

Episode #324 - Philemon 5: Paul and Philemon

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 17-21, Paul staked his own relationship with Philemon on the runaway slave Onesimus. He urged Philemon to receive Onesimus as if he were Paul himself. He promised to pay any debt Onesimus owed to Philemon himself. This was a great illustration of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us in paying our debts and identifying Himself with us. Now, Paul closes out his letter to Philemon.

III. Philemon 22-25. Greetings and Salutations.

- A. Philemon 22. Paul asks Philemon to prepare a guest room for him also, for he trusts that, through the prayers of Philemon and others, Paul will be released from Rome to come to them. Remember, Rome had no charges against him, so this may not be Rome holding him. Perhaps what he waited on was God giving him permission to go. Paul could only do as his Master bid him to do.
- B. Philemon 23. Epaphras (Lovely) was a Colossian, and was the one who carried the gospel to Colossae, as Colossians 1:7 tells us. We learn from Colossians 4:12 that he was constantly laboring for those in his hometown in prayers. Here, Paul calls him a fellow captive in Christ Jesus. Notice that it was Christ Who made them captives, not Rome. They were bound to do His will!
- C. Philemon 24. Greetings from Paul's companions.
 1. **Marcus** = Mark (A Defense) was the nephew of Barnabas, Paul's first traveling companion as an apostle.
 - a. He wrote the gospel of Mark.
 - b. Acts 12:12, his given name was John, and his mother's name Mary.
 - c. Acts 12:25, when Paul and Barnabas went to deliver famine relief to the Jews in Judea, Mark was their young companion.
 - d. Acts 13:5, on their first apostolic journey, they took Mark as their young helper. Acts 13:13, he later abandoned them.
 - e. Acts 15:37-40, Barnabas wanted to take him on a second apostolic journey, but Paul refused, causing these two apostles to part.
 - f. By this time, however, he had joined Paul, as we see here and in Colossians 4:10.
 - g. II Timothy 4:11, he was still with Paul at the end. He was now considered useful by Paul.
 2. **Aristarchus** (The Best Ruler) was from Macedonia, a traveling companion of Paul during his third apostolic journey.
 - a. Acts 19:29, he was with Paul during his ministry in Ephesus.
 - b. Acts 20:4, he was from Thessalonica in Macedonia.
 - c. Acts 27:2, he accompanied Paul while a prisoner headed to Rome.
 - d. In Colossians he calls him a "fellow captive," *sunaimalotos*. This is all we can learn of his character.
 3. **Demas** (Governor of the People) is listed with Luke here and in Colossians 4:14, perhaps of equal standing with him. Yet II Timothy 4:10, he abandoned

Paul before the end. Same word as Christ on the cross “forsaken.” “Loved” this present world = *agapao*, he sacrificed for it!

4. **Lucas** = Luke (Light Giving).
 - a. Also in Colossians 4:14 and II Timothy 4:11 as the last one remaining with Paul.
 - b. Only three mentions might make him seem a minor character, yet we have reason to believe Luke and Acts were written by him. Many words used in his books are technical, medical terms.
 - c. We can follow Luke in Acts by noting the pronouns, Acts 16:8-10; 20:5, 27:1, 28:16. He was still with Paul during his two years in Rome.
5. All four are called “fellow laborers,” *sunergos* in Greek, along with Paul.

D. Philemon 25. Paul finishes up by wishing the grace (God’s love and favor to us without regard to deserving it) of our Lord Jesus Christ be with Philemon’s spirit.

1. His spirit is him himself, Greek *pneuma*. It has to do especially with the mind.
2. This is what we have in the dispensation of grace, and His grace is what we need, just as it was what Philemon needed. May it be with our spirits as well. Amen!

IV. Conclusion. Paul finishes his letter of appeal to Philemon by revealing the hope that he may soon be able to visit Philemon by God’s will. He offers Philemon greetings from his fellow workers, among whom is Mark, another example in Paul’s life of God’s restoring grace. Finally, he wishes God’s grace to be with Philemon. May His grace be with us as well! And let us live out that grace, even as Paul lived it out in his relationship with Onesimus and Philemon.