

Thursday, December 14, 2023 • Read Philemon vv8–25

Questions from the Scripture text: What might the apostle be (v8)? In Whom? To do what? What does he prefer over commanding (v9)? What three reasons does he add to his appeal? For whom does he appeal (what does he call him, v10)? What has happened to Onesimus and when? What had he been previously (v11a)? What is he like now (v11b)? What is the apostle doing with Onesimus (v12)? What does he now call him? What had the apostle wished (v13)? What did he desire Onesimus to do? Why didn't Paul just keep him (v14)? Why, particularly, did the apostle want Philemon's consent? What does the apostle suggest about Onesimus's time with him (v15)? How does he urge Philemon to receive him (v16)? In what two ways? How else does he want Philemon to count him (v17)? What offer does he add in v18? What does the apostle begin doing in v19? What does he now promise? And remind Philemon? What is he asking him for, again in v20 (cf. v7)? Of what does the apostle have confidence (v21)? What else does Paul ask for (v22)? Why? Who sends greetings in v23? What does Paul title him? Who send them in v24? What does Paul call them? Who greets him in what way in v25? How does the apostle conclude the letter?

Why doesn't Paul just command Philemon? Philemon vv8–25 prepares us for the second serial reading in public worship on the Lord's Day. In these eighteen verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **out of love for one another, believers love to stir one another up to love.**

Authority that appeals by love, v8–14. The apostle had the authority to command Philemon (v8). Setting Onesimus free is "fitting" ("proper," or even "required"). But Paul loves Philemon (v9a, cf. v1) and desires that Philemon himself act out of love (cf. v5, 7). Let elders, husbands, fathers, and others in authority take note: the apostle sets the example of refraining from direct command in order to give the opportunity to act freely, from love.

This is not to say that he doesn't pile on the pressure. He appeals by their relationship (v9b). He appeals by his own age. He appeals by his status as a prisoner. He appeals by his own love for Onesimus (v10, 12), using tender terms of fatherhood and affection for having led him to the faith. He appeals by Onesimus's conversion (v11).

What the apostle does here, and how he pleads, many today would call "manipulative." But all of these are proper considerations! It is fleshly and worldly to act only out of self-interest, and out of love for Philemon, Paul gives him many reasons to act not in self-interest but out of sacrificial love. This takes wisdom to apply well, but it is helpful for us to see that it is sometimes loving to motivate someone out of love, if we have good hope that it is there.

Provoking genuine love is not manipulation (forcing them by our will) but liberation (sparking the freedom of their own will to do the good deed not under compulsion, but by the voluntary exercise of a loving heart). In a healthy and wisely-led home or church, there will be little need for the commands of the lesser authority, because the commands of Christ in Scripture will be more than enough to drive the loving hearts of those under authority to do what is right.

Believers never "lose" one another, v15–16. There really wasn't much for Philemon to lose before. Onesimus having been "unprofitable" in v11 gives us a clue as to how Paul had run into him: Onesimus had run away (and probably robbed Philemon, as well, cf. v18). You can imagine Onesimus's horror when he thinks he's made his escape, but far from home, he runs into his master's beloved friend who had brought his master to Christ. But soon, the Lord uses Paul to bring Onesimus to Christ. Now, Onesimus would be delighted to serve Paul but is also willing to be a profitable servant to Philemon as well (cf. v11).

So Paul is sending Onesimus back (v12), asking that Philemon would immediately send Onesimus back to Paul. Wouldn't this mean that Philemon would once again lose his slave? Not at all. Believers cannot permanently lose one another! What Onesimus had intended for evil (that Philemon would lose him for a while, v15a), the Lord had intended for good (that Philemon would receive him forever (v15b) as a beloved brother (v16). So now Philemon has Onesimus "back" both in the flesh and in the Lord. This is a great comfort for believers who have to say goodbye in this life. Even if we lose one another in the flesh, we will always have one another in the Lord. Believers never "lose" one another.

Believers love to refresh one another, v17–25. Philemon would be glad to be disadvantaged for Paul's sake (v17–19), and the apostle now urges him to treat Onesimus in the same way. After all, Philemon loves to refresh the hearts of the saints (cf. v7), and now he has an opportunity to refresh Paul's own heart by Onesimus (v20). Paul himself is hoping to be able to come (with Onesimus) back to Colossae and refresh Philemon (v22). And those who are with Paul are sending Philemon greetings (v23–24). Why do believers love to do this? Because we are being conformed to Christ! He Himself gives the final greeting by His apostle (v25). We do not have goodness and strength in ourselves to give to others, like Jesus does. But, we love to be used by Him to refresh one another, just as He loves to be gracious to us.

How are you fostering and nourishing your own love for Christ and Christians? Whom have you refreshed recently? Whom do you have opportunity to refresh? What believers have you "lost" in this life? Why haven't you lost them?

Sample prayer: Lord, forgive us for how small is our love for one another. We have not loved to refresh one another like we ought to. And often we have had to have been ruled by the commands of authority rather than appeals to our affections. Please make us to be more like Paul and Philemon; indeed, make us to be more like Christ, from whom true Christian love comes, we ask in His Name, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP197 "Christian Unity" or TPH409 "Blest Be the Tie That Binds"

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Philemon verse 8 through 25. These are God's words. Therefore though, i might be very bold in christ to command you. What is fitting? You look for love's sake, i rather appeal to you.

Being such a one is paul the agent. And now also a prisoner of jesus christ. I appeal to you for my son anisimus. They may have begotten while in my chains. Who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me. I am sending him back.

You therefore receive him. That is my own heart. Whom i wished to keep with me that on your behalf. You might minister to me. In my chains for the gospel. But without your consent, i wanted to do nothing. That your good deed might not be By compulsion as it were, but voluntary.

For perhaps a departed for a while for this that you might receive him forever. No longer as a slave but more than a slave a beloved brother. Especially to me, but how much more to you? Both in the flesh, and in the lord. If then you count me as a partner,

If then you can't me as a partner, Receive him as you would me. But if he is wronged you or owes anything, Put that on my account. Hi, paul. I'm riding with my own hand. I will repay Not to mention to you. That you owe me. Even your own self besides Yes, brother.

Let me have joy from you and the lord refresh my heart in the lord. Having confidence in your obedience. I write to you. Knowing that you will do even more than i say. But meanwhile also, Prepare a guest room for me. For thy trust that through your prayers, i shall be granted to you.

Epaphras my fellow prisoner in christ, jesus creates you As you mark aristocus damas. Luke my fellow laborers. The grace of our lord, jesus christ to be with your spirit. I mean,

So, the primary reason that, The pole is writing to Philemon is. To ask if I leman, To send an asimus. Back to him to give an asimus, his freedom And let an asimus come back to paul where paul is. In chains. And minister to paul so long as he continues.

And has chains. Now, paul makes it clear in verse 8 that this is something he could simply command. Both in his. Office as an apostle. And, Necessity for the preaching of the gospel. Uh but it also and especially because it is quote, what is fitting unquote in verse 8?

Which is to say what is proper? What is Required. Um, We have one of our membership vows. Promising to live as becomes a follower of Jesus Christ, nobody knows what becomes means in that case. So we have often used the word appropriate, but we too could say, As is fitting, whereas is proper.

Or as is required. And we would be using this. Bible words, this Bible concept from the end of verse 8. But Paul is not commanding. Finally, man. Which helps us understand even more verse 21 when he says, having confidence in your obedience. He's not talking about Philemon's obedience to him, he restrained himself from commanding.

He decided not to command, but to appeal, to him, Not an account of love. But, Still, he says having confidence in your obedience and so that brings up the question then. The obviously, which has an obvious answer obedience to whom Having confidence of Philemon's. Obedience to Christ. Now, this is very encouraging.

Um, if you have a wise authority in this case, a wise apostle, But we might be talking about a wise elder or a wise husband or a wise father. If you have a wise authority, and a godly subject, Uh, submitting under that authority. Then everything doesn't have to be.

By force of command. The one who is underneath the authority. Can know that the authority that the Lord is grant over them. That the Lord has granted over them is wise. And you can see that if they show a track record of obedience to the Lord Jesus, And the one who's an authority over them.

Is confident of their obedience to the Lord Jesus. Then the one who's in authority over them. Uh, won't like to give competing commands. Or. Reinforcing commands. The one who's an authority over them will make appeals out of love for Christ. And out of love for the brethren. The two things that the Spirit had reproduced and Philemon and the Applying the.

The two things that the Spirit had produced in Philemon, and applying The two great commandments richly. When he says, Hearing of your love and faith, which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints Uh, verse 5. And so, because Paul is confident of this about Philemon, He does not command him.

Rather he appeals. To him on account of love, yet for love's sake. I appeal to you. And if you're going to be in authority, this is something you should notice. That you don't have to. By the sheer force of your authority or the sheer force of your command. Command everything.

That it is not a. Compromising of your authority. To appeal to those beneath you on account of love or for the sake of love. In fact, it is superior because it permits them. To act as verse 14, says, not by compulsion as it were But voluntarily. But if you have someone who's an authority over you, You can liberate him to do that more.

If you consistently obey the Lord Jesus Christ,

Because an account of Their ability to be confident. In your obedience verse 21. Uh, they would then be freed more frequently, more consistently just to appeal to you in the say for the sake of love. This is something that I have as. A goal for each of you as you grow.

Um, and for our house as a whole A house where everyone can appeal to one another. As a sake for the sake of love for Christ. And love for one another. Is much more cheerful and warm and encouraging. Honoring to God, joyful to us. Why would we not want to have it?

And so, we We would like to be able to be those who. Um, Don't have to be commanded and don't have to command. But who can appeal to one another out of love? Now, you should be practicing this all the time is siblings because you don't actually have real authority over one another.

Although, that doesn't stop you guys from Uh, from barking commands. But how much better if you as? Brothers and sisters are appealing to one another. On account of. Uh, love and the worthiness. The rightness, the goodness. Of what it is that. That the other ought to do and stirring up in them.

That. Um, That motivation of Christian affection, towards the Lord Jesus. And towards one another. And then, when you do come into some authority of your own, As a husband boys, or even as a parent. Uh, ladies. That. You would have this practice of. Not using the naked force of being in command.

Unless it's necessary. But rather. Following the Spirit was given wisdom of the apostle. Here. So he appeals to him. Uh, he appeals to him in a way that Some would call. Uh, manipulation, but it's not manipulation. It's motivation for the sake of love. Yet for love's sake. I rather appeal to you and listen to the things that he piles on.

Being such a one as Paul so he reminds him. Of who it is, that's asking. Not just as authority, but their relationship to one another the agent. And special respect that the elder elderly ought to receive a prisoner of Jesus Christ. And we should remember prisoners and to steam them and desire to lighten.

Their chains. If we may And he refers to an asimus as my son anezimus in verse 10 and Uh, my own heart in verse 12. So, he's Uh, he's piling these up. Now, is this some kind of um, evil or psychologically tyrannical? Manipulation Oh the person who would say that obviously does not actually love ball.

Does not actually respect the agent does not actually care for prisoners of Jesus Christ and And the affectionate connection between. Uh, Paul and anezimus wouldn't matter to him. It is not wrong. For somebody. Who loves or who ought to love. Um, To motivate that, it is not wrong to motivate that person.

By appealing to reasons that should provoke them to love. Now, there is a sort of manipulation that takes that takes someone and to try to use. Uh, guilt. To pressure them or some other. Uh, relational pressure, to pressure them to do. According to your will, instead of their will That is an evil manipulation.

But, Knowing that someone ought to be motivated by what's right? And, Presenting them, those right reasons, that would motivate them. So that they are stirred up to love or in hope that they will be stirred up to love. That is not manipulation. That is motivating. In the best way.

That actually desires the good of the person. That they wouldn't do things out of a mere sense of drudgery. That certainly that they wouldn't do things only out of self-interest. But you're really trying to help them. To do things out of sacrificial love. Which we ought to do. And if we love someone, we will want them.

To grow in that. Now, they may. If the Lord does not give them grace. To love like they should they may think about you and say about you, how manipulative you are. But you can take comfort from. The book of Phylum in here. And know from the Lord that It's actually an act of love and kindness.

To try to motivate somebody. By the affections that they should have. So authority that appeals by love, is the first thing that we see here. Coming down in verses 15 and 16. Paul makes this sweet point that believers never lose one another, For perhaps, he departed for a little while.

For or for a while for this that you might receive him forever. No longer is a slave but more than a slave a beloved brother. In the flesh and the Lord. And so, Paul is sending an asimus back. Um, to if I leave and Philemon is going to receive him in the flesh, but he's already received him in the Lord.

Now, if I leave in is free, when an asimus arrives to send an asimus back to Paul, no, he's not losing his slave, we can't lose one another. It so short-sided for believers

to feel like we lose one another. When we're going to have one another in christ forever, and we do have one another in christ now.

Because we never lose christ. We always have him. And so in our union with christ, we actually always have one another. Even though in the flesh, we do not always have one another in the lord. We do always have one another When paul was encouraging the Thessalonians, remember about those who had departed.

He says. That, you know, whether we're absent, we're with the lord or present we're with the lord, and And particularly, he says there. That at the resurrection. Those who have departed will return with christ bodily. And those return with christ and receive a body that we caught up in the air.

Uh, The dead in Christ will rise first, rather And then those who had not departed to be with christ, they will be caught up in the air. They will be changed in a moment and we will always be with the Lord therefore comfort. One another with these words. While whether it's through the death of a christian or through some other goodbye to a christian christians never lose one another.

This is one of the reasons a small reason. Uh, small comparative to others. But a big reason, For us to want you. To be in the lord, jesus christ by faith. That we may know, we will never lose you. Not when you grow up and have your own family and which we of course want you to do and to be fruitful and multiply it.

Uh, the richness of thinking, what will come of your lives? And then the sadness of knowing that, that means That we can't be together in this particular family forever on the earth. For christians. Never lose one another. And if you are in christ by faith, And we are. Uh, not only united to him so that we always have one another in him.

But And we will have great reunion at the resurrection. Then before that probably when, when you pass them to glory, if the lord does not return, We don't lose one another in death either. Paul had lost anezimus. And asimus had run away and probably robbed him. Um, Uh, not paul phylman had lost.

Sorry. Philemon had lost anesmosome. And asimas had run away and and probably robbed him, paul refers to an SMS, has having not been profitable before that does not speak. Well, to the kind of servant or slave that anisimus was before he was converted. And, You can imagine anezimus is horror.

Having run away from his master and probably robbed him since paul talks about how much. Um, anezimus owes and writes with his own handwriting that he paul will. Payback, whatever. Debt, anisimus has From whatever he took with him, when he ran away as a slave. Um, If i leave an ad lost anismuth, but now he has him back.

And he has him back forever. Believers, never. Lose one another. And then, lastly, versus 17 through 25. Believers love to refresh one. Another One of the things that paul had said, Back in verse 7 was, he has great joy and comfort in the love of Eileen. Because the hearts of the saints had been refreshed by phylum, And now, Verse 20, he's asking that Philemon would refresh his own heart.

Uh, not by the hospitality of his house. Now not by the generous giving a material things. Um, Or. All of the other ways, probably an elder in the church. As we considered last time, versus one through seven and therefore doing much spiritual good to them, Uh, but here. Paul asks, if i leave into refresh his heart, not just by letting him have an asimus help him in the ministry, which is enough for freshmen, but by knowing that Philemons doing so, Was recognizing.

Um, that anesthemus has runaway slave Had been led. By the providence of god. It right into the gospel, trap, with the apostle paul, where anezimus the runaway would get converted. And the wonderful providence that occurred, And in that, in that way. And then Philemon. And anism has arrives with this letter and finally been receives it.

Reads it rejoices that has run away. Thief slave is now his forever brother in the lord. Jesus said. Him back. Um, and the joy, if that whole thing would be so refreshing. Uh, to paul's heart and that's the final part of paul's appeal. That. That this would be done to refresh his heart, but of course, Paul wants to refresh relievin's heart.

Not just paul. The patharis and mark and eros darkest, and demos and luke. Um, Demonst shame. Later would Fall in love with the world and start making ministry decisions based on. Uh, what is most comfortable and pleasant for him? Another lesson for another passage and another family, which But this.

Other than than that slight block on demos. The rest of them. Um, Yes, tall. Warts of The evangelistic ministries all words of the faith that this time, And the church. And all of them wanting to greet and refresh by Lehman himself. Um, and of course, the reason we believe is love to refresh one.

Another is because we belong to a savior and we're being conformed. To a savior who loves to refresh us. The last greeting of the letter doesn't come. From a brother on earth, it comes from the elder brother in glory. The grace of our lord jesus christ. Be with your spirit.

And so, the lord jesus himself. It's not with us bodily yet by his spirit. He is with our spirit with our soul. And, It is from him that we receive this character. To receive this desire to be refreshing to one another. Even as he Loves to refresh us. By his own life by his own strength by his own joy, by his own favor, Which his spirit ministers to us.

And oh that the lord would conform us to himself by his spirit. So that we would be like this with one another. Praise God. What a Rich. Little bulk of the bible. Let's pray. Our father in heaven. We ask that. Our hearts would be little worlds of love that our home.

Would be a little world of love that our church. Would be a little world of love. Where your spur produces such love to christ. That we may be confident in one another's obedience. To jesus. And where naked commands of authority are almost never needed. Because what jesus has said is enough and we may appeal To one another on account of love.

We thank you for the comfort that. We never lose someone who has genuinely in christ. And we pray o lord, then that All of our dear ones would be genuinely in christ. That we might never lose them. But might have our hearts refreshed by. All of the evidence they give Of the love.

That christ has produced in them. By faith. Then we ask lord that you would make us. To be the. The sort of christian who loves to refresh others. The sort of christian in whom this grace of christ is imitated. Thank you, lord. Jesus for your word. For coming near us by your spirit.

To refresh us from your word. Be glorified by making us to be like yourself. We ask in your own name. Lord. Jesus. Amen.