



The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and Philemon

The Request of Philemon

Philemon 1:8-19

- I. THE NATURE OF PAUL’S REQUEST (Philemon 1:8-9)
 - A. His Right to Boldness (Philemon 1:8)
 1. The potential for his boldness—“though I might be much bold”
 - a. As an apostle, Paul had certain rights to be burdensome to believers (1 Thessalonians 2:6).
 - b. He had a level of authority not necessarily granted to every believer (2 Corinthians 10:8).
 - c. Paul constantly battled perceptions against his apostleship (1 Corinthians 9:1-18).
 2. The source of his boldness—“bold in Christ”
 - a. This is not to be confused with arrogance.
 - b. Instead, it was a lack of fear (2 Corinthians 10:1-2) and a willingness to use great plainness of speech (2 Corinthians 3:12).
 - c. The boldness was obviously in Paul’s authority granted in Christ, not merely in himself.
 3. The accomplishment of his boldness
 - a. To enjoin Philemon; Note: The word *enjoin* is found four times in scripture and indicates something being imposed upon another.
 - b. That which was convenient; Note: The word *convenient* indicates that which is fit, appropriate, or suitable.
 - B. His Choice for Love (Philemon 1:9)
 1. His calling—for love’s sake”
 2. His choice—“I rather beseech thee”
 - a. Instead of enjoining
 - b. Paul is beseeching
 - (1) The word *beseech* is a strong word meaning *to ask earnestly; to implore; even to beg*.
 - (2) The word is used (as *beseech, beseeching, or besought*) 114 times in the English Bible. It is used of serious pleas:
 - a) Of Moses desiring to see God’s glory (Exodus 33:18)
 - b) Of David seeking the life of his son (2 Samuel 12:16)
 - c) Of Esther seeking deliverance for her people (Esther 8:3)
 - d) Of Hezekiah asking for extended life (Isaiah 38:3)
 3. His circumstances
 - a. Paul the aged
 - b. A prisoner of Jesus Christ



II. THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S REQUEST (Philemon 1:10-16)

A. The Introduction of the Appeal (Philemon 1:10-14)

1. The subject of the appeal (Philemon 1:10)
 - a. The person—Onesimus
 - b. The position—"my son...whom I have begotten in my bonds"
2. The announcement in the appeal (Philemon 1:11)
 - a. Onesimus' past
 - (1) He was unprofitable.
 - (2) To Philemon
 - a) Onesimus had been a servant to Philemon (see Philemon 1:16 and postscript).
 - b) He was deemed as unprofitable in times past by the apostle Paul. This was likely based upon Onesimus' testimony.
 - c) It would seem as though Onesimus wronged Philemon, perhaps stealing from him (Philemon 1:18).
 - d) This trouble is probably what moved Onesimus to depart from Colosse (Philemon 1:15).
 - e) He eventually found his way to Rome where he was converted by Paul while a prisoner (Philemon 1:10).
 - b. Onesimus' present
 - (1) He is profitable.
 - (2) To Philemon and Paul
3. The courtesy in the appeal (Philemon 1:12-14)
 - a. Paul's decision (Philemon 1:12)
 - (1) Paul sent Onesimus to Philemon again.
 - (2) He asked Philemon to receive Onesimus.
 - (3) Note: In this text, God implements the principle of *omission*.
 - a) Proper Bible study not only assumes God inspired the words in the Bible, but also assumes the omissions are of the Lord.
 - b) Omissions are on purpose and are meant to draw your attention to what the Lord wants emphasized.
 - i) We read the last phrase as though it says, "as mine own bowels."
 - ii) The Bible, however, omits the word *as*. This places a stronger emphasis on what Paul was suggesting.
 - b. Paul's desire (Philemon 1:13)
 - (1) Paul would have retained Onesimus.
 - (2) Onesimus could have continued to minister to the apostle Paul in his bonds.
 - c. Paul's deference (Philemon 1:14)
 - (1) Paul did not want to do anything without Philemon's knowledge and choice.
 - (2) He needed Onesimus' help to be a result of Philemon's willingness rather than necessity.



- B. The Desire of the Appeal (Philemon 1:15-16)
1. The time of reception (Philemon 1:15)
 - a. He departed for a season.
 - b. Perhaps he was to be received for ever.
 - c. In other words, Philemon might have had to suffer the loss of Onesimus for a season, but it would be worth it to now receive him for ever.
 2. The nature of reception (Philemon 1:16)
 - a. As a brother
 - (1) Not as a servant
 - (2) Above a servant
 - (3) A brother beloved
 - b. To Paul—"specially"
 - c. To Philemon
 - (1) More than to Paul
 - (2) In the flesh
 - (3) In the Lord
- III. THE FAVOUR OF PAUL'S REQUEST (Philemon 1:17-19)
- A. The Substitutionary Merit (Philemon 1:17)
1. Paul suggested Philemon's acceptance of him—"If thou count me... a partner"
 2. Paul requested Philemon's acceptance of Onesimus—"receive him as myself"
- B. The Apostle's Offer (Philemon 1:18-19)
1. The concern for Onesimus' actions (Philemon 1:18)
 - a. If he hath wronged thee
 - b. If he oweth thee ought
 2. The offer presented (Philemon 1:18-19)
 - a. Philemon could put Onesimus' debt on Paul's account (Philemon 1:18).
 - b. Paul signified this by writing it with his own hand (Philemon 1:19).
Note: This is unique because Paul did not typically do the writing of his epistles at this point in his ministry.
 - c. Paul affirmed his willingness to cover any debts obtained by Onesimus (Philemon 1:19).
- C. Philemon's Debt (Philemon 1:19)
1. Paul reminded Philemon of a debt while saying that he would not remind him of the debt.
 2. Paul declared that Philemon owed Paul his own self.