

“Faith and Love”
Philemon 1:4-7
(Preached at Trinity, July 16, 2023)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citation will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we've seen, this is a very personal letter from Paul to Philemon. Paul had a history with Philemon.
 - A. While Paul was in Ephesus during his third missionary journey, a Colossian man by the name of Epaphras arrived and was converted under Paul's preaching. He returned to Colossae and began sharing the good news of Christ. Through his faithful witness of the Gospel the Church of Colossae was planted.
 - B. Philemon was converted, either directly while on a visit to Ephesus, or indirectly through the ministry of Epaphras. Paul was able to write:
Verse 19 - "you owe to me even your own self as well"
2. Paul had confidence he was appealing to a brother in Christ.
"To Philemon our beloved *brother* and fellow worker"
But Paul never presumed upon God's grace, nor what someone claimed about themselves. To Paul, a person's reputation was important. He included a good reputation as one of the qualifications for pastor:
1 Timothy 3:2 NAU - "An overseer, then, must be above reproach"
1 Timothy 3:7 NAU - "And he must have a good reputation with those outside *the church*"
3. How did Paul know Philemon was a beloved brother? He had a reputation. Philemon was one of the leaders of the Colossian church and he had a church meeting in his home. Philemon's reputation had come to Paul.
Philemon 1:4-5 NAU - "I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers, ⁵ because I hear of your love and of the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints;"
4. Paul states there are two primary characteristics that mark a true believer. No matter what else we may claim about ourselves if we fail in these two marks we fail the test. Paul says he has heard of Philemon's faith and love. These two marks identify the Christian more than any other. If you want to know if you are a Christian examine your faith and love. These two marks assure our hearts more than any other.
5. This was always Paul's consistent standard reflected in his letters.
This is the Christian standard.
Ephesians 1:15-16 NAU - "For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which *exists* among you and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶ do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention *of you* in my prayers;"
Colossians 1:3-4 NAU - "We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, ⁴ since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints;"

Galatians 5:6 NAU - "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love."

1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 NAU - "We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of *you* in our prayers; ³ constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,"

2 Thessalonians 1:3 NAU - "We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is *only* fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows *ever* greater;"

Ephesians 3:14-17 NAU - "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, ¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love,"

6. Having preached through all of these books, I've set this truth before you before. This morning I want to try to set these two Christian traits before you once again. I pray God might give us renewed clarity.

- I. First, Paul says he had heard of Philemon's faith – He possessed genuine saving faith

A. Genuine faith is has a focus upon Christ. Notice Paul says,
"because I hear of the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus"

1. Saving Faith is not just an arbitrary belief in God
 - a. When you ask many people why they believe they are going to heaven they respond, "I believe in God"
 - b. There are few true atheists – God has manifested Himself to all men and although they suppress the truth, few are able to suppress it entirely.
There are far more practical atheists – they live as though God does not exist.
 - c. Merely believing in God is not saving faith
James 2:19 KJV – "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble."
2. Saving faith is not just believing that we are saved.
 - a. Most people believe they are right with God.
 - b. On the Day of Judgment great multitudes will stand before Christ fully expecting to be received into heaven only to find themselves condemned.

Matthew 7:21-23 NAU - "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. ²² "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' ²³ "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness."

3. Saving faith is not joining a religion.
 - a. Human beings are naturally religious – but they also naturally hate God.
 - b. The world is full of Christless religions, even those who call themselves Christian.
 4. Saving faith has Christ at the center of all things.
 - a. The life of a Christian revolves around Christ. Everything is in Christ. He controls everything.
 - b. Paul described it in **Ephesians 1:22-23** - "He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."
 5. Saving faith puts Christ at the center of our hope of salvation.
 - a. You must believe that Jesus Christ came into the world to save His people from their sins—that He lived a perfect life fulfilling the Law’s demands, and that He died on the cross as our substitute.
 - b. You must confess your own wicked rebellion against God and you must trust Christ’s death upon the cross as the full payment for your sin.
 - c. You must confess that there is nothing you can do to merit God’s favor.
 - d. You must confess your desire for Christ’s rule over every area of your life.
- B. Notice Paul’s words again:
- Philemon 1:5 NAU** - "the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus"
1. Saving faith puts us in submission to Christ – He is our Lord and Master.
 2. The only way to receive Jesus as Savior is to receive Him as Lord.
 3. Paul often described lordship as an essential element of the Gospel.

Romans 10:9 NAU – “that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved;”

2 Corinthians 4:5 NAU – “For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake.”
 4. Many people want to cling to the hope of salvation without Lordship. The truth is no Lordship, no salvation.
- C. A Christian’s faith is observable – he has a reputation
1. How is it that he says he had “heard” of their faith? He is saying he has heard of his endurance; of his progress in the faith. Others could bear testimony to his faith.

Romans 1:8 NAU - "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world."
 2. Saving faith is an observable reality. The person who has Christ at the center of all things has a life that is radically different from everyone else in the world.
 3. And notice that he is thanking God for their faith and love clearly marking these things as being not from ourselves but from the hand of God.

- II. Second, Paul says he had heard of Philemon's love. His faith was towards Christ and his love was "toward all the saints;"
- A. Saving faith produces a heart for others in the faith.
Philemon 1:7 NAU - "the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother."
1. Faith and love are inseparable.
 Love is impossible without faith. Faith cannot exist in the absence of love.
1 Corinthians 13:2 NAU - "if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing."
 2. Without love our religion is empty and without substance.
1 Corinthians 13:3 NAU - "And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing."
- B. Love is the chief distinguishing mark of Christianity.
1. We are not justified by love, but love is the fruit of true saving faith.
 - a. By nature we hate one another
Titus 3:3 NAU - "For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another."
 - b. Onesimus was at odds with his master. Paul will describe him as being changed from unprofitable to profitable. Paul will tell Philemon to receive Onesimus as a brother.
 2. Love changes everything. This is the consistent teaching of the New Testament.
 - Jesus said:
John 13:35 NAU - "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
 - John wrote:
1 John 3:14 NAU - "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death."
 3. This was Paul's consistent teaching.
Romans 13:10 NAU - "Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of *the law*."
Galatians 5:14 NAU - "For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the *statement*, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."
Galatians 5:22 NAU - "But the fruit of the Spirit is love"
Romans 12:10 NAU - "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;
1 Thessalonians 4:9 NAU – "Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for *anyone* to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;"
 4. In other words, love is what we are. It marks us, defines us. We love one another. We like being with one another. We enjoy the same things. We love the same Lord. We are adopted into the same family.

- C. Paul makes a particular statement about our love here
“toward all the saints.”
1. There is a universal element to our love
We have a unique love for all of our Christian brothers and sisters.
Galatians 6:10 NAU – “So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”
 - a. This love is made possible by our unique union with Christ.
Romans 12:5 NAU - "so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."
 - b. We have earthly families but these relationships are not as great as our relationship with our brothers and sisters in Christ.
 2. We love one another regardless of race, wealth, education, and social status. It will be love that will enable these two estranged brothers to become reconciled.

Conclusion:

1. We have experienced the infinite love of Christ. It is free and boundless. This love has had a huge impact upon our lives.
Paul wrote to the Corinthians:
2 Corinthians 5:14 NAU – “For the love of Christ controls us”
συνέχω – It means “to hold fast.” It can carry the meaning “to seize”
The love of Christ has gripped our hearts.
2. We love Jesus and we love all others who love Jesus.