

INTRODUCTION.

LAST WEEK, ~ WE BEGAN OUR STUDY OF PHILEMON ~ WITH AN OVERVIEW.

▶▶ To once again ~ summarize the letter, ~ a runaway slave, ~ Onesimus, ~ has met up with Paul and been converted, ~ ~ ¶¶

▷▷ and Paul sends him back ~ to his former master, ~ Philemon, ~ with a letter ~ ¶¶

↳ explaining ~ how Paul wants Philemon ~ to handle the situation of a returned slave ~ who is now a brother in Christ.

▶▶ As we noted, ~ this missive, ~ more like a postcard than a letter, ~ is ~ ¶¶

▷▷ the shortest ~ and most personal ~ of all Paul's letters.

TODAY, ~ 1-3 OF PAUL'S POSTCARD TO PHILEMON.

WE'LL BEGIN ~ BY LOOKING AT VERSE 1a ~ AND THE PHRASE, ~ PAUL, ~ A PRISONER for/of Christ Jesus.

THE FORM OF THE PHRASE ~ "OF CHRIST JESUS" ~ EXPRESSES A ~ DUAL MEANING.

▶▶ 1st, ~ it means ~ Jesus Christ's prisoner."

▷▷ IOW, ~ it is not ~ the Roman government ~ that has imprisoned Paul, ~ but Jesus Christ. ¶¶ 1/11

▶▶ And 2nd, ~ it means ~ Paul, ~ a prisoner ~ because of ~ Christ Jesus.

▷▷ I.e., ~ a prisoner ~ for preaching the Good News ~ about Christ Jesus.

THAT'S IT IN A NUTSHELL.

▶▶ Now let's unpack these two meanings.

THE FIRST MEANING.

▶▶ Paul was ~ Jesus Christ's prisoner.

▷▷ IOW, ~ it was not ~ the Roman government ~ that had imprisoned Paul, ~ but Jesus Christ.

▶▶ From a strictly human level, ~ Paul was in Rome, ~ a prisoner of Caesar, ~ awaiting trial before Nero.

▷▷ But Paul ~ refused ~ to look at things ~ on a human level.

▷▷ He looked at everything ~ from a spiritual level, ~~ which is evidenced by what he said in [2 Cor. 4:16-18](#)

▶▶ And this is the correct perspective for all believers.

▷▷ And that is: ~~ believers need to begin, ~ to think more on a spiritual level ~ 77

↪↪ rather ~ than on a physical, ~ only what we see, ~ level. 11 2/11

▷▷ As Paul says in 2 Cor., ~ "for we walk by faith, ~ not by sight."

▷▷ So, ~ like Paul, ~ refuse to look @ things on human level

▶▶ "I, ~ Paul, ~ the prisoner of Christ Jesus."

▷▷ Paul knew and understood ~ that Jesus ~ is in control ~ of history ~ and all of life ~ not Caesar.

▷▷ It only looked like Nero was in charge.

▶▶ Consider these examples as well.

▷▷ Crucifixion

↪↪ Judas not in control ~~ Jews not ~~ Romans not ~~ Satan not ~~

→→ It only looked that way.

↪↪ God ~~ & everything proceeded according ~ to sovereign plan.

▷▷ Pharaoh

▷▷ Nebuchadnezzar

▷▷ Esther

▶▶ By saying ~ Paul, ~ a prisoner of Christ Jesus, ~ Paul was declaring ~ ¶¶

▷▷ the absolute sovereignty of Jesus ~ over history and all of life. ¶¶ 3/11

▷▷Question.

↳↳Do we ~ really believe this ~ from the bottom of our hearts?

AS WE NOTED, ~ THE FORM OF THE GREEK NOUNS ~ FOR "CHRIST" AND "JESUS" ~ ¶¶

▶▶in the phrase, ~ a prisoner of Christ Jesus ~ express ~ a dual meaning.

▷▷Having looked at and finished ~ the first, ~ we'll now turn our attention ~ to the second meaning.

PAUL, ~ A PRISONER ~ BECAUSE OF ~ CHRIST JESUS.

▶▶I.e., ~ a prisoner ~ for preaching the Good News ~ about Christ Jesus.

▶▶Paul was more specific in Ephesians 3 about this.

▷▷The prisoner of Christ Jesus ~ on behalf of you Gentiles.

▶▶The primary meaning ~ for the Greek word translated as ~ "on behalf of" ~ ¶¶

▷▷is that Paul ~ was imprisoned ~ because of his ministry ~ on behalf of ~ the Gentiles.

↳↳Because of his mission to the Gentiles, ~ Paul suffered incarceration.

▶▶In addition to the primary meaning, ~ the word for ~ "on behalf of" implies ~ ¶¶

▷▷that Paul's imprisonment ~ benefited the Gentiles. ¶¶ 4/11

▷▷ Now, ~ Paul does not say ~ how ~ his imprisonment ~ was benefitting the Gentiles.

↳↳ But I think we can derive a general principle from this.

→→ Often, ~ or perhaps always, ~ what we go through, ~ be it hard times, ~ illness, ~ or suffering, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ is for the spiritual benefit ~ of other believers.

OK, ~ THAT ENDS OUR LOOK AT VERSE 1a ~ AND THE PHRASE, ~ PAUL, ~ A PRISONER OF Christ Jesus.

IN VERSE 1b, ~ PAUL MENTIONS TIMOTHY.

PAUL INCLUDED HIM IN THE GREETING.

▶▶ But not coauthor. ⇔⇔ Sing. from v. 4 on.

▶▶ Recording secretary.

▶▶ Or the idea here could be, ~ Paul is saying, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ "our brother Timothy joins me in sending greetings" ~ or " ~ . . . in sending this letter."

IN VERSES 1c - 2, ~ PAUL NOTES ~ THE RECIPIENTS OF THE LETTER.

FIRST, ~ VERSE 1c, ~ PHILEMON. ⇔⇔ Already talked about him.

JUST SOME ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS HERE. ¶¶ 5/11

▶▶ He is addressed as ~ our beloved fellow worker ~ or ~ our dear friend and coworker.

▷▷ Either translation works.

▶▶ "coworker" ~ should not be mistaken to mean ~ they were fellow workers in a trade.

▷▷ Like we see in ~ Acts 18:1-3

▷▷ What is meant ~ is that ~ ¶¶

↳↳ Philemon also helped ~ in advancing the cause of Christ.

▷▷ We could look at it ~ as saying, ~¶¶ ¶¶

↳↳ "our dear friend who works with us to help Christ," ~¶¶ ¶¶

→→ or ~¶¶ "... to serve Christ," ~¶¶ or ~¶¶ "... to spread the gospel."

NEXT RECIPIENT, ~ VERSE 2a, ~ APPHIA.

SHE IS USUALLY REGARDED ~ AS PHILEMON'S WIFE.

▶▶ This makes good sense, ~ since wives often managed household slaves ~ in Graeco-Roman society.

▷▷ So ~ she would have an interest ~ in this situation.

▶▶ Paul was calling on her ~ as well as Philemon ~ to receive Onesimus back ~ as a brother in Christ. ¶¶ 6/11

AND SPEAKING OF THE TERM ~ BROTHER ~ LET'S DIGRESS FOR A FEW MINUTES.

IN THIS LETTER, ~ PAUL PUTS AN EMPHASIS ON ~ THE CHURCH AS A FAMILY, ~ ¶¶

▶▶ whose members ~ are intimately connected in Christ.

▷▷ Timothy our brother. ⇔⇔ Apphia our sister.

▷▷ Twice ~ Paul calls Philemon ~ brother. ⇔⇔ And he refers to Onesimus as ~ brother.

▶▶ Christians ~ are all ~ in the same family.

▷▷ The spiritual blood-tie of Christians, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ i.e. the bond ~ of being redeemed by the blood of Christ, ~ is stronger ~ than even ~ a natural blood-tie.

▷▷ It is said that ~ 'blood ~ is thicker than water.'

↳↳ And never ~ is this more true ~ than in the family of God.

▶▶ A family ~ which transcends ~ status, ~ race, ~ nationality ~ and even time itself.

▷▷ In the social environment of their world, ~ Philemon and Onesimus ~ may have been owner and slave.

↳↳ But ~ in the greater sphere ~ they were brothers.

→→ A point ~ Paul expresses more strongly ~ in [verse 16](#) ¶¶ 7/11

▶▶ Christians ~ are brothers and sisters ~ who know God as their Father ~ through Jesus Christ.

▶▶ Through Jesus, ~ God has adopted us.

▷▷ In Galatians, ~ Paul tells us that ~ God sent his Son ~ to buy freedom ~ for us who were slaves to the law, ~ ~ ¶¶

↳↳ so that ~ he could adopt us ~ as his very own children.

▷▷ Rom. and Eph. ↳↳ Encourage to read

▶▶ Now, ~ adopting us was not something ~ that God did ~ reluctantly.

▷▷ In Eph. 1, ~ Paul tells us ~ first, ~ that it was because ~ ¶¶

↳↳ of God's infinite love for us ~ that He gave us membership in His family.

▷▷ And second ~ that he ~ desired ~ to adopt us, ~ and it gave Him ~ great pleasure ~ in doing so.

▷▷ Be greatly encouraged.

OK, ~ BACK TO DISCUSSING THE RECIPIENTS OF THIS LETTER ~ VERSES 1c-2.

NEXT, ~ IN VERSE 2b, ~ ARCHIPPUS.

▶▶ Described as fellow soldier.

▶▶ A reminder that ~ we are engaged ~ in a spiritual battle ¶¶ 8/11

WE ARE SOLDIERS IN A SPIRITUAL WAR.

▶▶ They ~ must be ~ disciplined, ~ committed, ~ and unified.

▷▷ So, too, ~ believers ~ must ~ lead disciplined lives, ~ stand strongly committed to sound doctrine, ~ ~ ¶¶

↪↪ and work ~ to remain unified ~ because we fight the same battle.

→→ And i.e., ~ bringing the gospel ~ to an unbelieving & increasingly hostile world.

AND THEN THE FINAL RECIPIENT, ~ VERSE 2c, ~ THE CHURCH ~ IN PHILEMON'S HOUSE.

IN ADDRESSING THE CHURCH IN PHILEMON'S HOME, ~ notice what Paul is implying.

▶▶ When there is dysfunction, ~ such as the conflict between Philemon and Onesimus, ~ ¶¶

↪↪ the problem engages the whole church, ~ Paul is saying, ~ not ~ just the individuals directly involved.

▶▶ Euodia and Syntyche

▶▶ It is not to be a ~ "mind your own business" thing.

▶▶ We are not ~ to take ~ a "hands off" approach ~ when interpersonal conflict arises in our church.

▶▶ Interpersonal conflicts ~ are not ~ ¶¶

▷▷ to be brushed aside ~ or swept under the carpet. ¶¶ 9/11

▷▷ They are not to be treated lightly. ⇨⇨ And they're not ~ to be allowed to fester.

▶▶ They're to be dealt with and resolved.

▷▷ We are to get involved, ~ in order ~ to help bring about a resolution.

WHY IS THAT?

▶▶ Because of the neg. cons. ~ of unresolved interpersonal conflicts.

▶▶ Here are just four. ⇨⇨ Very briefly.

▷▷ 1st, ~ divisions w/in church.

▷▷ 2nd, ~ if believers in a local fellowship ~ ¶¶

↪↪ are engaged in personal quarrels and divided, ~ then spreading the gospel ~ is not ~ being focused on.

→→ And a focus on spreading the gospel ~ is to be our priority.

▷▷ 3rd, ~ unresolved interpersonal conflict ~ hurts our personal witness.

↪↪ It will present us ~ as being no different ~ than unbelievers.

▷▷ And 4th, ~ unresolved interpersonal conflict ~ will give Satan ~ an open door ~ ¶¶

↪↪ through which to come and exploit the conflict. ¶¶ 10/11

IN VERSE 3, ~ PAUL ADDS, ~ "GRACE TO YOU ~ AND PEACE ~ FROM GOD OUR FATHER ~ and the Lord Jesus Christ."

"GRACE AND PEACE TO YOU" ~ IS A GREETING.

▶▶ But it is also ~ a prayer ~ that the recipients ~ might continue to experience ~ 77

▷▷ God's unmerited favor ~ and the peace that flows from it.

▶▶ It could be expressed this way.

▷▷ May ~ God our Father ~ and the Lord Jesus Christ ~ give you ~ grace and peace.

▶▶ This is a prayer ~ that we ~ should be continually praying for each other.

LET'S PRAY..... 11/11