

## *Intro to Philemon*

The situation that is presented to us in the book of Philemon concerns a serious matter that requires Philemon to reach deeply into his heart to forgive someone he has every right to condemn. It centers on whether to choose God's will over his own will, the desires of God's heart over the desires of his own heart, self-centeredness and selfishness over Christ-centeredness and righteousness, pride over humility, the ways of the world and the earthly nature over the ways of the Kingdom and the heavenly nature. Philemon knows the Word and his standing before Christ, and God is challenging him to put the gospel he so staunchly proclaims into practice on a level that cuts straight to the heart.

***Eph. 4:32*** *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

- I. The ways of the kingdom of God must supersede the ways of the culture we live in relationally, morally and spiritually. God calls us to put into practice his Word, no matter how difficult it might be in a culture that couldn't care less about the ways of God. We must never put ourselves in a position of choosing His way, our way or the culture's way depending on the circumstances we find ourselves in. There is only one choice we are to make, and it is God's way over our way or the cultures way no matter the cost.

***Prov. 3:5-6*** *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your path straight.*

*"Yet in one significant phrase Paul transforms the character of the master-slave relationship. Onesimus is returning no longer as a slave but as a brother beloved (verse 16). It is clearly incongruous for a Christian master to "own" a brother in Christ in the contemporary sense of the word, and although the existing order of society could not be immediately changed by Christianity without political revolution (which is clearly contrary to Christian principles), the Christian master-slave was so transformed from within that it was bound to lead ultimately to the abolition of the system." Donald Guthrie*

- II. In the Book of Philemon, Paul appeals to three foundational truths that must dictate how we are to live as a community of believers. Living in God's kingdom means that we are to live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, Jesus is the one who is in charge of every situation we find ourselves in (vv.3,5,15,16,20). It means that we are to live as a family (vv. 3,5,1b,2), aware that the decisions and choices we make will affect the unity, safety and security of the fellowship of believers God has placed us in. And it means that we are to highly value one another because of the value God has given us through reconciliation and redemption (vv.11,16).

**James 3:17-18** *But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.*