

INTRODUCTION.

TODAY, ~ WE'LL BEGIN LOOKING AT THE NEXT SECTION OF PHILEMON, ~ verses 17-20.

▶▶ In this paragraph, ~ as we've noted, ~ Paul gets into specifics ~ regarding Onesimus.

THIS MORNING, ~ WE WILL FOCUS ~ SOLELY ~ ON VERSE 17.

▶▶ In this verse, ~ Paul specifically states ~ how he would like Philemon ~ ¶¶

▷▷ to handle the situation ~ of his returned slave

▶▶ He would like Philemon ~ to welcome Onesimus back ~ into Philemon's life and household.

▷▷ He writes, ~ NIV ~ So ~ if you consider me ~ a partner, ~ welcome him ~ as you would welcome me.

▶▶ Boiled down, ~ and we'll get into specifics in a bit, ~ Paul is asking Philemon to ~ ¶¶

▷▷ forgive ~ and reconcile with ~ Onesimus.

▶▶ Ok, ~ let's unpack [verse 17](#).

NIV ~ SO ~ IF YOU CONSIDER ME ~ A PARTNER, ~ PAUL SAYS AT THE BEGINNING ~ OF verse 17.

PRESENTED AS CONDITIONAL, ~ BUT IT'S NOT. ¶¶ 1/10

▶▶ No doubt in Paul's mind.

▶▶ In the Greek text, ~ the condition is assumed ~ to be a reality.

▶▶ "If, ~ as is true," ~ or, ~ "Since."

▷▷ If, ~ as is true, ~ you consider me a partner.

▷▷ Or, ~ Since you consider me a partner.

NOW LET'S CONSIDER THE WORD ~ PARTNER ~ IN VERSE 17.

PHILEMON AND PAUL WERE PARTNERS.

▶▶ This means ~ they participated ~ in the same effort.

▶▶ In the opening of the letter, ~ Paul called Philemon ~ "our beloved fellow worker."

▷▷ I.e., ~ he helped Paul ~ in spreading the gospel.

▷▷ Most likely, ~ partner here, ~ in [verse 17](#), ~ refers ~ to the same endeavor.

▷▷ Paul and Philemon ~ were partners ~ in getting the gospel ~ out to the world.

▶▶ Now there is a ~ new partner, ~ Onesimus.

▷▷ Paul ~ wanted Philemon's attitude toward Onesimus ~ to be based on ~ his attitude toward Paul. ↴↴ 2/10

▷▷ Since Paul and Philemon were partners ~ then Philemon, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ would have to include Onesimus ~ who is now a partner in the gospel ministry as well.

▷▷ Paul ~ was relying ~ on his partnership in the gospel with Philemon ~ ¶¶

↳↳ to cause Philemon ~ to welcome Onesimus ~ as he would welcome Paul.

▶▶ Boiled down, ~ *verse 17*.

▷▷ Philemon, ~ since you consider me ~ a partner ~ in spreading the gospel, ~ give Onesimus, ~ this new partner ~ in the gospel ministry, ~ the same ready welcome ~ on his arrival ~ that you would give me.

WE SHOULD CONSIDER THIS NOW.

▶▶ Philemon was Paul's partner in ministry.

▶▶ No doubt then ~ an implication of this ~ is that Philemon, ~ like Paul, ~ correctly put ~ ¶¶

▷▷ the work of the gospel ~ among his highest priorities.

▶▶ Certainly, ~ a reminder of his partnership with Paul ~ would cause Philemon ~ ¶¶

▷▷ to put the situation with Onesimus ~ in its proper perspective.

▶▶ Nothing must hinder ~ the cause of the gospel.

▷▷ And ~ unresolved ~ interpersonal relationship problems ~ will do just that. ¶¶ 3/10

▷▷Undoubtedly, ~ this was a loud and clear message to Philemon ~ & should be to us ~ ¶¶

↳↳that ~ interpersonal relationship problems ~ must ~ be dealt with and resolved.

▷▷As noted before, ~ 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.

LET'S MOVE ON IN VERSE 17.

THE WAY~ PAUL WANTS PHILEMON ~ TO HANDLE THIS SITUATION ~ ¶¶

▶▶is ~ to welcome Onesimus back.

▷▷I.e., ~ to ~ forgive ~ and reconcile with ~ Onesimus.

AS I UNDERSTAND IT, ~ "WELCOME" HERE, ~ which means ~ wholehearted acceptance ~ ¶¶

▶▶can be looked at ~ on two levels.

1st, ~ WHEN HE TELLS PHILEMON TO WELCOME ONESIMUS, ~ PAUL IS SAYING ~ ¶¶

▶▶"Treat Onesimus ~ as an honored guest."

▶▶To contemporary readers, ~ a simple act ~ ¶¶

▷▷of hosting a dinner party ~ may come to mind. ¶¶ 4/10

▶▶ For first-century readers, ~ however, ~ this would evoke ~ the virtue of hospitality ~ 77

▷▷ where a stranger ~ is considered ~ a member ~ of the host's household ~ and ~ equal in status.

↪↪ This call to welcome Onesimus ~ is such a call.

BASICALLY, ~ PAUL IS SAYING TO PHILEMON, ~ 77

▶▶ "When Onesimus returns, ~ say to him ~ 'My home ~ is your home.'"

▶▶ Or to put it differently, ~ 77

▷▷ like the father of the prodigal son in Jesus' parable, ~ 77

↪↪ Philemon ~ should open his arms ~ to welcome Onesimus ~ back to his household.

DEFINITELY ~ A LESSON HERE FOR US.

▶▶ We ~ must always welcome back a repentant sinner, ~ 77

▷▷ whether it's ~ an unbeliever who has just been saved ~ 77

↪↪ or ~ a believer who has sinned and subsequently repented.

▶▶ And this welcome ~ must be on the level Paul describes.

PAUL TALKS ABOUT THIS IN 2 CORINTHIANS, ~ 77

▶▶ in relation ~ to repentant believers. 77 5/10

▶▶ And I want us to focus on that right now, ~ repentant believers.

▶▶ In the context of 2 Cor. 2, ~ Paul is speaking of church discipline, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ but the point is the same, ~ welcoming a repentant believer.

↳↳ 2 Cor. 2:5-8

▶▶ To "forgive and comfort" ~ is literally ~ "to act graciously toward ~ and ~ to encourage.

▶▶ This admonition ~ agrees with the teaching of Jesus, ~ who said, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ "If your brother or sister sins against you, ~ rebuke them; ~ and if they repent, ~ forgive them (NIV, Lk. 17:3).

▶▶ A repentant believer ~ must be responded to ~ with appropriate action.

▷▷ Vindictiveness and an unforgiving spirit ~ are as sinful ~ as the offender's deed.

↳↳ Read the parable of the unforgiving servant, ~ Matt. 18:21-35.

▶▶ We see from [verse 7](#) of 2 Cor. 2, ~ the reason ~ ¶¶

▷▷ for Paul's urging forgiveness by the Corinthians ~ was not ~ their personal obligation before God.

↳↳ Although ~ that was certainly part of it.

▷▷ Rather the reason was ~ the ultimate spiritual well-being of ~ the offender. ¶¶ 6/10

▷▷ To withhold forgiveness and restoration ~ could cause such excessive remorse ~ ¶¶

↳↳ as to bring ~ utter despair ~ and even abandonment of the faith.

▷▷ Unforgiveness toward a repentant believer ~ can do a lot of damage.

▶▶ In [verse 8](#), ~ Paul calls on them to reaffirm their love for him. ⇔⇔ ἀγάπη.

▷▷ Personal actions by the members should be forthcoming, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ proving to the offender ~ beyond any doubt ~ that genuine Christlike love ~ existed for him.

AS WE NOTED, ~ "WELCOME" HERE ~ PHILE. 17 ~ CAN BE LOOKED AT ON TWO LEVELS.

▶▶ Now ~ the 2nd, ~ and more important ~ level.

▶▶ In [Rom. 15:7](#), ~ Paul used the verb for ~ [welcome](#) ~ to encourage ~ ¶¶

▷▷ the squabbling factions in the Roman community ~ to welcome ~ or accept ~ each other.

▶▶ I.e., ~ to fully accept one another ~ as fellow members of Christ's body.

▶▶ And that ~ is what Paul is exhorting Philemon to do with Onesimus.

THE CONTEXT, ~ IN WHICH [ROM. 15:7 \(NIV\)](#) IS FOUND, ~ IS A CONTRAST ~ BETWEEN strong and weak believers.

▶▶ But, ~ again, ~ it's applicable to what we're discussing. ¶¶ 7/10

▶▶ Paul writes, ~ NIV ~ ¶¶

▷▷ Accept one another, ~ then, ~ just as Christ accepted you, ~ in order to bring praise to God.

▶▶ Here's Paul's point.

▷▷ Just as Christ accepted us, ~ we ~ are to accept other believers.

▶▶ When Jesus ~ has accepted someone, ~ are we to say ~ that ~ ¶¶

▷▷ we will not take them ~ as a Christian brother or sister?

▶▶ Our attitude toward other believers ~ must flow ~ ¶¶

▷▷ from the transformation ~ wrought in us by Christ.

▶▶ And this acceptance ~ of one another as family ~ will bring glory to God.

THIS SUGGESTS, ~ BACK TO PHILEMON ~ PAUL IS COMMANDING PHILEMON ~ ¶¶

▶▶ not only ~ to welcome Onesimus back into his life and household, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ but, ~ far more importantly, ~ to welcome him ~ into "the household of faith."

▶▶ To accept him ~ for what he is now, ~ a full-fledged brother ~ in the Lord.

▶▶ All of this, ~ we need to ~ take to heart ~ and practice it in our lives. ¶¶ 8/10

AT THE END OF VERSE 17, ~ PAUL TELLS PHILEMON ~ TO WELCOME ONESIMUS, ~ as he would welcome Paul.

THE SAME WELCOME ~ THAT HE WOULD GIVE TO PAUL, ~ PHILEMON ~ WAS TO GIVE ~ to Onesimus.

▶▶ Obviously, ~ he would welcome Paul ~ as ~ an honored guest ~ and ~ an equal.

▷▷ And Philemon ~ was to welcome Onesimus ~ as ~ an honored guest ~ and ~ on an equal level.

WHAT PAUL SAYS HERE ~ IS STARTLING.

▶▶ It was a traditional assumption ~ in Greco-Roman society ~ that such a relationship ~ 11

▷▷ was only possible ~ between equals, ~~ and certainly ~ not between master and slave.

▶▶ But in the kingdom of God, ~ such cultural assumptions ~ are turned on their head.

▶▶ Onesimus, ~ in the lowest social status in the Roman world, ~ a slave with no rights ~ 11

▷▷ was on a spiritual plane ~ equal with ~ his owner Philemon ~ and ~ with the apostle Paul.

THIS IS ONE PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCE ~ OF PAUL'S GREAT THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLE ~ in Gal. 3:28.

▶▶ There is ~ neither Jew nor Greek, ~~ there is ~ neither slave nor free, ~ 11

▷▷ there is ~ no male and female, ~~ for you are all one ~ in Christ Jesus.

BELIEVERS ~ ARE PART ~ OF A SPIRITUAL UNITY ~ IN WHICH HUMAN DISTINCTIONS
~ are irrelevant.

▶▶ Among the members of the body of Christ, ~ the earthly distinctions of ~ race, ~ social class, ~ and gender ~ ¶¶

▷▷ have no significance ~ as to the validity or quality ~ of one's relationship with God.

▶▶ Such divisions ~ are due to earthly realities, ~ and do have validity, ~ of course, ~ in temporal matters.

▶▶ As long as the church is on earth, ~ these distinctions must ~ be recognized and taken into account.

▶▶ The NT provides considerable regulation ~ for the church on earth ~ ¶¶

▷▷ regarding ~ various roles and responsibilities.

▶▶ But ~ so far ~ as the essential character of the body of Christ is concerned, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ we are all one ~ in Christ Jesus."

▶▶ In the believer's spiritual standing, ~ there is ~ unity and an equality.

▶▶ All believers ~ regardless of ~ race, ~ class, ~ or gender ~ are equally ~ a part of ~ ¶¶

▷▷ one spiritual entity, ~ the church, ~ the body of Christ.

LET'S PRAY 10/10