

## Episode #321 – Philemon 2: Not Required, But Exhorted

I. In the book of Philemon, written shortly after Ephesians, Paul illustrates the great principle of Ephesians that God always deals graciously with us (Ephesians 4:32) in the way he acts towards Philemon and his runaway slave Onesimus. Paul in how he treats these two becomes an example of how God treats us in the dispensation of grace.

II. In Philemon 1-3, Paul introduced himself and Timothy as the authors of the book, and addressed it to Philemon, his wife Apphia, and their son Archippus. He also greeted them with grace as their portion, even peace. Now he continues his greeting to them.

III. Philemon 4-7. Further greetings and compliments to Philemon and his family.

A. Philemon 4. Paul gave thanks for them. Thankfulness is always important! He mentions them at all times in his prayers.

B. Philemon 5. Paul had heard of their *agape*, self-sacrificial love and their belief. They had these things toward the Lord Jesus. Very important! They also had them toward all the saints. A “saint,” Greek *hagios*, in the Bible is a set-apart one, in this case, by belonging to God. It is good when we love each other self-sacrificially.

C. Philemon 6. He wishes the setting forth of their faith may be really working.

1. The word for “full knowledge” here is *epignosis*, which is knowledge accelerated. It can mean either full knowledge or acknowledging.

2. What he wants them to know is every good thing that is in their midst regarding Christ Jesus. We have many good things from our relationship with Christ, and we need full knowledge of all these good things for our faith to be energetic and to be really working as God would have it work.

D. Philemon 7. Paul and Timothy have much grace and comfort in the self-sacrificial love of Philemon and his family.

1. When we see believers acting lovingly and self-sacrificially, it is a sign of God’s grace working through them that gives us much comfort and help to see it. It is good to see believers acting as they should!

2. The word here is grace, *charis*, and not joy.

3. The word for consolation is related to the “Comforter” of John. It is *paraklesis*, related to the “paraclete,” the one who comes alongside to help.

4. The Greek reads, “the bowels of the saints.” They spoke of their “bowels” as the seat of their emotions, like we do the heart. If you think how deep emotions can upset your bowels, it makes sense.

5. The very compassionate feelings of the set-apart ones have been refreshed through Philemon because of his self-sacrificial love. No doubt he had done much for his fellow saints, when he had the chance.

IV. Philemon 8-9. Not Required, But Exhorted.

A. Philemon 8. Paul knows that he would have every right to be very bold in Christ to require of Philemon what he wants, and what is fitting in this case.

B. Philemon 9. Yet Paul is not going to do this. Instead for the sake of self-sacrificing, *agape* love he exhorts Philemon.

1. “Exhort” is *parakaleo*, and means to act as a paraclete. Paul intends in this letter to come alongside him to urge him to do what is right.

2. He does this as Paul the elder, one who has the right to represent God in this. This does not mean he is old, though he is probably in his sixties. Instead, he means he is a representative.
  3. He is also a bound one of Jesus Christ. This does not mean Rome had him imprisoned, though he might still be waiting to appear before Caesar in his own, hired house. Instead, this means that he has been bound where he is by Jesus Christ, and it is only Christ who can release him to go from there.
- C. Here we have an example of the way God treats us in the dispensation of grace.
1. Though He might very well require of us that we do what He wants us to do, instead He chooses to exhort us to do these things instead for the sake of love.
  2. If we do the things God would have us do, it is out of our love and gratitude to Him, not because He forces us to do them.
  3. Paul here is acting toward Philemon just as God acts toward us.

V. Conclusion. Paul, Timothy, and the inspiring Holy Spirit have many good things to say about Philemon, Apphia, and Archippus. They are thankful for their love and faith. Yet now Paul has a request of them. He is not going to boldly require it of them, though he would have the right to do this, but instead for love's sake he exhorts them to grant what he asks. This is the same way God treats us: He has done so much for us, and now He exhorts us to please Him out of love and gratitude. May we truly live lives worthy of all God has done for us in grace!