.

³¹ Matthew Henry (vs. 3) : God would have extant a proof and instance of his rich and free grace for the encouragement and comfort of the meanest and vilest of sinners, looking to him for mercy and forgiveness; and for instruction to ministers and others not to despise any, much less to judge them as to their final state, as if they were utter cast-aways, but rather to attempt their conversion, hoping they may be saved; likewise how to behave towards them

³² Compare the salutation to Philemon with the salutation in Colossians 1:2. The name of Christ is associated with the Church in Colossians and with the Father in Philemon.

Those who do not have the heavenly Father as their father belong to a different family. Jesus said to the unbelieving Pharisees that the Devil was their father.

.Thirdly, God the Father relates to you through His Son. Paul confesses that he is a prisoner of Jesus Christ. All those who are captivated by Christ through faith become the instruments of God for the extension of His kingdom. This extension reaches out into every area and relationship of life, including the slave-master relationship.

7. *The Lordship of Jesus Christ* (vs. 3)

In verse 1 Paul says He is a prisoner of Christ Jesus. In verse 3 He identifies Jesus as Lord. This was the death sentence for many Christians in the early church. The Roman Empire had decreed that Cesar is Lord. The Christians confessed, before their persecutors, JESUS IS LORD.

We stand amazed at Paul's boldness. David Barrett, a researcher for Christianity world wide reminds us that hundreds of thousands of Christians are martyred every year because they are Christians and not Muslims or communists. The death and enslavement of Christians at the hands of the Muslims in Africa continues to be an alarming concern, especially in Africa and the Mid East. Appendix C gives an indication as to how Christians continue to be persecuted.

Contrast the boldness of Paul with the cowardice of liberal Western Christianity, which has caved in to the pressure of academia, feminism, humanism, the gay lobbyist, new age and secularism and as a consequence have divided the church. The call for Biblical orthodoxy is now coming from the non-western church leaders for a return to Christian morals.³³

CONCLUSION

Although Paul is in confinement, he knows that the sovereign Father will use him to proclaim the gospel of redemption to other Christians, including to Philemon and the church in Colosse. The chains of Paul cannot stop him from advancing the cause of God's kingdom because the Father is working through the intercession of the Son and the gracious presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

CLOSING THOUGHTS ON SOCIAL ETHICAL ISSUES

1. Are you aware of Christians who are in prison for their faith?
2. What should be the response of free Christians towards Christians who are imprisoned for their faith?
3. For what reasons are Christians being imprisoned for their faith?
4. Are there cases today of Christians being martyred for their faith?
5. What are the main reasons for Christian martyrdom today?
6. What constitutes the organization of a church?
7. Are you familiar with the house church or cell church movement today? What are the reasons for their existence.

³³ The year 2005 call for the repentance of the USA Episcopal Church for their acceptance and ordination of a homosexual bishop is coming from the African Episcopal bishops.

LESSON TWO WORK SHEET

READING OF vs. 1-3	Read the passage in two versions and Show the difference
<p>INDUCTIVE STUDY of vs. 1-3</p> <p>Explanation of important data (from your reading of the Study Bibles and Philemon itself, please jot down what you know)</p> <p>Important words:</p> <p>Grammatical annotations:</p> <p>Translation method:</p> <p>Original author and hearers</p> <p>Cultural context:</p> <p>Historical context:</p> <p>Biblical context:</p> <p>Proposed title for the passage</p> <p>Major themes for the passage</p>	
VERSE BY VERSE EXPOSITIONAL STUDY	Show how these Biblical texts are related to our passage
Vs. 1	<p>Acts 16:1</p> <p>2 Co. 1:1</p> <p>Eph. 3:1</p> <p>Phil. 2:25</p> <p>I Tim. 1:2</p> <p>II Tim. 1:2</p> <p>II Tim. 1:5</p> <p>II Tim. 3:15</p>
Vs. 2.	Col. 4:17,18
Vs. 3	Rom. 1:7
Jot down notes from commentaries	
<p>LITERARY ANALYSIS</p> <p>-What kind (genre) of literature is the text?</p> <p>-What is the thematic outline of the passage and how does it fit into the structure of the book?</p> <p>-Have are figures of speech used?</p>	
<p>DIALECTICAL STUDY of</p> <p>Thesis:</p> <p>Antithesis:</p> <p>Synthesis:</p> <p>Syncretism:</p>	
<p>DEVOTIONAL STUDY</p> <p>Prayer and Action</p> <p>-Praise to God</p> <p>-Confession of personal sin</p> <p>-Confession of social sin</p> <p>-Special requests</p> <p>-Thanksgiving to God</p> <p>-Communication of truths of the passage</p> <p>-three main-truth statements</p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p> <p>Your summary of the passage</p>	

COMMENTARIES ON VS. 1-3

CALVIN'S COMMENTARY. Vs. 1-3³⁴

The singular loftiness of the mind of Paul, though it may be seen to greater advantage in his other writings which treat of weightier matters, is also attested by this Epistle, in which, while he handles a subject otherwise low and mean, he rises to God with his wonted elevation. Sending back a runaway slave and thief, he supplicates pardon for him. But in pleading this cause, he discourses about Christian forbearance¹ with such ability, that he appears to speak about the interests of the whole Church rather than the private affairs of a single individual. In behalf of a man of the lowest condition, he demeans himself so modestly and humbly, that nowhere else is the meekness of his temper painted in a livelier manner.

1. *A prisoner of Jesus Christ.* In the same sense in which he elsewhere calls himself an Apostle of Christ, or a minister of Christ, he now calls himself "a prisoner of Christ;" because the chains, by which he was bound on account of the gospel, were the ornaments or badges of that embassy which he exercised for Christ. Accordingly, he mentions them for the sake of strengthening his authority; not that he was afraid of being despised, (for Philemon undoubtedly had so great reverence and esteem for him, that there was no need of assuming any title,) but because he was about to plead the cause of a runaway slave, the principal part of which was entreaty for forgiveness.

To Philemon our friend and fellow-laborer. It is probable that this "Philemon" belonged to the order of pastors; for the title, with which he adorns him, when he calls him *fellow-laborer*, is a title which he is not accustomed to bestow on a private individual.

2. *And to Archippus our fellow-soldier.* He next adds "Archippus," who appears also to have been a minister of the Church; at least, if he be the same person who is mentioned towards the conclusion of the Epistle to the Colossians, (Colossians 4:17,) which is not at all improbable; for the designation -- "fellow-soldier" -- which he bestows on this latter individual, belongs peculiarly to ministers. Although the condition of a soldier belongs to all Christians universally, yet because teachers may be regarded as standard bearers in the warfare, they ought to be ready more than all others to fight and Satan usually give them greater annoyance. It is also possible, that Archippus attended and shared in some contests which Paul maintained; and, indeed, this is the very word that Paul makes use of, whenever he mentions persecutions.

And to the Church which is in thy house. By employing these terms, he bestows the highest praise on the family of Philemon. And certainly it is no small praise of a householder that he regulates his family in such a manner as to be an image of the Church, and to discharge also the duty of a pastor within the walls of his dwelling. Nor must we forget to mention that this good man had a wife of the same character; for she, too, not without reason, is commended by Paul.

³⁴ Taken from ccel.org and printed without revision of translation.

GILLS EXPOSITION. Vs. 1-3³⁵

Philemon 1:1

*Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ...*Not made a prisoner by Christ, though he was apprehended, laid hold on, and detained by Christ as a prisoner of hope, at his conversion; but this is not intended here: but he was a prisoner at Rome for the sake of Christ, on account of professing him, and preaching in his name; his bonds were for the sake of the Gospel of Christ; and therefore they are in this epistle called the bonds of the Gospel. He was not a prisoner for any capital crime, and therefore had no reason to be ashamed of his chain, nor was he; but rather gloried in it, as his taking this title and character to himself, and prefixing it to this epistle shows; and which he chooses to make use of rather than that of a servant of God, or an apostle of Christ, as he elsewhere does, that he might not by constraint, or authority, but by love, move the pity and compassion of Philemon to grant his request, and receive his servant; which, should he deny, would be to add affliction to his bonds: and that this is his view in the choice of this character, is manifest from (Philemon 1:8,9)

and Timothy our brother, not according to the flesh, or as being of the same country, for he was the countryman of neither of them; nor only on account of his being a regenerate man, born of God, a child of God, and of the same family; but chiefly because he was of the same function, was a minister of the Gospel: him the apostle joins with himself in the epistle, and so in the request, because he might be well known to Philemon, and be much respected by him; and to show that they were united in this affair, and both desired this favor of him; hoping that by their joint application it would be obtained:

unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellow laborer: the name of Philemon is Greek; there was a Greek poet of this name, and a Greek historian that Pliny made use of in compiling his history: there is indeed mention made in the Jewish writings^{F1}, of a Rabbi whose name was "Philemo"; but this our Philemon seems to have been an inhabitant of Colosse, and rather to have been a Gentile than a Jew; he was a rich and hospitable man, and greatly respected, and therefore here called, "our dearly beloved"; that is, dearly beloved by the apostle and Timothy, not only as being a believer, but as being also generous and useful in his station, and likewise as he was a minister of the Gospel; for so the next phrase, "and fellow laborer", seems to import; for though such are sometimes said to be laborers and fellow helpers with the apostle, who assisted in carrying on the interest of Christ, with their purses, and prayers, and private conversation; yet as it is used in this same epistle, of such who were in the work of the ministry, (Philemon 1:24) it is very probable it is so to be understood here: and now though these expressions of affection and respect were without dissimulation; nor were they mere compliments; yet the intention of them was to work upon the mind of Philemon, to reconcile him to his servant; suggesting, that as he had an interest in the affections of the apostle and others, this would be a means of establishing it, and would be acting agreeably to his character, as a minister of the Gospel.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Philemon 1:2

And to our beloved Apphia... The Alexandrian copy reads, "to sister Apphia"; and the Vulgate Latin version, "to the beloved sister Apphia"; for this is a woman's name; and it is thought that she was the wife of Philemon, since she is placed next to him, and before Archippus, a minister of the word; and very prudently is she wrote to, and justly commended, in order to engage her to use her interest with her husband to receive his servant again, who otherwise might have stood against it, and been a very great hindrance to a reconciliation: this clause is wanting in the Ethiopic version:

and Archippus our fellow soldier; that this Archippus was a preacher of the Gospel at Colosse is manifest from (Colossians 4:17) wherefore the apostle styles him a fellow soldier; for though this character belongs to private Christians, who are enlisted as volunteers under Christ, the Captain of salvation, and fight under his banners, against sin, Satan, and the world, being accoutered with the whole armor of God, and are more than conquerors through Christ that has loved them; yet it very eminently belongs to the ministers of the Gospel, who are more especially called upon, to endure hardness, as good soldiers of Christ; to war a good warfare, to fight the good fight of faith; and besides the above enemies common to all believers, to engage with false teachers, and earnestly contend for the faith of the Gospel, that so it may continue with the saints. Now this man was in the same company, and in the same service, engaged in the same common cause, against the same enemies, and under the same Captain, and was expecting the same crown of immortality and glory, and therefore he calls him his fellow soldier; and he wisely inscribes his epistle to him, that he might make use of the interest he had in Philemon, and his wife, to bring this matter to bear, the apostle writes about:

and to the church in thy house: not in the house of Archippus, but in the house of Philemon; and designs not the church at Colosse, as though it met at his house; but his own family, which for the great piety and religion which were among them, and for the good order and decorum in which they were kept, were like a church of themselves; and here again the apostle acts the wise part, in order to gain his point, by taking notice of them, who might some of them have been injured or affronted by Onesimus, when with them; and so entertained some resentment against him, and might put a bar in the way of his reception into the family again.

Philemon 1:3

Grace to you and peace, from God... Which is the same form of salutation used in the other epistles; (See Gill on Romans 1:7) for though this epistle is but a very small one, yet it is introduced in the same form as the larger epistles are; and has an inscription in the former verse, a salutation in this, and a preface in the three following.

MATTHEW HENRY COMMENTARY. Vs. 1-3 ³⁶

THIS epistle to Philemon is placed the last of those with the name of Paul to them, perhaps because the shortest, and of an argument peculiar and different from all the others; yet such as the Spirit of God, who inspired it, saw would, in its kind, be very instructive and useful in the churches. The occasion of it was this:--Philemon, one of note and probably a minister in the church of Colosse, a city of Phrygia, had a servant named *Onesimus*, who, having purloined his goods, ran away from him, and in his rambles came to Rome, where Paul was then a prisoner for the gospel, and, providentially coming under his preaching there, was, by the blessing of God, converted by him, after which he ministered awhile to the apostle in bonds, and might have been further useful to him, but, understanding him to be another man's servant, Paul would not, without his consent, detain him, but sends him back with this letter-commendatory, wherein he earnestly sues for his pardon and kind reception.

Before we enter on the exposition, such general things as follow may be taken notice of from the epistle and what relates to it; namely, I. The goodness and mercy of God to a poor wandering sinner, bringing him by his gracious providence under the means, and making them effectual to his conversion. Thus came he to be *sought of him that asked not for him, and to be found of him that sought him not*, Isa. lxxv. 1. II. The great and endeared affection between a true convert and him whom God used to be the instrument of his conversion. Paul regards this poor fugitive now as his son in the faith, and terms him his *own bowels*; and Onesimus readily serves Paul in prison, and would gladly have continued to do so, would duty have permitted; but, being another's servant, he must return and submit himself to his master, and be at his disposal. III. The tender and good spirit of this blessed Apostle Paul. With what earnestness does he concern himself for the poor slave! Being now, through his preaching, reconciled to God, he labors for reconciliation between him and his master. How pathetic a letter does he here write in his behalf! Scarcely any argument is forgotten that could possibly be used in the case; and all are pressed with such force that, had it been the greatest favor to himself that he was asking, he could not have used more. IV. The remarkable providence of God in preserving such a short writing as this, that might be thought of little concern to the church, being not only a letter to a particular person (as those to Timothy, and Titus, and Gaius, and the elect lady, likewise were), but of a private personal matter, namely, the receiving of a poor fugitive servant into the favor and family of his injured master. What in this is there that concerns the common salvation? And yet over this has there been a special divine care, it being given (as the other scriptures were) by *inspiration of God*, and in some sort, as they are, *profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness*. God would have extant a proof and instance of his rich and free grace for the encouragement and comfort of the meanest and vilest of sinners, looking to him for mercy and forgiveness; and for instruction to ministers and others not to despise any, much less to judge them as to their final state, as if they were utter cast-aways, but rather to attempt their conversion, hoping they may be saved; likewise how to behave towards them. Joy must be on earth, as well as there is in heaven, over one sinner

³⁶ Matthew Henry, Commentary on the Whole Bible (1721), taken from ccel.org.

who repenteth. Such must now be loved, and helped, and confirmed in good, and furthered in it; and, in their outward concerns, their comfort and welfare must be consulted and promoted as much as possible. And, on their part, they must be humble and grateful, acknowledging God and his instruments in what good they have received, ready to all suitable returns, making what reparation they can in case of injuries, and living a life of thankfulness and obedience. To such purposes may this epistle have been written and preserved. And perhaps, V. There may be something further in all this; at least, by way of allusion, it is applicable to the mediation and intercession of Christ for poor sinners. We, like Onesimus, were revolted from God's service, and had injured him in his rights. Jesus Christ finds us, and by his grace works a change in us, and then intercedes for us with the Father, that we may be received into his favor and family again, and past offences may be forgiven; and we are sure that the *Father heareth him always*. There is no reason to doubt but Paul prevailed with Philemon to forgive and receive Onesimus: and more reason have we to be confident that the intercession of Christ with the Father is prevalent for the acceptance of all whose case he takes in hand and recommends to him. From these general observations we come to the epistle itself.

I. In the first two verses of the preface we have the persons from and to whom it is written, with some annexed note or title, implying somewhat of argument to the purpose of the letter.

1. The persons writing: Paul, the principal, who calls himself *a prisoner of Jesus Christ*, that is, for Jesus Christ. To be a prisoner simply is no comfort nor honor; but such as Paul was, *for the faith and preaching of the gospel*, this was true glory, and proper to move Philemon upon the request made to him by such a one. A petition from one suffering for Christ and his gospel would surely be tenderly regarded by a believer and minister of Christ, especially when strengthened too with the concurrence of Timothy, one eminent in the church, sometimes called by Paul *his son in the faith*, but now, it is likely, grown more in years, he styles him *his brother*. What could be denied to two such petitioners? Paul is not slight in serving a poor convert; he gets all the additional help he can in it.

2. The persons written to are *Philemon and Apphia*, and with them Archippus, and the church in Philemon's house. Philemon, the master of Onesimus, was the principal, to whom the letter is inscribed, the head of the family, in whom were the authority and power of taking in or shutting out, and whose property Onesimus was: with him therefore chiefly lay the business. *To Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellow-laborer*; a good man he was, and probably a minister, and on both accounts dearly beloved by Paul. A *lover of good men* is one property of a good minister (Tit. 1. 8), and especially must such love those who labor with them in the work of the gospel, and who are faithful therein. The general calling as Christians knits those together who are Christian; but, when conjunction in the special calling as ministers is added, this will be further endearing. Paul, in the highest degree of ministry, not only calls Timothy, an evangelist, his brother, but Philemon, an ordinary pastor, his dearly beloved fellow-laborer--an example of humility and condescension, and of all affectionate regards, even in those that are highest in the church, towards others that are laborers in the same special heavenly calling. With

Philemon Apphia is joined, probably his yoke-fellow; and, having a concern in the domestic affairs, the apostle directs to her likewise. She was a party offended and injured by Onesimus, and therefore proper to be taken notice of in a letter for reconciliation and forgiveness. Justice and prudence would direct Paul to this express notice of her, who might be helpful in furthering the good ends of his writing. She is set before Archippus, as more concerned and having more interest. A kind conjunction there is in domestic matters between husband and wife, whose interests are one, and whose affections and actings must correspond. These are the principal parties written to. The less principal are, *Archippus, and the church in Philemon's house*. Archippus was a minister in the church of Colosse, Philemon's friend, and probably co-pastor with him; Paul might think him one whom Philemon would advise with, and who might be capable of furthering the good work of peace-making and forgiveness, and therefore might judge fit to put him in the inscription of the letter, with the adjunct of *fellow-soldier*. He had called Philemon his *fellow-laborer*. Ministers must look on themselves as laborers and soldiers, who must therefore take pains, and endure hardship; they must stand on their guard, and make good their post; must look on one another as fellow-laborers, and fellow-soldiers, who must stand together, and strengthen one another's hands and hearts in any work of their holy function and calling: they need see to it that they be provided with spiritual weapons, and skill to use them; as laborers they must minister the word, and sacraments, and discipline, and watch over souls, *as those that must give an account of them*; and, as soldiers, they must fight the Lord's battles, and not entangle themselves in the things of this life, but attend to the pleasing of him who hath chosen them to be soldiers, 2 Tim. ii. 4. To those it is added, *And to the church in thy house*, his whole family, in which the worship of God was kept up, so that he had, as it were, a church in his house. Observe, (1.) Families which generally may be most pious and orderly may yet have one or other in them impious and wicked. This was the aggravation of Onesimus's sin, that it was where he might and should have learned better; it is likely that he was secret in his misconduct, till his flight discovered him. Hearts are unknown but to God, till overt acts discover them. (2.) This one evil servant did not hinder Philemon's house from being called and counted a church, for the religious worship and order that were kept up in it; and such should all families be--nurseries of religion, societies where God is called on, his word is read, his Sabbaths are observed, and the members are instructed in the knowledge of him and of their duty to him, neglect of which is followed with ignorance and all corruption. Wicked families are nurseries for hell, as good ones are for heaven. (3.) Masters and others of the family may not think it enough to be good, singly and severally in their personal capacities, but they must be socially so; as here Philemon's house was a church; and Paul, for some concern that all might have in this matter of Onesimus, directs to them all, that their affection as well as Philemon's might return to him, and that in their way and place they might further, and not hinder, the reconciliation wished and sought. Desirable it is that all in a family be well affected towards one another, for furthering their particular welfare and for the common good and benefit of all. On such accounts might it be that Paul inscribed his letter here so generally, that all might be the more ready to own and receive this poor convert, and to behave affectionately towards him. Next to this inscription is,

II. The apostle's salutation of those named by him (v. 3): *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*. This is the token in every epistle; so the apostle writes. He is a hearty well-wisher to all his friends, and wishes for them the best things; not gold, nor silver, nor any earthly good, in the first or chief place, but *grace and peace from God in Christ*; he cannot give them himself, but he prays for them from him who can bestow them. *Grace*, the free favor and good-will of God, the spring and fountain of all blessings; *and peace*, all good, as the fruit and effect of that grace. *To you*, that is, be bestowed on you, and continued to you, with the comfortable feeling and sense of it in yourselves. *From God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*. The Holy Spirit also is understood, though not named; for all acts towards the creatures of the whole Trinity: from the Father, who is our Father in Christ, the first in order of acting as of subsisting; and from Christ, his favor and good-will as God, and the fruits of it through him as Mediator, God-man. It is in the beloved that we are accepted, and through him we have peace and all good things, who is, with the Father and Spirit, to be looked to and blessed and praised for all, and to be owned, not only as Jesus and Christ, but as Lord also. In 2 Cor. xiii. 14 the apostle's benediction is full: *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all, Amen*. Observe, Spiritual blessings are first and especially to be sought for ourselves and others. The favor of God and peace with him, as in itself it is the best and most desirable good, so is it the cause of all other, and what puts sweetness into every mercy and can make happy even in the want of all earthly things. *Though there be no herd in the stall, and the labor of the olive fail, yet may such rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of their salvation*, Hab. iii. 17, 18. *There are many that say, Who will show us any good?* But, if God *lift up the light of his countenance*, this will put more joy and gladness into the heart than all worldly increase, Ps. iv. 6, 7. And Num. vi. 26, *The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace*. In this is summarily all good, and from this one fountain, God the *Father, Son, and Spirit*, all comes. After this salutation of the apostle to Philemon, and his friends and family, for better making way still for his suit to him...

HOMILIES OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM³⁷

ARCHBISHOP OF CONSTANTINOPLE, ON THE EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE TO PHILEMON.

Argument.

FIRST, it is necessary to state the argument of the Epistle, then also the matters that are questioned respecting it. What then is the argument? Philemon was a man of admirable and noble character. That he was an admirable man is evident from the fact, that his whole household was of believers,¹⁵²⁹ and of such believers as even to be called a Church: therefore he says in this Epistle, “And to the Church that is in thy house.” (v. 2.) He bears witness also to his great obedience, and that “the bowels of the Saints are refreshed in him.” (v. 7.) And he himself in this Epistle commanded him to prepare him a lodging. (v. 22.) It seems to me therefore that his house was altogether¹⁵³⁰ a lodging for the Saints. This excellent¹⁵³¹ man, then, had a certain slave named Onesimus. This Onesimus, having stolen something from his master, had run away. For that he had stolen, hear what he says: “If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee aught, I will repay thee.” (v. 18, 19.) Coming therefore to Paul at Rome, and having found him in prison, and having enjoyed the benefit of his teaching, he there also received Baptism. For that he obtained there the gift of Baptism is manifest from his saying, “Whom I have begotten in my bonds.” (v. 10.) Paul therefore writes, recommending him to his master, that on every account he should forgive him, and receive him as one now regenerate.¹⁵³²

But because some say, that it was superfluous that this Epistle should be annexed, since he is making a request about a small matter in behalf of one man, let them learn who make these objections, that they are themselves deserving of very many censures. For it was not only proper that these small Epistles, in behalf of things so necessary, should have been inscribed,¹⁵³³ but I wish that it were possible to meet with one who could deliver to us the history of the Apostles, not only all they wrote and spoke of, but of the rest of their conversation, even what they ate, and when they ate, when they walked, and where they sat,¹⁵³⁴ what they did every day, in what parts they were, into what house they entered, and where they lodged¹⁵³⁵—to relate everything with minute exactness, so replete with advantage is all that was done by them. But the greater part, not knowing the benefit that would result thence, proceed to censure it.

For if only seeing those places where they sat or where they were imprisoned, mere lifeless spots, we often transport our minds thither, and imagine their virtue, and are excited by it and become more zealous, much more would this be the case, if we heard their words and their other actions. But concerning a friend a man enquires, where he lives, what he is doing, whither he is going: and say, should we not make these enquiries¹⁵³⁶ about these the general instructors of the world? For when a man leads a spiritual life, the habit, the walk, the words and the actions of such an one, in short, all that relates to him, profits the hearers, and nothing is a hindrance or impediment.

But it is useful for you to learn that this Epistle was sent upon necessary matters. Observe therefore how many things are rectified thereby. We have this one thing first,

³⁷ Ccel.org

that in all things it becomes one to be earnest. For if Paul bestows so much concern upon a runaway, a thief, and a robber, and does not refuse nor is ashamed to send him back with such commendations; much more does it become us not to be negligent in such matters. Secondly, that we ought not to abandon the race of slaves, even if they have proceeded to extreme wickedness. For if a thief and a runaway become so virtuous that Paul was willing to make him a companion, and says in this Epistle, “that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me” (v. 13.), much more ought we not to abandon the free. Thirdly, that we ought not to withdraw slaves from the service of their masters. For if Paul, who had such confidence in Philemon, was unwilling to detain Onesimus, so useful and serviceable to minister to himself, without the consent of his master, much less ought we so to act. For if the servant is so excellent, he ought by all means to continue in that service, and to acknowledge the authority of his master, that he may be the occasion of benefit to all in that house. Why dost thou take the candle from the candlestick to place it in the bushel?

I wish it were possible to bring into the cities those (servants) who are without. “What,” say you, “if he also should become corrupt.” And why should he, I beseech you? Because he has come into the city? But consider, that being without he will be much more corrupt. For he who is corrupt being within, will be much more so being without. For here he will be delivered from necessary care, his master taking that care upon himself; but there the concern about those things will draw him off perhaps even from things more necessary, and more spiritual. On this account the blessed Paul, when giving them the best counsel, said, “Art thou called, being a servant? care not for it: but if even thou mayest be made free, use it rather” (1 Cor. vii. 21.); that is, abide in slavery.¹⁵³⁷ But what is more important than all, that the word of God be not blasphemed, as he himself says in one of his Epistles. “Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed.” (1 Tim. vi. 1.) For the Gentiles also will say, that even one who is a slave can be well pleasing to God. But now many are reduced to the necessity of blasphemy, and of saying Christianity has been introduced into life for the subversion of everything, masters having their servants taken from them, and it is a matter of violence.

Let me also say one other thing. He teaches us not to be ashamed of our domestics, if they are virtuous. For if Paul, the most admirable of men, speaks thus much in favor of this one, much more should we speak favorably of ours. There being then so many good effects—and yet we have not mentioned all—does any one think it superfluous that this Epistle was inserted? And would not this be extreme folly? Let us then, I beseech you, apply to the Epistle written by the Apostle. For having gained already so many advantages from it, we shall gain more from the text.¹⁵³⁸

[NOTE.—The views of the Fathers on Slavery and Emancipation were very conservative, as slavery was interwoven with the whole structure of the Roman empire and could not be suddenly abolished without a radical social revolution. But the spirit of Christianity always suggested and encouraged individual emancipation and the ultimate abolition of the institution by teaching the universal love of God, the common redemption and brotherhood of men, and the sacredness of personality. Comp. Bishop Lightfoot’s Commentary on *Colossians and Philemon*, and Schaff’s *Church History*, I. 793–798; II. 347–354; III. 115–122. Möhler, in his *Vermischte Schriften*, II. 896 sqq., has collected the

views of St. Chrysostom on slavery, and says that since the time of the Apostle Paul no one has done more valuable service to slaves than St. Chrysostom.—P.S.]³⁸

John Chrysostom, Homily I.

Philemon 1. 1–3

THESE things are said to a master in behalf of a servant. Immediately at the outset, he has pulled down his spirit, and not suffered him to be ashamed, he has quenched his anger; calling himself a prisoner, he strikes him with compunction, and makes him collect himself, and makes it appear that present things are nothing. For if a chain for Christ's sake is not a shame but a boast, much more is slavery not to be considered a reproach. And this he says, not exalting himself, but for a good purpose doing this, showing thence that he was worthy of credit; and this he does not for his own sake, but that he may more readily obtain the favor. As if he had said, "It is on your account that I am invested with this chain." As he also has said elsewhere, there indeed showing his concern, but here his trustworthiness.

Nothing is greater than this boast, to be called "the stigmatized¹⁵³⁹ of Christ." "For I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." (Gal. vi. 17.)

"The prisoner of the Lord." For he had been bound on His account. Who would not be struck with awe, who would not be humbled when he hears of the chains of Christ? Who would not be ready to give up even his own life, much less one domestic?

"And Timothy our brother."

He joins another also with himself, that he, being entreated by many, may the more readily yield and grant the favor.

"Unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellow-laborer."

If "beloved," then his confidence is not boldness nor forwardness, but a proof of much affection. If a "fellow-laborer," then not only may he be instructed in such a matter, but he ought to acknowledge it as a favor. For he is gratifying himself, he is building up the same work. So that apart from any request, he says, thou hast another necessity for granting the favor. For if he is profitable to the Gospel, and thou art anxious to promote the Gospel, then oughtest thou not to be entreated, but to entreat.

³⁸ ¹⁵²⁹ B. and a Venice MS. read πιστῶν. Edd. πιστήν, which applies to the household as one.

¹⁵³⁰ πάντων ἕνεκεν. The phrase occurs again in a few lines, where it is translated, "on every account."

¹⁵³¹ θαυμαστός as before.

¹⁵³² B. and Ven. here add, "And on this score forgive him everything. And so much for the argument. Now let us proceed to the solution of the questions. Inasmuch as some venture to say," &c. and presently, "For I say not only this, that it was proper, . . . but add this also, that I wish."

¹⁵³³ He means in the Canon, as before by the word "annexed."

¹⁵³⁴ So B. and Ven. Edd. "where they sat and when they walked."

¹⁵³⁵ Lat. "landed," but κατήχθησαν bears the other sense, and he means evidently, "in what part of the house." B. and Ven. have, "I would not have been weary of relating."

¹⁵³⁶ B. and Ven. ἐρωτῶντας.

¹⁵³⁷ So also he says on the place, and Theodoret too, although he calls it a hyperbole. Εἰ καὶ is properly "if even," but the καὶ may be taken with the following word, as "also"; see Kühner, § 824, anm. 1, who quotes Eur. Andr. 1080, and Xen. Mem. i. c. 6, § 12.

¹⁵³⁸ τῆς ὑφῆς.

Ver. 2. "And to our beloved Apphia."

It seems to me that she was his partner in life. Observe the humility of Paul; he both joins Timothy with him in his request, and asks not only the husband, but the wife also, and some one else, perhaps a friend.

"And Archippus," he says, "our fellow-soldier."

Not wishing to effect such things by command, and not taking it ill, if he did not immediately comply with his request; but he begs them to do what a stranger might have done¹⁵⁴⁰ to aid his request. For not only the being requested by many, but the petition being urged to many, contributes to its being granted. And on this account he says, "And Archippus our fellow-soldier." If thou art a fellow-soldier, thou oughtest also to take a concern in these things. But this is the Archippus, about whom he says in his Epistle to the Colossians, "Say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfill it." (Col. iv. 17.) It seems to me too, that he, whom he joins with him in this request, was also one of the Clergy. And he calls him his fellow-soldier, that he may by all means cooperate with him.

"And to the Church in thy house."

Here he has not omitted even the slaves. For he knew that often even the words of slaves have power to overthrow their master; and more especially when his request was in behalf of a slave. And perhaps it was they particularly who exasperated him. He does not suffer them therefore to fall into envy,¹⁵⁴¹ having honored them by including them in a salutation with their masters. And neither does he allow the master to take offense. For if he had made mention of them by name, perhaps he would have been angry. And if he had not mentioned them at all, he¹⁵⁴² might have been displeased. Observe therefore how prudently he has found a way by his manner of mentioning them, both to honor them by his mention of them, and not to wound him. For the name of the "Church" does not suffer masters to be angry, even though they are reckoned together with their servants. For the Church knows not the distinction of master and servant. By good actions and by sins she defines the one and the other. If then it is a Church, be not displeased that thy slave is saluted with thee. "For in Christ Jesus there is neither bond nor free." (Gal. iii. 28.)

"Grace to you, and peace."

By mentioning "grace," he brings his own sins to his remembrance. Consider, he says, how great things God has pardoned in thee, how by grace thou art saved. Imitate thy Lord. And he prays for "peace" to him; and naturally: for it comes then when we imitate Him, then grace abides. Since even that servant who was unmerciful to his fellow-servants, until he demanded the hundred pence, had the grace of his master abiding on him. But when he made that demand, it was taken from him, and he was delivered to the tormentors.

MORAL. Considering these things, then, let us also be merciful and forgiving towards those who have trespassed against us. The offenses against us here are a hundred pence, but those from us against God are ten thousand talents. But you know that offenses are also judged by the quality of the persons: for instance, he who has insulted a private person has done wrong, but not so much as he who has insulted a magistrate, and he who has offended a greater magistrate offends in a higher degree, and he who offends an inferior one in a lower degree; but he who insults the king offends much more. The injury indeed is the same, but it becomes greater by the excellence of the person. And if he who insults a king receives intolerable punishment, on account of the superiority¹⁵⁴³ of the

person; for how many talents will he be answerable who insults God? so that even if we should commit the same offenses against God, that we do against men, even so it is not an equal thing: but as great as is the difference between God and men, so great is that between the offenses against Him and them.

But now I find also that the offenses exceed, not only in that they become great by the eminence of the person, but by their very nature. And it is a horrible saying that I am about to utter, and truly awful, but it is necessary to be said, that it may even so shake our minds and strike them with terror, showing that we fear men much more than God, and we honor men much more than God. For consider, he that commits adultery knows that God sees him, yet he disregards Him; but if a man see him, he restrains his lust. Does not such a one not only honor men above God, not only insult God, but, which is even much more dreadful, whilst he fears them, despise Him? For if he sees them, he restrains the flame of lust, but rather what flame? it is not a flame, but a willfulness. For if indeed it was not lawful to have intercourse with a woman, the matter perhaps would be a flame, but now¹⁵⁴⁴ it is insult and wantonness. For if he should see men, he desists from his mad passion, but for the longsuffering of God he has less regard. Again, another who steals, is conscious that he is committing robbery, and endeavors to deceive men, and defends himself against those who accuse him, and clothes his apology with a fair show; but though he cannot thus prevail with God, he does not regard Him, nor stand in awe of Him, nor honor Him. And if the king indeed commands us to abstain from other men's goods, or even to give away our own, all readily contribute, but when God commands not to rob, not to gather other men's goods, we do not forbear.

Do you see then that we honor men more than God? It is a sad and grievous saying, a heavy charge. But show that it is grievous; flee from the fact! But if you fear not the fact, how can I believe you when you say, We fear your words, you lay a burden on us! It is you that by the deed lay a burden on yourselves, and not our words. And if I but name the words of which you do the deeds, you are offended. And is not this absurd?

May the thing spoken by me prove false! I would rather myself in That Day bear the imputation of ill language, as having vainly and causelessly reproached you, than see you accused of such things.

But not only do you honor men more than God, but you compel others to do so likewise. Many have thus compelled their domestics and slaves. Some have drawn them into marriage against their will, and others have forced them to minister to disgraceful services, to infamous love, to acts of rapine, and fraud, and violence: so that the accusation is twofold, and neither can they obtain pardon upon the plea of necessity. For if you yourself do wrong things unwillingly, and on account of the command of the ruler, not even so is it by any means a sufficient excuse: but the offense becomes heavier, when you compel them also to fall into the same sins. For what pardon can there be any more for such an one?

These things I have said, not from a wish to condemn you, but to show in how many things we are debtors to God. For if by honoring men even equally with God, we insult God, how much more, when we honor men above Him? But if those offenses that are committed against men are shown to be much greater against God; how much more when the actual offense is greater and more grievous in its own quality.

Let any one examine himself, and he will see 549that he does everything on account of men. Exceedingly blessed we should be, if we did as many things for the sake of God,

as we do for the sake of men, and of the opinion of men, and for the dread or the respect of men. If then we have so many things to answer for, we ought with all alacrity to forgive those who injure us, who defraud us, and not to bear malice. For there is a way to the forgiveness of our sins that needs no labors, nor expense of wealth, nor any other things, but merely our own choice. We have no need to set out upon our travels, nor go beyond the boundaries of our country, nor submit to dangers and toils, but only to will.

What excuse, tell me, shall we have in things that appear difficult,¹⁵⁴⁵ when we do not do even a light thing, attended too with so much gain and so much benefit, and no trouble? Canst thou not despise wealth? Canst thou not spend thy substance on the needy? Canst thou not will anything that is good? Canst thou not forgive him that has injured thee? For if thou hadst not so many things to answer for, and God had only commanded thee to forgive, oughtest thou not to do it? But now having so many things to answer for, dost thou not forgive? and that too, knowing that thou art required to do it on account of things which thou hast from Him? If indeed we go to our debtor, he knowing it, receives us courteously, and shows us honor, and pays us every attention in a liberal way; and that though he is not paying off his debt, but because he wishes to render us merciful in our demand of payment: and thou, who owest so much to God, and art commanded to forgive that thou mayest receive in return, dost not thou forgive? And wherefore not, I beseech you? Woe is me! How much of goodness do we receive, and what wickedness do we show in return! What sleepiness! what indolence! How easy a thing is virtue, attended too with much advantage; and how laborious a thing is vice! But we, flying from that which is so light, pursue that which is heavier than lead.

Here there is no need of bodily strength, nor of wealth, nor possessions, nor of power, nor of friendship, nor of any other thing; but it is sufficient only to will, and all is accomplished. Hath some one grieved thee, and insulted thee, and mocked thee? But consider, how often thou hast done such things to others, and even to the Lord Himself; and forbear, and forgive him it. Consider that thou sayest, "Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors." (Matt. vi. 13.) Consider, that if thou dost not forgive, thou wilt not be able to say this with confidence: but if thou forgivest, thou demandest the matter as a debt, not by reason of the nature of the thing, but on account of the loving-kindness of Him that hath granted it. And wherein is it equal, that one who forgives his fellow-servants should receive remission of the sins committed against the Lord? but nevertheless we do receive such great loving-kindness, because He is rich in mercy and pity.

And that I may show that even without these things, and without the remission, thou art a gainer by forgiving, consider how many friends such a person has, how the praises of such an one are everywhere sounded by men who go about saying, "This is a good man, he is easily reconciled, he knows not to bear malice, he is no sooner stricken than he is healed." When such an one falls into any misfortune, who will not pity him? when he has offended, who will not pardon him? When he asks a favor of others, who will not grant it to him? Who will not be willing to be the friend and servant of so good a soul? Yea, I entreat you, let us do all things for Him,¹⁵⁴⁶ not to our friends, not to our relations only, but even to our domestics. For He says, "Forbearing threatening, knowing that your Master also is in heaven." (Eph. vi. 9.)

If we forgive our neighbors their trespasses, ours will be forgiven to us, if we bestow alms, if we be humble. For this also taketh away sins. For if the publican, only for saying,

“God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke xviii. 13.), went down justified, much more we also, if we be humble and contrite, shall be able to obtain abundant loving kindness. If we confess our own sins and condemn ourselves, we shall be cleansed from the most of our defilement. For there are many ways that purify. Let us therefore in every way war against the devil. I have said nothing difficult, nothing burdensome. Forgive him that has injured thee, have pity on the needy, humble thy soul, and though thou be a grievous sinner, thou wilt be able to obtain the kingdom, by these means purging off thy sins themselves, and wiping off their stain. And God grant that we all, having purified ourselves here by confession from all the filth of our sins, may there obtain the blessings promised in Christ Jesus our Lord, &c.

¹⁵³⁹ στιγματίας. Literally, “branded slave.”

¹⁵⁴⁰ He may mean a stranger to Onesimus.

¹⁵⁴¹ i.e. of Onesimus.

¹⁵⁴² Some suggest the plural, “they,” but there is no MS. authority for it. The last editor defends the singular, as the expression used would please Philemon.

¹⁵⁴³ Edd. ἀξιοπιστίαν, literally, “worthiness of credit,” but in later Greek “of consideration.” Sav. mar. B. and Ven. have ὑπεροχὴν.

¹⁵⁴⁴ Sav. mar. B. and Ven. “but now, with most men, what is lawful is despised,” and, “but what is forbidden made much of, it is all,” &c.

¹⁵⁴⁵ Raphelius (ap. Par.) notes that he means “what presumption is there that we would do them if we could?”

¹⁵⁴⁶ Or, “to this purpose,” as the Latin. But it seems to be an unexpected turn upon the last clause. Compare the general argument of Bp. Butler’s Sermons on the Love of God.

LESSON THREE

GOD'S RECONCILIATION IS PREPARED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT. Vs. 4-7

INTRODUCTION

Paul prays for Philemon, he observes the fruit of the Spirit in the life of Philemon; he encourages Philemon to exercise his faith and walk according to the attributes of God. Paul precedes his ethical request by grounding it in the attributes of God.³⁹ Let us reflect on the spiritual life that Paul recognizes in Philemon.

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

1. *Continual prayer* (vs. 4)

Before Paul spoke with Philemon, he has prayed to the Lord about Philemon. Consulting with God first is a necessary Christian principle. Paul initiated the efforts towards reconciliation in prayer.

We face personal and life's issues. Always remember to go the heavenly Father in prayer, first, not only during or after your issues. Our issues need to be resolved before the throne of grace before we seek resolution on earth.

When we are involved in reconciliation we continue in prayer. And when reconciliation is accomplished we pray to God in thankfulness. "Pray without ceasing."

2. *Listening and spiritual discernment* (vs. 5)

Paul had heard about the love and faith of Philemon (vs. 5). Paul just didn't give his opinion, but he first listened to how things were going.

Paul heard that there was love and faith in the life of Philemon. These are fruit of the Holy Spirit and show that the Spirit was present in the life of Philemon.

Before one becomes involved in counseling others.....you better be sure God is present. How do you know? Look for the fruit of the Spirit as believers obey God's Word. If the fruit of the Spirit is not present, you may be wasting your words and actions. Then it's necessary to go back to square one to see if you're dealing with a believer or not. Then you must pray for the conversion of the people you are dealing with. If the people you are dealing are not born again then they will only respond to legalistic law and not the grace of the gospel.

Would Paul have asked for the reconciliation between Philemon and Onesimus had they not been reconciled to God first?

As we share our Christian council with others, let us not show partiality. It is meant to be applied to "all the saints." This statement is also a reminder that Onesimus,

³⁹ O'Brien, *op.cit.* p. 276, quotes Knox (*Philemon*, p. 19). "It is the overture in which each of the themes, to be later heard in a different, perhaps more specific context, is given an anticipatory hearing." Terms (or their cognates) such as prayer (vs. 4, cf. v.22), love (vs. 5, cf. v. 9), fellowship (v. 6, cf. 17), good (vs. 6, cf. v 20) and brother (v. 7, cf. v. 20).

for becoming a believer, he was to be considered a saint and treated like a saint even though his life as a sinner had consequences that needed to be dealt with.

3. *A good faith* (vs. 6)

It is true that Paul taught, as the whole Scriptures teach, that the “just shall live by faith.” Such a saving faith needs to lead to certain actions.⁴⁰ These actions are identified by the apostle; they are” knowledge of every good thing which is in you in Christ.” This is a good faith, a faith that recognizes where goodness comes from and a faith that does good works.

Notice that Paul did not praise Philemon for being a good man rather praise is given to God.⁴¹ If Philemon was a good man he would not need to have faith in a Savior to save him from his sin.

Yet there was something good about Philemon. Paul identifies that goodness. a. His goodness comes through faith in Jesus. b. His goodness is in Christ and not from himself. c. Believers are to manifest such goodness. All of the fruit of the Spirit is that way: faith, goodness, love, patience, etc. We can only experience them “by faith in Christ.”

Martin Luther spoke of the believer’s “alien righteousness.” We are made righteous because of the righteousness of Jesus. Due to His righteous act in His perfect life, his perfect payment for our sin on the cross and his perfect resurrection, we are declared righteous. The same applies to our goodness. Jesus said that “only God is good.” The way in which the believer participates in that goodness is through faith in Christ.

When something good happens in your life or you’re involved in doing good, do not boast or be proud, such goodness comes from Him who “only is good.” Rather, be thankful that God is working through you.

So Paul will appeal to the goodness and love of God that is found in Philemon. On the basis of that goodness and love, he will ask for reconciliation between Philemon and Onesimus.

4. *A love that leads to joy in the Church* (vs. 7)

Paul recognizes the love of God in the life of Philemon. This love leads to the pleasant fruit of joy, encouragement (or consolation) and heartfelt refreshment of all the saints.

It is the joy of Paul, the discipler, to see his disciples bear spiritual fruit (Rom. 15:32; I Cor. 16:18, I Thes. 3:6-7).

It will also be a joy when Philemon forgives Onesimus and sets him free!

⁴⁰ John Calvin (vs. 5): “This praise, which he bestows on Philemon, includes briefly the whole perfection of a Christian man. It consists of two parts, faith in Christ, and love towards our neighbors; for to these all the actions and all the duties of our life relate.”

⁴¹ John Gill. “Hearing of thy love and faith...Those two spring from the free favor and love of God, and are the pure gifts of his grace; and therefore thanks are to be given for them to God; nor are they to be ascribed to the power and will of man; they are the fruits of the Spirit of God; and are the principle ingredients in sanctification, which is entirely his work; and they are in all regenerate persons.....”

In the verses 8-21, Paul is going to argue on the basis of all these spiritual superlatives that Onesimus must be forgiven and set free. The proper spiritual condition exists in order to advocate for the reconciliation of Onesimus.

CONCLUSION

The recognition of the spiritual qualities in the believers is essential for applying Christian principles to other areas of life. The realities of prayer, faith, love, goodness and joy accompany the extension of the kingdom of God and are required for the forgiveness of sinners, for the freedom of God's servants, and for the up building of the church.

CLOSING THOUGHTS ON SOCIAL ETHICS

1. Are you aware of how the church is growing outside of your city?
2. What was it important for Paul to note that the church in Philemon's house was bearing spiritual fruit?
3. What relationship does the Holy Spirit have with social ethics?
4. Are we saved through good works or are good works an indication that we are saved?
5. Why is the presence of the Holy Spirit necessary when we are counseling people who are having problems?
6. How does the Holy Spirit promise to be with believers who are having difficulties?
7. Should we seek reconciliation with someone who has wronged us because we want to or because we have to?

LESSON THREE WORK SHEET. Vs 4-7

READING OF 4-7	Read the passage in two different versions and Show the differences
<p>INDUCTIVE STUDY of VS. 4-7 Explanation of important data (from your reading of the Study Bibles and Philemon itself, please jot down what you know) Important words: Grammatical annotations: Translation method: Original author and hearers Cultural context: Historical context: Biblical context: Proponed title for the passage Major themes for the passage</p>	
<p>VERSE BY VERSE EXPOSITIONAL STUDY Vs. 4</p>	<p>Show how these Biblical texts are related to our passage Rom. 1:8 Rom. 1:10 2 Thess. 1:3</p>
<p>Vs. 5</p>	<p>Acts 20:21 Col. 1:4 I Thess. 3:6,7</p>
<p>Vs. 6</p>	<p>Phil. 1:9 I Thess. 5:18</p>
<p>Vs. 7</p>	<p>Rom. 15:32 I Cor. 16:18 2 Cor. 7,4,14</p>
<p>Jot down notes from commentaries</p>	
<p>LITERARY ANALYSIS -What kind (genre) of literature is the text? -What is the thematic outline of the passage and how does it fit into the structure of the book? -Have are figures of speech used?</p>	
<p>DIALECTICAL STUDY of vs. 4-7 Thesis: Antithesis: Synthesis: Syncretism:</p>	
<p>DEVOTIONAL STUDY Prayer and Action -Praise to God -Confession of personal sin -Confession of social sin -Special requests -Thanksgiving to God -Communication of truths of the passage -three main truth statements 1. 2. 3. Your summary of the passage</p>	

COMMENTARIES ON VS. 4-7

CALVIN'S COMMENTARIES. Vs. 4-7

4. *I give thanks to my God.* It deserves attention, that he at the same time prays for that very thing for which he "gives thanks." Even the most perfect, so long as they live in the world, never have so good ground for congratulation as not to need prayers, that God may grant to them, not only to persevere till the end, but likewise to make progress from day to day.

5. *Hearing of thy love and faith.* This praise, which he bestows on Philemon, includes briefly the whole perfection of a Christian man. It consists of two parts, faith in Christ, and love towards our neighbors; for to these all the actions and all the duties of our life relate. Faith is said to be in Christ, because to him it especially looks; in like manner as in no other way than through him alone can God the Father be known, and in no other than in Him can we find any of the blessings which faith seeks.

And towards all saints. He does not thus limit this *love* to the *saints*, as if there ought to be none towards others; for, since the doctrine of "love" is, that "we should not despise our flesh, (Isaiah 53:7) and that we should honor the image of God which is engraven on our nature, undoubtedly it includes all mankind. But since they that are of the household of faith are united with us by a closer bond of relationship, and since God peculiarly recommends them to us, for this reason they justly hold the highest rank.

The arrangement of the passage is somewhat confused; but there is no obscurity in the meaning, except that it is doubtful whether the adverb *always* (in the 4th verse) is connected with the first clause, "I give thanks always to my God," or with the second clause, "making mention of thee always in my prayers." The meaning may be brought out in this manner, that, whenever the Apostle offered prayer for Philemon, he interwove thanksgiving with it; that is, because Philemon's piety afforded ground of rejoicing; for we often pray for those in whom nothing is to be found but what gives occasion for grief and tears. Yet the second mode of pointing is generally preferred, that Paul "gives thanks for Philemon, and always makes mention of him in his prayers." Let my readers be at full liberty to judge for themselves; but, for my own part, I think that the former meaning is more appropriate.

In the rest of the passage there is an inversion of the natural order; for, after having spoken of "love" and "faith," he adds, "towards Christ and towards saints," while, on the contrary, the contrast would demand that "Christ" should be put in the second part of the clause as the object to which our faith looks.²

6. *That the communication of thy faith may be effectual.* This clause is somewhat obscure; but I shall endeavor to elucidate it in such a manner that my readers may somewhat understand Paul's meaning. First, it ought to be known that the Apostle is not continuing to give the praise of Philemon, but that, on the contrary, he expresses those blessings for which he prays to God. These words are connected with what he had formerly said, that he "makes mention of him in his prayers." (Philemon 1:4.) What blessing then did he ask for Philemon? That his faith, exercising itself by good works, might be proved to be true, and not unprofitable. He calls it "the communication of faith," because it does not remain

inactive and concealed within, but is manifested to men by actual effects. Although faith has a hidden residence in the heart, yet it communicates itself to men by good works. It is, therefore, as if he had said, "That thy faith, by communicating itself, may demonstrate its efficacy in every good thing.

The knowledge of every good thing denotes experience. He wishes that, by its effects, faith may be proved to be effectual. This takes place, when the men with whom we converse know our godly and holy life; and therefore, he says, *of every good thing which is in you*; for everything in us that is good makes known our faith.

Towards Christ Jesus. The phrase *eijv Cristo>n* may be explained to mean "through Christ." But, for my own part, if I were at liberty, I would rather translate it as equivalent to *ejn Cristw~*, "in Christ;" for the gifts of God dwell in us in such a manner, that nevertheless, we are partakers of them only so far as we are members of Christ. Yet because the words *in you* go before, I am afraid that the harshness of the expression would give offense. Accordingly, I have not ventured to make any alteration in the words, but only wished to mention it to my readers, that, after full consideration, they may choose either of those meanings which they prefer.

7. *We have much grace and consolation.* Although this reading is found in the majority of Greek copies, yet I think that it ought to be translated *joy*; for, since there is little difference between *ca>rin* and *cara>n*, it would be easy to mistake a single letter. Besides, Paul elsewhere employs the word *ca>rin* to mean "joy;" at least, if we believe Chrysostom on this matter. What has "grace" to do with "consolation?"

For thy love. It is plain enough what he means, that he has great joy and consolation, because Philemon administered relief to the necessities of the godly. This was singular love, to feel so much joy on account of the benefit received by others. Besides, the Apostle does not only speak of his personal joy, but says that many rejoiced on account of the kindness and benevolence with which Philemon had aided religious men.

Because the bowels of the saints have been refreshed by thee, brother. "To refresh the bowels" is an expression used by Paul to mean, to give relief from distresses, or to aid the wretched in such a manner that, having their minds composed, and being free from all uneasiness and grief, they may find repose. "The bowels" mean the affections, and *ajna>pausiv* denotes tranquility; and therefore they are greatly mistaken who torture this passage so as to make it refer to the belly and the nourishment of the body.

¹ "De la douceur, moderation, et humanite." "Of gentleness, moderation, and kindness."

² It has sometimes occurred to me, that the intricacy of this passage might be removed, first, by the transposition suggested by Calvin, and, next, by transposing the 5th verse so as to place it before the 4th. "Hearing of thy love towards all saints, and of thy faith which thou hast towards Lord Jesus, I give thanks unto my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, That the communication of thy faith may be effectual, through the knowledge of every good thing which is in thee towards Christ Jesus." - *Ed.*

GILL'S EXPOSITION. Vs. 4-7

Philemon 1:4

I thank my God... Meaning on account, of Philemon, for the grace bestowed upon him, thereafter mentioned; (*See Gill on Romans 1:8*) making other saints, (Romans 1:9) (Ephesians 1:16) (Philippians 1:3,4) (Colossians 1:3) (1 Thessalonians 1:2) , the apostle was a man much in prayer, frequent at the throne of grace; and he prayed not for himself only, but for all the saints, for all the churches and ministers of the Gospel; whom he not only bore upon his mind and heart, but made mention of them, it may be by name; however, he remembered them, and put up petitions, with thanksgivings, for them; and so he did for Philemon; and which he takes notice of with the same view as before: the word, "always", is so placed in the original text, as to be put either to his thanks to God, or his prayers, and may be true of both; the Syriac and Arabic versions join it to the former; and the Vulgate Latin and the Ethiopic versions place it to the latter.

Philemon 1:5

Hearing of thy love and faith... Those two spring from the free favor and love of God, and are the pure gifts of his grace; and therefore thanks are to be given for them to God; nor are they to be ascribed to the power and will of man; they are the fruits of the Spirit of God; and are the principal ingredients in sanctification, which is entirely his work; and they are in all regenerate persons; and are the evidences of regeneration; by which it is known that men are passed from death to life; and they always go together, and are inseparable from each other: there cannot be true faith where love is wanting, for faith works by love; and there cannot be real love, where there is not faith; they only love the saints aright, who love them in the faith, and because of it; and these graces are visible, and to be known by their fruits, whereby they come to be heard of, and talked of, as these in Philemon were. Faith in the heart is confessed by the mouth; and love, both to Christ and to his people, shows itself, as well as faith, in works of righteousness. Sometimes faith is put before love, it being a leading grace, and the great receiver of all the blessings of grace; and here love is placed before faith, because of its being more excellent on account of its continuance and duration; or there may be no design at all in it; but rather, as sometimes one, and sometimes another is mentioned first, it shows that they are upon an equal foot, and both have their proper place and usefulness; the objects of them follow:

which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints; which are either to be considered as equally objects of the same grace, or as distinct ones; that is, either that Christ is the object both of faith and love, and the saints are the object both of faith and love; or else these graces are to be distinguished by their respective objects; as that faith is toward Christ, and love toward all the saints: that Christ is both the object of faith and love is certain; nor is there any difficulty to consider him as such; faith is equally to be exercised on him, as on God the Father; and he is indeed the immediate object of faith, and by whom men believe in God; and he is to be loved, and is loved by his people above all things, and at all times, and in sincerity: and that the saints are the objects of the love

of all truly gracious souls, is a plain case; but the greater difficulty is, how they should be the objects of their faith; and yet there are instances of this, (Exodus 14:31) (2 Chronicles 20:20) and indeed, true love believes all things, and hopes all things, (1 Corinthians 13:7) . But it seems better to divide these objects according to the different graces, and to consider faith as being towards our Lord Jesus; which is a looking towards Christ, a moving towards him, a laying hold upon him, and embracing him, a staying and leaning on him, a living upon him, and walking in him; and which in Philemon might be a strong one, as well as unfeigned, and operative: and love may be considered as being toward all saints; for though all men are, in a sense, to be loved, and kindness to be shown to them, and that even to enemies, yet more especially the saints; who are set apart by God the Father, whose sins are expiated by the blood of Christ, and who are internally sanctified by the Spirit, and are enabled to live soberly and righteously: and all of these are the objects of love, whether rich or poor, greater or lesser believers, of meaner or larger abilities; for they are all equally loved by God, redeemed by Christ, and regenerated by his Spirit; are justified by his righteousness, are all the children and heirs of God, and are called in one hope of their calling; and love to them should be unfeigned, fervent, active, and laborious, and as Christ has loved us; and such was Philemon's love, as well as it was universal and this distribution of these graces to their respective objects may be confirmed from a parallel place in (Colossians 1:4) which epistle was written and sent at the same time with this.

Philemon 1:6

That the communication of thy faith... The grace of faith itself cannot be communicated from one to another; a believing parent cannot communicate it to his children, nor a master to his servants, nor a minister to his hearers; but an account of it, of its actings and exercises, of the joy of it, and of the peace a soul is filled with through believing, may be given to the mutual comfort and edification of saints; and it may be shown forth to others by the fruits of it, works of righteousness: but here it seems to design acts of beneficence, communicating to the necessities of others, as flowing from faith; and these words are to be connected with (Philemon 1:4) as a part of the apostle's prayers, as what is contained in the preceding verse is the matter of his thanksgiving. And his prayer is, that such a communication of good things, which springs from faith,

may be effectual; to answer some very good purposes, the good of others, and the service of the interest of Christ, and the glory of God; or, as the Vulgate Latin version reads, only by the change of one letter, that it "may be evident"; to which the Syriac version seems to incline, rendering it, that it "may be fruitful in works"; or show itself in fruits of righteousness, in works of mercy and kindness; and the apostle's sense is, that it might be more and more so:

by the acknowledging of every good thing that is in you in Christ Jesus; the meaning is, that every good thing that is in the saints, or among them, should be acknowledged to come to them in and through Christ Jesus, in whom all fullness of grace dwells, and from whom all is imparted; and that every good thing that is communicated, or done in faith, which is effectual to any good purpose, should be owned as done by the grace and

strength of Christ, and be done to his saints, as if done to himself, and be directed to his glory: the phrase, "in you", respects not Philemon only, but Apphia, Archippus, and the church in Philemon's house; the Arabic version reads, in us.

Philemon 1:7

For we have great joy and consolation in thy love... In the expressions and acts of it to the poor saints; for which reason the apostle gives thanks for it before; and it is a pleasure and comfort to an ingenuous mind, though it is not in his power to do good to the poor saints himself, to see that others have both abilities, and a heart to relieve them:

because the bowels of the saints are, refreshed by thee, brother; meaning, not only that their bellies were filled with food, for the phrase is used in (Philemon 1:20) where that cannot be intended; but their hearts were filled with gladness, the load upon their spirits, the pressures upon their minds were removed, and they had an inward pleasure in their souls, and rest, refreshment, and comfort, through the liberal communications of Philemon to them; who did what he did cheerfully, that so it did their souls good, as well as their bodies; and in doing which, he acted the part of a brother in Christ.

MATTHEW HENRY'S COMMENTARY. Vs. 4-7

III. He expresses the singular and affection he had for him, by thanksgiving and prayer to God in his behalf, and the great joy for the many good things he knew and heard to be in him, v. 4-7. The apostle's thanksgiving and prayer for Philemon are here set forth by the object, circumstance, and matter of them, with the way whereby much of the knowledge of Philemon's goodness came to him.

1. Here is the object of Paul's praises and prayers for Philemon: *I thank my God, making mention of thee in my prayers*, v. 4. Observe, (1.) God is the author of all the good that is in any, or that is done by them. *From me is thy fruit found*, Hos. xiv. 8. To him therefore is all the praise due. 1 Chron. xxix. 13, 14, *But [or for] who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come of thee*, both wherewith to offer, and the will and heart to do it. On this account (says he) *we thank thee our God, and praise thy glorious name*. (2.) It is the privilege of good men that their praises and prayers they come to God as their God: *Our God, we thank thee*, said David; and *I thank my God*, said Paul. (3.) Our prayers and praises should be offered up to God, not for ourselves only, but for others also. Private addresses should not be altogether with a private spirit, minding our own things only, but others must be remembered by us. We must be affected with joy and thankfulness for any good in them, or done by them, or bestowed on them, as far as is known to us, and seek for them what they need. In this lies no little part of the communion of saints. Paul, in his private thanksgivings and prayers, was often particular in remembering his friends: *I thank my God, making mention of thee in my prayers*; sometimes it may be by name, or at least having them particularly in his thoughts; and God knows who is meant, though not named. This is a means of exercising love, and obtaining good for others. *Strive with me, by your prayers to God for me*, said the apostle: and what he desired for himself he

surely practiced on behalf of others; so should all. *Pray one for another*, says James, v. 16.

2. Here is the circumstance: *Always making mention of thee*. Always--usually, not once or twice only, but frequently. So must we remember Christian friends much and often, as their case may need, bearing them in our thoughts and upon our hearts before our God.

3. Here is the matter both of his praises and prayers, in reference to Philemon.

(1.) Of his praises. [1.] He thanks God for the love which he heard Philemon had towards the Lord Jesus. He is to be loved as God superlatively, as his divine perfections require; and as related to us, the Lord, and our Lord, our Maker, Redeemer, and Savior, who loved us, and gave himself for us. Paul thanks God for what he heard of this, the signal marks and expressions of it in Philemon. [2.] For his faith in Christ also. Love to Christ, and faith in him, are prime Christian graces, for which there is great ground of praise to God, where he has blessed any with them, as Rom. i. 8, *I thank my God because your faith is published throughout the world*; and, in reference to the Colossians (*ch. i. 3, 4*), *We give thanks to God since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus*. This is a saving grace, and the very principle of Christian life and of all good works. [3.] He praises God likewise for Philemon's love to all the saints. These two must go together; for he who *loveth him that begat must and will love those also that are begotten of him*. The apostle joins them in that (*Col. i. 3, 4*), *We give thanks to God since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which you have to all the saints*. These bear the image of Christ, which will be loved by every Christian. Different sentiments and ways in what is not essential will not make a difference of affection as to the truth, though difference in the degrees of love will be according as more or less of that image is discerned. Mere external differences are nothing here. Paul calls a poor converted slave *his bowels*. We must love, as God does, all saints. Paul thanked God for the good that was not only in the churches, but in the particular persons he wrote to, and though this too was known to him merely by report: *Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast towards the Lord Jesus, and towards all saints*. This was what he enquired after concerning his friends, the truth, and growth, and fruitfulness of their graces, their faith in Christ, and love to him and to all the saints. Love to saints, if it be sincere, will be catholic and universal love towards all saints; but faith and love, though in the heart they are hidden things, are known by the effects of them. Therefore,

(2.) The apostle joins prayer with his praises, that the fruits of Philemon's faith and love might be more and more conspicuous, so as that the communication of them might constrain others to the acknowledgment of all the good things that were in him and in his house towards Christ Jesus; that their *light might so shine before men that they, seeing their good works, might be stirred up to imitate them, and to glorify their Father who is in heaven*. Good works must be done, not of vain-glory to be seen, yet such as may be seen to God's glory and the good of men.

4. He adds a reason, both of his prayer and his praises (v. 7): *For "we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.* The good thou hast done and still doest is abundant matter of joy and comfort to me and others, who therefore desire you may continue and abound in such good fruits more and more, to God's honor and the credit of religion. *The administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God,"* 2 Cor. ix. 12.

John Chrysostom Homily II

Philemon 1. 4–6 (1547)

HE does not immediately at the commencement ask the favor, but having first admired the man, and having praised him for his good actions, and having shown no small proof of his love, that he always made mention of him in his prayers, and having said that many are refreshed by him, and that he is obedient and complying in all things; then he puts it last of all, by this particularly putting him to the blush.¹⁵⁴⁸ For if others obtain the things which they ask, much more Paul. If coming before others, he was worthy to obtain, much more when he comes after others, and asks a thing not pertaining to himself, but in behalf of another. Then, that he may not seem to have written on this account only, and that no one may say, "If it were not for Onesimus thou wouldest not have written," see how he assigns other causes also of his Epistle. In the first place manifesting his love, then also desiring that a lodging may be prepared for him.

"Hearing," he says, "of thy love."

This is wonderful, and much greater than if being present he had seen it when he¹⁵⁴⁹ was present. For it is plain that from its being excessive it had become manifest, and had reached even to Paul. And yet the distance between Rome and Phrygia was not small. For he seems to have been there from the mention of Archippus. For the Colossians were of Phrygia, writing to whom he said, "When this Epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the Church of the Laodiceans, and that ye likewise read the Epistle from Laodicea." (Col. iv. 16.) And this is a city of Phrygia.

I pray, he says, "that the communication of thy faith may become effectual in the knowledge of every good thing which is in Christ Jesus." Dost thou see him first giving, before he receives, and before he asks a favor himself bestowing a much greater one of his own? "That the communication of thy faith," he says, "may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus"; that is, that thou mayest attain all virtue, that nothing may be deficient. For so faith becomes effectual, when it is accompanied with works. For "without works faith is dead." (Jas. ii. 26.) And he has not said, "Thy faith," but "the communication of thy faith," connecting it with himself, and showing that it is one body, and by this particularly making him ashamed to refuse. If thou art a partaker, he says, with respect to the faith, thou oughtest to communicate also with respect to other things.

Ver. 7. "For we have [I had] great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels [hearts] of the Saints are refreshed by thee, brother."

Nothing so shames us into giving, as to bring forward the kindnesses bestowed on others, and particularly when a man is more entitled to respect than they. And he has not

said, "If you do it to others, much more to me"; but he has insinuated the same thing, though he has contrived to do it in another and a more gracious manner.

"I had joy," that is, thou hast given me confidence from the things which thou hast done to others. "And consolation," that is, we are not only gratified, but we are also comforted. For they are members of us. If then there ought to be such an agreement, that in the refreshing of any others who are in affliction, though we obtain nothing, we should be delighted on their account, as if it were one body that was benefited; much more if you shall refresh us also. And he has not said, "Because thou yieldest, and compliest," but even more vehemently and emphatically, "because the bowels of the Saints," as if it were for a darling child fondly loved by its parents, so that this love and affection shows that he also is exceedingly beloved by them.

¹⁵⁴⁷ E.V. "in you." [The R.V. reads "in you," ἐν ὑμῖν, and puts "us," ἡμῖν, in the margin.—P.S.]

¹⁵⁴⁸ δυσωπῶν.

¹⁵⁴⁹ Philemon, as it is παρόντος.

LESSON FOUR

RECONCILIATION REQUIRES PERSUASION. Vs. 8-11

INTRODUCTION

The study of Paul's letter to Philemon is not simply the reflection (on of) one man's opinion. Paul writes as an apostle and the church receives this letter as authoritative apostolic teaching. However, the irony of the letter is that Paul writes Philemon that he does not want to use his apostolic authority to command him to do something against his will but he would rather persuade Philemon to do what pleases God. In the process we receive an in-depth look as to the values and principles of the gospel of reconciliation.

PERSUASIVE ARGUMENTS

1. *A reasonable method* (vs. 8-9)

Biblical ethic of love. Vs. 8 ties in the verses 1-7 with the rest of the letter by stating, "therefore." He has stated several doctrinal truths and now he moves on their outworking in ethics, the practice of living out your values. Biblical ethics are based on absolute biblical truths.

The major Biblical ethic is love. Paul already identified God's love for Philemon (vs. 2); had heard of Philemon's love (vs. 5)) and now he appeals to that in love (vs. 8). The love of one's neighbor is to do unto others as you would want to be done to yourself. So, the mayor question is, if Philemon were in Onesimus' sandals, would he want forgiveness and social redemption? (I John 3:16, 17) It's a rhetorical question as the answer is obviously affirmative.

The Christian law of love is more than positive emotions about a person or issues. Love fulfils the law and the Mosaic Law with its gospel fulfillment continues to be normative for Christians (Mt. 5:17). The Ten Commandments need to be applied to the issue of the abolition of slavery within the Christian community. If slaves were enslaved simply because of their ethnicity, this is a violation of the 9th commandment, "you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."⁴² If one's believe is that certain races are predestined to be slaves, then such a fatalistic falsehood needs to be exposed by the law. The 10th commandment forbids the coveting of other people's property and social position. This would be a temptation for a believing slave as well as for a believing master. Should a believing master covet his economic gain produced by a slave over the spiritual and personal gain of the slave?

The rendering of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 makes refers in the prologue that obedience to the commands are in response to a God who "brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." This liberating act of divine love requires the believer's response of obedient love. Should the believer's love also include liberating other's out of the house of bondage, especially when such a house of bondage is the believing master's domain?

⁴² It is false witness against your neighbor to think that some human races are superior or inferior to others. All people are made in the image of God with the ability to be fully human.

Church history shows that not all Christians would relate forgiveness and social redemption with the Golden Rule. This was especially seen in the justification and practice of the ethnic slavery of the African peoples in from the 15th century to the 19th century.

What about the non-documented immigrant that is living and working in your country? If you were such an immigrant would you want a Christian to give you a day's work for a day's wage, even though it would put the employer at risk? As a national citizen, would your church accept a non-documented immigrant for baptism or membership in your church?

During the late 1980's, the Christian Reformed Church in the Dominican Republic, working mostly with Haitian immigrants in the Dominican Republic, was faced with a dilemma created by the Dominican Republic government. The Haitian immigrants had been granted working papers or passport visas by the Dominican government to enter the DR but then the Balaguer led government closed the immigrant office department for Haitian document renewals for over a year. All of the annual documents expired. All of the Haitian pastors, evangelists, elders, deacons and church members became illegal immigrants. The church decided to continue to operate with the non-documented leaders and members; and suffer the consequences, if need be; as well as communicate with the Dominican government seeking justice. Massive deportations resulted in the loss of over one third of the ICRRD leadership and membership. Several years latter documentation resumed and many of the deported Haitians returned to the DR. The denomination spends tens of thousands of dollars seeking proper documentation for the church leaders.⁴³

Biblical ethics and cultural ethics need to be distinguished. In the case of the reconciliation of Onesimus, Philemon would not have been breaking Roman or even local law in freeing Onesimus, although he would have been going against the social norm of the day.

Apostolic authority. Paul says he does not want to use his apostolic authority to command but he would rather persuade.⁴⁴ The apostles did have a very special authority. They were authorized by the Lord Jesus Christ to bear witness to Jesus, to build the church and to write Scripture! In fact, the writing of this letter becomes part of Scripture, God's Word! Ephesians 2:20 shows us that the prophets and apostles were part of the foundation of the New Testament Church. The apostles interpret the teachings of Jesus, who fulfills the Old Testament.

However, having mentioned that he is an apostle and that he has apostolic authority, Paul is not relegating the issue about to be treated to a category of personal opinion or an opinion poll among fellow prisoners, but this is a serious redemptive matter that needs to be dealt with and resolved.⁴⁵

⁴³ Hegeman, *Ethnic Disfranchisement*. Documents the first ten year of the Christian Reformed Church in the Dominican Republic and includes a description of the deportation years.

⁴⁴ John Calvin (vs. 9) observes that it is not necessary to command when believers are willing to obey.

⁴⁵ John Calvin: "The designation "elder," here, denotes not age, but office."

Reason. Paul also shows that Biblical revelation and apostolic authority is reasonable. Revelation, Christian authority and reason are compatible. His apostolic authority does not stand alone. All truth comes from the same source.

Persuasion. Paul appeals to Philemon in love. The whole book is a wonderful treatise on applying the truths of the gospel of grace and love, in a gracious and loving way, to the end of accomplishing reconciliation of a slave and his master.

Personal appeal. He reminds Philemon that he is old, imprisoned for Jesus sake, and that he loves him. This is a very personal appeal.⁴⁶

So Paul uses biblical truth, apostolic authority, his ability to reason as well as a personal appeal to address the very serious issue of the restoration of Onesimus. The methodology of Paul is multiple but it is compatible in every way.

What a lesson for the Church today! We are to approach our issues with such a multiple, yet consistent methodology. What does the Bible, the apostles and reason say about abortion, sexual sanctity, homosexuality, wages, lifestyle and you name the issues? Are you able to reasonably, lovingly address the issues of the day, using the Bible, the apostolic teachings, reason and moral persuasion?

2. *The spiritual priority* (vs. 10)

In verse(s) 10, he appeals to Onesimus' *spiritual status*. Paul speaks as a spiritual father for his spiritual son. He evangelized Onesimus who was born again in prison. He considers Onesimus as a spiritual son, part of the family of God.

In considering reconciliation, Paul does not start with the slave status of Onesimus but his spiritual status.⁴⁷ Neither does Paul ignore the slave status of Onesimus, but carefully works through the implications of his slave status (such as having a master, being in debt, being a runaway slave).

In Christian social ethic one has to weigh all of our actions in light of salvation and eternal priorities. The way we relate to people is to bring them to Christ and to nurture them in Christ. All of the social issues of the day need to be measured in that light.

Returning to the example of the Haitian immigrants in the CRC in the DR. Despite all of the social problems (forced labor, non documentation, deportations, and broken families) the church continued to minister to the Haitian immigrants and Dominican nationals. Haitians were not excluded from the church on the basis of their non-documented status. Nor did the church ignore the Haitian social status. All legal means were used to obtain legal papers for social, work and family life. Regardless of the legal status the Church continued to minister to the members.

⁴⁶ John Calvin: "By his example he shows that pastors should endeavor to draw disciples gently rather than to drag them by force."

⁴⁷ It is not known how Onesimus came into contact with Paul. J. Muller (*op.cit.*, p. 163) gives several possibilities: 1) Did one of Paul's fellow workers bring him to Paul? 2) Did Onesimus hear about Paul's preaching and come to visit him? Both of these are unlikely since Paul had not been to Colosse and Onesimus, as a slave, would not have gone to Ephesus (where Paul was for two years). In the author's opinion, the imprisonment of Onesimus is unlikely as he became Paul's messenger.

3. For *gospel utility* (vs. 11)

Paul points to how Onesimus has been useful for the gospel.⁴⁸ Onesimus had been profitable for Paul. All the details are not given, but in as much as other Christians were not able to help Paul, Onesimus had helped Paul.

Onesimus' relationship to Philemon is identified as profitable and useful. As a slave, Onesimus was probably enslaved for not paying a debt, he may have stolen money before he fled, he was not productive as a slave, in every economical way, and he was unprofitable. Now, however, Paul also identifies Onesimus as profitable for Philemon. Vs.13 says why; "that on your behalf he might minister to me in my chains for the gospel."

We tend to look at all the bad things people have done. Paul looks at the good things God is doing in life of Onesimus. We often see that God calls Christians to minister in areas where their sin had previously led them. Former prisoners start prison ministries. That is how Chuck Colson started the Prison Fellowship in jails throughout the world. Former addicts help other addicts. I know of former international drug dealers who go to visit the drug prisoners in Colombia. There is not one forgiven sinner who our sovereign God cannot use for the good of the person, the church and society.

CONCLUSION

Do you need to be persuaded to grant forgiveness to those who have offended you? In reconciliation are you part of the solution or part of the problem?

CLOSING REFLECTIONS ON SOCIAL ETHICS

1. Have you had opportunity to help two people seek reconciliation? What kind of argumentation did you use?
2. What method was the most effective to help persuade the couple? 1) quote Scripture; 2) remind them of their obligations; 3) appeal to reasonable arguments.
3. What is the Biblical position on issues such as:
 - a. premarital sex
 - b. marriage of believers and unbelievers
 - c. abortion
 - d. divorce
 - e. remarriage
 - f. homosexuality
 - g. racism
 - h. feminism and machoism
 - i. illegal immigration
 - j. capital punishment
 - k. war
4. How does the practice of reconciliation apply to any one of the above?
5. One of the most insidious forms of sin is personal and social discrimination. We judge people by the language they speak, color of their skins, place where they live,

⁴⁸ This is a play on words as Onesimus name means "useful."

religion they profess, their social status and for other reasons that makes them different from us. How does this show in your life and in your local church? What can be done about it?

LESSON FOUR WORK SHEET : vs. 8-11

READING OF 8-11	Read the passage in two different versions and Show the differences
<p>INDUCTIVE STUDY of 8-11 Explanation of important data (from your reading of the Study Bibles and Philemon itself, please jot down what you know) Important words: Grammatical annotations: Translation method: Original author and hearers Cultural context: Historical context: Biblical context: Proponed title for the passage Major themes for the passage</p>	
VERSE BY VERSE EXPOSITIONAL STUDY Vs. 8	Show how these Biblical texts are related to our passage Eph. 2:20
Vs. 9	I Co 1:10 Eph. 3:1
Vs. 10	Acts 21:33 Col. 4:9 I Thess. 2:11
Vs. 11	
Jot down notes from commentaries	
<p>LITERARY ANALYSIS -What kind (genre) of literature is the text? -What is the thematic outline of the passage and how does it fit into the structure of the book? -Have are figures of speech used?</p>	
<p>DIALECTICAL STUDY of 8-11 Thesis: Antithesis: Synthesis: Syncretism:</p>	
<p>DEVOTIONAL STUDY Prayer and Action -Praise to God -Confession of personal sin -Confession of social sin -Special requests -Thanksgiving to God -Communication of truths of the passage -three main truth statements 1. 2. 3. Your own summary of the passage</p>	

COMMENTARIES ON VS. 8-11

CALVIN'S COMMENTARY. Vs. 8-11

8. *Wherefore, while I have great confidence in Christ to command thee.* That is, "though I have authority so that I might justly command thee, yet thy love makes me prefer to entreat thee."

9. *Being such a one.* He claims the right to command on two grounds, that he is *an elder*, and that he is *a prisoner for Christ*. He says that, on account of Philemon's love, he chooses rather to entreat, because we interpose authority in commanding those things which we wish to extort by necessity even from the unwilling, but there is no need of commanding those who willingly obey. And because they who are ready of their own accord to do their duty listen more willingly to a calm statement of what is necessary to be done than to the exercise of authority, with good reason does Paul, when he has to deal with an obedient man, use entreaty. By his example he shows that pastors should endeavor to draw disciples gently rather than to drag them by force; and indeed, when, by condescending to entreaty, he foregoes his right, this has far greater power to obtain his wish than if he issued a command. Besides, he claims nothing for himself, but in Christ, that is, on account of the office which he has received from him; for he does not mean that they whom Christ has appointed to be apostles are destitute of authority.

What is proper. By adding this, he means that teachers have not power to enact whatever they please, but that their authority is confined within these limits, that they must not command anything but "what is proper," and, in other respects, consistent with every man's duty. Hence (as I said a little before) pastors are reminded that the hearts of their people must be soothed with all possible gentleness, wherever this method is likely to be more advantageous, but yet so as to know that they who are treated so gently have nothing less exacted from them than what they ought to do.

The designation "elder," here, denotes not age, but office. He calls himself an apostle for this reason, that the person with whom he has to deal, and with whom he talks familiarly, is a fellow-laborer in the ministry of the word.

10. *I beseech thee for my son.* Since less weight is commonly attached to those prayers which are not founded in some cause of just commendation, Paul shows that Onesimus is so closely related to him as to afford a good reason for supplicating in his behalf. Here it is of importance to consider how deep is his condescension, when he gives the name of "son" to a slave, and a runaway, and a thief.

When he says that Onesimus has been *begotten by him* this must be understood to mean, that it was done by his ministry, and not by his power. To renew a soul of man and form it anew to the image of God -- is not a human work, and it is of this spiritual regeneration that he now speaks. Yet because the soul is regenerated by faith, and "faith is by hearing," (Romans 10:17,) on that, account he who administers the doctrine holds the place of a parent. Moreover, because the word of God preached by man is the seed of eternal life, we need not wonder that he from whose mouth we receive that seed is called a father. Yet, at the same time, we must believe that, while the ministry of a man is efficacious in regenerating the soul, yet, strictly speaking, God himself regenerates by the power of his

Spirit. These modes of expression, therefore, do not imply any opposition between God and man, but only show what God does by means of men. When he says that he had *begotten him in his bonds*, this circumstance adds weight to the commendation.

GILL'S EXPOSITION OF THE BIBLE. Vs. 8-11

Philemon 1:8

Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ... Or use much freedom of speech in the name of Christ, as an ambassador of his, and great authority as his apostle, which was given him for edification:

to enjoin thee that which is convenient; which became him as a believer in Christ, and a minister of the Gospel; which was his duty, and was obligatory upon him, agreeable to the doctrines of Christ; who taught men to love their enemies, to be reconciled to their brethren, that had offended them, especially when they repented; and therefore it was fit and proper that he should receive his servant again, since God had called him by his grace, and given him repentance for his sins: upon this foot the apostle could have commanded him, as he did in other cases, (2 Thessalonians 3:6,12) , but he chose not to address him in an authoritative way, but by way of entreaty, as follows.

Philemon 1:9

Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee... Either for the sake of the great love which the apostle bore to Philemon, being, as he calls him, his dearly beloved, he took this method; or because of Philemon's great love to all the saints before mentioned, he was encouraged to proceed in this manner, hoping on that account to have success; or it may be, it was for the sake of that love with which God had loved him, and which he puts him in mind of, to engage him to grant his request; that seeing God the Father had loved him, and chosen him in Christ; and Christ had loved him, and redeemed him by his blood; and the Holy Spirit had loved him, and sanctified him by his grace, that therefore he would receive his servant again for the sake of this love; who also was the object of it; see (Romans 15:30) . The Alexandrian copy reads, "for", or "through necessity", as if necessity obliged him to this request.

Being such an one as Paul the aged; or "the elder"; meaning either in office, which he might mention with this view, that his request might have the greater weight and influence; or else in years, and which he might observe partly to move compassion in Philemon, and that he might not grieve him in his old age, as he would, should he deny his request; and partly to suggest to him, that the advice he was about to give him, to receive his servant, did not come from a raw young man, but from one well stricken in years, with whom were wisdom and understanding; and therefore not to be treated with neglect or contempt: how old the apostle was at this time, is not certain; he could not be less than sixty years of age, or he would not have called himself an old man; for no man was so called by the Jews, but he that was at the age of sixty ^{F2}. Some editions of the Vulgate Latin version, as that of the London Polyglot Bible, read, "seeing thou art such an one as Paul the aged"; as if Philemon was an old man, as the apostle was, and

therefore he would not lay his commands upon him, as an ancient man might upon a young man, but rather entreat him as equal to him in years: but then it follows, which does not appear to be true of Philemon, or that he was in the like case,

and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ; which is observed with the same view as in Philemon 1:1.

Philemon 1:10

I beseech thee for my son Onesimus... Now he comes to the request itself, and mentions by name the person on whose account he makes it, and whom he calls his son; not merely because of his affection to him, but because he really was his spiritual father; he had been the happy instrument of his conversion, and he was his son according to the common faith, or in a spiritual sense: hence it follows,

whom I have begotten in my bonds: which is to be understood of a begetting again, or of regeneration; not as if the apostle was the efficient cause of it, as the nature of it shows, it being expressed by men's being born from above; by their being quickened, when dead in trespasses and sins; by being made new creatures, and transformed in the renewing of their minds; by Christ being formed in them, and by a partaking of the divine nature; and who is sufficient for these things? besides it is expressly denied to be of man, but is always ascribed to God, Father, Son, and Spirit; but as being the instrument and means of it, through the preaching of the Gospel, the word of truth, by which God of his own will, and by the power of his grace, regenerated this person; and this is said to be done "in his bonds": by which it appears, that the word of God was not bound, but had a free course, and was glorified, and the bonds of the apostle were the means of the spread of it; and that it was attended with great power, to the conversion of souls: and this circumstance is mentioned to engage Philemon to regard the entreaty of the apostle; he had been the instrument of begetting many souls to Christ; but this man was begotten by him in his bonds, when he was a prisoner, and so was peculiarly dear to him.

Philemon 1:11

Which in time past was to thee unprofitable... Yea, injurious and hurtful; one that was an eye servant, that loitered away his time, and set an ill example to fellow servants; and not only so, but embezzled his master's goods, and robbed him, and run away from him. So every man, in his state of unregeneracy, is an unprofitable man, (Romans 3:12) unprofitable to God, to men, and to themselves; their sins will not profit them, though they may promise them liberty and pleasure; nor will their riches, should they lose their own souls: nor their own righteousness, in the business of justification and salvation; nor even an outward profession of religion: yea, they are not only said to be unprofitable, but are represented as good for nothing; hence they are compared to dishonorable and unserviceable vessels; to briars and thorns, and the earth which brings them; to the salt that has lost its savor, and is fit neither for the land, nor for the dunghill; to rotten figs, to chaff, and dross of metals: yea, they are hurtful and injurious to themselves, on whom they bring ruin and destruction; to others, to wicked men, whom they more and more

corrupt, and harden in sin; and to good men, whom they grieve; and also to the interest and glory of God, whose laws they transgress, and against whom they sin, affront his justice, and provoke the eyes of his glory.

But now profitable to thee and to me; that is, he was now likely to be so, to be profitable to Philemon, as a servant, and to the apostle as a ministering brother. Some think there is in this an allusion to his name Onesimus, which signifies "profitable"; before he did not answer to his name, but now he was a true Onesimus, really a profitable person; grace, of an unprofitable man, makes a profitable one. Such an one is profitable to himself; his godliness is gain unto him, it having both the promise of this life, and of that which is to come; and he is profitable to others, if he has gifts qualifying him for the public work of the ministry, as Onesimus seems to have had; then he is made and becomes very useful to many for conviction, conversion, comfort, and edification; and if only a private believer, he is often profitable to others, by relating the work of God upon his soul; he is serviceable to the interest of Christ, for the support of the ministry, and supply of the poor; he is useful by his good examples, and prayers, in the neighborhood, town, city, or nation, in which he dwells. This argument from profit, the apostle knew would be an engaging one.

MATTHEW HENRY'S COMMENTARY. Vs. 8-11

We have here,

I. The main business of the epistle, which was to plead with Philemon on behalf of Onesimus, that he would receive him and be reconciled to him. Many arguments Paul urges for this purpose, v. 8-21. The

1st Argument is taken from what was before noted, and is carried in the illative *wherefore*: "Seeing so much good is reported of thee and found in thee, especially thy love to all saints, now let me see it on a fresh and further occasion; *refresh the bowels of Onesimus and mine also*, in forgiving and receiving him, who is now a convert, and so a saint indeed, and meet for thy favor and love." Observe, A disposition to do good, together with past instances and expressions of it, is a good handle to take hold of for pressing to more. "*Be not weary of well-doing*, go on as thou art able, and as new objects and occasions occur, to do the same still." The

2nd Argument is from the authority of him that was now making this request to him: *I might be very bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient*, v. 8. The apostles had under Christ great power in the church over the ordinary ministers, as well as the members of it, for edification; they might require of them what was fit, and were therein to be obeyed, which Philemon should consider. This was a matter within the compass of the apostle's power to require, though he would not in this instance act up to it. Observe, Ministers, whatever their power be in the church, are to use prudence in the exercise of it; they may not unseasonably, nor further than is requisite, put it forth; in all they must use godly wisdom and discretion. Wherefore this may be a

3rd Argument, Waiving the authority which yet he had to require, he chooses to entreat it of him (v. 9): *Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee*. Observe, It is no disparagement for those who have power to be condescending, and sometimes even to beseech, where, in strictness of right, they might command; so does Paul here, though an apostle: he entreats where he might enjoin, he argues from love rather than authority, which doubtless must carry engaging influence with it. And especially, which may be a

4th Argument, When any circumstance of the person pleading gives additional force to his petition, as here: *Being such a one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ*. Years bespeak respect; and the motions of such, in things lawful and fit, should be received with regard. The request of an aged apostle, and now suffering for Christ and his gospel, should be tenderly considered. "If thou wilt do any thing for a poor aged prisoner, to comfort me in my bonds, and make my chain lighter, grant me this which I desire: hereby in a manner you will do honor to Christ in the person of an aged suffering servant of his, which doubtless he will take as done to himself." He makes also a

5th Argument, From the spiritual relation now between Onesimus and himself: *I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds*, v. 10. "Though of right and in a civil respect he by thy servant, yet in a spiritual sense he is now a son to me, God having made me the instrument of his conversion, even here, where I am a prisoner for Christ's sake." Thus does God sometimes honor and comfort his suffering servants, not only working good in themselves by their sufferings, exercising and improving thereby their own graces, but making them a means of much spiritual good to others, either of their conversion, as of Onesimus here, or of their confirmation and strengthening, as Phil. i. 14, *Many brethren, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word of the Lord without fear*. When God's servants are bound, yet his word and Spirit are not bound; spiritual children may then be born to them. The apostle lays an emphasis here: *My son, whom I have begotten in my bonds*; he was dear to him, and he hoped would be so to Philemon, under this consideration. Prison-mercies are sweet and much set by. Paul makes an argument to Philemon from this dear relation that now was between Onesimus and him, his son begotten in his bonds. And a

6th Argument is from Philemon's own interest: *Who in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me*, v. 11. Observe, (1.) Unsanctified persons are unprofitable persons; they answer not the great end of their being and relations. Grace makes good for somewhat: *In time past unprofitable, but now profitable*, inclined and fitted to be so, and will be so to thee, his master, if thou receive him, as he has since his conversion been here to me, ministering to me in my confinement." There seems an allusion to the name Onesimus, which signifies *profitable*. Now he will answer to his name. It may be noted also how the apostle speaks in this matter, not as Onesimus's former case and conduct might warrant; he had wronged his master, and ran away from him, and lived as if he were his own and not his; yet as God covers the sins of penitents, forgives and does not upbraid, so should men. How tenderly does Paul here speak! Not that Onesimus's sin was small, nor that he would have any, much less himself, to take it so; but having been humbled for it, and doubtless taken

shame to himself on account thereof, the apostle now would not sink his spirit by continuing to load and burden him therewith, but speaks thus tenderly when he is pleading with Philemon not to make severe reflections on his servant's misconduct, but to forgive. (2.) What happy changes conversion makes--of evil good! of unprofitable useful! Religious servants are a treasure in a family. Such will make conscience of their time and trusts, promoting the interests of those whom they serve, and managing all they can for the best. This then is the argument here urged: "It will now be for thy advantage to receive him: thus changed, as he is, thou mayest expect him to be a dutiful and faithful servant, though in time past he was not so."

John Chrysostom. Homily (continued)

Ver. 8. "Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient [befitting]."

Observe how cautious he is, lest any of the things which were spoken even from exceeding love should so strike the hearer, as that he should be hurt. For this reason before he says, "to enjoin thee," since it was offensive, although, as spoken out of love, it was more proper to soothe him, yet nevertheless from an excess of delicacy, he as it were corrects it by saying, "Having confidence," by which he implies that Philemon was a great man,¹⁵⁵⁰ that is "Thou hast give confidence to us." And not only that, but adding the expression "in Christ," by which he shows that it was not that he was more illustrious in the world, not that he was more powerful, but it was on account of his faith in Christ,—then he also adds, "to enjoin thee," and not that only, but "that which is convenient," that is, a reasonable action. And see out of how many things he brings proof for this. Thou doest good to others, he says, and to me, and for Christ's sake, and that the thing is reasonable, and that love giveth, wherefore also he adds,

Ver. 9. "Yet for love's sake, I rather beseech thee."

As if he had said, I know indeed that I can effect it by commanding with much authority, from things which have already taken place. But because I am very solicitous about this matter, "I beseech thee." He shows both these things at once; that he has confidence in him, for he commands him;¹⁵⁵¹ and that he is exceedingly concerned about the matter, wherefore he beseeches him.

"Being such an one," he says, "as Paul the aged." Strange! how many things are here to shame him into compliance! Paul, from the quality of his person, from his age, because he was old, and from what was more just than all, because he was also "a prisoner of Jesus Christ."

For who would not receive with open arms a combatant who had been crowned? Who seeing him bound for Christ's sake, would not have granted him ten thousand favors? By so many considerations having previously soothed his mind, he has not immediately introduced the name, but defers making so great a request. For you know what are the minds of masters towards slaves that have run away; and particularly when they have done this with robbery, even if they have good masters, how their anger is increased. This anger then having taken all these pains to soothe, and having first persuaded him readily to serve him in anything whatever, and having prepared his soul to all obedience, then he introduces his request, and says, "I beseech thee," and with the addition of praises, "for my son whom I have begotten in my bonds."

Again the chains are mentioned to shame him into compliance, and then the name. For he has not only extinguished his anger, but has caused him to be delighted. For I would not have called him my son, he says, if he were not especially profitable. What I called Timothy, that I call him also. And repeatedly showing his affection, he urges him by the very period of his new birth, "I have begotten him in my bonds," he says, so that on this account also he was worthy to obtain much honor, because he was begotten in his very conflicts, in his trials in the cause of Christ.

"Onesimus,"

Ver. 11. "Which in time past was to thee unprofitable."

See how great is his prudence, how he confesses the man's faults, and thereby extinguishes his anger. I know, he says, that he was unprofitable.

"But now" he will be "profitable to thee and to me."

He has not said he will be useful to thee, lest he should contradict it, but he has introduced his own person, that his hopes may seem worthy of credit, "But now," he says, "profitable to thee and to me." For if he was profitable to Paul, who required so great strictness, much more would he be so to his master.

Footnotes:

¹⁵⁵⁰ i.e. a man of high Christian character, who would admit such claims as his.

¹⁵⁵¹ He means that his words would be felt as a command, and were really not *less*, but *more*.

LESSON FIVE

THE PROCESS OF RECONCILIATION. Vs. 12-16

INTRODUCTION

The reconciliation of the believer with the Father through the Son is implied in vs. 3 and it is the subject matter of several of the prison epistles. Those epistles need to be taken as a back ground to the social reconciliation that Paul proposes to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus. It would be unfair to interpret Paul's effort for social reconciliation as separate from spiritual reconciliation.

Christian reconciliation was established by the Lord Jesus Christ through his life, death, resurrection, ascension and reign. It does not have to be re-invented, or mythologized, but it is an historical event that occurred on the cross. Now the Lord requires that its implications be carried out in the life of the Christian and the Church.

THE PROCESS OF RECONCILIATION

1. *First step of action* (vs. 12)

Paul does not just speak about reconciliation but he promotes its first step. He sends Onesimus, the run away slave back to his master, Philemon, with the request for reconciliation in his hand (Col. 4:7-9).⁴⁹

The sending forth of Onesimus is analogous to the Great Commission. Christians are sent forth into the world with the good news of liberation from sin. In order for the news to become good news for the audience, the receptor has to believe in order to partake in the promises that accompany the message.

2. *The intercessor shows the way* (vs. 13)

Paul lets Philemon know that Onesimus had been helpful to him. Onesimus' reconciliation with God was bearing fruit as he was serving the aged apostle. Paul trusted Onesimus so much that he sent the letter to the church in Colosse as well as this handwritten letter to Philemon, with the runaway slave.

As the intercessor between Philemon and Onesimus, Paul shows the way. He shows trust in both parties. Isn't this a beautiful example of what Jesus Christ, our divine Intercessor has done? He has already accomplished all that is necessary to reconcile lost sinners to the father. As our High Priest he paid the supreme sacrifice and serves as our constant intercessor before the Father.

3. *Submission to the old in order to bring the new* (vs. 14)

Paul wants Philemon to make amends with Onesimus and visa versa. Paul's appeal has implications for the freedom of Onesimus. Paul does not implement a law that all people

⁴⁹ Since Paul was able to send Onesimus as a messenger it seems evident that he was not a prisoner.

have to set their slaves free. Rather, he appeals to the conscience of Philemon to free Onesimus.⁵⁰

Within the Christian community the rule of reasonable persuasion is used from the pulpits and in the meeting rooms. However, in society, one does not necessarily have the precondition of regeneration, love and faith, and so the rule of law prevails.⁵¹

On a wider scale, Paul submits to the old order (slavery) (I Col. 7:20-22) and teaches slaves to obey their master (Col. 3:22; I Tim. 6:1,2) in order to live within it through the gospel or to be freed (Luke 4:18-19; Col. 3:11; Gal. 3:28).

The seeds of social freedom, based on the gospel, are planted with a submissive yet persuasive spirit. Paul's approach is not passive but active. He logically pursues the fruit of reconciliation, namely, the spiritual restoration between believers and the gracious release of the slave.

Paul's approach does not justify or sanctify the institution of slavery. Just because one is imprisoned (like he was) does not justify the reasons for the imprisonment, the mistreatment of prisoners, nor their unjust punishment. Just because Onesimus was a slave and the Christians worked with slaves, does not justify the existence of the institution.

4. *A providential explanation* (vs. 15)

Paul sees the bigger picture. He does not speak about Onesimus' action of running away but speaks in terms of God separating Onesimus from Philemon. The three steps backward (slavery, runaway, estrangement from Philemon) are now turned into one giant leap forward: the return of a slave to his master and more so, the addition of another worker for the Lord.

Notice that what Philemon was unable to do on his own, God accomplished through providence, regeneration, Christian leadership and the consequent reconciliation.

The theology of providence, how God operates in a fallen world, is fascinating and encouraging. The goodness of God is not on par with the intentions of human action, it stands above it. God is able to intervene in man's fallen condition and work towards the good. All things (good and evil) work together for good for those who love God. God is not the author of human evil but God is sovereign and so can use the evil intent and action for His purpose.

The theology of providence and the good news of salvation compliment each other. Since all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, it is only by God's grace that human beings are elected, regenerated, equipped as saints and sent into the world to serve God. The fallen nature and actions of Onesimus are no worse than that of Philemon. The doctrine of total depravity and undeserving grace puts all people, slave and master alike, on the same level. Philemon, saved by grace, has good reason to be gracious and forgive Onesimus.

⁵⁰ Muller writes: "the converted slave was still the slave of Philemon, and his mastership had still to be acknowledged. The bond of slavery is not severed by the gospel in a revolutionary way." (*op.cit.* p.184). Muller misses the implication of verse 16 where Paul does not affirm the status quo but goes beyond the social norms and applies principles that will bring justice for all, including the freedom to serve.

⁵¹ According to this distinction, the Christian could voluntarily free slaves while non-Christian or non-consistent Christians could be forced by the rule of law to free slaves.

5. *From slavery into brotherhood* (vs. 16)

Verse 16 is the pivotal statement in the argumentation of Paul. All of the previous statements lead to this synthesis. Onesimus is to be received, no longer as a slave (doulos) but more than a slave, both as a person (*en sarki*, in the flesh) and brother in the Lord.⁵² The freeing of slaves was mandated for Hebrew slaves in the Old Testament. They would serve for 6 years and then be freed.⁵³ Here the apostles come to the same conclusion for Onesimus.

Paul insinuates that Philemon voluntarily free Onesimus. Christian slaves were encouraged to gain freedom (I Cor. 7:21) but if that was not possible, to be content in their spiritual freedom (I Cor. 7:22).⁵⁴ Even though the Hebrew slaves were mandated to be set free at the end of the 6 years, the Christians found themselves in a Roman system and freedom for slaves could not be mandated.

If it is true that the apostle was advocating for forgiveness and freedom for the slave, then one implication for the universal church is that within the Christian community slaves should be set free.....not only if they become Christians but also to show the love of the gospel of Jesus Christ to non-Christians. The grace and love of the gospel needs to be shown to unbelievers, as was Onesimus in his runaway situation, so that such a wonderful ethic would continue to work its way into all of society. It's a question of lifestyle, not simply an exception to the rule.⁵⁵

By such argumentation, the apostle does not abolish the holding of slaves among Christians but addresses their conscience as to what they should do in such situations; namely, express their common love and goodness in Christ. There would come a time, especially with the racial slave institution created by trafficking of slaves from Africa to

⁵² The Hebrew institution of slavery as described by Lightfoot, *op.cit.* p. 320. "The Hebrew was not suffered whether by law-giver or by prophets to forget that he himself had been a bondman in the land of Egypt; and all his relations to his dependents were molded by the sympathy of this recollection. His slaves were members of his family; they were members also of the Holy Congregation. They had their religious, as well as social, rights. If Hebrews, their liberty was secured to them after six years' service at the outside. If foreigners, they were protected by the laws from the tyranny and violence of their masters. Considering the conditions of ancient society, and more especially of ancient warfare, slavery as practiced among the Hebrews was probably an escape from alternatives which would have involved a far greater amount of human misery. Still even in this form it was only a temporary concession, til the fullness of time came, and the world was taught that "in Christ is neither bond nor free."

Robert Wall in *op.cit.* p. 212. "Paul does not suppose that the social (as a man, literally 'in the flesh.')

and the spiritual (as a brother) can be kept as two disjointed spheres of human existence. While God's creation includes both the visible and the invisible, they are integrated and held together by one Lord."

⁵³ Paul does not speak about the Christianity as a time of jubilee, but this one implication. Lightfoot observes how cruel Roman slavery was. Pages 322 f. gives useful information as to Christianity and slavery in the Roman Empire.

⁵⁴ Martin in *op.cit.* p. 166, says it a little different: "In that way (that Onesimus would serve Paul on Philemon's behalf) Paul has put a new face on slavery by regarding the human condition as unimportant in contrast with a person's desire to fulfill his Christian vocation. This is his teaching in I Corinthians 7:21-4; and repeated in the "rules for the household", especially Colossians 3:22-4." However, Paul does not suggest that Onesimus stay a slave but rather speaks in liberating terms.

⁵⁵ F.F. Bruce, *Paul*, p. 401. "What this letter does is to bring us into an atmosphere in which the institution could only wilt and die." I do not agree with O'Brien's, *op.cit.*, p. 303, casual statement: "Although Onesimus' earthly freedom may be of positive value, finally it is of no ultimate significance to him as a Christian as to whether he is slave or free. In the end what matters is to have accepted God's call and to follow him (I Cor. 7:21-24)."

the Americas in the 16th to the 19th century, that conscientious Christians called for the total abolition of the institution, as it was not a penal institution to repay debts but had become a racist institution to enslave and abuse certain people groups.

The implications for the inclusion of non-documented migrants, prisoners, released prisoners and marginalized peoples in our church community are encouraged as the gospel of reconciliation is believed and practiced, as it was in the prison confinement in Rome and the living room of Philemon and Apphia.

CONCLUSION

Paul advocates the acceptance of Onesimus as his personal friend, as a man, as better than a slave, a brother and a servant of the Lord. That is quite a letter of recommendation! Paul is confident in the credentials of Onesimus because they have been accomplished by Christ and worked into his life by the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul says the bigger picture, the advancement of the kingdom of God through Onesimus, Philemon and the church in Colosse.

THOUGHTS ON SOCIAL ETHICS

1. Are all kinds of sinners welcome in your church?
2. Are restored alcoholics voted in as elder and deacons in your church? Should they be?
3. Are restored homosexuals part of your church? Should they be?
4. Could an illegal immigrant become member of your church? Please discuss.
5. Could an illegal immigrant become a pastor in your church?
6. What ministries of restoration does your church or are you involved in?

LESSON FIVE WORK SHEET: vs. 12-16

READING OF 12-16	Read the passage in two different bible versions and Show the differences
<p>INDUCTIVE STUDY of 1:1-3 Explanation of important data (from your reading of the Study Bibles and Philemon itself, please jot down what you know) Important words: Grammatical annotations: Translation method: Original author and hearers Cultural context: Historical context: Biblical context: Proposed title for the passage Major themes for the passage</p>	
VERSE BY VERSE EXPOSITIONAL STUDY Vs. 12	Show how these Biblical texts are related to our passage
Vs. 13	
Vs. 14	2 Cor. 9:7 I Peter 5:2
Vs. 15	
Vs.16	Mt. 23:8 Acts 1:16 I Cor. 7:22 Eph. 6:5 Col. 3:22-25; Col. 4:1 I Tim. 6:1-2
Jot down notes from commentaries	
<p>LITERARY ANALYSIS -What kind (genre) of literature is the text? -What is the thematic outline of the passage and how does it fit into the structure of the book? -Have are figures of speech used?</p>	
<p>DIALECTICAL STUDY 12-16 Thesis: Antithesis: Synthesis: Syncretism:</p>	
<p>DEVOTIONAL STUDY Prayer and Action -Praise to God -Confession of personal sin -Confession of social sin -Special requests -Thanksgiving to God -Communication of truths of the passage -three main truth statements 1. 2. 3. Your own summary of the passage</p>	

COMMENTARIES ON VS. 12-16

CALVIN'S COMMENTARY. Vs. 12-16

12. *Receive him, that is, my bowels.* Nothing could have been more powerful for assuaging the wrath of Philemon; for if he had refused to forgive his slave, he would thus have used cruelty against "the bowels" of Paul. This is remarkable kindness displayed by Paul, that he did not hesitate to receive, as it were into his bowels, a contemptible slave, and thief, and runaway, so as to defend him from the indignation of his master. And, indeed, if the conversion of a man to God were estimated by us, at its proper value, we too would embrace, in the same manner, those who should give evidence that they had truly and sincerely repented.

13. *Whom I was desirous to keep beside me.* This is another argument for the purpose of appeasing Philemon, that Paul sends him back a slave, of whose services, in other respects, he stood greatly in need. It would have been extreme cruelty, to disdain so strong affection manifested by Paul. He likewise states indirectly, that it will be a gratification to himself to have Onesimus sent back to him rather than that he should be harshly treated at home.

That he might minister to me instead of thee in the bonds of the gospel. He now mentions other circumstances: first, Onesimus will supply the place of his master, by performing this service; secondly, Paul himself, through modesty, was unwilling to deprive Philemon of his right; and, thirdly, Philemon will receive more applause, if, after having had his slave restored to him, he shall willingly and generously send him back. From this last consideration we infer, that we ought to aid the martyrs of Christ by every kind office in our power, while they are laboring for the testimony of the gospel; for if exile, imprisonment stripes, blows, and violent seizing of our property, are believed by us to belong to the gospel, as Paul here calls them, whoever refuses to share and partake of them separates himself even from Christ. Undoubtedly the defense of the gospel belongs alike to all. Accordingly, he who endures persecution, for the sake of the gospel, ought not to be regarded as a private individual, but as one who publicly represents the whole Church. Hence it follows, that all believers ought to be united in taking care of it, so that they may not, as is frequently done, leave the gospel to be defended in the person of one man.

14. *That thy benefit might not be by constraint.* This is drawn from the general rule, that no sacrifices are acceptable to God but those which are freely offered. Paul speaks of almsgiving in the same manner. (2 Corinthians 9:7.) *To > ajgaqon* is here put for "acts of kindness," and willingness is contrasted with constraint, when there is no other opportunity of putting to the test a generous and cheerful act of the will; for that duty which is generously performed, and not through influence exercised by others, is alone entitled to full praise. It is also worthy of observation, that Paul, while he acknowledges that Onesimus was to blame in past time, affirms that he is changed; and lest Philemon should have any doubt that his slave returns to him with a new disposition and different conduct, Paul says that he has made full trial of his repentance by personal knowledge.

15. *For perhaps he was separated.* If we are angry on account of offenses committed by men, our minds ought to be soothed, when we perceive that those things which were done through malice have been turned to a different end by the purpose of God. A joyful result may be regarded as a remedy for evils, which is held out to us by the hand of God for blotting out offenses. Thus Joseph -- when he takes into consideration, that the wonderful providence of God brought it about, that, though he was sold as a slave, yet he was elevated to that high rank, from which he could provide food for his brethren and his father -- forgets the treachery and cruelty of his brethren, and says, that he was sent before on their account. (Genesis 45:5.)

Paul therefore reminds Philemon that he ought not to be so greatly offended at the flight of his slave, for it was the cause of a benefit not to be regretted. So long as Onesimus was at heart a runaway, Philemon, though he had him in his house, did not actually enjoy him as his property; for he was wicked and unfaithful, and could not be of real advantage. He says, therefore, that he was a wanderer for a little time, that, by changing his place, he might be converted and become a new man. And he prudently softens everything, by calling the flight a departure, and adding, that it was only *for a time*.

That thou mightest receive him for ever. Lastly, he contrasts the perpetuity of the advantage with the short duration of the loss.

But above a servant, a beloved brother. He next brings forward another advantage of the flight, that Onesimus has not only been corrected by means of it, so as to become a useful slave, but that he has become the "brother" of his master.

Especially to me. Lest the heart of Onesimus, wounded by the offense which was still fresh, should be reluctant to admit the brotherly appellation, Paul claims Onesimus first of all, as his own "brother." Hence he infers that Philemon is much more closely related to him, because both of them had the same relationship in the Lord according to the Spirit, but, according to the flesh, Onesimus is a member of his family. Here we behold the uncommon modesty of Paul, who bestows on a worthless slave the title of a brother, and even calls him a dearly beloved brother to himself. And, indeed, it would be excessive pride, if we should be ashamed of acknowledging as our brother those whom God accounts to be his sons.

How much more to thee. By these words he does not mean that Philemon is higher in rank according to the Spirit; but the meaning is, "Seeing that he is especially a brother to me, he must be much more so to thee; for there is a twofold relationship between you."

We must hold it to be an undoubted truth, that Paul does not rashly or lightly (as many people do) answer for a man of whom he knows little, or extol his faith before he has ascertained it by strong proofs, and therefore in the person of Onesimus there is exhibited a memorable example of repentance. We know how wicked the dispositions of slaves were, so that scarcely one in a hundred ever came to be of real use. As to Onesimus, we may conjecture from his flight, that he had been hardened in depravity by long habit and practice. It is therefore uncommon and wonderful virtue to lay aside the vices by which his nature was polluted, so that the Apostle can truly declare that he has now become another man.

From the same source proceeds a profitable doctrine, that the elect of God are sometimes brought to salvation by a method that could not have been believed, contrary to general expectation, by circuitous windings, and even by labyrinths. Onesimus lived in a religious and holy family, and, being banished from it by his own evil actions, he deliberately, as it were, withdraws far from God and from eternal life. Yet God, by hidden providence, wonderfully directs his pernicious flight, so that he meets with Paul.

GILL'S EXPOSITION. Vs. 12-16

Philemon 1:12

Whom I have sent again... From Rome to Colosse, or to Philemon, wherever he was, along with this epistle:

thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels; meaning his son, who, in a spiritual sense, came out of his bowels, to whom he stood in the relation of a spiritual father; so the Syriac version renders it, as my son, so receive him; see (Genesis 15:4) (2 Samuel 16:11) and for whom he had a most strong affection, and tender regard; his bowels yearned for him, and he suggests by this expression, that should he reject him, it would give him the utmost pain and uneasiness; and he should be obliged to cry out as the Prophet Jeremy did, "my bowels, my bowels, I am pained at the very heart"; (Jeremiah 4:19) wherefore he entreats him to receive him again into his house and family, into his service, and into his heart and affections, where the apostle had received him

Philemon 1:13

Whom I would have retained with me... At Rome, where the apostle was a prisoner:

that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the Gospel; the apostle was in bonds, not for any crime, for any immorality he had been guilty of, but for the sake of the Gospel, for professing and preaching that; for this he was an ambassador in bonds, as he elsewhere says, (Ephesians 6:20) . Now he would have kept Onesimus with him, either to have waited upon him, in his bonds, and to have provided for him the necessaries of life; or to have assisted him in the ministration of the word, in the room of Philemon, who, had he been there, would have been employed in such service; so that if the apostle had retained him, he would have been acting not for himself, but in the room of his master, and doing what he should have done, had he been on the spot. This the apostle observes to prevent an objection that might have been made; that since Onesimus was become so profitable to him, why did he send him back? why did he not keep him for his own service? this he obviates and removes, by signifying he should have done it, but for the following reason

Philemon 1:14

But without thy mind would I do nothing... Which shows great modesty and humility in the apostle, that though as such he had an authority, which he could have used, as well as had understanding and judgment how to have used it without consulting Philemon, or having his sense of this affair, yet chose to consult him: and it also shows the strict regard the apostle had to equity and justice, that he would do nothing with another man's servant without his consent; he would not seem to alienate, or engross another man's right and property, whatever power he might have, as an apostle, to have retained Onesimus as a minister to him.

That thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly; that is, that his goodness in forgiving his servant, and renouncing all claim and property in him, and admitting him to continue in the service of the apostle, might not look like a forced thing; but that it might appear to be a voluntary action, when he should of himself return him, after he had been thus sent to him, and received by him.

Philemon 1:15

For perhaps he therefore departed for a season... The apostle in this clause seems to soften this business of Onesimus in running away from his master; he calls it not a running away, but a departure, an absence from him, and that but for a little while; and suggests that the hand of God might be in it; that there was an overruling providence that attended it, such as was in Joseph's going down into Egypt; and that this separation of Onesimus from his master, for a short time, was in order that they should come together again, and never part more, as follows:

that thou shouldest receive him for ever; or during life, referring to the law in (Exodus 21:6) or to all eternity, since they were in the same spiritual relation, partakers of the same grace, and had a right to the same heavenly inheritance, and should be together with Christ for evermore.

Philemon 1:16

Not now as a servant... That is, not only as a servant, for a servant he was, and was to be received as such; his call by grace had not dissolved the civil relation that was between him and his master, though it had added to it something that was above it, and greater than it:

but above a servant; in a higher condition, as the Arabic version renders it, than a servant; not barely considered in that relation, but as being in one much preferable to it:

a brother beloved, specially to me; a brother in Christ, and to be beloved on that account, as he was especially by the apostle, who had been the instrument of his conversion; see (Colossians 4:9) .

But how much more unto thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord? both in a natural and civil sense, as being of the same nation and country, and as being part of his family, his servant, and now become an useful and profitable one; and, in a spiritual sense, being in the Lord, belonging to the Lord Jesus, to that family which is named of him, being a fellow citizen with the saints, and of the household of God, and therefore must be doubly dear to him.

MATTHEW HENRY'S COMMENTARY. Vs. 12-16

7th Argument, He urges Philemon from the strong affection that he had to Onesimus. He had mentioned the spiritual relation before, *My son begotten in my bonds*; and now he signifies how dear he was to him: *Thou therefore receive him, that is my own bowels*, v. 12. "I love him as I do myself, and have sent him back to thee for this end, that thou shouldst receive him; do it therefore for my sake, receive him as one thus dear to me." Observe, even good men may sometimes need great earnestness and entreaty to lay their passions, let go their resentments, and forgive those who have injured and offended them. Some have thought it to look this way, when Paul is so pathetic and earnest, mustering up so many pleas and arguments to gain what he requests. Philemon, a Phrygian, might perhaps be naturally of a rough and difficult temper, and thence need no little pains in touching all the springs that might move him to forgiveness and reconciliation; but rather should we strive to be like God, who is *slow to anger, ready to forgive, and abundant in pardons*. And again, an

8th Argument is from the apostle's denying himself in sending back Onesimus: though he might have presumed upon Philemon's leave to detain him longer, yet he would not, v. 13, 14. Paul was now in prison, and wanted a friend or servant to act for him, and assist him, for which he found Onesimus fit and ready, and therefore would have detained him to minister to him, instead of Philemon himself, whom if he had requested to have come to him in person for such purpose, he might have presumed he would not have refused; much less might he have reckoned that he would be unwilling his servant should do this in his stead; yet he would not take this liberty, though his circumstances needed it: *I have sent him back to thee*, that any good office of thine to me might not be *of necessity, but willingly*. Observe, Good deeds are most acceptable to God and man when done with most freedom. And Paul herein, notwithstanding his apostolical power, would show what regard he had to civil rights, which Christianity does by no means supersede or weaken, but rather confirm and strengthen. Onesimus, he knew, was Philemon's servant, and therefore without his consent not to be detained from him. In his unconverted state he had violated that right, and withdrawn himself, to his master's injury; but, now that he had seen his sin and repented, he was willing and desirous to return to his duty, and Paul would not hinder this, but rather further it. He might indeed have presumed on Philemon's willingness; but, but notwithstanding his need, he would deny himself rather than take that way. And he further urges,

9th Argument, That such a change was now wrought in Onesimus that Philemon needed not fear his ever running from him, or injuring him any more: *For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldst receive him for ever*, v. 15. There are

those of whom Solomon says, *If thou deliver them, thou must do it again* (Prov. xix. 19); but the change wrought in Onesimus was such that he would never again need one thus to intercede for him. Charity would so hope and judge, yea, so it would be; yet the apostle speaks cautiously, that none might be bold to make another such experiment in expectation of a like gracious issue. Observe, (1.) In matters that may be wrested to ill, ministers must speak warily, that kind providences of God towards sinners be not abused to encouragements to sin, or abatements of just abhorrence of it: *Perhaps he therefore departed from thee for a season, &c.* (2.) How tenderly still the sins of penitents are spoken of; he calls it a *departure for a season*, instead of giving it the term that it deserved. As overruled and ordered by God, it was a *departure*; but in itself, and in respect of the disposition and manner of the act, it was a *criminal going away*. When we speak of the nature of any sin or offence against God, the evil of it is not to be lessened; but in the person of a penitent sinner, as God covers it, so must we: "*He departed for a season, that thou shouldst receive him for ever, that upon conversion he may return, and be a faithful and useful servant to thee as long as he lives.*" *Bray a fool in a mortar, yet will not his folly depart from him.* But it is not so with true penitents: they will not return to folly. (3.) Observe the wisdom, and goodness, and power of God, in causing that to end so happily which was begun and carried on for some time so wickedly, thus regarding a poor vassal, one of such low rank and condition and so little regarded by men, working so good and great a change in him who was so far gone in evil ways, who had wronged a master so good, had run from a family so pious, from the means of grace, the church in his house, that he should be led into the way of salvation who had fled from it, and find means made effectual at Rome who had been hardened under them at Colosse. What riches are here of divine grace! None so low, nor mean, nor vile, as utterly to be despaired of. God can meet with them when running from him; can make means effectual at one time and place, which have not been so at another. So was it in this instance of Onesimus; having returned to God, he now returns to his master, who will have more service and better hold of him than ever--by conscience of his duty and faithfulness in it to his life's end; his interest therefore it will be now to receive him. So God often brings gain to his people out of their losses. And, besides interest, a

10th Argument is taken from the capacity under which Onesimus now would return, and must be received by Philemon (v. 16): "*Not now as a servant* (that is, not merely or so much), *but above a servant* (in a spiritual respect), *a brother beloved*, one to be owned as a brother in Christ, and to be beloved as such, upon account of this holy change that is wrought in him, and one therefore who will be useful unto thee upon better principles and in a better manner than before, who will love and promote the best things in thy family, be a blessing in it, and help to keep up the church that is in thy house." Observe, (1.) There is a spiritual brotherhood between all true believers, however distinguished in civil and outward respects; they are all children of the same heavenly Father, have a right to the same spiritual privileges and benefits, must love and do all good offices to and for one another as brethren, though still in the same rank, and degree, and station, wherein they were called. Christianity does not annul nor confound the respective civil duties, but strengthens the obligation to them, and directs to a right discharge of them. (2.) Religious servants are more than mere ordinary servants; they have grace in their hearts, and have found grace in God's sight, and so will in the sight of religious masters. Ps. ci. 6, *Mine*

eyes are upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me. He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. "Onesimus having now become such, receive and regard him as one that is partaker of the same common faith, and so *a brother beloved, specially to me* who have been the instrument of his conversion." Good ministers love not so much according to the outward good which they receive as the spiritual good which they do. Paul called Onesimus his *own bowels*, and other converts his *joy and crown*. "*A brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more to thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord*; by a double tie therefore (both civil and religious) thy servant: thy property, one of thy house and family, and now, in a spiritual respect, thy brother in Christ, which heightens the engagement. He is God's servant and thine too; here are more ties than he is under to me. How readily therefore should he be received and loved by thee, as one of thy family and one of the true faith, one of thy house and one of the church in thy house!" This argument is strengthened by another, the (10th argument).

John Chrysostom Homily II (continued)

Ver. 12. "Whom I have sent again to thee."

By this also he has quenched his anger, by delivering him up. For masters are then most enraged, when they are entreated for the absent, so that by this very act he mollified him the more.

Ver. 12. "Thou therefore receive him, that is mine own bowels."

And again he has not given the bare name, but uses with it a word that might move him, which is more affectionate than son. He has said, "son," he has said, "I have begotten" him,¹⁵⁵² so that it was probable¹⁵⁵³ he would love him much, because he begot him in his trials. For it is manifest that we are most inflamed with affection for those children, who have been born to us in dangers which we have escaped, as when the Scripture saith, "Woe, Barochabel!"¹⁵⁵⁴ and again when Rachel names Benjamin, "the son of my sorrow." (Gen. xxxv. 18.)

"Thou therefore," he says, "receive him, that is mine own bowels." He shows the greatness of his affection. He has not said, Take him back,¹⁵⁵⁵ he has not said, Be not angry,¹⁵⁵⁶ but "receive him"; that is, he is worthy not only of pardon, but of honor. Why? Because he is become the son of Paul.

Ver. 13. "Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the Gospel."

Dost thou see after how much previous preparation, he has at length brought him honorably before his master, and observe with how much wisdom he has done this. See for how much he makes him answerable, and how much he honors the other. Thou hast found, he says, a way by which thou mayest through him 552repay thy service to me. Here he shows that he has considered his advantage more than that of his slave, and that he respects him exceedingly.

Ver. 14. "But without thy mind," he says, "would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be, as it were, of necessity, but willingly."

This particularly flatters the person asked, when the thing being profitable in itself, it is brought out with his concurrence. For two good effects are produced thence, the one person gains, and the other is rendered more secure. And he has not said, That it should not be of necessity, but "as it were of necessity." For I knew, he says, that not having

learnt¹⁵⁵⁷ it, but coming to know it at once, thou wouldest not have been angry, but nevertheless out of an excess of consideration, that it should “not be as it were of necessity.”

Ver. 15, 16. “For perhaps he was therefore parted from thee for a season that thou shouldest have him for ever; no longer as a bond-servant.”

He has well said, “perhaps,” that the master may yield. For since the flight arose from perverseness, and a corrupt mind, and not from such intention, he has said, “perhaps.” And he has not said, therefore he fled, but, therefore he was “separated,”¹⁵⁵⁸ by a more fair sounding expression softening him the more. And he has not said, He separated himself, but, “he was separated.” For it was not his own arrangement that he should depart either for this purpose or for that. Which also Joseph says, in making excuse for his brethren, “For God did send me hither” (Gen. xlv. 5.), that is, He made use of their wickedness for a good end. “Therefore,” he says, “he was parted for a season.”¹⁵⁵⁹ Thus he contracts the time, acknowledges the offense, and turns it all to a providence.¹⁵⁶⁰ “That thou shouldest receive him,” he says, “for ever,” not for the present season only, but even for the future, that thou mightest always have him, no longer a slave, but more honorable than a slave. For thou wilt have a slave abiding with thee, more well-disposed than a brother, so that thou hast gained both in time, and in the quality of thy slave. For hereafter he will not run away. “That thou shouldest receive him,” he says, “for ever,” that is, have him again.

“No longer as a bond-servant, but more than a bond-servant, a brother beloved, especially to me.”

Thou hast lost a slave for a short time, but thou wilt find a brother for ever, not only thy brother, but mine also. Here also there is much virtue. But if he is my brother, thou also wilt not be ashamed of him. By calling him his son, he hath shown his natural affection; and by calling him his brother, his great good will for him, and his equality in honor.

MORAL. These things are not written without an object, but that we masters may not despair of our servants, nor press too hard on them, but may learn to pardon the offenses of such servants, that we may not be always severe, that we may not from their servitude be ashamed to make them partakers with us in all things when they are good. For if Paul was not ashamed to call one “his son, his own bowels, his brother, his beloved,” surely we ought not to be ashamed. And why do I say Paul? The Master of Paul is not ashamed to call our servants His own brethren; and are we ashamed? See how He honors us; He calls our servants His own brethren, friends, and fellow-heirs. See to what He has descended! What therefore having done, shall we have accomplished our whole duty? We shall never in any wise do it; but to whatever degree of humility we have come, the greater part of it is still left behind. For consider, whatever thou doest, thou doest to a fellow-servant, but thy Master hath done it to thy servants. Hear and shudder! Never be elated at thy humility!

Perhaps you laugh at the expression, as if humility could puff up. But be not surprised at it, it puffs up, when it is not genuine. How, and in what manner? When it is practiced to gain the favor of men, and not of God, that we may be praised, and be high-minded. For this also is diabolical. For as many are vainglorious on account of their not being vainglorious,¹⁵⁶¹ so are they elated on account of their humbling themselves, by reason of their being high-minded. For instance, a brother has come, or even a servant thou hast

received him, thou hast washed his feet; immediately thou thinkest highly of thyself. I have done, thou sayest, what no other has done. I have achieved humility. How then may any one continue in humility? If he remembers the command of Christ, which says, "When ye shall have done all things, say, We are unprofitable servants." (Luke xvii. 10.) And again the Teacher of the world, saying, "I count not myself to have apprehended." (Philip. iii. 13.) He who has persuaded himself that he has done no great thing, however many things he may have done, he alone can be humble-minded, he who thinks that he has not reached perfection.

Many are elated on account of their humility; but let not us be so affected. Hast thou done any act of humility? be not proud of it, otherwise all the merit of it is lost. Such was the Pharisee, he was puffed up because he gave his tithes to the poor, and he lost all the merit of 553it. (Luke xviii. 12.) But not so the publican. Hear Paul again saying, "I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified." (1 Cor. iv. 4.) Seest thou that he does not exalt himself, but by every means abases and humbles himself, and that too when he had arrived at the very summit. And the Three Children were in the fire, and in the midst of the furnace, and what said they? "We have sinned and committed iniquity with our fathers." (Song, v. 6, in Sept.; Dan. iii. 29, 30; v. 16.) This it is to have a contrite heart; on this account they could say, "Nevertheless in a contrite heart and a humble spirit let us be accepted." Thus even after they had fallen into the furnace they were exceedingly humbled, even more so than they were before. For when they saw the miracle that was wrought, thinking themselves unworthy of that deliverance, they were brought lower in humility. For when we are persuaded that we have received great benefits beyond our desert, then we are particularly grieved. And yet what benefit had they received beyond their desert? They had given themselves up to the furnace; they had been taken captive for the sins of others; for they were still young; and they murmured not, nor were indignant, nor did they say, What good is it to us that we serve God, or what advantage have we in worshiping Him? This man is impious, and is become our lord. We are punished with the idolatrous by an idolatrous king. We have been led into captivity. We are deprived of our country, our freedom, all our paternal goods, we are become prisoners and slaves, we are enslaved to a barbarous king. None of these things did they say. But what? "We have sinned and committed iniquity." And not for themselves but for others they offer prayers. Because, say they, "Thou hast delivered us to a hateful and a wicked king." Again, Daniel, being a second time cast into the pit, said, "For God hath remembered me." Wherefore should He not remember¹⁵⁶² thee, O Daniel, when thou didst glorify Him before the king, saying, "Not for any wisdom that I have"? (Dan. ii. 30.) But when thou wast cast into the den of lions, because thou didst not obey that most wicked decree, wherefore should He not remember thee? For this very reason surely should He.¹⁵⁶³ Wast thou not cast into it on His account? "Yea truly," he says, "but I am a debtor for many things." And if he said such things after having displayed so great virtue, what should we say after this? But hear what David says, "If He thus say, I have no delight in thee, behold here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him." (2 Sam. xv. 26.) And yet he had an infinite number of good things to speak of. And Eli also says, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good." (1 Sam. iii. 18.)

This is the part of well-disposed servants, not only in His mercies, but in His corrections, and in punishments wholly to submit to Him. For how is it not absurd,¹⁵⁶⁴ if we bear with masters beating their servants, knowing that they will spare them, because

they are their own;¹⁵⁶⁵ and yet suppose that God in punishing will not spare? This also Paul has intimated, saying, "Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's." (Rom. xiv. 8.) A man, we say, wishes not his property to be diminished, he knows how he punishes, he is punishing his own servants. But surely no one of us spares more than He Who brought us into being out of nothing, Who maketh the sun to rise, Who causeth rain; Who breathed our life into us, Who gave His own Son for us.

But as I said before, and on which account I have said all that I have said, let us be humble-minded as we ought, let us be moderate as we ought. Let it not be to us an occasion of being puffed up. Art thou humble, and humbler than all men? Be not high-minded on that account, neither reproach others, lest thou lose thy boast. For this very cause thou art humble, that thou mayest be delivered from the madness of pride; if therefore through thy humility thou fallest into that madness, it were better for thee not to be humble. For hear Paul saying, "Sin worketh death in me by that which is good, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." (Rom. vii. 13.) When it enters into thy thought to admire thyself because thou art humble, consider thy Master, to what He descended, and thou wilt no longer admire thyself, nor praise thyself, but wilt deride thyself as having done nothing. Consider thyself altogether to be a debtor. Whatever thou hast done, remember that parable, "Which of you having a servant...will say unto him, when he is come in, Sit down to meat?...I say unto you, Nay...but stay and serve me." (From Luke xvii. 7, 8.) Do we return thanks to our servants, for waiting upon us? By no means. Yet God is thankful to us, who serve not Him, but do that which is expedient for ourselves.

But let not us be so affected, as if He owed us thanks, that He may owe us the more, but as if we were discharging a debt. For the matter truly is a debt, and all that we do is of debt. For if when we purchase slaves with our money, we wish them to live altogether for us, and whatever they have to have it for ourselves, how much more must it be so with Him, who brought us out of nothing into being, who after this bought us with His precious Blood, who paid down such a price for us as no one would endure to pay for his own son, who shed His own Blood for us? If therefore we had ten thousand souls, and should lay them all down for Him, should we make Him an equal return? By no means. And why? Because He did this, owing us nothing, but the whole was a matter of grace. But we henceforth are debtors: and being God Himself, He became a servant, and not being subject to death, subjected Himself to death in the flesh. We, if we do not lay down our lives for Him, by the law of nature must certainly lay them down, and a little later shall be separated from it,¹⁵⁶⁶ however unwillingly. So also in the case of riches, if we do not bestow them for His sake, we shall render them up from necessity at our end. So it is also with humility. Although we are not humble for His sake, we shall be made humble by tribulations, by calamities, by over-ruling powers. Seest thou therefore how great is the grace! He hath not said, "What great things do the Martyrs do? Although they die not for Me, they certainly will die." But He owns Himself much indebted to them, because they voluntarily resign that which in the course of nature they were about to resign shortly against their will. He hath not said, "What great thing do they, who give away their riches? Even against their will they will have to surrender them." But He owns Himself much indebted to them too, and is not ashamed to confess before all that He, the Master, is nourished by His slaves.

For this also is the glory of a Master, to have grateful slaves. And this is the glory of a Master, that He should thus love His slaves. And this is the glory of a Master, to claim for His own what is theirs. And this is the glory of a Master, not to be ashamed to confess them before all. Let us therefore be stricken with awe at this so great love of Christ. Let us be inflamed with this love-potion. Though a man be low and mean, yet if we hear that he loves us, we are above all things warmed with love towards him, and honor him exceedingly. And do we then love? and when our Master loveth us so much, we are not excited? Let us not, I beseech you, let us not be so indifferent with regard to the salvation of our souls, but let us love Him according to our power, and let us spend all upon His love, our life, our riches, our glory, everything, with delight, with joy, with alacrity, not as rendering anything to Him, but to ourselves. For such is the law of those who love. They think that they are receiving favors, when they are suffering wrong for the sake of their beloved. Therefore let us be so affected towards our Lord, that we¹⁵⁶⁷ also may partake of the good things to come in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- 1552 Old Lat. adds, “in my bonds,” which the sense requires.
- 1553 B. and Ven. “so as to show that he loved him especially.”
- 1554 The last Paris edition has a note from Raphelius and Hemsterhusius which curiously illustrates the variation of names. This οὐαιβαροχαβήλ is in Sept. 1 Sam. iv. 21, οὐαιβαρχαβώθ, Vat. Οὐαιχαβώθ Alex., Or. Hex. οὐαι ίοχαβήδ, E.V. “Ichabod.”
- 1555 ἀπόδεξαι.
- 1556 προσλαβοῦ.
- 1557 i.e. by previous explanation, μαθών.
- 1558 Gr. ἔχωρίσθη. [R.V. “he was parted *from thee*.”—P.S.]
- 1559 ὥραν, lit. “an hour.”
- 1560 οἰκονομίαν.
- 1561 “Proud of his periods leveled against pride.”—Anon.
- 1562 B. “didst thou not remember,” and presently, “did I not remember.” The construction in either case is so elliptical as to be difficult.
- 1563 Bel and Dragon, verse 38 [Ὁδὲ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἐμνήσθη τοῦ Δαυιδ.—P.S.]
- 1564 B. and Ven. add, “for us to be well disposed while we are favored, but discontented when we are chastised; tell me now.”
- 1565 Such seems the principle in Ex. xxi. 21.
- 1566 The sense naturally leads to this transition to the singular, which is not uncommon in St. Chrysostom.
- 1567 B. and Ven. add, “May both obtain His help here, and.”

LESSON SIX

THE PARTNERSHIP IN CHRIST. Vs. 17-21

INTRODUCTION

Christians do not act alone but their actions are part of a larger picture in which God is reconciling all things to Himself. Paul makes it clear to Philemon that Philemon's response is not just about Philemon but also about Paul and the Christian community.

THE PARTNERSHIP

1. *Appeal to partnership* (vs. 17)

Paul asks Philemon to become a partner in this enterprise of reconciliation. Paul asks Philemon not only to do such a thing for Onesimus' sake but also for Paul's sake. The immediate partners are Paul and Philemon. Other associated partners are Onesimus and the house church in Colosse. Since Paul is writing as an apostle, his teachings are authoritative for all believers and so the partnership principles apply to us as well. In other words, the believer cannot simply reject the teachings of Paul as "his opinion" or "culturally conditioned to his time." By being fellow believers, we too are drawn into partnership with other Christians seeking social reconciliation. The apostle Paul is not carrying out a personal agenda but he represents the extension of the kingdom of God as he applies the principles of the gospel of reconciliation.

There are special calls today to partner with other believers in order to accomplish social reconciliation. This is true for ministry among prisoners and ex-prisoners; this applies to working with the persecuted church; it is relevant for seeking relief for the Christian in forced service situations⁵⁶ and it applies to missions in general.

As a missionary I am aware that other Christians prayerfully and financially support the mission work we are involved in as faithful partners for the gospel sake. Many missionaries depend on the financial and logistical support of regular church members. The missionary becomes the representative of the prayers and vision of the supporting church members.

On the personal level Christians are interested in the process of reconciliation in their family, among church members and in relationship beyond their immediate community. In order to accomplish reconciliation it is often necessary to appeal for the help of others. In the case of Paul, he appeals to Philemon to welcome Onesimus as he would welcome Paul.

2. *Personal responsibility* (vs. 18)

One reason, not the only one, for Roman slavery was to repay debts. Onesimus had even some more debt to pay since he ran away and probably stole money to do so. Paul does not shrug off the financial cost for freeing the slave. He offers to pay for any crime that

⁵⁶ This would apply to Christians in totalitarian regimes that force Christians to work or support their social projects.

was committed as well as any other debt. How Christ like! Jesus paid for our crimes against God and paid the debt owned by shedding his blood on the cross.

There may be readers who object to applying the principles of reconciliation between God and the believer to the Christian's social situation. Yet, such an association, although puzzling to contemporary critics, was shown by Paul. The first commandment to love God above all else is directly related to the second commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves. One would have to be a dualist to separate the vertical relationship from the horizontal relationship.

The Netherlands Reformed Church in St. Thomas and Suriname did not minister among the African-Caribbean slaves and Indian populations. In 1732, the Moravians came to St. Thomas and later went to Surinam to explicitly work with the slaves. Some sold themselves into slavery in order to be with the slaves and develop the Christian community among them. Even though some of the NRC ministers and colonists were violently opposed, the Moravians continued, and through evangelism bringing spiritual reconciliation and through community work living out social reconciliation.⁵⁷

Christian parents become aware of orphans who need a home. I have cousins who have spent tens of thousands of dollars in order to secure a child from Russia. The cost was not only for the adoption agencies but for travel, passport costs and even unexpected payments demanded by corrupt government officials and orphanage workers. But that is a financial commitment, what about the hours, days and years of personal commitment to raise a child in the love of God? It is a fulltime responsibility.

3. *Mutual responsibility* (vs. 19)

Verse 19 contains one of the more humorous statements in Paul's presentation. First he offers to pay for Onesimus' debts. Now, where does Paul have all of his cash stashed away? Then he implies that Philemon owes Paul practically everything! Again, we see the relationship between submitting to the old order for the purpose of fulfilling one's social obligations and live with a free conscience in the new order. Paul teaches Philemon that business transaction debts do not compare to the gospel debt we have with God and His Church.

Non-Christians may ridicule such argumentation. However, Christians within the community of the Church greatly value their new birth and new status in Christ and they apply their status in Christ to their responsibilities in society.

Contemporary Christians continue to feel the burden of those who suffer. Who responds to the war refugee camps in northern Africa? Who were the first to respond to the tsunamis in the Far East? Was it the Muslims? The Buddhist? Communist? Humanist? What people group continues to serve in those areas?

4. *Expect joy* (vs. 20)

Even though Paul said he would not command Philemon to do something against his will yet Paul strongly suggest that he wants to see some real results. More than a friendly reminder, Paul expresses his will very clearly.

⁵⁷ Hegeman, *Mission to the People* ..., p. 97.

The benefit that Paul is seeking is not a financial one. In fact, he offered to pay for Onesimus' debts. Paul is seeking a spiritual result, where two people reconcile out of respect for Jesus Christ and for the advancement of the kingdom of God on earth.

5. *More than obedience* (vs. 21)

What a conclusion! Paul is confident that Philemon will accept Onesimus as a man, a brother and fellow worker. Paul knows that for the believer it is gratifying to participate in the transforming results of the gospel. Obedience goes way beyond the law of "you shall and you(€) shall not" rather, the Christian by faith lives in the fulfillment and joy of pleasing God.

6. *Pray for me* (vs. 22)

Paul encourages Philemon to pray for Paul's release and ability to come to Colosse. As Paul began his dialogue with Philemon in prayer, he ends his case with prayer. The difference is that he is asking Philemon to pray for him.

In the making of disciples, the mentor encourages the student to imitate him. Yet, it goes beyond imitation. He is teaching Philemon to take this matter to the Lord, first of all and to finish obeying by thanking God as well.

CONCLUSION

Paul is looking for grateful partners in the mission of reconciliation. He is willing to finance the cost and he expects his partners to join him in prayer and Christian service. Paul is confident in how the gospel message transforms lives and relationships in the church.

REFLECTIONS ABOUT SOCIAL ETHICS

1. Do you believe that Paul was advocating for both the pardon and freedom of Onesimus?
2. How do you see a 19th century American slave owner interpret Paul's efforts for reconciliation?
3. How do you see a 19th century African American slave interpret Paul's efforts for reconciliation?
4. In what sense do you notice social discrimination in your church? How does the epistle to Philemon help you deal with that?
5. What role does intercessory prayer have in dealing with social issues in the church?

WORK SHEETS FOR LESSON SIX. vs. 17-21

READING OF 17-21	Read passage in two different versions and Show the differences
<p>INDUCTIVE STUDY of 17-21</p> <p>Explanation of important data (from your reading of the Study Bibles and Philemon itself, please jot down what you know)</p> <p>Important words:</p> <p>Grammatical annotations:</p> <p>Translation method:</p> <p>Original author and hearers</p> <p>Cultural context:</p> <p>Historical context:</p> <p>Biblical context:</p> <p>Proposed title for the passage</p> <p>Major themes for the passage</p>	
VERSE BY VERSE EXPOSITIONAL STUDY Vs. 17.	Show how these Biblical texts are related to our passage 2 Cor. 8:23
Vs. 18	Gen. 43:9
Vs. 19	I Cor. 16:21 Gal. 6:11 2Thess. 3:17
Vs. 20	I Cor. 16:18
Vs. 21	II Cor. 2:3
Jot down notes from commentaries	
<p>LITERARY ANALYSIS</p> <p>-What kind (genre) of literature is the text?</p> <p>-What is the thematic outline of the passage and how does it fit into the structure of the book?</p> <p>-Have are figures of speech used?</p>	
<p>DIALECTICAL STUDY of 17-21</p> <p>Thesis:</p> <p>Antithesis:</p> <p>Synthesis:</p> <p>Syncretism:</p>	
<p>DEVOTIONAL STUDY</p> <p>Prayer and Action</p> <p>-Praise to God</p> <p>-Confession of personal sin</p> <p>-Confession of social sin</p> <p>-Special requests</p> <p>-Thanksgiving to God</p> <p>-Communication of truths of the passage</p> <p>-three main truth statements</p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p> <p>Your own summary of the passage</p>	

COMMENTARIES ON VS. 17-21

CALVIN'S COMMENTARY on vs. 17-21

17. *If, therefore, thou holdest me to be thy associate.* Here he lowers himself still further, by giving up his right and his honor to a runaway, and putting him in his own room, as he will shortly afterwards offer himself to be his cautioner. He reckoned it to be of vast importance that Onesimus should have a mild and gentle master, that immoderate severity might not drive him to despair. That is the object which Paul toils so earnestly to accomplish. And his example warns us how affectionately we ought to aid a sinner who has given us proof of his repentance. And if it is our duty to intercede for others, in order to obtain forgiveness for those who repent, much more should we ourselves treat them with kindness and gentleness.

18. *If in any thing he hath done thee injury.* Hence we may infer that Onesimus had likewise stolen something from his master, as was customary with fugitives; and yet he softens the criminality of the act, by adding, or *if he oweth thee anything.* Not only was there a bond between them recognized by civil law, but the slave had become indebted to his master by the wrong which he had inflicted on him. So much the greater, therefore, was the kindness of Paul, who was even ready to give satisfaction for a crime.

19. *Not to tell thee that thou owest to me thyself.* By this expression he intended to describe how confidently he believes that he will obtain it; as if he had said, "There is nothing that thou couldst refuse to give me, even though I should demand thyself." To the same purpose is what follows about lodging and other matters, as we shall immediately see.

There remains one question. How does Paul—who, if he had not been aided by the churches, had not the means of living sparingly and frugally -- promise to pay money? Amidst such poverty and want this does certainly appear to be a ridiculous promise; but it is easy to see that, by this form of expression, Paul beseeches Philemon not to ask anything back from his slave. Though he does not speak ironically, yet, by an indirect figure, he requests him to blot out and cancel this account. The meaning, therefore, is -- "I wish that thou shouldst not contend with thy slave, unless thou chooseth to have me for thy debtor in his stead." For he immediately adds that Philemon is altogether his own; and he who claims the whole man as his property, need not give himself uneasiness about paying money.

20. *Yea, brother.* This affirmation is used in order to increase the ardor of the exhortation; as if he had said -- "Now shall it be clearly proved that there hath been no variance between thee and me, but that, on the contrary, thou art sincerely attached to me, and that all that thou hadst is at my disposal, if thou pardon offenses and receive into favor him who is so closely related to me."

Refresh my bowels in the Lord. He again repeats the same form of expressions which he had previously employed. Hence we infer that the faith of the gospel does not overturn civil government, or set aside the power and authority which masters have over slaves. For Philemon was not a man of the ordinary rank, but a fellow-laborer of Paul in cultivating Christ's vineyard; and yet that power over a slave which was permitted by the

law is not taken away, but he is only commanded to receive him kindly by granting forgiveness, and is even humbly besought by Paul to restore him to his former condition.

When Paul pleads so humbly in behalf of another, we are reminded how far distant they are from true repentance who obstinately excuse their vices, or who, without shame and without tokens of humility, acknowledge indeed that they have sinned, but in such a manner as if they had never sinned. When Onesimus saw so distinguished an apostle of Christ plead so eagerly in his behalf, he, must undoubtedly have been much more humbled, that he might bend the heart of his master to be merciful to him. To the same purpose is the excuse which he offers (Philemon 1:21) for writing so boldly, because he knew that Philemon would do more than he had been requested.

21. *But at the same time prepare for me a lodging.* This confidence must have powerfully excited and moved Philemon; and next, he holds out to him the hope of being gratified by his own arrival. Although we do not know whether or not Paul was afterwards released from prison, yet there is no absurdity in this statement, even though he was disappointed of the hope which he cherished about God's temporal kindness. He had no confident hope of his release, further than if it pleased God. Accordingly, he always kept his mind in suspense, till the will of God was made known by the result.

That through your prayers I shall be given to you. Here it deserves notice, that he says that everything that believers obtain "through their prayers," is "given" to them; for hence we infer that our prayers, though they are not unsuccessful, yet have no power through their own merit; for what is yielded to them is of free grace.

GILL'S EXPOSITION. Vs. 17-21

Philemon 1:17

If thou count me therefore a partner... A companion and friend, who reckon each other's affairs and interest their own: the word answers to, a word often used in Talmudic writings, for an associate of the doctors or wise men: here it may mean also a partner both in grace, and in the ministry; one that shared in the same gifts and graces of the Spirit of God, and one that was to be a partaker of the inheritance with the saints in light: now if Philemon reckoned the apostle such an one, as he doubtless did, as being engaged in the same common cause, and a partaker of the same common faith, and interested in the same common salvation; then he entreats him on account of Onesimus, in the following manner,

receive him as myself; intimating, that he was as dear to him as himself; that he loved him as his own soul; and that he should take whatever respect and affection were shown to him as done to himself; and that he would have him receive him into his house, his heart and affections, as he would receive him the a Philemon 1:18

If he hath wronged thee... By squandering away his time, spoiling his work, or corrupting his fellow servants:

or oweth thee ought; by embezzling his master's goods, robbing him of his money, and running away from his service:

put that on mine account; Signifying that he would be answerable for all, and make good all debts and damages.

Philemon 1:19

I, Paul have written it, with mine own hand...Meaning either this epistle, which being short, he used no amanuensis, but wrote it all himself, and which might be taken as an engagement to do what he promised; or else a bill, a promissory note, written with his own hand, which he sent along with Onesimus, by which he laid himself under obligation to give Philemon full satisfaction in every thing, in which he had been injured by his servant; adding,

I will repay it: this was not an ironical expression, nor a piece of vanity in the apostle; he spoke seriously, and heartily, and meant what he said; and though his circumstances were often so mean, that he was forced to work with his own hands to minister to his necessities; yet such was his interest in the churches, and such their obligation to him, on account of his personal and useful ministrations to them, that he could easily raise a sum of money among them, upon any emergent occasion; so that Philemon had a good surety and paymaster of the apostle: and this shows his great humility to be a bondsman for a servant, and to make good damages and debts brought on in a scandalous manner; as also that suretyship in some cases is lawful, though it ought to be cautiously, and for very good reasons, entered into: and this engagement of the apostle for Onesimus bears some resemblance with, and may serve to illustrate the suretyship of Christ, for his people, they, and Onesimus, being much in a like condition; as he was an unprofitable and run away servant, so they are all gone out of the way, and together become unprofitable; and Christ engaged with his Father to bring them back again, and set them before him; and by his sufferings and death has brought them nigh, which were afar off; as he had wronged his master and was indebted to him, so they have injured the law of God, affronted his justice, and incurred his displeasure; and having owed to him more than ten thousand talents, and having nothing to pay, Christ engaged to satisfy law and justice, to make reconciliation for them, and pay all their debts; all which he has accordingly done; their sins have been placed to his account, imputed to him, and charged upon him; and he has bore them, and the punishment due to them, and so has satisfied for them, and restored that which he took not away.

Albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides; having respect to his conversion, which he was the happy instrument of the apostle was his spiritual father, and he was his son, according to the common faith; he had been the instrument of saving his soul from death; he had been the means of that in the hand of God, which all his riches, and the riches of his friends and relations, could never have procured: the salvation of his soul, his better part, was instrumentally owing to him, and so his whole self; and therefore, what favor might he not ask of him? and what was it he could, or should deny him? this the apostle introduces in a very artificial manner, and does not insist upon it, but suggests, that should he forgive the injuries and debts, he had took upon him to make satisfaction for, it would not be an equivalent to the debt he owed

to him. From hence may be observed, how greatly obliged regenerated persons are to those, who have been the means and instruments of their conversion.

Philemon 1:20

Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord... Through the apostle was his spiritual father, having been the instrument of his conversion, yet he calls him his brother, as being a partaker of the same grace, and a minister of the same Gospel; and intimates to him, that should he grant his request, and receive his servant again, it would give him great joy and pleasure, and that not of a carnal, but of a spiritual kind, even joy in the Lord; he should rejoice in the presence of the Lord, and before him, concerning him; he should rejoice in his faith in the Lord, and love for him, and obedience to him; all which would be discovered in such a conduct: the Syriac version renders it, as an assurance to himself,

I shall be refreshed by thee in our Lord; not doubting but that he would gratify him in the thing he asked of him, which would be a refreshment to him; the Vulgate Latin version renders it, "may I enjoy thee in the Lord": meaning not his company and presence, either in this world, or in the world to come; but that he might enjoy or receive the favor from him he had petitioned him for, for the Lord's sake; the Arabic version renders it, as a reason why he should do it, "I have been profitable to thee in the Lord"; confirming what he had said before, that he owed himself to him; he having been useful to him in bringing him to the knowledge of Christ, and faith in him; and the Ethiopic version refers it to a promise, "I will repay in our Lord"; in spiritual things in our Lord, if not in things temporal:

refresh my bowels in the Lord; or "in Christ"; as the Alexandrian copy, the Syriac and Ethiopic versions, read; and by his "bowels", he either means Onesimus, as in (Philemon 1:12) who, in a spiritual sense, came forth out of his bowels; or else himself, his soul, his spirit, his inward parts; and so the Ethiopic version renders it, "refresh my soul"; and the sense is, that he desired in the Lord, and for his sake, that he would receive Onesimus again, which would give him an inward pleasure, and refresh his spirit; and indeed he intimates, that nothing could be more cheering and reviving to him.

Philemon 1:21

Having confidence in thy obedience... In his obedience of faith to Christ, and his Gospel; he having been made willing in the day of his power to serve him, as well as to be saved by him; and being constrained by his love, and the Spirit of Christ having wrought in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure:

I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say; the knowledge the apostle had of Philemon's cheerful obedience to Christ in all the parts of duty, encouraged him to write to him, on this head; believing that he would even do more than he had desired of him.

MATTHEW HENRY'S COMMENTARY. Vs. 17-21

11th Argument, From the communion of saints: *If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself*, v. 17. There is a fellowship among saints; they have interest one in another, and must love and act accordingly. "Now show thy love to me, and the interest I have in thee, by loving and receiving one so near and dear to me, even as myself; own and treat him as thou wouldst me, with a like ready and true, though perhaps not equal, affection." But why such concern and earnestness for a servant, a slave, and such a one as had misbehaved? *Answer*, Onesimus being now penitent, it was doubtless to encourage him, and to support him against the fears he might have in returning to a master whom he had so much abused and wronged, to keep him from sinking into despondency and dejection, and encourage him to his duty. Wise and good ministers will have great and tender care of young converts, to encourage and hearten them what they can to and in their duty. *Objection*, But Onesimus had wronged as well as offended his master. The answer to this makes a

12th Argument, A promise of satisfaction to Philemon: *If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee aught, &c.*, v. 18, 19. Here are three things:

(1.) A confession of Onesimus's debt to Philemon: *If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee aught*. It is not an *if* of doubting, but of illation and concession; *seeing he hath wronged thee*, and thereby has become indebted to thee; such an *if* as Col. iii. 1 and 2 Pet. ii. 4, &c. Observe, True penitents will be ingenuous in owning their faults, as doubtless Onesimus had been to Paul, upon his being awakened and being brought to repentance; and especially is this to be done in cases of injury to others. Onesimus by Paul owns the wrong. And,

(2.) Paul here engages for satisfaction: *Put that on my account; I Paul have written it with my own hand, I will repay it*. Observe, [1.] The communion of saints does not destroy distinction of property: Onesimus, now converted, and become a brother beloved, is yet Philemon's servant still, and indebted to him for wrongs that he had done, and not to be discharged but by free and voluntary remission, or on reparation made by himself, or some other in his behalf, which part, rather than fail, the apostle undertakes for him. [2.] Suretiship is not in all cases unlawful, but in some is a good and merciful undertaking. Only know the person and case, be not *surety for a stranger* (Prov. xi. 15), and go not beyond ability; help thy friend thou mayest, as far as will comport with justice and prudence. And how happy for us that Christ would be made the surety of a better covenant (Heb. vii. 22), that he would be made *sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him!* And, [3.] Formal securities by writing, as well as by word and promise, may be required and given. Persons die, and words may be forgotten or mistaken; writing better preserves right and peace, and has been in use with good persons, as well as others, in all ages, Jer. xxxii. 9, &c.; Luke xvi. 5-7. It was much that Paul, who lived on contributions himself, would undertake to make good all loss by an evil servant to his master; but hereby he expresses his real and great affection for Onesimus, and his full belief of the sincerity of his conversion: and he might have hope

that, notwithstanding this generous offer, Philemon would not insist on it, but freely remit all, considering,

(3.) The reason of things between him and Philemon: "*Albeit, I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thy own self besides; thou wilt remember, without my reminding thee, that thou art on other accounts more in debt to me than this comes to.*" Modesty in self-praises is true praise. The apostle glances at the benefits he had conferred on Philemon: "That thou art any thing in grace and acceptation with God, or enjoyest any thing in a right and comfortable manner, it is, under God, owing to my ministry. I have been the instrument in his hand of all that spiritual good to thee; and what thy obligation to me on this account is I leave to thee to consider. Thy forgiving a pecuniary debt to a poor penitent for my sake and at my request, and which, however, I now take upon myself to answer, thy remitting it to him, or to me, now his surety, thou wilt confess, is not so great a thing; here is more *per contra: Thou owest to me even thy ownself besides.*" Observe, How great the endearments are between ministers and those towards whom their endeavours have been blessed to their conversion or spiritual edification! *If it had been possible* (said Paul to the Galatians), *you would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me,* Gal. iv. 15. On the other hand he calls them his *children, of whom he travailed again, till Christ was formed in them,* that is, the likeness of Christ more fully. So 1 Thess. ii. 8, *We were willing to have imparted to you not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because you were dear unto us.* By way of allusion, this may illustrate Christ's undertaking for us. We had revolted from God, and by sin had wronged him, but Christ undertakes to make satisfaction, *the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God.* "If the sinner owes thee aught, put it upon my account, I will pay the debt; let his iniquity be laid on me, I will bear the penalty." Further, a

13th Argument is from the joy and comfort the apostle hereby would have on Philemon's own account, as well as on Onesimus's in such a seasonable and acceptable fruit of Philemon's faith and obedience: *Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord,* v. 20. Philemon was Paul's son in the faith, yet he entreats him as a brother; Onesimus a poor slave, yet he solicits for him as if he were seeking some great thing for himself. How pathetic is he! "*Yea, brother, or O my brother* (it is an adverb of wishing or desiring), *let me have joy of thee in the Lord.* Thou knowest that I am now a prisoner of the Lord, for his sake and cause, and need all the comfort and support that my friends in Christ can give me: now this will be a joy to me, I shall *have joy of thee in the Lord,* as seeing such an evidence and fruit of thy own Christian faith and love, and on Onesimus's account, who hereby will be relieved and encouraged." Observe, (1.) Christians should do the things that may rejoice the hearts of one another, both people and minister reciprocally, and ministers of their brethren. From the world they expect trouble; and where may they look for comfort and joy but in one another? (2.) Fruits of faith and obedience in people are the minister's greatest joy, especially the more of love appears in them to Christ and his members, forgiving injuries, showing compassion, being merciful as their heavenly Father is merciful. "*Refresh my bowels in the Lord.* It is not any carnal selfish respect I am actuated by, but what is pleasing to Christ, and that he may have honor therein." Observe, [1.] The Lord's honor and service are a Christian's chief aim in all things. And, [2.] It is meat and drink to a good minister

to see people ready and zealous in what is good, especially in acts of charity and beneficence, as occasions occur, forgiving injuries, remitting somewhat of their right, and the like. And, once more, his last, which is the

14th Argument, Lies in the good hope and opinion which he expresses of Philemon: *Having confidence in thy obedience, I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say*, v. 21. Good thoughts and expectations of us more strongly move and engage us to do the things expected from us. The apostle knew Philemon to be a good man, and was thence persuaded of his readiness to do good, and that not in a scanty and niggardly manner, but with a free and liberal hand. Observe, Good persons will be ready for good works, and not narrow and pinching, but abundant in them. Isa. xxxii. 8, *The liberal deviseth liberal things*. The Macedonians first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to his apostles by the will of God, to do what good they could with what they had, according as occasions offered.

John Chrysostom, Homily III

Philemon 1: 17–19

NO procedure is so apt to gain a hearing,¹⁵⁶⁸ as not to ask for everything at once. For see after how many praises, after how much preparation he hath introduced this great matter. After having said that he is “my son,” that he is a partaker of the Gospel, that he is “my bowels,” that thou receivest him back “as a brother,” and “hold him as a brother,” then he has added “as myself.” And Paul was not ashamed to do this. For he who was not ashamed to be called the servant of the faithful, but confesses that he was such, much more would he not refuse this. But what he says is to this effect. If thou art of the same mind with me, if thou runnest upon the same terms,¹⁵⁶⁹ if thou considerest me a friend, receive him as myself.

“If he hath wronged thee at all.” See where and when he has introduced the mention of the injury; last, after having said so many things in his behalf. For since the loss of money is particularly apt to annoy men, that he might not accuse him of this, (for it was most likely that it was spent,) then he brings in this, and says, “If he hath wronged thee.” He does not say, If he has stolen anything; but what? “If he hath wronged thee.” At the same time he both confessed the offense, and not as if it were the offense of a servant, but of a friend against a friend, making use of the expression of “wrong” rather than of theft.

“Put that to mine account,” he says, that is, reckon the debt to me, “I will repay it.” Then also with that spiritual pleasantry,

“I Paul write¹⁵⁷⁰ it with mine own hand.” At once movingly and pleasantly; if when Paul did not refuse to execute a bond for him, he should refuse to receive him! This would both shame Philemon into compliance, and bring Onesimus out of trouble. “I write it,” he says, “with mine own hand.” Nothing is more affectionate than these “bowels,” nothing more earnest, nothing more zealous. See what¹⁵⁷¹ great concern he bestows in behalf of one man. “Albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides.” Then that it might not appear insulting to him, whom he requests, if he had not the confidence to ask and obtain in behalf of a theft, he in some measure relieves this, saying, “That I say not unto thee how thou owest to me even thine own self besides.” Not

only thine own things, but thyself also. And this proceeded from love, and was according to the rule of friendship, and was a proof of his great confidence. See how he everywhere provides for both, that he may ask with great security, and that this may not seem a sign of too little¹⁵⁷² confidence in him.

Ver. 20. “Yea, brother.”

What is, “Yea, brother”? Receive him, he says. For this we must understand though unexpressed. For dismissing all pleasantry, he again pursues his former considerations, that is, serious ones. And yet even these are serious. For the things that proceed from Saints are of themselves serious, even when they are pleasantry.

“Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord, refresh my heart in Christ.”¹⁵⁷³

That is, thou grantest the favor to the Lord, not to me. “My heart,” that is, toward thyself.

Ver. 21. “Having confidence in thy obedience, I write unto thee.”

What stone would not these things have softened? What wild beast would not these things have rendered mild, and prepared to receive him heartily? After having borne witness to him by so many great testimonies of his goodness, he is not ashamed again to excuse himself. He says, Not barely requesting it, nor as commanding it, nor arbitrarily, but “having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee.” What he had said at the beginning, “having confidence,” that he also says here in the sealing up of his letter.

“Knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say.”

At the same time in saying this he excited him. For he would have been ashamed, though for nothing else, if having such credit with him as this, that he would do more than he said,—he should not do so much.

Ver. 22. “But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.”

This also was the part of one who was exceedingly confident—or rather this too was in behalf of Onesimus, that not being indifferent, but knowing that he upon his return would know the things relating to him, they might lay aside all remembrance of the wrong, and might the rather grant the favor. For great was the influence and the honor of Paul residing among them, of Paul in his age, of Paul after imprisonment. Again, it is a proof of their love that he says that they pray; and to attribute to them so much as that they pray for “him.” For although I be now in danger, yet nevertheless you will see me if ye pray for it.

Ver. 23. “Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus, saluteth thee.”

He was sent by the Colossians, so that from this it appears that Philemon was also at Colossæ. And he calls him his “fellow-prisoner,” showing that he also was in much tribulation, so that if not on his own account, yet on account of the other, it was right that he should be heard. For he that is in tribulation, and overlooks himself, and is concerned for others, deserves to be heard.

And he puts him to shame from another consideration, if his countryman is a fellow-prisoner with Paul and suffers affliction with him, and he himself does not grant him a favor in behalf of his own servant. And he has added, “my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus,” instead of on account of Christ.

Ver. 24. “Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow-workers.”

Why then does he put Luke last? And yet he elsewhere says, “Only Luke is with me” (2 Tim. iv. 11.), and “Demas,” he says, was one of those who “forsook him, having loved

the present world.” (2 Tim. iv. 10.) All these things, although they are mentioned elsewhere, yet nevertheless ought not to be passed over here without enquiry, nor ought we merely to hear them as things of course. But how comes he to say that he who forsook him salutes them? For 556“Erastus,” he says, “abode at Corinth.” (2 Tim. iv. 20.) He adds Epaphras, both as known to them, and being of their country. And Mark, as being himself also an admirable man. Why then does he number Demas with these? Perhaps it was after this that he became more remiss, when he saw the dangers multiplied. But Luke being last became first. And from these indeed he salutes him, urging him the more to obedience, and calls them his fellow-laborers, and in this way shames him into granting the request.

Ver. 25. “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.”

MORAL. He hath closed his Epistle with a prayer. And indeed prayer is a great good, salutary, and preservative of our souls. But it is great when we do things worthy of it, and do not render ourselves unworthy. And thou too, therefore, when thou goest to the priest, and he shall say to thee, “The Lord will have mercy on thee, my son,” do not confide in the word only, but add also works. Do acts worthy of mercy, God will bless thee, my son, if indeed thou doest things worthy of blessing. He will bless thee, if thou showest mercy to thy neighbor. For the things which we wish to obtain from God, of those we ought first to impart to our neighbors. But if we deprive our neighbors of them, how can we wish to obtain them? “Blessed,” He says, “are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.” (Matt. v. 7.) For if men show mercy to such, much more will God, but to the unmerciful by no means. “For he shall have judgment without mercy to him that hath showed no mercy.” (Jas. ii. 13.)

An excellent thing is mercy! Why then hast thou not done it to another? Dost thou wish to be pardoned, when thou offendest? why then dost thou not thyself pardon him who has offended thee? But thou comest to God, asking of Him the kingdom of heaven, and thou thyself dost not give money when it is begged of thee. For this cause we do not obtain mercy, because we do not show mercy. But why? you say. Is not this also a part of mercy, to show mercy to the unmerciful? Nay!¹⁵⁷⁴ For he that treated with the greatest kindness the hard-hearted cruel man, that had done numberless ills to his neighbor, how should he be merciful? What then, say you? Hath not the Laver saved us, who had committed infinite evils? It hath delivered us from them, not that we should commit them again, but that we may not commit them. For “how shall we,” it is said, “that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (Rom. vi. 2.)

“What then? shall we sin because we are not under the law? God forbid.” (v. 15.) For this cause God hath delivered thee from those sins that thou mightest no more run back to that dishonor. Since even physicians relieve their feverish patients from their heat, not that they may abuse their health to their injury and disorder, (since it would be better to be sick, if one was about to use his health only that he might confine himself again to his bed,) but having learnt the evils that arise from sickness, they may no longer fall into the same, that they may the more securely preserve their health, that they may do everything that conduces to its preservation.

How then? you say: what is the loving-kindness of God, if He is not about to save the bad? For oftentimes I hear many talking in this way, that He is the Friend of man, and will by all means save all. That we may not therefore vainly deceive ourselves, (for I remember that I made a promise of this kind to you,) come let us to-day move this

argument. I lately discoursed with you about Hell, and I deferred my argument upon the loving-kindness of God. It is proper therefore to-day to resume it. That there will, then, be a hell, we have, as I think, sufficiently proved, bringing forward the deluge, and former evils, and arguing that it is not possible that He who performed these things should leave the men of the present age unpunished. For if thus He chastised those who sinned before the Law, He will not let those go unpunished who after grace have committed greater wickedness. It has been questioned therefore how is He good? how merciful to man, if at least He punishes? and we have deferred the argument, that we might not overwhelm your ears with a multitude of words.

Come, to-day let us discharge the debt, and show how good is God, even in punishing. For this discourse would be suitable for us in opposition to the heretics. Let us therefore pay earnest heed to it. God, standing in no need of anything from us, yet created us. For that He stood in need of us, is manifest from His having made us after a long time. For He might have made us long ago, if He had needed us. For if He Himself was, even without us, and we were made in later times, He made us, not needing us.

He made the Heaven, the earth, the sea, all things that exist, for our sake. Tell me, are not these marks of goodness? And many things one might mention. But to cut short the matter, "He maketh the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." (Matt. v. 45.) Is not this a mark of goodness? No, you say. For I said once in conversing with a Marcionite, Are not these things a mark of goodness? and he answered, If 557He did not call men to account for their sins, it were a mark of goodness. But if He calls them to account, it is not goodness. That man, however, is not now present. But come, let us repeat what was then said, and more beside. For I, out of my superfluity, show that if He did not call men to account, He would not be good; but because He does call them to account, therefore He is good.

For, say, if He did not call us to account, would human life then have endured? Should we not then have fallen into the state of beasts? For if when there is this fear impending over us, and the giving account, and judgments, we have gone beyond fishes in devouring one another, we have thrown wolves and lions into the shade in ravaging one another's possessions; if He did not call us to account, and we were persuaded of this, with how great tumult and confusion would life be filled? What would be the fabled labyrinth after this, compared with the perplexities of the world? Would you not see numberless indecencies and disorders? For who then would have respected his father any more? Or who would have spared his mother? Who would have left unattempted any pleasure, any wickedness? And that the matter is so, I will endeavor to show you from one house only. How? You who raise these questions and who have servants; if I could make it manifest to these, that if they should destroy the family of their masters,¹⁵⁷⁵ if they should insult their persons, if they should plunder everything, if they should turn things upside down, if they should treat them as enemies, they would not threaten them, nor correct them, nor punish them, nor even grieve them with a word, would this be any proof of goodness? I maintain that this is the extreme of cruelty, not only because the wife and children are betrayed by this unreasonable kindness, but because the slaves themselves are destroyed before them. For they will be drunkards, wanton, dissolute, and more irrational than any beasts. Is this, tell me, a proof of goodness, to trample upon the noble nature of the soul, and to destroy both themselves and others beside? Seest thou that to call men to account is a proof of great goodness? But why do I speak of slaves,

who more readily fall into these sins? But let a man have sons, and let him permit them to do everything they will, and let him not punish them; will they not be worse than anything? tell me. In the case of men then, it is a mark of goodness to punish, and of cruelty not to punish, and is it not so in the case of God? So that because He is good, therefore He has prepared a hell.

And do you wish that I should speak of another instance of God's goodness? It is not only this, but that He does not suffer the good to become bad. For if they were destined to meet with the same things, they would all be bad. But now this also does not a little console the good. For hear the Prophet, saying, "The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance upon the ungodly, he shall wash his hands in the blood of the sinner." (Ps. lviii. 10.) Not rejoicing on account of it, God forbid! but fearing lest he should suffer the same things, he will render his own life more pure. This then is a mark of His great care. Yes, you say, but He ought only to threaten, and not to punish also. But if He does punish, and still you say it is a matter of threat, and on that account become more slothful, if it were really but a threat, would you not become more supine? If the Ninevites had known it was a matter of threat, they would not have repented. But because they repented, they cause the threat to stop at words only. Dost thou wish it to be a threat only? Thou hast the disposal of that matter. Become a better man, and it stops only at the threat. But if, which be far from thee! thou despisest the threat, thou wilt come to the experience of it. The men before¹⁵⁷⁶ the flood, if they had feared the threat, would not have experienced the execution of it. And we, if we fear the threat, shall not expose ourselves to experience the reality. God forbid we should. And may the merciful God grant that we all henceforth, having been brought to sound mind, may obtain those unspeakable blessings. Of which may we all be thought worthy, through the grace and loving-kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom to the Father, together with the Holy Ghost, be glory, power, and honor, now and for ever and ever. Amen.

¹⁵⁶⁸ παραινεῖν.

¹⁵⁶⁹ ἐπὶ τοῖς αὐτοῖς, perhaps "for the same prize."

¹⁵⁷⁰ [Ἐγγραφα, the epistolary aorist.—P.S.]

¹⁵⁷¹ Colb. "what entreaty he makes."

¹⁵⁷² The Editor has ventured to insert μὴ from Raphelius' conjecture. Old Lat. omits the former negative. If the common text ("too much confidence") is right, "security" means confidence in Philemon, but that is indifferent Greek.

¹⁵⁷³ So the best MSS. and most Fathers for ἐν κυρίῳ 251. Hemsterhusius quoted in New Par. defends the Vulgate *Ego te fruar in Domino* for the former clause, giving it a general sense; Beza has *hunc fructum*. [A.V. "my bowels in the Lord"; R.V. "my heart in Christ."—P.S.]

¹⁵⁷⁴ The negative is understood in "for."

¹⁵⁷⁵ δεσποτεῖαν.

¹⁵⁷⁶ So Sav. al. "of."

LESSON SEVEN

A HOST OF WITNESSES. Vs. 22-25

INTRODUCTION

Paul had other prisoners with him who were Christian, like Epaphras. There were also those who visited the Christian who were imprisoned, such as Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke. It is assumed that Timothy was sent with Onesimus to deliver this letter to Philemon. Paul identifies a host of witnesses who would support his appeal.

THE WITNESSES

Paul identifies an astonishing group of credible witnesses for his case. There is a gospel writer (Mark), the main church historian (Luke), fellow travelers (Aristarchus and Demas), fellow prisoners (Epaphras) and even a future failure (Demas). Paul is not simply acting as Paul but his letter is in concert with the gospel tradition, the historical record and first century church experience and persecution.

1. Epaphras. He was also a prisoner. From Colossians 1:7 we learn that he was a church leader in Colosse, who preached the gospel there. He also informed Paul as to what was going on in the Colossians church. Now he is a fellow prisoner (Col. 4:12).
2. Mark, the writer of the gospel of Mark, did not only associate with Peter but he also visited Paul. There had been some problems between Paul and Mark (Acts 15:38), but now, years later, they had been resolved. Reconciliation is not only for Philemon and Onesimus, but it is practiced by Paul and Mark (2 Tim. 4:11).
3. Luke, the writer of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, is also present with Paul in the Roman prison. In the book of Acts Luke gives a detailed account as to the imprisonment of Paul, showing how Paul was taken in chains from Jerusalem to Rome.
4. Aristarchus. His association with Paul is well documented in the book of Acts (written by Luke). He was with Paul during the Ephesian riot (Ac 19:29). We find out that he is from Macedonia and that he traveled with Paul. He went with Paul to Macedonia and Greece (Acts 20:1-4). He traveled with Paul all the way to Rome, where imprisonment awaited Paul. It appears that he was imprisoned (Col. 4:10) and that he was known by the Colossians.
5. Demas. Not much is know about Demas, just that he traveled with Paul and visited him in jail (Col. 4:14). Apparently, Demas abandoned Paul latter on for the “love of the world” (2 Tim. 4:10). How sad it is to endure all kind of trails for the Lord’s sake and then reject the Lord.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Gill and Henry suggest that Demas may have been restored, if the letter to Philemon was written after 2 Timothy.

SCRIPTURAL WITNESS

Luke and Mark were present with Paul. Their writings compliment each other. Luke writes about the inauguration of Jesus ministry:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor (Luke 4:18-19)”

Luke is not only referring to spiritual prisoners but social prisoners as well. The letter to Philemon is one example of how one prisoner was released from the imprisonment to his old nature through regeneration and restored to the church and Philemon through reconciliation.

One of the major themes of Mark’s writings is:

“You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be a slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:42-45)

As Jesus ransomed His people, paid the debts for their sins, so Paul offered to pay for the debts of Onesimus. Of course, Christ’s payment of his life and blood was far more significant than Paul’s offer; however, the greater ransom is reflected in the small ransom. God is glorified in both.

CONCLUSION

The presence of these witnesses gives credence to ethical and theological authority of this apostolic letter. Even though it is addressed to one individual, it is not individualistic or simply one person’s opinion, but it is representative of Scriptural teachings about how the gospel of salvation has implications for all of life.

REFLECTION ON SOCIAL ETHICS

1. What have you learned about social ethics from this epistle?
2. Are there any indication in the book of Mark as to social ethics?
3. Are there any indication in the gospel of Luke as to social ethics?

WORK SHEET FOR LESSON SEVEN. vs.22-25

READING OF 22-25	Read passage in two different versions and Show the differences
<p>INDUCTIVE STUDY of 22-25</p> <p>Explanation of important data</p> <p>Important words:</p> <p>Grammatical annotations:</p> <p>Translation method:</p> <p>Original author and hearers</p> <p>Cultural context:</p> <p>Historical context:</p> <p>Biblical context:</p> <p>Proposed title for the passage</p> <p>Major themes for the passage</p>	
<p>VERSE BY VERSE EXPOSITIONAL STUDY</p> <p>Vs. 22</p>	<p>Show how these Biblical texts are related to our passage</p> <p>2 Cor. 1:11</p> <p>Phil. 1:19, 25; 2;24</p> <p>Heb. 13:19</p>
Vs. 23	<p>Rom. 16:7</p> <p>Col. 1:7;</p> <p>Col. 4:10, 12</p>
Vs. 24	<p>Acts 12:12,25;</p> <p>Acts 15:37-39</p> <p>Acts 19:29</p> <p>Acts 20:4</p> <p>Acts 27:2</p> <p>Col. 4:10</p> <p>Col. 4:14</p> <p>2Tim. 4:10,11</p>
Vs. 25	<p>Gal. 6:18</p> <p>2 Tim. 4:22</p>
Jot down notes from commentaries	
<p>LITERARY ANALYSIS</p> <p>-What kind (genre) of literature is the text?</p> <p>-What is the thematic outline of the passage and how does it fit into the structure of the book?</p> <p>-Have are figures of speech used?</p>	
<p>DIALECTICAL STUDY of 22-25</p> <p>Thesis:</p> <p>Antithesis:</p> <p>Synthesis:</p> <p>Syncretism:</p>	
<p>DEVOTIONAL STUDY</p> <p>Prayer and Action</p> <p>-Praise to God</p> <p>-Confession of personal sin</p> <p>-Confession of social sin</p> <p>-Special requests</p> <p>-Thanksgiving to God</p> <p>-Communication of truths of the passage</p> <p>-three main truth statements</p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p> <p>Your own summary of the passage</p>	

COMMENTARIES ON VS. 22-25

CALVIN'S COMMENTARIES. Vs. 22-25

24. *Demas*. This is the same person who afterwards forsook him, as he complains in the Second Epistle to Timothy (2 Timothy 4:10.) And if one of Paul's assistants, having become weary and discouraged, was afterwards drawn aside by the vanity of the world, let no man reckon too confidently on the zeal of a single year; but, considering how large a portion of the journey still remains to be accomplished, let him pray to God for steadfastness.

GILL'S EXPOSITION. Vs. 22-25

Philemon 1:22

But withal prepare me also a lodging... Not that the apostle expected or desired any grand apartment to be fitted up for him; a room with such furniture as the Shunamite provided for the man of God was sufficient for him, and what he would have been entirely contented with; but his view in this was, to let Philemon know that he hoped to be released from his bonds, and that he might expect to see him; and this he hinted to him, in order to stir him up to receive his servant sooner, and the more readily; who otherwise might have been indifferent to it, and negligent of it, thinking he should never see the apostle's face any more.

For I trust, that through your prayers I shall be given you; to minister in the Gospel again among them: the apostle was a man of prayer himself, and he had a very great regard to the prayers of others, and often desired an interest in them; that he might perform his ministerial work as it should be; that he might have success in it; and that he might be delivered from the unbelieving Jews, and from wicked and unreasonable men; and he had some secret hope and trust in his own mind, that through the prayers of the saints he should be delivered from his bonds, and go up and down preaching the Gospel as heretofore: he doubtless was acquainted with the case of Peter, for whom prayer was made incessantly by the church, when in prison, and he had deliverance; however, he knew that the prayers of the saints availed much with God; but whether this hope and expectation of his were answered, is a matter of doubt and question: some think he was released, and went into several parts, and preached the Gospel, and then was taken up again, and committed to prison, and suffered under Nero, some years after; and others think not.

Philemon 1:23

There salute thee Epaphras... Who was a Colossian, and minister of the church at Colosse, and so might be well known to Philemon, who seems to have been of the same place and church; see (Colossians 1:7) (4:12,13) his name is omitted in the Ethiopic version:

my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus; this good man, and minister of Christ, might have been sent by the Colossians, as Epaphroditus was by the Philippians, to the apostle at Rome, to pay him a visit, and comfort and assist him under his afflictions; and staying and preaching the Gospel there, was committed to prison, or was laid in bonds, as the apostle was, and upon the same account; namely, for the sake of Christ, and his Gospel. For by this time Nero began to persecute the Christians, which he did in the better and more moderate part of his reign; for among several things for which he is commended by the historian ^{F2}, this is one;

""Afficti suppliciis Christiani, genus hominum superstitionis novae ac maleficae"; the Christians were punished, a sort of men of a new and bad religion:" and Epaphras being at Rome, when this persecution broke out, was taken up and put in prison, as were also Aristarchus, (Colossians 4:10) and Timothy, (Hebrews 13:23) .

Philemon 1:24

Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas... Marcus was Barnabas's sister's son, the son of that Mary, in whose house the church met, and prayed for Peter when in prison; whose name was John Mark, whom Saul and Barnabas took along with them to Antioch, and from thence, in their travels, to other parts; but he leaving them at Pamphylia, was the occasion of a contention between Saul and Barnabas afterwards, when returned to Antioch; the latter insisting on his going with them again, and the former refusing it on account of his departure from them; which contention rose so high that they parted upon it, (Acts 12:12,25) (13:5,13) (15:37-39) though after this the apostle was reconciled to him; he approving himself to be a faithful and useful minister of the Gospel; and therefore he desires Timothy to bring him along with him, (2 Timothy 4:11) and if this epistle was written after that, he was now come to him; however, he was now with him, whether before or after: Aristarchus was a Macedonian of Thessalonica; or very likely the apostle had been the instrument of converting him there, and who followed him from thence, and attended him wherever he went; he was with him in the uproar raised by Demetrius at Ephesus, and accompanied him into Asia; went with him in his voyage to Rome, and was now a fellow prisoner there, (Acts 19:29) (20:4) (27:2) (Colossians 4:10) . Demas is the same with him who is mentioned in (2 Timothy 4:10) and if this epistle is later than that, it should seem that he was restored from his fall, and was returned to the apostle. Lucas is the same with Luke the Evangelist, the beloved physician, the brother whose praise was in all the churches, and a constant companion of the apostle, in his travels; and who wrote the book called, "The Acts of the Apostles": these the apostle styles, "my fellow laborers", being all ministers of the Gospel; and this shows the apostle's great humility, so to call them, when they were far from being on an equal foot with him in office, gifts, or usefulness: and the Christian salutations of these persons are sent to Philemon, with this view, to engage him the more to attend to the apostle's request, in which they all joined.

Philemon 1:25

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Not with his spirit only, but with the spirit of Apphia and Archippus, to whom also the epistle was sent; and

therefore the word is in the plural number; and the Syriac version adds pertinently enough, "my brethren": the salutation is the same as in all the epistles; the form of it agrees with (Galatians 6:18) the subscription of the epistle is,

written from Rome, to Philemon, by Onesimus, a servant; that is, it was written by the Apostle Paul when at Rome, and sent to Philemon by the hands of Onesimus, who was his servant, and upon whose account the letter was written.

MATTHEW HENRY'S COMMENTARY. Vs. 22-25

Thus far is the substance and body of the epistle. We have,

II. The conclusion, where, 1. He signifies his good hope of deliverance, through their prayers, and that shortly he might see them, desiring Philemon to make provision for him: *But withal prepare me also a lodging; for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you, v. 22. But withal, or moreover.* He comes to another thing, yet, as may seem, not without some eye to the matter which he had been upon, that might be furthered by this intimation that he hoped he should himself soon follow, and know the effect of his epistle, which Philemon would therefore be the more stirred up to see might be to his satisfaction. Now here is,

(1.) The thing requested: *Prepare me also a lodging;* under this all necessaries for a stranger are included. He wills Philemon to do it, intending to be his guest, as most to his purpose. Observe, Hospitality is a great Christian duty, especially in ministers, and towards ministers, such as the apostle was, coming out of such dangers and sufferings for Christ and his gospel. Who would not show the utmost of affectionate regards to such a one? It is an honourable title that he gives Gaius (Rom. xvi. 23), *My host, and of the whole church.* Onesiphorus is also affectionately remembered by the apostle on this account (2 Tim. i. 16, 18), *The Lord give mercy to the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; and in how many things he ministered to me at Ephesus, thou knowest.*

(2.) Here is the ground of the apostle's request: *For I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.* He did not know how God might deal with him, but the benefit of prayer he had often found, and hoped he should again, for deliverance, and liberty to come to them. Observe, [1.] Our dependence is on God for life and liberty and opportunity of service; all is by divine pleasure. [2.] When abridged of these or any other mercies, our trust and hope must be in God, without fainting or succumbing, while our case is depending. But yet, [3.] Trust must be with the use of means, prayer especially, though no other should be at hand; this hath unlocked heaven and opened prison-doors. *The fervent effectual prayer of the righteous availeth much.* [4.] Prayer of people for ministers, especially when they are in distress and danger, is their great duty; ministers need and request it. Paul, though an apostle, did so with much earnestness, Rom. xv. 30; 2 Cor. i. 11; Eph. vi. 18, 19; 1 Thess. v. 25. The least may in this way be helpful to the greatest. Yet, [5.] Though prayer obtains, yet it does not merit the things obtained: they are God's gift, and Christ's purchase. *I trust that through your prayers, **charisthesomai***

hymn--I shall be freely bestowed on you. What God gives, he will yet be sought to for, that mercies may be valued the more, and known whence they come, and God may have the praise. Minister's lives and labors are for the people's good; the office was set up for them; *he gave gifts for men, apostles, &c.* Eph. iv. 8, 11, 12. Their gifts, and labors, and lives, all are for their benefit. 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22, *All things are yours, Apollos, Cephas, &c.* [6.] In praying for faithful ministers, people in effect pray for themselves: "*I trust I shall be given unto you, for your service, and comfort, and edification in Christ.*" See 2 Cor. iv. 15. [7.] Observe the humility of the apostle; his liberty, should he have it, he would own to be through their prayers, as well as, or more than, his own; he mentions them only through the high thoughts he had of the prayers of many, and the regard God would show to his praying people. Thus of the first thing in the apostle's conclusion.

2. he sends salutations from one who was his fellow-prisoner, and four more who were his fellow-laborers, v. 23, 24. Saluting is wishing health and peace. Christianity is no enemy to courtesy, but enjoins it, 1 Pet. iii. 8. It is a mere expression of love and respect, and a means of preserving and nourishing them. *There salute thee Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus.* he was of Colosse, and so countryman and fellow-citizen with Philemon; by office he seems to have been an evangelist, who labored among the Colossians (if he was not the first converter of them), for whom he had special affection. *Our dear fellow-servant* (said St. Paul), *and for you a faithful minister of Christ* (Col. i. 7), and (ch. iv. 12, 13), *A servant of Christ, always laboring for you in prayers. I bear him record that he hath a great zeal for you, &c.* A very eminent person therefore this was, who, being at Rome, perhaps accompanying Paul, and laboring in the same work of preaching and propagating the gospel, was confined in the same prison, and for the same cause; both termed *prisoners in Christ Jesus*, intimating the ground of their imprisonment, not any crime or wickedness, but for the faith of Christ and their service to him. An honor it is to suffer shame for Christ's name. *My fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus* is mentioned as his glory and the apostle's comfort; not that he was a prisoner and so hindered from his work (this was matter of affliction), but that, seeing God thus permitted and called him to suffer, his providence so ordered it that they suffered together, and so had the benefit and comfort of one another's prayers, and help, it may be, in some things; this was a mercy. So God sometimes lightens the sufferings of his servants by the communion of saints, the sweet fellowship they have one with another in their bonds. Never more enjoyment of God have they found than when suffering together for God. So Paul and Silas, when their feet were fast in the stocks, had their tongues set at liberty, and their hearts tuned for the praises of God.--*Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellow-laborers.* The mention of these seems in a manner to interest them in the business of the latter. How ill would it look by denial of the request of it to slight so many worthy names as most of these, at least, were! *Marcus*, cousin of Barnabas, and son of Mary, who was so hospitable to the saints at Jerusalem (Col. iv. 10, Acts xii. 12), and whose house was the place of meeting for prayer and the worship of God. Though some failing seems to have been in him when Paul and he parted, yet in conjunction with Barnabas he went on with his work, and here Paul and he, we perceive, were reconciled, and differences forgotten, 2 Tim. iv. 11. He bids Mark to be brought to him, *for he is profitable to me for the ministry*, that is, of an evangelist. *Aristarchus* is mentioned with Marcus (Col. iv. 10), and called there by Paul his fellow-prisoner; and speaking there of Marcus, sister's son to

Barnabas, he adds, *Touching whom you received commandments; if he come unto you, receive him*: an evidence that he himself had received him, and was reconciled to him. Next is *Demas*, who hitherto, it seems, appeared not faulty, though he is censured (2 Tim. iv. 10) as having forsaken Paul, from *love of this present world*. But how far his forsaking was, whether total from his work and profession, or partial only, and whether he repented and returned to his duty, scripture is silent, and so much we be: no mark of disgrace lay on him here, but he is joined with others who were faithful, as he is also in Col. iv. 14. *Lucas* is the last, that *beloved physician* and evangelist, who came to Rome, companion with Paul, Col. iv. 14; 2 Tim. iv. 11. He was Paul's associate in his greatest dangers, and his fellow-laborer. The ministry is not a matter of carnal ease nor pleasure, but of pains; if any are idle in it, they answer not their calling. Christ bids his disciples *pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers, not loiterers, into his harvest*, Matt. ix. 38. And the people are extorted to *know those that labor among them, and are over them in the Lord, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake*, 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. *My fellow-laborers*, says the apostle: ministers must be helpers together of the truth; they serve the same Lord, in the same holy work and function, and are expectants of the same glorious reward; therefore they must be assistants to each other in furthering the interest of their great and common Master. Thus of the salutations, and then,

3. Here is the apostle's closing prayer and benediction, v. 25. Observe, (1.) What is wished and prayed for: *Grace*, the free favor and love of God, together with the fruits and effects of it in all good things, for soul and body, for time and eternity. Observe, Grace is the best wish for ourselves and others; with this the apostle begins and ends. (2.) From whom: *Our Lord Jesus Christ*, the Son of God, second Person in the Trinity, Lord by natural right, *by whom, and for whom, all things were created* (Col. i. 16, John i. 1-3), *and who is heir of all things*, and, as God-man and Mediator, who purchased us, and to whom we are given by the Father. *Jesus*, the Savior, Matt. i. 21. We were lost and undone; he recovers us, and repairs the ruin. He saves by merit, procuring pardon and life for us; and by power, rescuing us from sin, and Satan, and hell, and renewing us to the likeness, and bringing us to the enjoyment, of God: thus is he Jesus; and Christ, the Messiah or anointed, consecrated and fitted to be king, priest, and prophet, to his church. To all those offices were their anointings under the law with oil, and to them was the Savior spiritually anointed with the Holy Ghost, Acts x. 38. In none but him were all these together and in such eminence. *He was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows*, Ps. xlv. 7. This Lord Jesus Christ is ours by original title to us, by gospel offers and gift, his purchase of us, and our own acceptance of him, resignation to him, and mystical union with him: *Our Lord Jesus Christ*. Observe, All grace to us is from Christ; he purchased, and he bestows it. *Of his fulness we all receive, and grace for grace*, John i. 16. *He filleth all in all*, Eph. i. 23. (3.) To whom: *Your spirit, meta tou pneumatos hymon*, not of Philemon only, but of all who were named in the inscription. *With your spirit*, that is, with you, the soul or spirit being the immediate seat of grace, whence it influences the whole man, and flows out in gracious and holy actings. All the house saluted are here joined in the closing benediction, the more to remind and quicken all to further the end of the epistle.

Amen is added, not only for strong and affectionate summing up the prayer and wish, *so let it be*; but as an expression of faith that it will be heard, *so shall it be*. And what need we more to make us happy than to have *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ with our spirit*? This is the usual benediction, but it may be taken here to have some special respect also to the occasion; the grace of Christ with their spirits, Philemon's especially, would sweeten and mollify them, take off too deep and keen resentments of injuries, and dispose to forgive others as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us.

LESSON EIGHT

FURTHER RESOURCES AND REFLECTIONS

INTRODUCTON

The final lesson in this study is to further expand the horizons of our study of the letter to Philemon by identifying existing resources as well as respond to two studies from the appendix.

INTERPRETATION RESOURCES

One of the student's homework assignments for lesson 8 is to write down 10 internet web sites that apply to themes presented in Paul's letter to Philemon. The student is asked to write a one page summary comparing these web sites.

The following are the resources that the author used for studying Philemon.

1. Bible interpretation

Peter T. O'Brien. *Colossians, Philemon in Word Biblical Commentary*. Vol. 44, Waco, Word, 1982. Good use of the Greek and parallel Bible texts.

F.F.Bruce, *Paul. Apostle of the Free Spirit*. Paternoster: Exeder, 1977.

John Calvin. *Philemon*. ccel.org

Hebert M. Carson. *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and Philemon*. In Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1978. A much abbreviated summary of Philemon.

John Chrysostom, *Homilies*. Ccel.org

J. Douglas (ed.) "Reconciliation" and "Redemption" by Leon Morris, in *The New Bible Dictionary*, Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1979.

Cornelius Hegeman. *Hermeneutics*. MINTS, 2005. A course on Bible interpretation.

William Hendricksen. *Exposition of Colossians and Philemon in New Testament Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1964.

Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (1721), taken from ccel.org

G. Kittle. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Vol. 2, Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1964. An excellent source for word studies.

J. Knox. *Philemon among the Letters of Paul*. 2nd ed., London: Collins, 1960. Referred to by O'Brien.

J.B.Lightfoot. *Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*. Grand Rapids: Zondervans, 1974. Includes an interesting section on Hebrew and Roman slavery.

Ralph Martin. *Colossians and Philemon*. In the new Century Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1981. A concise treatment of the relevant matters in Philemon.

Bruce M. Metzger. *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*. New York: United Bible Society, 1975.

Jac. J. Muller. *The Epistles of Paul to the Philippians and to Philemon*. In New International Commentary of the New Testament series. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1978. An exegetical study, by a South African Bible student.

Rene Padilla (ed.) *Bases Bíblicas de la misión*. Grand Rapids: W.B.Eerdmans, 1998.

R.C. Sproul. *Knowing Scriptures*. Orlando: Ligonier Ministries.

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible. Iowa Fall: Word, nd.

Recursosteologicos.com

Geerhardus Vos. *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation*. Phillipsburg: PR Publishing, 1980.

Robert Wall. *Colossians and Philemon*. In The IVP New Testament Commentary Series. Downers Grove: IVP, 1993. Well written and readable commentary.

John Wesley. Eword.gospelcom.net

2. Culture

Louis J. Luzbetak. *The Church and Cultures*. Pasadena, William Carey Library, 1981. Well written cultural anthropological perspective from a Roman Catholic writer.

Eugene Nida. *Customs and Cultures*. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1979.

3. Ethics

Johan Hegeman. *Christelijk Dienen*. Amsterdam: Buijten and Schipperheijn, 1994.

Robert McQuilkin, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics*, Wheaton: Tyndale, 1989.

Gerald Nyenhuis. *Etica Cristiana*. Miami: UNILIT.

R.C. Sproul. *Making Tough Moral Decision*. Orlando: Ligonier Ministries.

Henry Stob. *Basic Christian Ethics*. Grand Rapids: Calvin Theological Seminary class syllabus, 1981.

4. History

Catholic Encyclopedia. www.newadvent.org

Justo González. *The Story of Christianity*. San Francisco, Harper, 1984.

Cornelius Hegeman. *Mission to the People and Church Maintenance: The Origin and Development of the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches and Missions in the Caribbean and Latin America (1528-1916)*. Miami: MINTS, 2002.

Cornelius Hegeman. *Ethnic Disfranchisement: The History of the Christian Reformed Church in the Dominican Republic: 1980-1990*. Miami: MINTS, 2005.

New Schaff-Hertog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge. Ccel.com

World Wide Encyclopedia of Christianity. Ccel.org/php/wwec

5. Race Reconciliation

Anthony Carter. *On Being Black and Reformed*. Phillipsburg: PR Publishers, 2003.

Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith. *Divided by Faith. Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Leslie Pelt. "Wanted: black missionaries, but how?" *Evangelical Missionary Quarterly*. January 1989. pp. 28-37.

HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Appendix A and B will be read by the student. For each appendix a one page reflection paper will be written.

CONCLUSION

The letter of Paul to Philemon is a dynamic commentary on the importance of the doctrine of reconciliation in the Christian's doctrinal and ethical system. The author looks forward to interacting with other Christians as to how they interpret the message and implications of this powerful book of the Bible.

APPENDIX A

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Introduction

The letter of Paul to Philemon demonstrates the relationship between soteriological (salvific) reconciliation and ethical reconciliation. The reconciliation between God and people may be called religious, spiritual or vertical reconciliation while the reconciliation between people can be labeled personal, communal, social or horizontal reconciliation.⁵⁹ For the sake of consistency, this study will speak of soteriological and communal reconciliation. This study is particularly interested in the apostle's teachings about the relationship between soteriological and communal reconciliation.

All of the loci's of systematic theology reflect the importance of the Biblical doctrine of reconciliation that is reflected in Paul's letter to Philemon. This section will reflect on the doctrines of God, man, Christ, salvation, the Church and missions and see how they relate to what Paul writes about to Philemon.

Theology Proper

Theology proper, the doctrine of the being and work of God, shows how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is involved in divine-human reconciliation. The sovereignty of the Father, the redemption of the Son and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit are involved in reconciliation as it concerns one's salvation as well as one's community.

The Father is identified with the Son, Jesus Christ, in verse 3. The Father cannot be understood without the Son. The Son reveals the Father and leads people to the Father (John 14:6). Only by the redemption of the Son can sinful people be made right with the Father. He accomplished redemption as he became their perfect substitute who satisfies the just wrath of God by dying for His people. He is the High Priest intercessor between a sinful people and a Holy Father. The Father's responds to the believer because of His Son. This means that God works through the believer in order to accomplish the benefits of the redemptive work of the Son.

The above truth is analogous to Paul interceding for Onesimus to Philemon. "Even as Christ did for us with God the Father, thus also does Paul for Onesimus and Philemon; for Christ also...by love and humility induced the Father to take us to His grace for the sake of Christ, who lovingly pleads our cause and with all His heart lays Himself out for us" (Martin Luther).

⁵⁹ The terminology can be refined yet the distinction between the greatest command (love God above all else) and the second command (love your neighbor as yourself) is a distinction that can be applied to reconciliation.

The sovereignty of the Father is exalted in the imprisonment of Paul. God is able to take the worst of evil situations, such as the persecution of Christ and the imprisonment of Paul and use it for His kingdom purposes.

The extraordinary love of Paul comes from a divine source that is modeled by Christ. Christ was punished for the sin of God's people so that they could be freed. Redemption literally means that someone pays for the deliverance and freedom of those imprisoned or enslaved. Christ's substitutionary sacrifice on the cross was the perfect payment to the Father to free the believer from sin, the world and Satan. In what way would Christians live out their redemption? Would they redeem those who were slaves?

The reconciliation between Philemon and Onesimus would require the regenerative and sanctifying operation of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. Paul identifies the sanctified fruit of faith and love in the life of Philemon (vs. 5). Paul makes clear that Onesimus was born again by the Holy Spirit under his ministry (vs. 10). With the presence of the Holy Spirit in both men, Paul was confident that his request for reconciliation would be accomplished. The reader of the letter is left the possible thought that if Philemon would reject Paul's offer for reconciliation that such a response would be inappropriate for a Christian.

The grace and sovereignty of the Father, the intercession and redemption of Christ and the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit is exalted not only between the Lord and believers but also in the reconciliation between a master and his run away slave. If freedom was not secured at the church level, would the analogy of Christ's freeing work in salvation be put into doubt? Christian slaves could still serve Christ even though they remained slaves. However, Christian masters could free their slaves in honor of God and for the benefit of the slaves.

The question about Onesimus' freedom is a "yes, but not yet" situation.⁶⁰ Paul gives Philemon all the reasons he needs to forgive and free Onesimus but in the letter he does not command it nor does Scripture give us a final answer as to whether it took place. However, the answer is strongly implied! If Philemon did not forgive or set free Onesimus, then he will go down in church history as another ungrateful servant (Mt. 18:21-35). On the other hand, the solution to Onesimus' bondage had to be worked out in his personal and legal history. Paul did not advocate the sanctification of slavery nor a radical abolitionist position. Rather, the principles and transforming power of Christian living are worked out in every day situations. The knowledge of the grace of the gospel would serve as inspiration and hope for countless other Christians.

The Christian has the knowledge of the grace and sovereignty of the Father, as well as the intercessory ministry of Christ and the available presence and workings of the Holy Spirit. With such a God the Christian is able to enter into humanly impossible situations and intercede, persuade and work towards both soteriological as well as communal

⁶⁰ This is analogous to the "already and not yet" dimensions of the kingdom. The principles of the kingdom operate in the already but the kingdom has not come in its fullness yet.

reconciliation. The Christian is not fatalistically bound to the old world order but he is predestined to usher in the reality of the kingdom of God.

With such confidence the Christians enter into the prisons, social institutions and nations of the world in order to proclaim and practice the gospel of Jesus Christ. The presence of Prison Fellowship in penal institutions throughout the world; the growth of the house-church movement in China, the inability of militant Islam to stamp out national Christianity, are evidences of the power of the gospel of redemption and communal reconciliation.

Anthropology

Paul's letter to Philemon presents the human panorama of believer and non-believer, slave and free, male and female and Jew and Gentile.

Paul was in jail due to the accusations of unbelieving Jews (Acts 21). He was imprisoned by Roman unbelievers. When Paul first met Onesimus in prison, we may presume that Onesimus was an unbeliever since he was later on born again under Paul's ministry. Yet Paul does not say that he was a prisoner because of the unbelievers but "Paul, prisoner of Jesus Christ." The calling of Paul was to present the Word of God to unbelievers, whether that would cost him imprisonment or martyrdom. Also, God brought Paul into the life of unbelievers, such as Onesimus, so that he would enter the kingdom through believing in the proclaimed gospel presented by Paul.

Through Paul evangelizing and preaching the gospel, Onesimus hears the good news and by God's Spirit receives new life and believes. Through regeneration Onesimus joins the brotherhood of Paul, Philemon and all other Christians. In his letter to Philemon, Paul asks the master to recognize the brotherhood of Onesimus (vs. 16).

Paul goes beyond identifying the regeneration and spiritual brotherhood of Onesimus and sees him as a fellow servant for the extension of the gospel. He sends the letter to Philemon by the hands of Onesimus.

By becoming a Christian, Onesimus received new life, a new community and a new mission. However, he had to deal with his past. He needed to reconcile with his master Philemon. For that purpose, Paul had to act as an intercessor. Paul even offered to pay Philemon the debt that Onesimus owed Philemon.

The sinner-saint needs constant intercession and the Christian community is to be the source of such graces. All Christians have a past that needs to be reconciled. There is no better time to do that than now and no better place than in the Christian community.

Onesimus could not imagine how his mission in life had changed through the gospel. Not only was Onesimus sent to Philemon carrying his license for reconciliation, not only would this sacred letter be canonized as one of the 66 books of the Bible, but for centuries afterwards, sinful believers would be encouraged and morally strengthened to

reconcile situations created by sinful activities and seek to show the grace and mercy of God.

Onesimus was a slave, Paul a prisoner and Philemon a master and free man. Even though each believer had a different social status, they were all brothers. Their brotherhood eliminated neither Paul's chains, nor Onesimus' slave status or take away the freedom of Philemon, but rather their brotherhood superseded their social position and placed them in the same kingdom of grace and the same Christian church. At the time of the writing of the letter, they were still a slave, a prisoner and a master. However, they are equal in the Lord and each serves to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Both male and female believers are addressed in this letter. It appears that Apphia was the wife of Philemon. She is addressed in this letter for her involvement in the house affairs of Philemon as well as a member in the house church. This meant that she too would need to forgive Onesimus for his betrayal of trust of her husband and members in the household.

Paul, and possibly Philemon, was of Jewish descent. Apparently, Onesimus was a Gentile. Paul does not make this a subject matter. For Paul, the covenant separation between Jew and Gentile had been eliminated through the redemptive work of Jesus (Eph. 1).

Within the multitude of human and social distinctions Paul identifies the common bond that believers have in Christ. Paul does not call for the elimination of the master-servant, male-female, Jew and Gentile distinctions, but he works toward applying Christian ethics to each member of the Christian community. Reconciliation and its implications apply to all the members of the Church.

Contemporary western society has over reacted in seeking to bring their definition of equality among races, genders and religious communities. Formerly discriminated against peoples are given more rights than others. That depends on who writes and keeps the laws. The relativization of gender roles has led to the homosexual revolution. The Christian community is the most persecuted community in the world today. However, the authentic Christian church continues to grow and model to the world God's intended purpose for the genders, the family, people groups and nations. It's not the first time in human history that God's people have been rejected by society's power brokers while being accepted by a growing number of people.

Christology

Paul identifies himself as a prisoner of Jesus Christ. Paul is in jail, not only because of the complaints of the Jews or the judicial system of the Romans, but for Christ's sake.

For Paul, Jesus is God. In his salutation (vs. 3) and benediction (vs. 25), the attributes of God are attributed to the Father as well as Jesus. And remember, because Paul preached

that Jesus was the Messiah and that the Messiah is God, the Jews hated him so much they wanted to kill him.

Paul instructs Philemon about the many benefits there are to be “in the Lord.” According to verse 6, “the knowledge of every good thing which is in you in Christ,” Paul reminds Philemon that any goodness that exists comes from God and is lived out by faith in Christ.

In Christ there is liberty (vs. 8). Paul does not use his apostolic liberty to arbitrarily bully Philemon into accepting Onesimus, but rather he persuades Philemon to forgive Onesimus. The apostle does not use legalistic force but passionate persuasion. The Christian pulpit is not a judge’s bench but a place to plead God’s cause and persuade believers to live according to the implications of the gospel.

Christian liberty is not a human right but a Christian responsibility. The believer uses his liberty in Christ to advance the cause of “the least of the brethren” rather than his own cause (Romans 14). Even though Paul was a prisoner, he rejoiced in the spiritual liberation of Onesimus through his new birth and now advocates for his communal acceptance.

In verse 16, Paul recognizes that there is a human level of existence (in the flesh) as well as a believer’s status of brotherhood “in the Lord.” Christian brotherhood comes from the Father and is not shared with non-believers. Non-believers have another father and another brotherhood. Whether or not a believer is willing to forgive or be forgiven in Christ is an indication as to which brotherhood they belong to (Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors).

Paul’s closing statements allude to their common identity “in the Lord” (vs. 20). Paul is looking for the fruit of obedience. His letter is not a series of recommendations to be accepted or rejected but rather Paul is applying the principles of the kingdom of God.

What ever situation the Christian finds himself in is to plant the standard of the kingdom of God and let the gospel light shine.

Soteriology

Soteriology deals with the doctrine of eternal salvation. Onesimus was born again under the ministry of Paul and so was saved. The process went like this: Onesimus heard the gospel, he believed, he was born again as a new man. The letter does not go into detail about Onesimus’ conversion and reconciliation with God, rather this particular writing of Paul is concerned about Onesimus’ reconciliation with Philemon and the church in Colosse.

The letter, however, raises important issues about the relationship of eternal salvation and its earthly consequences. Jesus commands a response between being forgiven one’s debt and forgiving the debts of others (Mt. 9:6: 18:21-35).

The relationship between eternal salvation and social reconciliation is like faith and works. Christian works flow out of faith but the two cannot be reversed nor be combined.⁶¹ The reconciliation of Onesimus to his master and the church was preceded by his rebirth and faith in Christ. Without faith and rebirth the social reconciliation would not have taken place.

Does this mean that non believers cannot be reconciled to their masters and join the church? Social reconciliation obviously takes place outside of Christianity and people are welcome to come to church,; however, the reasons and quality of such reconciliation is different: it operates under law and not under God's grace.

Ecclesiology

To be sure, this letter is not about church government. Yet, there is useful information contained in the letter that speaks to the nature of the early Christian church.

Paul preached and ministered from his prison. Philemon met in a house church. The early church services did not employ an altar, a pulpit, baptismal founts, a special table for the Lord Supper, candles, robes, incense, crosses and a host of other religious paraphernalia associated with historical and contemporary Christianity. With the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and the rejection of Christians from the synagogues, Christians met in homes and other places of convenience. This was not a step down but an exaltation of the conquest of Christ. Christian communal worship was free to expand to whatever part of the world. The worship of Christ would not be encased by external religious trappings but would be measured by its adherence to the gospel of grace. It was important that master and slave would worship together. The early church did not have churches for masters and churches for slaves.⁶²

The church community was not the instrument of society or the bearer of a certain culture. Paul addressed certain members of the Church in Colosse and was seeking reconciliation and the inclusion of Onesimus in the church.

As an apostle, Paul was concerned about the church in Colesse. The original apostle's teachings and prohibitions were part of the foundation of the Christian church (Eph. 2:20).

⁶¹ The Protestant view is that the believer is saved by faith alone. This position was condemned by the Roman Catholic Council of Trent (1563).

⁶² Before, during and after the American Civil War, the Protestants formed both Anglo and Black churches.

Missiological

The short letter to Philemon shows how the kingdom of God is extended. There is evangelism, the strengthening and extension of the church and the witness to the gospel of Christ in the most difficult situations of life.⁶³

The extension of God's kingdom was prophesied by Jesus in Luke 4:18-19. In the "acceptable year of the Lord" liberty would be proclaimed to the captives and those who were oppressed would be set free. All that happened in the prison cell of Paul and house church of Philemon.

The "year of the Lord" of the New Testament may be compared to the concept of the Sabbaths of the Old Testament. The freeing of the Hebrew slaves occurred every 7 years. In the Christian community such liberation may take place "today." "Today is the acceptable year of the Lord."

Doxological

In the letter to Philemon God is glorified through the proclamation and practice of the gospel of redemption and reconciliation. The orthodoxy and orthopraxis of Christian reconciliation exalts the being and work of God.

Orthodoxy demands that the reconciliation between God and His people be reflected in communal or social reconciliation (Mt. 6:12; 18:21-35). Orthopraxis requires that in reconciliation forgiveness is meaningfully and thoroughly realized.

Orthodoxy without orthopraxis is hypocrisy. "Do as I say but do not do what I do." We know that underpaying undocumented workers is wrong, yet we do it and continue to tithe to God on our profits. Even though the Church includes all of the redeemed, there are still "master" churches and "servant" churches. In America there are still American churches and immigrant churches.

Orthopraxis without orthodoxy is liberalism. All the efforts toward social reconciliation that are not based on the ultimate reconciliation between God and man will not provide true conflict resolution and freedom. Paul was willing to go to jail and to his death for confessing that "Jesus is God and Lord," while years later ecumenical Protestantism has compromised the gospel by recognizing abortion rights, homosexual practice and theological heresy.

When run away rebels are evangelized, born again and obedient to the claims of the gospel of Jesus Christ, there is the promise of eternal reconciliation with God and the hope of communal reconciliation for the home, church and society.

⁶³ Gisbertus Voetius, 16th century Reformed theologian, spoke of missions as the extension of the kingdom of God through evangelization, church growth and the witness to Jesus.

APPENDIX B

HISTORICAL REFLECTION

Introduction

How has the Christian church responded to the practice of communal reconciliation? A review of the early church (33-380 aC); Roman Catholic Christendom (380-1563); Protestant Christendom (1530-present); Radical Reformation and Evangelicals (Mennonites-present); Ecumenical movement (1945-present) and the church of the 21st century show a variety of emphasis in relationship of soteriological and communal reconciliation.

The Early Church (33-380 aC)

From the day of Pentecost (33 AC) on the early church consisted of Christian congregations and communities throughout the known world. The churches were governed by apostolic doctrine (Acts 2:42; chapter 15). Christians were known for their love for God and many were martyred for upholding the confession that Jesus is Lord. Christians did not practice abortion, infanticide and euthanasia. They were against adultery, theft, and treated slaves and servants with respect. Slaves were welcomed to be members of the church. Justo Gonzalez, in *History of Christianity*⁶⁴ reminds us that the majority of the early Christians were slaves, carpenters, construction workers and servants.

The Church responded to the slavery issue in many ways.⁶⁵ The Church would at times free slaves, advocated for legislation that would protect the slaves and their families.

The early church was constantly persecuted by the Romans. This led to the writing of defenses and apologetics by the church fathers. The church did not represent one dominant culture or people group. While continuing to be organized at the local level, the church maintained its international and universal character. The universalism was not

⁶⁴ Justo Gonzáles, *Historia del Cristianismo*, Vol. 1, pg. 112.

⁶⁵ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, "The Church and Roman Slavery." "Sometimes the Church redeemed slaves out of its common resources (St. Ignatius, "Polyc.", 4; Apos. Const., IV, iii). Heroic Christians are known to have sold themselves into slavery to deliver slaves (St. Clement, "Cor.", 4; "Vita S. Joannis Eleemosynarii" in Acts SS., Jan., II, p. 506). Many enfranchised all the slaves they had. In pagan antiquity wholesale enfranchisements are frequent, but they never include all the owner's slaves, and they are always by testamentary disposition -- that is when the owner cannot be impoverished by his own bounty, (Justinian, "Inst.", I, vii; "Cod. Just.", VII, iii, 1). Only Christians enfranchised all their slaves in the owner's lifetime, thus effectually despoiling themselves a considerable part of their fortune (see Allard, "Les esclaves chrétiens", 4th ed., p. 338). At the beginning of the fifth century, a Roman millionaire, St. Melania, gratuitously granted liberty to so many thousand of slaves that her biographer declares himself unable to give their exact number (Vita S. Melaniae, xxxiv). Palladius mentions eight thousand slaves freed (Hist. Lausiaca, cxix), which, taking the average price of a slave as about \$100, would represent a value of \$800,000 [1913 dollars]. But Palladius wrote before 406, which was long before Melania had completely exhausted her immense fortune in acts of liberality of all kinds (Rampolla, "S. Melania Giuniore", 1905, p. 221)."

organized or expressed in terms of a hierarchy or central government but rather its worship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; the biblical witness to Christ in all areas of life, the work of evangelizing all people and being members of the Christian church.

The early church history comes to an end, starting with the Edict of Milan in 313, in which the Roman Empire allows for its existence and continuing with the declaration of the Romans in 380 that Christianity is the religion of the empire. The persecuted church became the politically powerful church. Would they ban slavery?

Roman Catholic Christendom (380-1563)

Christendom refers to the fusion of church and society. In Christendom, the church becomes an instrumental part of government, military and culture. In 380, Christianity was declared the religion of the Roman Empire. By 392, it was the only tolerated religion. By the beginning of the 9th century, the pope of the RCC became the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. The Orthodox churches distinguish themselves from the Roman Catholic Church starting at the end of the first millennium.

Roman Catholic Christianity as the religion of the state led to forced conversions of non-Romans. The church ceases to be a persecuted community in order to become the aggressors and persecutors. The Inquisition is set up to eliminate heretics.

The Roman Catholic Church defines itself over against the theological and provincial challenges of Protestantism. The Council of Trent (Vatican I) was written between 1545-1563. The Protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone is declared anathema. The Inquisition was instructed to eliminate the "Lutheran heresy."

Both the Catholic Church and nations allowed for domestic slavery.⁶⁶ Slave trafficking was forbidden until the mid 16th century. There was a revival of slavery due to conquests in the Mid East and Africa.⁶⁷ The peaceful evangelization of the Africans and the Indians

⁶⁶ *Op.cit.*, "Under the Christian emperors this tendency, in spite of relapses at certain points, became daily more marked, and ended, in the sixth century, in Justinian's very liberal legislation (see Wallon, "Hist. de l'esclavage dans l'antiquité", III, ii and x). Although the civil law on slavery still lagged behind the demands of Christianity ("The laws of Caesar are one thing, the laws of Christ another", St. Jerome writes in "Ep. lxxvii"), nevertheless very great progress had been made. It continued in the Eastern Empire (laws of Basil the Macedonian, of Leo the Wise, of Constantine Porphyrogenitus), but in the West it was abruptly checked by the barbarian invasions. Those invasions were calamitous for the slaves, increasing their numbers which had begun to diminish, and subjecting them to legislation and to customs much harder than those which obtained under the Roman law of the period (see Allard, "Les origines du servage" in "Rev. des questions historiques", April, 1911. Here again the Church intervened. It did so in three ways: redeeming slaves; legislating for their benefit in its councils; setting an example of kind treatment. Documents of the fifth to the seventh century are full of instances of captives carried off from conquered cities by the barbarians and doomed to slavery, whom bishops, priests, and monks, and pious laymen redeemed. Redeemed captives were sometimes sent back in thousands to their own country (ibid., p. 393-7, and Lesne, "Hist de la propriété ecclésiastique en France", 1910, pp. 357-69)."

⁶⁷ But while serfdom was becoming extinct, the course of events was bringing to pass a temporary revival of slavery. As a consequence of the wars against the Mussulmans and the commerce maintained with the East, the European countries bordering on the Mediterranean, particularly Spain and Italy, once

in the Americas was the exception rather than the rule. The Roman Catholic conquerors subjugated the peoples they ruled over.

Protestant Christendom

The early Protestants established their own version of Christendom in northern Europe, Hungary and later in their colonies and the New World. Their particular fusion of Church and society generally did not benefit the Africans, Afro-American, Indo-Americans and other non-colonists. Protestant friendly nations became involved in slave trading beginning in the 16th century.⁶⁸ The provincial Protestant churches such as the Anglicans, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Reformed were virtually silent about slave trade until the 19th century. It would depend on the radical reformation to bring about a protest against the slave trade from the 17th century until emancipation in the 19th century.

Radical Reformation and Evangelicals

What the original Protestants could not accomplish among the slaves and non-colonists, the radical Reformers were able to realize. The Mennonites, Pietists, Moravians and later, the mission societies, had a more distant relationship with the state and the dominant cultures. Not only did the theology of the radical reformers distinguish them from Protestant theocratic ideals (i.e. Belgic Confession, Article 36; the Queen of England as the civic head of the Anglican Church) but their marginal position in society placed them in contact with marginal peoples.

The Moravians began as an 18th century missionary community. Some Moravians sold themselves into slavery in order to work within the Caribbean slave community. Baptists, Mennonites, Methodists as well as Quakers were anti-slavery voices and movements that helped bring the gospel of double reconciliation to the Protestant-Evangelical community.

Historical Protestants finally joined the radical Reformations anti-slave movement. This was expressed through missionary societies such as the Glasgow Mission Society who sent Presbyterian missionaries to work with the African-Jamaicans in 1800. Upon emancipation in the 1840s, the African-Jamaican Presbyterians were among the first Protestants to establish churches in Nigeria and Chad.

Protestant Christendom stood in the way of preaching the justification by faith alone gospel to non-European peoples. It would be the Evangelical missionaries who would reach the masses.

more had slaves -- Turkish prisoners and also, unfortunately, captives imported by conscienceless traders. Though these slaves were generally well-treated, and set at liberty if they asked for baptism, this revival of slavery, lasting until the seventeenth century, is a blot on Christian civilization.

⁶⁸ Cornelius Hegeman, *Mission to the people...* comments on the Protestant involvement in slave trading. Roman Catholic historians point to the non-Roman Catholic German Welser family as the first mass slave traders to the New World (1528).

Ecumenical Church

After the formation of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Amsterdam, the Netherlands in 1945, the Protestant ecumenical movement has been the loudest yet most contradictory voice among the Christians calling for social liberation. Orthopraxis is not accompanied by orthodoxy. The WCC today supports abortion, homosexual and lesbian rights. The WCC has become theological pluralform and does not present the uniqueness of salvation in Jesus Christ. It is not the desired synthesis between “justification by faith alone” and “justice.” There must be a better way.

The Church of the 21st century

The Christian church continues to be “reformed” back to its apostolic, biblical and Christocentric roots. Interestingly enough, both the Pentecostal as well as the persecuted church movements have returned to the simplicity of the early Church.

The largest block of Christians is members of the underground churches in China. Missionaries estimate that the Church in China may number between 60 and 100 million persons. Most are members of unregistered churches. The servitude that the Christians face in restrictive societies will require the patient application of the principles of soteriological and communal reconciliation.

The radical Reformation’s call for the lay Christians to become involved in ministry and missions continues to be heard and practiced today. This does not excuse Christian leaders, denominations and the institutional church from responding to ministry needs but rather it activates the mission of the Church.

Christians of the 21st century face the seemingly insurmountable task of evangelizing, witnessing and serving the Lord throughout the whole world. However, the kingdom advances one regenerate soul at a time; brings its reconciling power to one relationship at a time; is communally built up through one church at a time and it brings God glory and worship through one praying and witnessing Christian at a time. The letter of Paul to Philemon confirms that.

APPENDIX C. STUDENT WRITINGS OF ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES INSTITUTE FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

The students of the Grenadines Institute for Theological Education of Kingstown, St. Vincent developed position papers on issues related to the theme of slavery.

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Jennifer Maureen Eustace

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SLAVERY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT-APOSTOLIC WORLD

Jennifer Maureen Eustace

1. INTRODUCTION

Slavery is an institution based on a relationship of dominance and submission, whereby one person owns another and extracts from that person labour and other services. The New Testament uses the word 'slave' frequently. In the King James Version (KJV) the Greek word 'doulos' is translated 'servant.' And one who serves as a 'servant' is usually translated 'minister.'^{69[1]} But there is a difference between a servant and a slave. A servant is one who is privately employed to perform household services – one who serves another. A slave is one who is bound in servitude to another person or group of persons as an instrument of labour – usually one who is coerced to serve.

Slaves are regarded as chattel and property of the owner. In earlier times ownership of slaves was an indication of wealth. Slavery as an institution has been with us since 'time memorial' and still continues today.

2. SLAVERY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament contains laws for the regulation of slavery which were used to justify the most infamous of all forms of slavery – the African slave trade between the Americas, the West Indies and Africa. This type of slavery was based on racism and many Christians believed that Africans were an inferior race,

The early Hebrews were themselves slaves in Egypt before Moses was selected by God to lead them to freedom and the Promised Land. The Mosaic laws sought to regulate the ownership and management of slaves whilst reminding the early Hebrews of their own bondage. The laws provided for the release of slaves after six years of servitude and in the year of the Jubilee regardless of the period served. The noteworthy point here being that Hebrew persons were enslaved for their inability to pay their debts. Other slaves were persons captured during military skirmishes and provision was made for their release also. The point to ponder here is that slavery was the penal system – there were no jails as we have today.^{70[2]} It is worth remembering that the Hebrews were a nomadic people for forty years before the settlement of the Promised Land and hence incarceration could not have been practical.

Many of the patriarchs of old owned and kept slaves. In Genesis we read about Abraham and Isaacs having many slaves and sheep. Solomon, the man of wisdom also owned many slaves as did Boaz, the progenitor of Jesus.

3. ROMAN SLAVERY

Roman governance was in evidence during the period of the New Testament. In fact it coincided with the expansionist period of the Roman Empire. As more and more territories were acquired so did the demand for labour and a form of agricultural slavery was introduced on a wide scale. The increasing wealth of Rome led to an expansion in

^{69[1]} <http://www.brfwitness.org/Articles/2003.Oct.17>, 2006.

^{70[2]} Cornelius Hegeman, Lecture on Philemon, Kingston, St. Vincent., Oct 13, 2006.

the number of slaves as ostentatious living became signs of wealth and privilege, and the servile class grew to great numbers. Many slaves were highly educated and were employed as instructors. Slaves often managed money, guarded children, and sometimes were even family doctors. Having a large retinue of slaves became one of the prime marks of luxury.^{71[3]} The slave had no legal status but manumission (emancipation from slavery) was common and freedmen became a factor in the Roman social system.

Roman slavery in the first century was far more humane and civilized than the African-American slavery practiced in the United States and the Caribbean during the 17th to the 19th centuries. This does not suggest that ancient slavery was not evil. Slaves were considered as property which can be purchased and sold and severely punished – but understanding the nature of slavery in New Testament times helps us to understand why the apostolic leaders and writers were not as quick to attack slavery.^{72[4]}

4. SLAVERY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the New Testament the picture is remarkably different with regard to the rules governing slavery. The old Mosaic laws appeared to have been suspended and the Romans were the de-facto rulers of the Hebrews. In fact one can safely say that the New Testament says little or nothing about the regulation of slavery. It appears to have been accepted as merely part of the status quo. In fact even Jesus did not attack the practice but appears to have taken it for granted and shaped his parables accordingly. Smith and Hoffman, in their attacks on the Bible suggested that if Jesus had denounced slavery, we should almost certainly have heard of him doing so.^{73[5]}

The Apostle Paul clearly understood the nature of slavery and respected the civil law and the social patterns of his day. He did not agitate against the law of slavery. In his commentary, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, William Barclay^{74[6]} says: “In those early days, the Church did not emerge as the opponent and would-be destroyer of slavery by violent means. And the Church was wise”. Barclay claims that there were approximately 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire and for the church to have encouraged slaves to revolt and rise up against their masters would have been fatal and would have caused civil war, mass murder and the complete discredit of the church. What happened, he commented, was that as the centuries went on, Christianity so permeated civilization that in the end the slaves were freed voluntarily and not by force. The reform, he said must come through the slow penetration of the Spirit of Christ into the human situation. Slow indeed!!!

Another challenge to the New Testament stance on slavery centers on passages that admonish slaves to be humble and obedient to their masters. Paul, who wrote approximately 2/3 of the New Testament, commands slaves to obey their earthly masters in everything, not only when being watched or to impress them, but wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord. (Colossians 3:22)

Ruth Green^{75[7]}, after presenting her case to suggest that the Bible condones slavery wrote: ‘those who deny my contentions about the Bible should turn to the Epistles

^{71[3]} <http://education.com/reference/encyclopedia/slavery>. Oct 17, 2006.

^{72[4]} Ibid.

^{73[5]} Smith & Hoffman 1989, p. 143.

^{74[6]} William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, Westminster, 1960.

to see what Peter and Paul have to say about “servants” and masters. “Servants, be subject to your masters in all fear” (1Peter 2:18). “Servants, be obedient to them that are masters.....with fear and trembling” (Ephesians 6:5)”

It must be acknowledged here that much of the slavery mentioned in these times referred to persons who had accrued massive debts and had to become a slaves or servants due to the inability to meet their obligations. In the Sermon On The Mount, Jesus said: “Agree with your adversary quickly while you are on your way with him less your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny” (Matthew 5:25-26). From the comments of our Lord we can establish that failure to settle one’s debts or to make satisfactory arrangements to do so, could result in incarceration until the debt is fully settled. But, how can an imprisoned person settle debts? The answer is by selling oneself into slavery. Hence, a person’s freedom is revoked by a judge due to his inability to pay his adversary. Debt slavery was still a very real form of restitution in New Testament times.

5. BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION OF SLAVERY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The sayings in the Bible by Jesus, Paul and Peter have been used and abused in various forms by Christians over the years to justify or condemn slavery. In fact, most of these writings were by church men during the abolitionist period of the African slave trade. One passage that has provided much ammunition for the supporters of slavery is found in Ephesians 6:5-6 where the Apostle Paul says:

“Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, not by the way of eye service, as people pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.”

Part of the problem here is the lack of awareness of what slavery was like in those times. We, as children descended from slaves are often emotional when discussing this passage. Could our Creator God have condoned this type of slavery? But, our interpretation is against the background of the slavery that we know about- African slavery which was racist, harsh and strictly for economic gain. Although lip service was paid to the conversion of slaves to Christianity this was not enforced and Africans were treated as animals to breed and work. Often we interpret Paul’s saying against the background of modern day movies which highlight the backbreaking work, the brutality and plight of the African slave. The fact that neither Jesus or Paul, or Peter for that matter, did not seek to overthrow or condemn slavery is highly instructive and is certainly not indicative of God’s approval for racist slavery.

Another reason for Christians having a hard time understanding the Bible’s treatment of slavery is the tendency to confuse morality with political values. Today we have to be politically correct. Hence some versions of the Bible have changed the word slave to servant thereby giving the impression that such persons were employees as we understand the word today. The political correctness is not merely a fad, but the logical

⁷⁵[7] www.inplainsite.org/slavery_and_christianity. Oct 28, 2006.

and inevitable result of the politicization of morality, the elaboration of an entirely new morality based upon political ideas of right and wrong^{76[8]}

George Eldon Ladd sums it up for us when he writes:

“Paul has no word of criticism for the institution as such. In this sense he was rather unconcerned about “social ethics” – the impact of the gospel on social structures. In fact he admonishes slaves to be indifferent to their social status (1 Cor.7:21), because a human slave is really a freedman of the Lord”.^{77[9]}

It is my view that Paul was in-fact concerned about ‘social ethics’. Why then would he send that letter to Philemon in which he pleads for the forgiveness of Onesimus and implies that he should be freed? This, according to Hegeman, demonstrates the fruit of the doctrine of redemption, as in Christ every thought and every action is taken captive, redeemed, transformed, and presented to God for His glory.^{78[10]}

6. SOLUTIONS/RECONCILIATION

Hegeman argues in his paper that eternal redemption demands that communal reconciliation takes place. Hence Paul was able to call for reconciliation between Onesimus and Philemon in a very diplomatic, yet loving manner. His language and choice of words are so powerful that we are left with the impression that if the reconciliation did not take place that this would be one of the greatest contradictions of the New Testament.^{79[11]} Hegeman suggest that this failure would have been tantamount to Peter’s denial of Jesus or Paul’s refusal to reconcile with Mark.

Paul’s letter to Philemon laid a Christian ethical groundwork for the humane treatment of slaves as well as providing logical arguments for emancipation within the Christian community and total abolition.^{80[12]} The letter demonstrates that social ethics are not the preserve of civic authorities but concerns theologians and church leaders as well.

This letter was also utilized by the abolitionists in the fight for the emancipation of African slaves in the Caribbean and North America.

7. CONCLUSIONS

We need not be harsh in our assessments of slavery in the New Testament and the apparent lethargic response of the apostolic leaders to it. We were not all born saints. The redemptive power of the Gospel demonstrates to us its ability to transform sinners into saints and as Christians we must respond accordingly. Paul was a sinner who earlier persecuted the church. But, following his transformation he became one of the greatest proponents of the Gospel. By his writings he laid the ethical foundation and logical arguments for the emancipation of slaves. His letter to Philemon strikes at the very

^{76[8]} www.bible-researcher.com/slavery Oct.28, 2006.

^{77[9]} George Eldon Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament . Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1975. p.529

^{78[10]} Cornelius Hegeman, Philemon, A Study About Eternal Redemption & Communal Reconciliation.

^{79[11]} Ibid.

^{80[12]} Ibid.

nervous system of the age old institution of slavery and presents the church as a community of reconciliation. The Hegeman view that eternal redemption demands that communal reconciliation takes place was forcibly demonstrated in South Africa following the end of apartheid when the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established. This gave all groups the opportunity to present their case for redemption in an atmosphere of reconciliation. Although highly charged emotionally, the commission achieved its purpose. It did not correct the wrongs, bring back victims to life, or restored broken lives or dreams but it fostered the rebirth of hopes and dreams, and for Christians demonstrated the redemptive power of the gospel and gave the nation the opportunity to forgive each other and glorify God as Creator and Lord.

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SLAVERY IN THE EARLY CHURCH FROM JESUS TO CONSTANTINOPLE

Helen E. Burke Richards

1. INTRODUCTION

As a part of the course on “Paul’s letter to Philemon”, the class that the writer attends has been requested to research various topics. The writer has chosen to research “Slavery in the Early Church from Jesus to Constantine” which is about 320 AD or the fourth century. As stated by Cornelius Hegeman, Paul’s letter directly or indirectly addresses the values of four institutions: the church, the penal system, slavery and government. The letter of Paul (Phil. 1-25) snips the roots of the age old slavery system and presents the church as a community of reconciliation^{81[1]}. Slavery was definitely a part of the early church and Paul made mention of this very frequently when he beseeched Philemon to reconcile with Onesimus, his run- away slave whom Paul felt could be his partner in the mission for Christ.

2. DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION

Definition: In the Oxford Concise Dictionary, slavery is defined as “The state or system whereby one person is the legal property of another person and is forced to obey and is controlled by that person”. One writer defines slavery as a means of (dis) ordering economic, political and social life, and as an instrument of oppression, racism and prejudice toward the ‘other’—has been a part of the culture within which the church found itself from the beginning.^{82[2]}

Description: The Roman Empire encouraged slaves. It is noted that the Hebrew slaves were treated better than the Gentile slaves. As for example, the Hebrew slaves were freed after six years of service. They were protected by the Mosaic Law (Gen. 20: 10; 21: 2-11; Ex. 21: 2; Deut. 15: 12, 18; Lev. 19: 20-22; Deut. 5:14; 15:12-18)^{83[3]}. In gratitude to being delivered from the bondage of Egypt, the Israelites were called to obey God’s laws (Ex. 20: 1-17^{84[4]}) Jesus in his time of teaching, did not condemn slavery, he encouraged them to be good workers for their master. Slavery was seen as the penal system of government as there were no jails, so slaves were put to work not only as payment for their wrong doings, but for economic reasons as they worked the lands without being paid.

3. SITUATION

Kimberley Flint- Hamilton in her research on “Slavery in the Early Church: Hatred Disguised as Love?” stated that Keith Bradley in his book *Slavery and Society at Rome* pointed out that in many ways, Christianity was a revolutionary religious development. Its members acquired spiritual fulfillment as well as salvation and eternal life. All were

^{81[1]} Cornelius Hegeman, *Philemon: A Study About Eternal Redemption and Communal Reconciliation*. (Miami International Seminary), p. 8.

^{82[2]} Pruitt Memorial Symposium, *Slavery, Oppression and Prejudice*, (Baylor Institute for Faith and Learning). 2004.

^{83[3]} Ibid, p. 11.

^{84[4]} Ibid, p 13-14.

welcomed. Bradley described in detail the social reform that the church prompted. The church at Rome supported more than 1500 widows and beggars by the middle of the third century, successfully blending belief and social action. Those in positions of authority never fully accepted that slaves were equals either socially or religiously, and therefore worthy of love and for some reason, Christianity brought about little or no change for slaves.^{85[5]}

According to Bradley, Christianity did not make life better for slaves. Instead it made life worse. He said” To pious slaves the teachings on obedience and submission automatically foreclosed all possibility of agitating for freedom, of seeking material improvements, of resisting servitude. Freedom of spirit and hopes of eternal life, they were repeatedly told, were all that mattered.... Christianity brought change, therefore, but from the servile perspective it was change not for the better but for the worse^{86[6]}.

Flint Hamilton commented that when slavery was mentioned in early church documents, including letters and homilies of the church fathers themselves, early catechetical documents, or the records of councils, it generally is framed as one of the following sentiments: (i) An emphasis on the fact that slaves should accept their situation in life and fulfill their roles; (ii) An acceptance of the social stereotype of slaves as deceitful, lustful and conniving; and (iii) Rarely, an argument made against slavery as an institution. In the context of these three sentiments that the answers to the above questions can be found:

1. Slaves should Accept Their Situation. This is demonstrated in the Epistle of Paul, early catechetical documents such as *The Didache*, records of local church councils or synods, and the writings of Augustine and Gregory the Great. In the epistles of Paul, both slaves and free are invoked as members of the church. No fewer than four places in Corinth (I Cor. 7: 21-24); in Ephesus (Eph. 6: 5-9); Colosse (Col. 3:22-24; and to Timothy (1Tim. 6: 1-2), he called slaves together in Christ, and exhorts them to obey their masters. He also warned masters not to treat their slaves too harshly. He asked Philemon to reconcile with Onesimus (Phil. 12-19) and he criticized the Corinthians for humiliating those poorer members of the congregation who come to worship while hungry (1 Cor. 12: 20-22; James 2: 1-4).^{87[7]} Paul always in his writings addressed slaves directly, whereas the writers in the other early documents did not do likewise.

Hamilton went on to say that the wording of the *Didache*, were slightly different from Paul’s writings as they felt that slaves should think of their masters as types of God. When they are in the presence of their masters, they are to think of themselves as in the presence of God, and that when they look at their masters, they are to think of God^{88[8]}.

The Church Councils on the other hand depict the church of Spain and its relations to slaves. A synod was convened at Elvira in southeastern Spain and three canons regarding slaves resulted from this. The summary of these canons were that they regarded slaves in like manner of their Greek and Roman predecessors as slaves were of

^{85[5]} Keith Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 145-146.

^{86[6]} Keith Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 151.

^{87[7]} Frank Charles Thompson, *The Thompson Chain Reference Bible*. (Kirkland Bible Institute, 1964).

^{88[8]} H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *Greek- English Lexicon with a Revised Supplement* (Clarendon Press, 1996).

less value than the free person. As for example if a free man were to be caught stealing, he were to be flogged, but a slave was to flogged and executed if he were to have the same crime; and if a divorced woman were caught exposing her child before presenting it as required, she would be fined 50 staters if the child were free, but only 25 if the exposed child were a slave. In both cases, a distinction is drawn between the value of a free person and that of a slave.^{89[9]}

2. **The social stereotype of slaves as lazy and deceitful and conniving** is best demonstrated in the writings of Ignatius and Tertullian. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch in a letter to Polycarp instructed masters in their proper treatment of slaves. He admonished that they should not despise slaves, but neither let them be ‘puffed up’, and that they should not use the church corporate funds for the care of widows in the care of slaves^{90[10]}. Tertullian, the jurist and ecclesiastical writer in his writings always referred to them as ‘lazy and thieving slaves’ He went on to say that slaves were to be forbidden to marry other slaves from other households and that they slip into debauchery and become neglectful and of their duties. Tertullian further stated that domestic slaves peep through cracks and holes in doors and lurking about, spreading damaging gossip about their Christian masters to the authority. He questioned the trustworthiness of the slaves and the wisdom of the authorities who put faith in such reports.^{91[11]}

3. **Challenging the Status Quo and Advocating For Freeing Slaves.** This third sentiment challenges the justice of slavery as an institution and encouraged Christian to free slaves, stand in antithesis to the first two and help pave the road, albeit slowly, for the liberation theology movement. Hamilton intimated that *The Shepherd of Hermas*, an early Christian document composed in the early second century and known to early Christian writers, instructs the faithful to use the common fund for liberating prisoners and freeing slaves.^{92[12]} The Hermas further inferred that it is the responsibility of all Christians to care for those in severe distress and failure so to do renders Christians guilty of grave sin.^{93[13]}

4. SOLUTION

The solution to slavery was to free them. As Paul admonished Philemon (vs. 16-21) that he was to accept Onesimus not as a run-away slave, but as a brother, who would be profitable to him in the ministry of Christ.

^{89[9]} Keith Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 37.

^{90[10]} James Harrill, *The Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity* (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1995), p. 171.

^{91[11]} Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *The Ante- Nicene Fathers .Translation of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325. Volume III. Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian,* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1899), p. 115.

^{92[12]} Carolyn Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), p. 4.

^{93[13]} James Harrill, *The Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity* (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1995), p. 179.

5. CONCLUSION

It seems that images of slavery in the early church were often conflicting and confusing. The images presented to the early Christians through the eyes of Tertullian call to mind negative social stereotypes, while Ignatius warns masters not to allow slaves to become ‘puffed up’ and advised against corporate manumission. Both spoke not to slaves but to their masters and both words are laced with contempt for slaves, while on the other hand, The Shepherd of Hermas while still purporting to address slave holding population, instruct the masters that it is their duty to free slaves. Paul on the other hand, admonished slaves to be loyal to their masters and that masters should treat them well. (1 Cor. 7: 21-24; Eph. 6: 5-9; Col. 3: 22-24; 1 Tim. 6: 1-2). He, however never spoke about freeing slaves except when he requested Philemon to receive Onesimus as a brother instead of a slave (Phil. 11-16). Apparently the great Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch and Tertullian the early Jurist and ecclesiastical writer never read Psalm 139: 13-16 where David declared that he was wonderfully made in God’s image. They did not know that no one was born by accident and that we are all equal in God’s sight. Ms Judith Miles in her book *Journal from an Obscure Place* declares that “The earthly desire that begot me as unholy, but the Heavenly Desirer who planned me is the Holy one. He allowed for His reason the miracle for me to be conceived. From the very first I am a creature allowed by pure grace- an object of His mercy and love.”^{94[14]} It is a pity that the so-called Christians in the early church did not know or realized that slaves were made by the Heavenly Desirer who made them in His likeness and created them in His image because He wanted them to be on earth.

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^{94[14]} Judith Miles, *Journal from An Obscure Place* (Chicago: Moody Bible Press, 1995), p. 11.

SLAVERY IN MEDIEVAL TIMES

Beverly C. Roberts

1. INTRODUCTION

The period in European history dated from the fall of the Roman Empire to the dawn of the Renaissance is referred to as the Medieval or Middle Ages (A.D 476 –1453). Some historians have recognized sub-periods within the thousand years of the Middle Ages: The Early Middle Ages to about 900 was the period of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, the invasions of the barbarians, and the triumph of Christianity. The High Middle Ages to about 1300 saw Europe begin to revive and the church was reformed and revitalized. In the Later Middle Ages – the 14th and 15th century, Europe suffered great famines and the Hundred Years' War.

All ancient and medieval cultures had slaves, though some had more slaves than others. A slave is someone who is the property of somebody else, according to the laws of the place they live in. A slave can be sold to another owner or forced to work without pay at any kind of work the owner wants. Owners exercised the absolute right to dispose of and control their slaves as one would a piece of property. Basically slaves were treated like animals although there were some slave owners who took pretty good care of their slaves because of the worth they could realize.

2. PRACTICE OF SLAVERY

Slave ownership was widespread throughout the Roman Empire. The Romans understood that they could make more money from slave labour, but the mere fact of owning slaves was a mark of social destination. Particularly among the Roman elite slave owning was a social prestige-making venture as much as, if not more than a financial profit-making venture. Romans brought their slave society mentality to every part of the empire they created. Slavery became a social institution embedded in every part of the world that the Romans came to dominate.

3. LEGAL STATUS OF SLAVES

The Romans legally conceived of the slaves they owned, as cut off from all the rights and rituals of human society. Slaves could have no family. In practice, slaves formed relationships and had children, but they had no legal authority to protect these relationships. If you were a slave who had borne or fathered a child, the child was not yours.

A slave had no honour or dignity. The essence of being a slave was the inability to protect one's body. While every citizen had the right to trial and appeal before they suffered physical punishment, a slave had no such right and expectation. An owner could beat and abuse slaves, and that would not be considered assault. A child born of a slave woman was a slave and the property of the slave woman's owner. While owners frequently gave slaves an allowance, the slave had no right to it, and had to surrender it on demand.

4. SUPPLIES OF SLAVES

Romans obtained slaves in massive numbers by conquering other political entities. After a successful battle captives were sold wholesale to dealers who followed the army, or a commander might distribute a captive population among his men as a form of bonus.

Once Rome stopped conquering the world, their source of slavery was homegrown slaves, known as '*vernae*'. Some Roman slave owners (like Cato and Cassius) turned the art of raising, training, and selling *vernae* into a business enterprise. Owners would select talented young children of slave women – train and educate them in specific crafts, then sell them at a considerable profit.

Another source of slaves was *foundlings*: these were abandoned children who the Romans took and maintained as slaves (which they had every legal right to do).

The Romans also traded for slaves. For example, a great portion of the Roman wine sold in Gaul was paid for in human currency (as many as 15,000 a year). Also individuals were willing to sell themselves into slavery to pay off their own debts. European tribes sold their war captives to slave traders and merchants

Piracy also provided a steady supply of slaves. Pirates kidnapped individuals from ships they seized and sold them into slavery, or they would attack coastal towns and villages and sell populations wholesale into slavery. Pirates also worked with gangs who would attack and seize towns, then turn them over to the pirates who would sell the captives to slave merchants and split the profit with the gangs.

5. LIVES AND JOBS OF SLAVES

The working life of slaves depended greatly on the economic status of the owner. One who could only afford one or two slaves may use them for all sorts of purposes, while a very wealthy Roman could afford slaves trained for specific tasks.

The experience of slavery depended heavily on the type of labour to which a slave was assigned. Slaves assigned to mines and galleys lived under a certain sentence of death, while those sold to gladiatorial schools might live longer and could even fight their way to freedom. Farm slaves were subject to the authority of bailiffs who themselves were slaves who managed the agricultural estates of wealthy Romans. Farm work could be physically demanding and the personality of the overseer often determined the slave's experience of his life and work. Slave children worked as much as their elders, pruning and harvesting.

Household slaves of elite families in Rome probably enjoyed the greatest standard of living. However slaves routinely enjoyed food, clothing, and living space. Some slaves were trained in arts and crafts, weaving and dyeing cloth, or manning their owner's workshops. Slaves with unique and profitable skills enjoyed a greater standard of living and easier relations with their owners than those who could merely offer physical labour on a farm.

6. SLAVERY IN THE CHURCH

Slavery was practiced in the Bible in both Old and New Testaments. The patriarch Abraham had slaves, and so did his cousin Lot. However the Hebrew slaves were

protected by Mosaic Law and were treated with more respect than in other societies. They were not even assigned to work on the seventh day, for they were expected to rest and be refreshed (Exodus 20:10; 23:12). The Hebrew slaves were to be freed after six years of service. God never sanctioned the inhumane treatment of slaves but on the contrary there are several Scriptures in both Old and New Testaments teaching how God required slave owners to deal with slaves very kindly- Exodus 21:20, 26-27; Leviticus 25:47-48; Deut.15: 12-14; 23:15-16; 24:7; Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 4:1.

Mark Brumley, in an article entitled *Let My People Go: The Catholic Church and Slavery* writes, "Certainly the early Christians more or less tolerated the slavery of their day, as seen from the New Testament itself and the fact that after Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire, slavery was not immediately outlawed. Even so, this doesn't mean Christianity was compatible with Roman slavery or that the early church did not contribute to its demise".

However in the Middle Ages Christians also owned, bought, and sold slaves as evidenced by the following: -

- When the Bishop of Le Mans transferred a large estate to the Abbey of St. Vincent in 572, ten slaves went with it.
- In the early ninth century, the Abbey of St. Germain des Pres listed 25 of their 278 householders as slaves.
- Pope Gregory X1 excommunicated the Florentines in the fourteenth century and ordered them enslaved wherever taken.

The Roman Empire was dependent on slave labour so the church became generally supportive of slavery, especially since very few of its theologians wrote in opposition to it. In 595 Pope Gregory dispatched a priest to Britain to purchase pagan boys to work as slaves on church estates. In 600 he wrote in Pastoral Rule: "Slaves should be told not to despise their masters and recognize that they are only slaves".

Despite the above, many of the early church fathers promoted, and were responsible for, the eventual abolition of slavery. Gregory of Nyssa and John Chrysostum strongly denounced it. The Christians in Asia Minor decried the lawfulness of it, denounced slaveholding as a sin, a violation of the law of nature and religion. They gave fugitive slaves asylum and openly offered them protection.

St. Eligius, Bishop of Noyon, redeemed captive slaves in large numbers and of many nations. Whenever he understood that a slave was being offered for sale, he hastened with the utmost speed and immediately gave the price and freed the captive. Occasionally he redeemed from captivity up to one hundred slaves at the same time from various peoples and of both sexes.

St. Augustine spoke of the granting of freedom to slaves as a great religious virtue, and declares the Christian law against regarding God's rational creation as property.

Isidore of Seville wrote: "I can hardly credit that a friend of Christ, who has experienced that grace, which bestowed freedom on all, would still own slaves".

Some churches redeemed slaves using the congregation's common means, while others sold themselves into slavery to emancipate others. That the church willingly baptized slaves was claimed as proof that they had souls, and soon both kings and bishops-including William the Conqueror forbade the enslavement of Christians.

In the thirteenth century Saint Thomas Aquinas deduced that slavery was a sin, and a series of popes upheld his position.

7. CONCLUSION

Although some argue that the Bible did not speak out against slavery it is the same Bible that warns slave owners to treat their slaves justly. God's people were not called to attack the system of darkness, but to shine their lights and dispel the darkness.

Because of the radical character of the gospel the institution of slavery was abolished for men and women dared stand for righteousness. I am glad to declare that this gospel is the Good News that can set people free from the chains of sin.

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INVOLUNTARY OR FORCED LABOR

Kenyatta Lewis

1. INTRODUCTION

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”^{95[1]} If article 1 is adhered to by mankind then article 4 will become a reality, unfortunately it is not. It states, no one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.^{96[2]}

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the gross disregard of both articles, and the Biblical tenet that we should love our neighbors. It will also present a Biblical response to the human scourge of forced labor and its appendage, human trafficking.

2. INVOLUNTARY OR FORCED LABOR

“All work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily.”^{97[3]} This is the definition of forced or compulsory labor adopted by the ILO Convention (no 29) article 2:1 of 1930.^{98[4]} The International Labor Organization (ILO) affiliate of the United Nations responsible for labor issues states that there are eight forms of forced labor practices in the world today, namely: slavery, farm and rural debt bondage, bonded labor, people trafficking, abuse of domestic workers, prison labor, compulsory work, military labor.^{99[5]}

An ILO report in May 2005 puts the total number of people around the world involved in forced labor at a conservative “12.3 million”.^{100[6]} However, Kevin Bales a leading expert on the issue of contemporary slavery puts the figure at a staggering 27 million.^{101[7]} (Kevin Bales, *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy*, University of California Press, 1999). It is reported that a whooping “15.5 billion dollars”^{102[8]} are generated in the industrialized world through forced labor. While in Asia the exploiters net “9.7 billion”^{103[9]} a contrasting report puts the figure at “32 billion a year”^{104[10]} with “profits from forced commercial sexual exploitation...27.8 billion annually.”^{105[11]}

Countries that the practice of compulsory labor exists in are as diverse as Congo, Sierra Leone to India and Pakistan to Hungary and Albania, to Burma and Cambodia, to

^{95[1]} www.ohchr.org

^{96[2]} *Ibid.*

^{97[3]} www.hrea.org

^{98[4]} *Ibid.*

^{99[5]} *Ibid.*

^{100[6]} www.pww.org

^{101[7]} www.hrea.org

^{102[8]} www.pww.org

^{103[9]} *Ibid.*

^{104[10]} www.commondreams.org

^{105[11]} *Ibid.*

Brazil and Columbia to the USA and Italy.^{106[12]} This in no way states that the governments of the majority of these countries endorse this evil practice, but it does say that it is a worldwide phenomenon, and that it is not a few of the world's poorest nations, as the list of named countries will show. As was earlier stated forced or compulsory work entails having a person under the threat of violence labor against their will. This practice gets no worse than in the use of child labor and human trafficking/sex trafficking.

3. MANIFESTATIONS

3.1. Child labor

“The International Labor Organization asserts that child labor usually amounts to forced labor.”^{107[13]} Child labor is the form given where a child 5-17 is forced to work when said work brings harm or exploits the child in some way, be it mentally, morally, physically or sexually.^{108[14]} Such activities range from animal care, food harvesting, auto repair, footwear, textiles and small manufacturing^{109[15]}. Other forms of child labor include prostitution and soldiering. According to Human Rights Watch there are more than thirty countries worldwide where children are used as soldiers and in the cases of girls as “wives” and sex-slaves.^{110[16]}

The estimated number of those involved in child labor is put by the ILO at “246 million” of which “8.4 million children were engaged in...armed conflict... trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.”^{111[17]} Asia alone accounts for 61% of this figure, while in Africa its 32%, Latin America its 7% and the USA, Canada and Europe account for 1%.^{112[18]}

3.2. Human trafficking/Sex trafficking

Images of West African slaves canned into ship holds are forever stained on the minds of those repulsed by the slave trade undertaken by European countries in 16th and 17th centuries. The modern phenomenon of human trafficking is no less distasteful. Figures are stating of course but the reality is stark. Men and boys, but mostly women and girls for sex are taken from their homes, mainly poor countries to places like Amsterdam, Brussels, New York and Tokyo.^{113[19]} The dream is of a better life, the horror is captivity, rape, even murder. Though sex is the main purpose there are other forms of manual labor included and though women are primarily the targets, in places like the Ukraine and Poland, men make up the greater numbers.

^{106[12]} www.hrea.org

^{107[13]} [En.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)

^{108[14]} www.childlaborphotoproject.org

^{109[15]} www.dol.org

^{110[16]} www.hrw.org

^{111[17]} www.childlabor.org

^{112[18]} Child labor: targeting the intolerable, Geneva, 1998, p. 7.

^{113[19]} “*Stopping Forced Labor*”. <http://www.digitalcommons.1/R.corneel.edu/forcedlabor/2>

Few even return home or are heard from by families and friends. Armed conflicts, poor living conditions, economic collapse and the dream of earning money are some of the situations that human trafficking thrives in.

3.3. Human trafficking in the Caribbean

Pristine white sand beaches are often the image of the Caribbean beamed around the world. Sadly a darker sinister side of the Caribbean exists amidst the beauty of the islands; there exists a disturbingly burgeoning sex trade involving women, girls and boys. The region is also fast becoming a transit point en route to North America, Europe and Australia. However, countries such as Haiti, Cuba, Suriname, Dominican Republic and Jamaica are also destination countries.

Victims are usually plucked from impoverished living conditions and lured by promises of a better life. Awareness is however low amongst member states of the Caribbean and it therefore means there are not many nationally engineered projects underway to stem this ever-increasing atrocity.

4. SOLUTIONS

A number of initiatives have been implemented to eradicate this evil from the world. In 1957 the ILO Convention no. 105 concerning the Abolition of forced labor stated that “Each member of the International Labor organization which ratifies this convention undertakes to suppress and not to make use of any form of forced or compulsory labor”.^{114[20]}

Countries such as Italy, Austria and the United States have enacted laws to help victims of trafficking, while in countries such as Thailand, China and Cambodia laws are in place to deal with the traffickers.

Along with the ILO, UNICEF and WHO are working to eradicate child trafficking and debt bondage respectively. Interpol, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) have also played significant roles in the fight against forced labor.^{115[21]} Trade Unions, NGO’s like Human Rights Watch and Media houses like BBC have also played great roles in identifying the problems and solutions. The task, however, remains monumental.

8. BIBLICAL RESPONSE

The Biblical patriarch Abraham was an owner of slaves or servants (Gen 12:5). There is no clear date as to when the practice of slavery started but it was a well-known and practiced code even in antiquity. The Israelites were allowed by the law given by God through Moses, to purchase slaves from outside their borders (Lev 25:44-46). This practice is contrasted by the edict that Israelites could be slaves of each other, but hired, and only for a prescribed time (Lev 25: 39-42). There was also allowance in Israelite law for a convicted thief unable to pay his fines to serve for a period of time as a slave (Ex 22:3). Speaking of the treatment of slaves and hired servants the Lord was clear, “Thou

^{114[20]} www.hrea.org

^{115[21]} “*Stopping Forced Labor*”

shalt not rule over him with rigor, but shalt fear the Lord” (Lev 25:43 – KJV). When commissioning Moses to lead the enslaved Israelites free, God clearly shows His concern for their plight. “ I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows.” (Ex 4:7 KJV). It is a reflection of the heart of God that slaves be treated just and fair. God constantly reminds the Israelites that they were once slaves, harshly and brutally treated (Lev 25:38, 55).

As a model to the nations, Israel was not to enslave their own and if they did so to foreigners then their treatment must be humane and reflective of God’s mercy. Where God is concerned, the rights of a man should in no way be impinged upon or denied. As a matter of fact, “God’s demands for justice and peace, the stress on human beings as the imago dei, the call to love our neighbors as ourselves, the Ten Commandments, indeed the very idea of revealed law, can all be regarded as foundations for rights”^{116[22]}

The New Testament story of the Roman centurion whose slave was healed by Jesus furnishes us with a look into the heart of God and the issue of slavery in Roman times. Firstly we learn that there were times when a slave can be highly valued, “most ship’s captains in the Roman navy were slaves owned by the Emperor. Farm managers frequently were slaves as were many of the chief executive officers of primitive banks of the age”^{117[23]} We also learn that Jesus healing of the slave enforces the idea of the equality of all men. Jesus heals a ruler’s daughter and a slave, none are better, but to all the kingdom of God has come.

In Ephesians 6:8 Paul teaches that a man who does good will receive good from the Lord, be this man free or bond. The idea of masters treating their slaves with decency is clearly emphasized by God, but here we learn that the moral responsibility of all men applies to the slave as well. He is a person of dignity and worth; he is therefore endowed with moral and ethical responsibilities. The slave is not excused from living without honor and purpose.

The scourge of human bondage is detested by God as any other manifestation of sin. The cries of the oppressed and afflicted need to be heard by the Christian community. Like God we must be grieved and tormented by the pleas of millions enough to be moved into action. Through advocacy, involvement in the solution, prayer, missions and co-operation with other agencies and bodies involved in the war against human slavery.

7. CONCLUSION

Juan Somavia the ILO Director-General comments that “forced labor is a social evil which has no place in the modern world”^{118[24]} The ILO Declaration speaks to us as Christians more than it does to various international bodies when it says that “there is no excuse for forced labor in the twenty first century”^{119[25]} The elimination of this stain

^{116[22]} David J. Atkinson, *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology* (Illinois: Inter-Varsity press, 1995), p. 747.

^{117[23]} Atkins.

^{118[24]} www.pww.org

^{119[25]} “*Stopping Forced Labor*”,

calls for thought, careful action, and tripartite co-operation and compassion. The knowledge that we are empowered with is that God is with us.

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LABOUR ABUSE

Tama Henry

1. INTRODUCTION

The good book says, “By the sweat of thy brow thou shall eat bread.” So let him labour with the hands that he may have it to help himself and others. It was the great writer Booker T. Washington who penned it, “To work or labour with the hands at a job that needs doing, does not lower a man, but makes him a better man,” (without being abused on the job). This is very uplifting.

2. DESCRIPTION

The word labour means in the dictionary: - Physical or mental exertion, a specific task, manual work. Also the word abuse means: - to be used wrongly, to mistreat, to insult, to revile, a corrupt practice. Since the creation and fall of man, people have all been labouring, working hard for their honest wages to accommodate both themselves and others. In doing so, some people are being abused on the job, and that makes it rather difficult and unbearable for some. Still some people might find it very comfortable to labour for their wages, because of that certain labour laws are being in place.

As a description of such laws, there are conditions of employment. When one labours for a day for his/her wages, it means a period of eight hours work. \$25.00 per day is for a certain category of labourers; while \$15.00 per day for another category of labourers.

As for overtime, the labourers employed on time work, for every hour a part, thereof in excess of eight hours, the labourer will receive time and a half. On public holidays the labourer will receive double time payment. Also on Sunday he will receive double time payment. Vacation leave is to be given to the labourer after working for a number of years accordingly. Sick leave is entitled to all workers. Maternity leave is to be given to the female labourer after working for a number of years accordingly.

3. SITUATIONS OF LABOR ABUSE

It is under these situations that the labourers are liable to be abused by fellow labourers, bosses and employers. For example, when the time comes for a labourer to discontinue working for his lunch period, his co-workers doesn't show up. He may have to wait until he comes, when its time for him to go. After minutes went by, he may show up without an apology. That's adding insult to injury, and that is labour abuse. Remember the Bible says, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” I am sure the other worker would not like to be treated that way. But what goes around comes around back.

As under the condition of labour, at the end of the day, or a period o labour, one is expected to receive or to be paid his wages. But sometimes a month will lapse and the labourer gets no pay for the work done. There are bills to be paid, children to go to school, food to be bought, clothes etc. One's obligation is to be met. This is labour abuse. Again, sometimes one may work his fulltime honestly and he receives only half of his pay. Then there is no one to lodge his complaint to, because the injustice is from

the higher powers. So, one just has to take it as it is. But not so with the bigger boss (God). At the end of the day, everyone must be paid in full, whether he has done good or bad labour. Not half of his wages but the whole. The Bible states that the employer and the employee agreed for such an amount at the end of the day, or the labour period. So the employer should not abuse the employee by giving him only half or not the whole of his payment for the time he laboured. That is not the bargain or arrangement and agreement.

For overtime: if the labourer happens to work overtime, he should also be compensated for the work and time, by receiving a day and a half wages as agreed on. By that it is meant, if the labourers schedule is eight hours per day, but he works in excess of eight hours, the labourer will receive payment for a time and a half, which is twelve hours. Then if he has to labour on a public holiday or on a Sunday, he will receive double payment. Some employers cut the labourer's pay and refuse to pay him for the time. That is less pay for more work done. He is abused and some have gone as far as to dismiss or lay off the labourer, if he dares to quarry the matter, or complain about it. In simple terms, the labourer will have no job again.

As for the workers' vacation, arrangements are made in various sectors for certain periods of labour for vacation. For some workers, their vacation is cut short and they don't get the pay equal to the time specified for their vacation and complaining becomes complicated. So it's best to leave it where it is. Therefore the labourer becomes the looser of time and money. This is unfair. This is highway robbery. The command is, "Thou shall not steal thy employees' time and payment, for the lord will not hold you guiltless that do so to thy employees."

Sick leave is for anyone or labourer that is sick and is working. Therefore, he needs not remain on the job at that time. He takes his leave, goes to the doctor and rest off until he is well enough to get back on the job. But sometimes the boss calls for such a one before his leave is up. So the boss is not dealing with him fairly. There should be that tender and helpful heart to feel for others.

Ladies who have to take maternity leave from their job are treated very shamefully sometimes. If they happen to be feeling ill during pregnancy at work, sometimes they are not allowed to take a little time off to the rest room until they recover to face the public. Even unkind words would be thrown at them. They would be cursed even verbally abused. They also would be shouted at, if anything goes wrong, or even if they make a mistake. No respect would be shown to them. These labourers are entitled to their leave, but again, for some; before the leave is up they have to report back to work. They have to put up with it or they don't have a job. One may ask if the male bosses really have a heart of flesh or stone, or if they have a wife, daughter or mother. It is true, whatsoever one does to one of these, he has done it unto Jesus.

In some areas, labourers are beaten on the job and employers curse them with indecent languages, use the feet on them, and treat them as if they are not human as they themselves are. But because of the society in which they live, there is not redress and not even one to take their grievance to confidentially. In other words, there is no justice to be given in terms regards to labour abuse. So the answer is left blowing in the wind.

4. SOLUTION

To think of a solution for these conditions and in situations like these, employers must get back to the drawing board, and revisit all conditions and agreements made by both employers and employees with regards to the labour rules. Then at least begin to correct some of ills, and treat each other as one would like to be treated. Then the work place will become a heaven down here, where the labour won't be a burden to the labourer, and the employer won't abuse his employee.

5. CONCLUSION

In simple terms, man must remember that every employer has a boss over him and God is the eternal and greatest boss over all. Then he will be coming back very soon, to pay every man, every worker, every labourer, according as his work shall be. He will be doing it without cutting anyone's pay or for overtime payment, and he won't abuse any of his labourers, because he is a just God (as a boss). So let us all labour in righteousness that when pay-day comes, we won't be ashamed.

CHILD LABOUR

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Brief History

The issue of child labor the world over has been examined and addressed extensively for many decades. International Organizations such as United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the Human Resources Organization (HRO) are actively involved in monitoring such occurrences.

Data has been compiled even before the industrial revolution, which many experts believe worsened the situation. Every nation on earth, undeveloped or developing, is able to identify some kind of exploitative child labor taking place. In fact, since Bible days there were child laborers. 1King 5 relates the story of Naaman and his maid who could not have been more than fifteen years old. David also worked as a child tending his father's sheep at the age of twelve (1Samuel 17:14, 15). Even the Lord Jesus when He walked this earth, worked with His father Joseph as a carpenter (Luke 2:39, 40). However, as research shows, the situation has become increasingly unhealthy and poorer nations are experiencing an unacceptably high degree of child laborers. Data from a child labor education project reveals that child labor occurs in the continent of Asia- 60%, Africa- 23% and South America – 8%.^{120[1]} The ILO has estimated that 250 million children between the ages of five and fourteen work in developing countries.^{121[2]}

1.2. Relation to today

There are strict laws in place today for many countries that are aimed at eradicating the worst forms of child labor. The United Nations has set up several Organizations (ILO, HRO etc.) to play an active role in monitoring and reporting situations as they exist. However, from information gathered and observations made, it seems that child exploitation in the workplace is still practiced on a wide scale- especially in poorer, developing countries. Today, one must ask the questions: "How concerned are the authorities on this problem? How devastating is the effect on Society? Why should parameters be set for putting a child to work?" These questions must be address or the world could become indifferent to what is going on.

1.3. Christian response to the Issue

Christians in all areas of ministry are aware of the child labor problem as it exists today, but their role in its alleviation is not properly documented. Indeed, there are but few Christian organizations set up to deal with the issue. Although there are numerous secular organizations already working towards lessening the problem, as a Christian one must seek the Lord's guidance as to how to impact positively in situations around the world. Reference could be made to the Letter to Philemon where Paul speaks of "Onesimus" who seemed to be a young runaway slave. Paul beseeched Philemon to forgive Onesimus and to receive him as a brother. Christians should not alienate those

^{120[1]} "What is Child labor?" http://www.continuetolearn.uiowa.edu/laborectr/child_labor.

^{121[2]} "Children Rights". <http://www.hrw.org/children/labor.htm>.

involved in child labor, but they are requested to share the word of truth, bid people to come to Christ and seek reconciliation.

The Psalmist David says “*Children are a heritage of the Lord and the fruit of the womb is His reward*” (Psalm 127:3). Surely a community could amend its ways by taking heed to God’s word.

2. DEFINITION

To obtain some understanding of the issue one must have a definition of and distinguish between “child labor” and “child work.” According to Wikipedia, child labor is “the employment of children under an age determined by law or custom”.^{122[3]} The Article “child labor and the global village” (author unknown) describes it as “work for children that harms them or exploits them in some way- physically, mentally, morally, or by blocking access to education.”^{123[4]} Child work, on the other hand, is children’s participation in economic activity that does not affect their health and development or interfere with their education.^{124[5]} This paper seeks to discuss child labor – that form of work that harms, exploits or blocks access to education for children.

3. CERTAIN SITUATIONS

3.1. India

Several nations in the world today are plagued with child labor problems. India, being one of the most populated nations in the world, is believed to have the largest child labor force on the continent of Asia.

In 1996, Human Rights Watch estimated that between “60 and 115 million children in India were being exploited or forced into work”. According to Mitesh Badiwala, Child labor in India is found in nine different sectors namely: (1) Cultivation, (2) Agricultural Labor, (3) Livestock, Forestry, Fishing, Plantation, (4) Mining and Quarrying, (5) Manufacturing, Processing, Servicing and Repairs, (6) Construction, (7) Trade and Commerce, (8) Storage, Transport and Communication (9) Other Services.^{125[6]}

Children’s work depends on where they live whether in rural or in urban areas. For example, Badiwala research indicates that 84.29 % of rural child workers are employed in cultivation or agricultural labor, whilst some 39.16% of urban child workers are employed in manufacturing. The International labor Organization (ILO) is particularly concerned with the manufacturing sector as this type of labor produces “bonded laborers” which means children are working to repay some kind of family debt and are not monetarily rewarded. This type of labor gives rise to great exploitation of the children.

Research also indicates that the main reasons for child labor are poverty and lack of education. Many poor families rely on the labor of their children to survive. The

^{122[3]} http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_labor.

^{123[4]} “*Child Labor and Global village.*” <http://www.childlaborphotoproject.org/childlabor.html>.

^{124[5]} “*Child protection from violence, exploitation and abuse.*” <http://www.unicef.org/protection/index>

^{125[6]} Mitesh Badiwala, “*Child Labor in India.*” <http://www.geocities.com/collegepark/library/9175/inquiry1.htm>

income is necessary to maintain economic levels. Inadequate schooling in the rural areas and lack of any input financially by the government are prime factors. Also, the caste system allows a certain class to live in the cycle of poverty all their lives. These are the central issues that perpetuate child labor in India.^{126[7]}

3.2. Africa

In the continent of Africa, child labor remains prevalent especially in the rural areas. According to research carried out by Faraaz Siddiqi, Nigeria alone has twelve million child workers. Figures reported from 1990 shows that 22% of children under fourteen are actively employed in the labor force. Warring tribes throughout the African continent continually use under age boys to be soldiers. As reported by the United Nations, in countries like Somalia, Sudan and the Congo, civil war has caused the deaths of millions of children. The HIV/AIDS crisis in South Africa is creating a grave child labor situation as older siblings have to work to care for orphaned younger children.^{127[8]}

Like India, poverty, lack of education and proper government services are responsible for the child labor problem in Africa. The lack of adequate education especially in rural areas where children live very far away from learning institutions also force children to chose to work and help their families.

3.3. South America

The International Labor Organization (ILO) in 1992 stated that in Peru there are some seven million children working. Most of the work is agricultural in nature, and take place in areas that are difficult to control and monitor in an effective manner. Due to the fact that the children contribute significantly to the household income, parents often force their children to work, and do not disclose the truth about situations occurring in the home. One of Peru's problems is that the minimum age for compulsory education is lower than the minimum age for work. Data provided by Sinclair and Trah 1991, and UNESCO 1993 shows that the minimum compulsory education age is twelve. So children stop going to school and turn to employment at a very early age. Figures indicate that these children contribute 7.5% of household income.

3.4. El Salvador

Sugar cane is the main economic industry and therefore a great percentage of its citizens are involved in its production in one way or the other. The harvesting of sugar cane can be a dangerous occupation because of the process – cutting using sharp tools. Children who work under these conditions are too young to handle such tools, and research by Human Rights World Wide Organization shows that these children sustain serious, if not fatal injury during the process. Data is recorded (author unknown) which indicate that children between ages eight and eighteen displayed cut fingers and feet from machete.

^{126[7]} *Ibid.*

^{127[8]} Faraaz Siddiqi, “*Child labor*”.

http://www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/hnp/hddflash/workp/wp_00056.html

Interviews with these children by Human Rights Researchers were graphic as they told of their injuries.

In addition to the danger of using the machete, children are faced with skin problems from their exposure to hazardous substances and irritants. According to an IPEC study, 25.5% of the Salvadoran children surveyed experienced headaches, 14.5% back or neck problems, and 14.5 % respiratory problems. These statistics show that there is great health risk to children in this country.

Again, reasons cited for extensive child labor is poverty, and because working in the sugarcane industry provides a viable means of income to poor families, the laws against this occurrence are not observed or strictly imposed.^{128[9]}

3.5. The Caribbean

Although the islands are classified as “third world” or ‘developing’, the population of each island is minuscule as compared to other nations, therefore any evidence of worst forms of child labor is hidden. Jamaica, however, being one of the largest islands in the Caribbean with a population of over two million exhibited significant child labor of one of the worst kind – Prostitution. This type of sexual exploitation on Jamaican children seem to occur more in private places where there is less monitoring of social behaviour.

The prostitution occurring in young Jamaican children was divided into nine categories according to data provided by the ILO. These are (1) children living and working on the streets, (2) children in formal prostitution, (3) children in seasonal prostitution, (4) Go-go dancers, (5) massage parlor workers, (6) sugar daddy girls, (7) ‘chapses’, (8) children used in pornographic productions and (9) children used in sacrificial sex. Homosexual behavior among boys is prevalent, occurring mostly in a group of children who lives on the street. Young girls are engaged in adult prostitution-operating from bars and massage parlors. They are also part of exotic dancers in go-go clubs.

The breakdown of family is sited as one of the main reasons for the exploitation of children. This coupled with poverty and lack of educational opportunity allows the issue of child labor to become a major problem in Jamaica. Other factors that play a major role are peer pressure, media advertising and inadequate monitoring of laws.^{129[10]}

4. THE SOLUTION

Although the various organizations such as UNICEF, ILO, WHO and others are making a concerted effort to curb and eventually eradicate child labor, the task is multifaceted and complex. Why is putting a child to work an issue? Why should parameters be set? The governing bodies recognize that some child labor is necessary, depending on the situation of a family or the conditions under which the family lives.

Various remedies have been adapted by the different countries around the world-usually drafted to suit individual needs. Most of the laws are centered on the parameters of those already enacted by the UN. The following is a list of recommendations for

^{128[9]} “*The use of child Labor in Sugarcane Cultivation.*” <http://www.hrw.org>.

^{129[10]} “*Jamaica-Situation of children in prostitution*”. <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards>

various nations, written on the premise that poverty and lack of educational opportunity are the main reasons for child labor:

- Raise the income of families living below the poverty level – individual nations to match the cost of living so that families would be able to afford basic necessities.
- Provide subsidies for essential needs such as food and transportation in areas where they are not available.
- Provide adequate education for all citizens – both in urban and rural areas. Advertise the advantages of basic education and appeal for monetary help with regards to funding from charities.
- Improve the standard of living for very poor families, through proper health care with control and parental guidance and counseling.
- Enforce the minimum age requirement for labor as stated in the ILO guidelines which lists it at 15 years.

5. CONCLUSION

Apart from the moral and social effects of child labor, the spiritual impact on various societies has far reaching consequences. The International and regional instruments that govern child labor include “the minimum age convention 1973 and Worst forms of Child Labor Convention”. The Psalmist claims that children are like “arrows in a bow”- they must be carefully guided. They are the future leaders of the world. In order for civilization to improve its living standards and for mankind to show forth God’s glory, the children of today must be properly nurtured.

The Christian Church and Christian community has the responsibility of reaching out and strengthening families and their children with the good news of Jesus Christ. Churches are instructed by Jesus to bring the children to Him.

A great amount of humans inhabit the earth, and some of the poorest countries have the largest population – like India and China. Realistic laws must be put in place to help countries whose citizens have large families. Such laws need to enable local families to be able to work, provide for their family and avoid abuse of any member of the family, including the children.

Child labor may never be totally eradicated but with continued work among organizations and vigilance among its staff, a great deal can be done to draw attention to this situation.

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SEX SLAVERY

Wendell B. Roberts

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the fall of man sin has come in to the world. Man in his depravity has done everything to move away from God and God's plan and perfect will for his life. God, upon creating male and female, commissioned them to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth. Clearly this was God's approval on the sexual union between the man and the woman to fulfill God's plan of procreation. When Adam and Eve failed the whole human race fell into sin and man became a slave to his desires and passions. This slavery drives man to satisfy his sexual passions through means that are not lawful. This, coupled with greed and the desire to become rich, have led man into devising unscrupulous means of gaining money easily. One of the means being used is the exploitation of women into sexual slavery.

Genesis 1:26 clearly points out that man was to have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. We note that this portion did not instruct man to have dominion over man. This being the case, God approves no form of exploitation, and His Word will sternly denounce sex slavery.

When one considers what is involved in the practice of sex slavery there is a Scripture portion that immediately comes to mind: Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it".

2. DEFINITION

According to Wikipedia, the free Encyclopedia, 'sexual slavery' is a special case of slavery which includes various practices: (1) Forced prostitution, (2) single-owner sexual slavery, (3) ritual slavery, sometimes associated with traditional religious practices, (4) slavery for non-sexual purposes where sex is common or permissible. The nature of the slavery means that the slave is available for sex, and ordinary social conventions and legal protections that would otherwise constrain an owner's actions are not effective. Female slaves are at highest risk of sexual abuse and sexual slavery.

'Trafficking' is when someone is forced through deception, coercion, threats, or actual violence into labour exploitation. When we talk of sex slavery, we are referring to sexual exploitation whereby people are trafficked into forced prostitution.

3. SITUATION

Sex slavery is widespread and its presence is evident in practically all major nations of the earth. In a five-year study conducted by the NGO, End Child Prostitution In Asia (ECPAT), data compiled for 160 foreign males who were arrested by the police forces of Asian countries because of sex abuse against prostitute minors, revealed these countries of origin: 40 abusers from the U.S.A, 28 from Germany, 22 from Australia, 19 from the U.K, 10 from France; Japan, Canada, Switzerland, Swede, Denmark, Austria, Belgium, Holland, Spain, Saudi Arabia, and South Africa were also on the list.

Forced prostitution is a form of sexual slavery that is often directed to immigrants of Western and Asian countries. This practice, which is also referred to as sex trafficking or human trafficking, is illegal in most countries. However traffickers use coercive tactics including deception, fraud, isolation, threat, physical force and intimidation to trap and control their victims. Women are recruited with promises of good, legal jobs in other countries, or are tricked into a false marriage, and lacking better opportunities at home, agree to migrate. The traffickers arrange the travel and job placements; the women are escorted to their destinations and delivered to the employers. It is at this point that many women come to discover that they have been deceived about the nature of the work they are expected to do. Most of them realize only too late, that they have been lied to about the financial arrangements and conditions of their employment. At this point the die is cast and these women find themselves in abusive and bullying situations from which escape is both difficult and dangerous.

One writer describes the movement of women for the sex industry as 'waves'. He states that the first wave came from Southeast Asia, particularly Bangkok, Thailand, to service the American troops who went into Viet Nam. The second wave came from North Africa and moved into parts of Southern Europe. The third wave was that of the Central and South American women. The fourth wave came in an explosion. It did not creep up like the other waves did. When the Iron Curtain came down Eastern European women suddenly went from less than 1% to 25% of the trafficking women. They were blond, sexy, and intelligent. They suddenly became the 'it' girl.

The United States Department of State in its annual report on human rights violations in Moldova states, "The country was a major country of origin for women and children to be trafficked abroad for forced prostitution. Men and children were trafficked to Russia and neighbouring countries for forced labour and begging". The International Organization for Migration (I.O.M) reported that the Moldova government knows that children are highly sought after for the sex trade. The article further stated "of the victims they have assisted, 40% were minors at the time of their initial trafficking. The sex trafficking of minors is organized by government officials who take the major share of the income from this trade".

The U.S State Department's report on Human Rights abuses in Moldova confirms that "trafficking of children for the purpose of sex exploitation" remains a problem, calling it "very serious" and confirming that Moldavian authorities simply turn a blind eye and refuses to arrest or prosecute anyone. The authorities opened investigations against only low-level government officials and did not arrest or prosecute any during the year. No high-level officers were prosecuted during the year".

The collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in a desperation that has forced thousands of young women to do anything to get out and try to earn a living. Someone said "after the collapse everything was destroyed; everything changed". A U.S Government report published in 2003 estimates that 800,000 –900,000 people worldwide are trafficked across borders each year.

CBS News carries a story entitled ***Rescue From Sex Slavery, February 25, 2005***. Their correspondent Peter Van Sant of 48 Hours went undercover on the front where sex trading was taking place and has revealed some astonishing findings. He stated that downtown Bucharest resembles a scene straight from the 18th century slave trade. According to the record hundreds of thousands of young, desperate girls are trafficked

each year as sex slaves. Some are lured overseas with the promise of a good job, only to be enslaved once they arrive. Others are simply abducted.

48 Hours correspondent Van Sant entered into business with a trafficker who had a young blond girl for sale. He offered to pay \$1,000.00 for Nicoleta, to which the owner agreed. The next day when Van Sant came to seal the deal, the trafficker realizing that the slave was to be taken overseas raised the sale price to \$2,000.00. Van Sant negotiated and purchased Nicoleta for \$1,800.00. She left with only the clothes on her back. 48 Hours was astonished at the ease by which a human being can be bought- even in less time than it takes to purchase groceries. Nicoleta shared her story with 48 Hours correspondent. It was the first time she was outside in more than a year. She said that she was brutally beaten by her owners and was fed like a dog. Having been abandoned by her mother at an orphanage where she was subsequently thrown out, and with no family and no home, she ended up in Bucharest living in the sewers and shantytowns for years with young runaways. The traffickers found her at the side of the road. They promised her food and shelter but made her bad world worse by having her become a sex slave. 48 hours then revealed to her that they were journalists from the U.S.A who purchased her because they wanted to set her free. She hugged the translator and said, "Thank you from the bottom of my heart, that you have saved me from that hell".

48 Hours shares an equally pathetic story of Olga, 25 years old, who is also a survivor of a million-dollar sex slave trafficking ring in Russia. Her ordeal began in 1999 in her hometown of Moscow, a growing supplier of sex slaves to the United States. Olga's father and boyfriend were murdered by the Russian mob, which made her scared and desperate to get out of Russia. She therefore became a perfect target for traffickers. She was introduced to a man named Alexander Rashkowsky who was looking for girls to work in America. He offered her a chance at a new life: a job as an assistant, and transportation to the U.S.A. Olga embraced the opportunity and along with four other Russian girls, got on the plane. Rashkowsky made it clear to them that having spent his money for plane tickets there was no backing out; and if anyone tried to run away he was going to cut their head off. Olga realized that she was now the property of an international slave trader. Instead of flying to the U.S.A Olga's plane was headed to Mexico where Rashkowsky was planning to smuggle the women across the notorious, unsupervised border between Mexico and the United States. They were brought to a hotel in Tijuana. According to 48 Hours, girls like Olga are sometimes put to work in Mexico's strip clubs before heading north. Rashkowsky brought some men to the hotel the first night to put his new slaves to work. Olga convinced them that she was too sick to perform, but Rashkowsky did not care at all. She sees a horrible future ahead of her and is determined to escape. Olga decided to take her chance at the border and so frustrate Rashkowsky's dream of making her one of his sex slave victims. When she got to the border and the patrol guard stopped the car, Olga began speaking in Russian. Rashkowsky was furious for he had already commanded them to use only 2 English words, 'yes and U.S.A'. Everyone was ordered out of the car and detained. When questioned on video Rashkowsky tried to convince his interrogators that he had just met the girls in Tijuana but his alibi did not work. He was arrested and charged for attempting to smuggle human beings across the border. Olga was taken into a 'safe house' in San Diego under protective custody. She was allowed to stay in the U.S.A under a special

visa federal government offers to victims of trafficking. She is now trying to build a real estate career.

Investigators later learned the ugly truth: Rashkowsky had raked in more than a million dollars, trafficking young Russian girls into the Los Angeles area, who were being treated as sex slaves. Alexander Rashkowsky ended up in a California prison after Olga testified against him. He died of pneumonia behind bars in 2003.

Someone has observed that one of the most shocking things about the traffickers and recruiters is how regular they are: Mothers, fathers, and daughters who blend in seamlessly with the rest of society. The callous, absolute cold-hearted, matter-of-fact way they treat these transactions is staggering. To them it's just another business deal.

If the slaves are caught in the foreign country they are often deported to their homeland where they are scoffed at and seen as whores or prostitutes. They are usually psychologically devastated with all kinds of medical problems, sexually transmitted diseases, and HIV/Aids; and there is nothing for them. Knowing that the better part of their lives has been spent, many of them end up in mental asylums. Others eventually commit suicide.

4. SOLUTIONS

Fervent, earnest prayers must be made to God for the dismantling of this evil system where God's creation is treated less than human. There is the need to implement stringent measures to prosecute all offenders in this horrific sex trade. There is a need for halfway houses or foundations where victims can be sheltered and cared for until they are satisfactorily recovered. The Christian community should be very involved in caring for these victims, as this affords a golden opportunity to demonstrate that God cares for those who are broken, wounded, and downcast.

Education can also help: Schools can make this topic of sex slavery, trafficking, and prostitution part of their sex education so that students and other citizens can be made aware of the horrors of this trade and not be caught in it.

5. CONCLUSION

Sex slavery, as a billion dollar business in the 21st century, is a sad reflection of where we are as human beings. In an article entitled *The Modern Scourge of Sex Slavery*, Martin Brass informs us, "As international tourism is vital to economic growth, many governments, aware that the most marketable commodity is their subjects' bodies, promote the growth to epic proportions of prostitution, sex towns, brothels, and massage parlours. Corrupt government officials satisfy both their physical lust as well as their greed by exploiting and expediting the sale of those whom they are self-appointed or elected to protect". The church of Jesus Christ must stand up and be counted for God in these closing days. May God help us to empathize and bring relief to those crushed and broken by this wicked system.

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APPENDIX D

EMMANUEL FREE REFORMED CHURCH (SAH)

Refugee Program:
8893-185th Street
Surrey, B.C. V4N 3T2
Phone/fax: 604-882-1170
vanderwoerd@shaw.ca

January 20, 2007

Condensed Summary Christian Refugees-25 applicants

Please share with your congregation

1. **1009. AGOK, John, Jock, Malith(1).** John is a farmer and an orphan. His parents were killed and he has been a slave for 8 years. He has not given his complete story as yet, for fear of getting arrested.
2. **U1189. ALMAS, John, Asiano(1)** John is a male nurse and has a pharmacology degree. His wife and children are still in Sudan. He is a committed Christian. The secret police arrested him after a political rally in which the Governor of his state was the main speaker. John asked some questions about health issues that were misunderstood and later caused his arrest and torture.
3. **ALIMA, James, Hassan (1)** James was a youth coordinator and choir leader, quoting from 1 Peter 5:8-10. He was arrested and terribly tortured. He woke up in a hospital and assisted by a military doctor to escape.
4. **U1138, ANTONIO, Pastor Manzambi(5).** Manzambi had to flee his country Angola, after the police had been instructed to arrest and kill those who had helped in the 1992 election. Two of his voting booth colleagues and his secretary at the voting poll were killed. He fled to Namibia, but now the government of Namibia and UNHR want to repatriate all Angolans. A police officer has occupied his house and has told his relatives that he is waiting for him to return, to kill him.
5. **U1134, Atsu-Nenyewoede, Amevi,E(1). Amevi is 29 years old.** He comes from Togo and has a degree in Mathematics and Science as well as in Transit and Shipping. His father was a member of one of the opposition parties. His father was seriously molested on the street and died of his wounds after 3 or 4 months. Amevi got arrested a few days after the attack on his father. He was terribly beaten because he could not give any information about his father's activities. He got separated from his mother and sisters and believes that they have moved to Benin. He is now alone in Egypt.
6. **AWOW, Zechariah Cornelius (3)** Z. Has been starved, beaten, and twice jailed for attending the preaching seminar by famous German evangelist Reinhard Bonnke. He comes from a Christian family and says that since age 10 he never missed church. He is married and have one baby.
7. **U 1185, BISIMWA, John and Neema** are brother and sister from DR Congo. They are born again Christians. John's father was attacked, and never returned home. Joh's mother, three sisters and two brothers were home and

each fled in a different direction John and Neema managed to reach Kampala and received UNHCR recognition.

8. **U1206, BISIMBA, Bagalwa James, (11)** This family has 9 children age 4-26. Bagalwa is a pastor, persecuted by both government and rebels on DR Congo. He is in the Kiangali refugee camp but is still under threat of being drowned with his entire family.
9. **U1197, FOUFANO, Joseph Said Hassan(2)** Joseph got married last year. He has cruelly suffered arrest and torture four times. He could have prevented much of his suffering if he would only have been willing to convert to the Muslim religion. His unwavering commitment is a testimony to God's goodness and grace in his life.
10. **U153. KANGO LOMARY, Taban, Lasu(7).** Taban was a lead convoy driver for combined international organizations. He was arrested at a check point, locked in a trailer, interrogated. Tortured and mistreated. Upon release he managed to leave Sudan.
11. **918. KENYI, Nelson, Lado, Christopher(2),** Nelson was called in for military training and sent to the South. He escaped but was arrested and beaten. He agreed to be sent to Juba, to fight the "rebels". While at the airport, he managed to escape with those soldiers who came from Juba, leaving his gun and bag behind, an unforgivable act. His friends helped him in hiding and fleeing the country.
12. **MAKASI, Pablo Hulute (7)** Bablo and his wife are from DR Congo. They fled after 5 of his brothers were killed by rebels in the internal war. After many hair raising experience they finally came to Egypt.
13. **U1139. NKUMU, Hubert (6).** Hubert is a pastor from Congo, who fled to Namibia, because of war and persecution.
14. **U 1154 NYAK, John Lual Jock (2)** John is married but this couple does not have children. John has 5 years of university training and has taught chemistry and biology in a primary school. He was arrested for and accused of teaching in order to convert children to Christianity.
15. **934. NYAWELLO, Johnson, George (1)** Johnson is a converted Muslim and as such very vulnerable if forced to return.
16. **897. Nyoma, Mrs. Lilian Kaku, Noel. (2).** Lilian's son is still in Sudan. Lilian was arrested when there was an explosion in a nearby ammunition store. The secret police searched many homes in the area and found some SPLA publications. She managed to inform her husband, who did not return. Five days later they arrested her again and kept her for five weeks of terrible torture. A doctor helped her escape.
17. **751. ROMBE, Alfred Silvestro(6).** Alfred spoke up at a political rally in October 1999 and was arrested two days later. He was tortured for two weeks and released. A police officer helped him escape the country.
18. **935. TELAR, Thomas, Kok.(1)** Thomas is a librarian. Thomas got separated from his parents in Southern Sudan. In Khartoum he was a member of the student association and arrested for defending the Southerners. He managed to escape, but if arrested, may be executed under military martial law.

19. **U1175 TOMBE(1)** Lado, Daniel, Paulino became separated from his family and is now 21 years old. He was forced into slavery for 2 years, where he continued to be mistreated by his Muslim master.
20. **WALLA, Eastea Kilyona (6)** Eastea's husband was arrested in Juba in 1997. She moved to Khartoum where she was a catechist teaching South Sudanese children. After 65 were baptized she was arrested, tortured and forced to admit her work. After 8 days she was released but forced to report on others. She escaped, and while abroad remarried.
21. **1017 YANG, Ayor, Aluonj , Baij. (1)** Ayor was caught by the Janjaweed, while going for water. He discovered that his father and uncle were caught as well. Both were slaughtered. Ayor remained a slave until he was released by a human rights organization.
22. **1019. Yool, Josephina, Nyatuic, Arop (5)** In 1987 her village was overrun by militias and popular defense forces. All houses burned, men killed, including her father and her uncle with his children. Her husband, mother and brother fled to a refugee camp, where she used to collect firewood and grass to buy food. In 1998, her husband was arrested and never returned.
23. **UR1153. YUT, Tock, Puok, Kuon, (1).** Tock was captured when he was 11 yrs old and also taken as a slave herding sheep. He managed to escape his master too and reach Khartoum just as the previous man.
24. **U1152. YUT. Koang, Gatkuoth, Thiang.(1).** Koang was arrested at a check point near Renk. He had no ID and was expected to be one of the rebels. He was released to become a domestic slave of a Muslim named Yasser. He managed to escape during the wedding of Yasser's daughter.
25. **U1198, Thot.(7)** Nyachak is a 40 year old mother with 6 children, 14-21. Her husband was murdered in his own home while his wife and children were watching. She managed to reach the Kakuma camp where she leads a Women's Support Group in her church.

Additional information available upon request.

Sponsors,

Some refugees move frequently to avoid detection, and it may take some time to locate those refugees, who have no Email. Others have moved to Australia or the US. Would you therefore please select a number of refugees and list them in the order of your preference, so that we can move fast to your next choice in the event your first choice has moved to another country. Thanks!

TEACHER'S MANUAL

LESSON ONE

THOUGHTS ON SOCIAL ETHICAL ISSUES

1. What is your definition of reconciliation? *(Each student gives their own definition. That definition should include the fact that two or more hostile parties become friends)*
2. As we begin the study of this epistle, what is your perspective about the relationship between God's eternal redemption and reconciliation in the church? *(Eternal redemption occurred when Jesus Christ paid the perfect price for the sins of God's people in order to restore God's people to the Father. So now the question is whether or not people who have benefited from being delivered from their bondage to sin should in gratitude also forgive and free others)*
3. What is the distinction between personal and social ethics? *(Personal ethics has to do with the conduct of an individual person. Social ethics addresses the issues related to the values and conduct of a group of people or a society.)*
4. What is your view of social ethics? *(Each student will give their own view. Part of this view should be the identification of a core system of values that apply to a group of people.)*
5. Why does Bible relate to social ethics? *(If the Bible is the Word of God and is the normative way in which He communicates His will to His people and the world, then we need to know what the Bible says about social ethical issues).*
6. As you read about the principles of interpretation (hermeneutics) did you observe how they will relate to social ethics issues? *(Each hermeneutical principle has both a personal as well as communal implications. The most important principle is that God rules over people and society through His Word and Spirit. The Bible is the maximum authority for all of life. Both our thought life and social behavior needs to glorify the true God).*
7. What Biblical basis do you have for your view of social ethics? *(Each student gives their point of view. Part of the biblical basis for social ethics needs to be a recognition of God as creator and governor; the reality of sin and the role of law in limiting and punishing sin; the existence of Christian salvation and restoration and the final goal of life as defined with eternal values.)*
8. If Christ is reconciling all things to God, what is your role in such universal reconciliation? *(If Christ is reconciling all things to God I better by reconciled to God through faith in Jesus! Also, and this is the point of Paul's letter to Philemon, the gospel of reconciliation will transform or personal and social relationship in accordance with how God has blessed us with His salvation.)*

LESSON TWO

1. Are you aware of Christians who are in prison for their faith? *(Each student answers according to their knowledge. They can check on the Internet and find resources from Global Christianity, Voice of the Martyrs, Amnesty International and independent sources)*
2. What should be the response of free Christians towards Christians who are imprisoned for their faith? *(Christians are to pray for them, attend to the needs of their families, be advocates, study up on the legal and local issues.)*
3. For what reasons are Christians being imprisoned for their faith? *(The most common reason is that Christians refuse to accept the domination of the State, the military,*

para-military groups and social groups that seek to coerce the conscience and conduct of the believer. There are governments that seek to control the churches and many Christians have refused. Such is the case in China. In some Muslim countries, such as Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia, there are laws against becoming a convert to Christianity. In some ethnic groups, non-Christian traditional religions seek to prevent conversion to Christian as well as the practice of Christianity. This is happening in Chiapas, México, where the militant conservatives, be they Roman Catholic or not, are seeking to prevent the extension of evangelical Christianity. In the supposed Free World, Christians are pursued through the legal system. Churches and Christians are sued for evangelism, counseling, sermon content, articles of faith and other supposed violation of hate laws, personal rights, zoning ordinances and laws concerning the separation of Church and State.

4. Are there cases today of Christians being martyred for their faith? *In 2000 a Baptist minister in Miami was martyred, shot by a homeless person he was ministering to. In 2004, a homeless person shot a lady who was handing out food. These brothers and sisters are victims of the misuse of violence and fanaticism. Such cases are multiplied throughout the world. In the Sudan, Christian tribe's people are assaulted and the deaths during the last 10 years surpass the 100,000 mark.*
5. What are the main reasons for Christian martyrdom today? *Tribal violence, military genocide, religious fanaticism, government restrictions.*
6. What constitutes the organization of a church? *(This question arises do the fact that Paul recognizes the existence of the church in the home of Philemon. We tend to think of the church as the organization and gathering of Christians as a separate institution The student can inquire of his church leaders as to what they say constitutes a church. What does the Bible say? The Old Testament synagogue was constituted with 10 male members. Jesus speaks about two or three gathered in His name, but Matthew 18 is not really speaking about the constitution of a local church but rather conflict resolution)*
7. Are you familiar with the house church or cell church movement today? What are the reasons for their existence? *(The small group movement is significantly growing today. Sometimes the organization of house churches is necessitated through restrictions imposed by the government or for lack of religious freedom to meet. However, some Christians chose to meet in small groups, in part as a reaction to the church being identified as a denomination or as the building on the corner of Main Street. It is the author's estimation that many of the Christians in the world meet in small groups, with or without the option of assembling in larger groups.)*

LESSON THREE

1. Are you aware of how the church is growing outside of your city? *(Student's own opinion. This question is asked to see if the student is aware, as Paul was, of the spiritual condition of churches outside of his own context.)*
2. What was it important for Paul to note that the church in Philemon's house was bearing spiritual fruit? *(Paul was going to ask Philemon to reconcile with his run-away slave. The preparatory work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the separated parties would be crucial if the problem would have a God glorifying solution.)*

3. What relationship does the Holy Spirit have with social ethics? (*The principles, norms, morality and ethics that make society function are given and governed by the Holy Spirit*)
4. Are we saved through good works or are good works an indication that we are saved? (*We are not saved by good works since we can not be good enough to be saved. Our works are contaminated by sin. Rather, good works are the results of God working through us (Eph. 2:10).*)
5. Why is the presence of the Holy Spirit necessary when we are counseling people who are having problems? (*The Holy Spirit prepares the hearts of the people who are having problems so that they will make God glorifying decisions. In order for that to happen one needs to believe in Jesus, trust in His word, pray and live to God's glory.*)
6. How does the Holy Spirit promise to be with believers who are having difficulties? (*He promises to be with us so that we can rely on Him*).
7. Should we seek reconciliation with someone who has wronged us because we want to or because we have to? (*If someone has wronged us we will probably not want to seek reconciliation. However, reconciliation glorifies God because God sought reconciliation for us through His Son. The Holy Spirit will help us to reconcile.*)

LESSON FOUR

1. Have you had opportunity to help two people seek reconciliation? What kind of argumentation did you use? (*The student reflects on his personal experience*)
2. What method was the most effective to help persuade the couple? 1) quote Scripture; 2) remind them of their obligations; 3) appeal to reasonable arguments. (*Probably #3, being persuasive with good arguments*)
3. What is the Biblical position on issues such as (*the following are the interpretation of the author of this course, Neal Hegeman*).)
 - a. Prematerial sex (*Against it, "you shall not commit adultery." All sexual behavior outside of marriage is prohibited in order to protect the sacredness and uniqueness of marital love. Exodus 20:14; Revelation 22:15*)
 - b. Marriage of believers and unbelievers (*Against it, "do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. Christians are called to live out their covenant with God by seeking faithful partners and raise their children in the knowledge and love of God. 2 Corinthians 6:14*)
 - c. Abortion (*The Bible considers all of life sacred and human life needs to be protected by law. The law says, "You shall not murder." Human life begins at conception as seen in the beginning of the human life of Jesus and human life on earth ends with natural death. Exodus 20:13; Matthew 1:20*).
 - d. Divorce. (*God hates divorce, it deeply hurts all the parties involved. Jesus told the teachers of the law that God created marriage to be permanent. Due to the hardness of human heart, Moses conceded a bill of divorce. If divorce is conceded then the marriage is over and remarriage is possible, although not always recommendable. Matthew 19: 8, 9*)
 - e. Remarriage (*After a divorce, society allows a person to be remarried. For the Christian, an extra step needs to take place and that is to sincerely repent of the sin that led to the previous divorce. John 8:11*)

- f. Homosexuality. *(Both the Old and New Testament condemn the practice of homosexuality, that is, the lust and practice of sex between persons of the same sex. Romans 1:24; Revelation. 22:15)*
 - g. Racism. *(Since God is the creator of all people and all people are created in His image, the basis of our unity before God lies with God. Therefore, to discriminate against another person is to insult their creator. James 2:9)*
 - h. Feminism and machismo. *(Both feminism, the belief in the superiority of the female gender and machismo, the belief in the superiority of the male gender, are unbalanced views. God made both male and female in His own image. Male and female, due their creation as God's image bearers are equal in dignity and responsibility yet different in biological make up and family responsibilities. Genesis 1:26; Matthew. 22:37f)*
 - i. Illegal immigration *(Whether a person has the proper social documents or not they are made in the image of God and need to be treated with love and respect. Christians are called to obey the law that honors God and respects human life. To do that they need to understand the law and be good advocates for those who need help. Romans 13:1-5).*
 - j. Capital punishment. *(Christians differ in this social issue. Christian pacifists hold that there are no reasons to take the life of another person. Non-pacifist Christians believe that the "sword" was given to the State in order to protect life and society, promote the good and punish evil doers. Romans 13:1-5)*
 - k. War *(Obviously there was war in the Bible. However, the pacifist and non-pacifist (like the arguments for and against capital punishment) base their ethics more on the New Testament ethics for Christians in the church than on the theocratic ethics for the Israelite in the nation of Israel. The "just war theory" states that war is justified to protect human life and punish those who seek to take one's life).*
4. How does the practice of reconciliation apply to any one of the above? *(One of the issues that the USA society is facing is illegal immigration. A reported 12 million illegal immigrants have crossed the border during the last years. The governments have been ineffective, slow and in some cases unwilling to deport certain undocumented workers. Whatever the solution the American government is going to take it should include seeking proper documentation, protect human dignity, maintain the unity of the family and conduct its immigration policy in a just and orderly fashion. The role of the church, which is an international community, is to counsel, protect and advocate for both citizens and non-documented persons.))*
5. One of the most insidious forms of sin is personal and social discrimination. We judge people by the language they speak, color of their skins, place where they live, religion they profess, their social status and for other reasons that makes them different from us. How does this show in your life and in your local church? What can be done about it? *(The student will reflect on his personal situation. Every society has minority groups that are not represented in the mainstream of the national government and local authorities. Marginal minority groups will have special needs. Jesus instructs His disciples to feed the hungry, visit the widow and orphan in their affliction, seeks to liberate the oppressed and imprisoned and seek reconciliation. In Miami, where the author lives, the Haitian immigrants are the most marginalized*

group and that for several reasons. 1) Although many seek to come by boat to the shores of Florida, unlike the Cuban immigrants who have special laws to allow them to stay, the Haitian are not favored by the law and are deported. 2) The Haitians do not speak English or Spanish but a lesser known language and that adds to their isolation. 3) The poverty of Haiti does not allow them to qualify for many of the high skill technical job that facilitates immigration and social mobility within the society.)

LESSON FIVE

1. Are all kinds of sinners welcome in your church? *(If you are a member of your church then your church allows for sinners, since we are all sinners. However, this question is directed to the church's treatment of certain kinds of sinners. It is said by some that a pedophile can never be restored. Others claim that once a homosexual, always a homosexual. Yet, the Christian view of the "saint" is that he/she has a new nature, a new identify because of their new relationship with God through faith in Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Granted, once a gossip, once a thief, once an adulterer, once a homosexual and once a pedophile, there will always be a residual temptation towards the old life style. However, is not Christ in us greater than sin, temptation, Satan and the sinner? If not, then why are you a member of a church?)*
2. Are restored alcoholics voted in as elder and deacons in your church? Should they be? *(In theory, most Christians agree to that, but will they vote that way? How many recovering alcoholics are leaders in your church [I know quite a few in the area of missions!])*
3. Is restored homosexuals part of the leadership of your church? Should they be? *(It would seem that any restored sinner should be able to be part of the leadership of the church. However, either the restored person or the persons in the pew may have doubts. Should we live according to our doubt or according to the promises of the kingdom's power? It seems that sexual sins are very common in the church but considered the worst for church leaders. That is seen in the restoration of church leaders who have committed sexual sins such as pornography, adultery or divorce during their ministry)*
4. Could an illegal immigrant become member of your church? Please discuss. *(Each student will have their opinion. The author was involved with the Haitian immigrants in the Dominican Republic, whose legal status was changed by the government so that all of the immigrants became illegal. This included all the Haitian immigrant pastors and members.)*
5. Could an illegal immigrant become a pastor in your church? *(Each student will give their opinion. Usually, a pastor needs to be legally in the country; however, there are occasions when that is impossible. Such may be the case of visiting missionaries who minister in countries where Christianity is suppressed.)*
6. What ministries of restoration does your church or are you involved in? *(The student will reflect on their own involvement in ministry and on their own church ministries. Usually the Christian community is very involved in the restoration of people's lives, restoration of families and home situation, restoration ministries in*

areas of addiction (alcohol, drugs, pornography, gambling, etc) and other forms of ministry.)

LESSON SIX

1. Do you believe that Paul was advocating for both the pardon and freedom of Onesimus? *(The student gives their own opinion. The reasons that could be given for the freedom of Onesimus could include: 1) provision for the freeing of slaves was done in the Old Testament; 2) the law of love requires one to do unto others as they would like to have done to themselves; 3) Onesimus in his freedom could continue to serve the gospel and 4) the freeing of Onesimus is a logical implication of Paul's arguments. The reasons for not freeing Onesimus could include: 1) Philemon did not want to reconcile with Onesimus; 2) Philemon had to recover his economic losses for Onesimus running away; or 3) Philemon was a an "ungrateful servant." (Mt. 18:21f)*
2. How do you see a 19th century American slave owner interpret Paul's efforts for reconciliation? *(There were Christians who defended the institution of slavery. Among the reasons that were used were: 1) the Africans were descendents of Ham and Ham was cursed to be a servant of his brothers; 2) The status quo of slavery was socially justifiable. 3) It was thought that African Americans were better off as slavery. They would argue that Paul was seeking personal, not social, reconciliation.)*
3. How do you see a 19th century African American slave interpret Paul's efforts for reconciliation? *(They would see hope in the arguments of Paul for total emancipation)*
4. In what sense do you notice social discrimination in your church? How does the epistle to Philemon help you deal with that? *(Student's own opinion)*
5. What role does intercessory prayer have in dealing with social issues in the church? *(Paul prayed for Onesimus and for Philemon. His prayers were answered. Also, prayer directs our hearts to do God's will. Scripture teaches that we are to pray for those in need.)*

LESSON SEVEN

1. What have you learned about social ethics from this epistle? *(Students own observations)*
2. Are there any indication in the book of Mark as to social ethics? *(There is no indication as to the relationship between the writing of the gospel of Mark and Epistle of Paul to Philemon. Yet, the same personal ethics practiced by Paul is voiced by Mark in Mark 10:44.)*
3. Are there any indication in the gospel of Luke as to social ethics? *(The inaugural speech of Jesus in Nazareth (Luke 4:18-19) is filled with ethical implications for those who need reconciliation.)*