



SERIES: MAY- JULY: THE MAIN THING

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Wednesday, 7/6/22

Scripture: Philemon

TITLE: Philemon - Relationships Restored

Growing up, me and my older brother fought all the time. Sometimes things got pretty ugly. I can remember one specific instance where we were both really mad at each other for a long time, I couldn't even tell you what we've been fighting about. It even got to the point where we started to beat each other up. But finally, after throwing a few punches, my brother looked at me, laughed, and called me by my nickname (which I won't share here.) At that moment I knew the fighting was over and everything was going to be okay.

This idea of relationships being restored is what we called reconciliation. Reconciliation is what the book of Philemon is all about.

Christians should read the book of Philemon because we learn important lessons about how the Gospel transforms relationships and goes above and beyond our social status and our culture here on Earth. In Philemon, we can learn how to treat someone who sinned against us and how to find unity in the cross.

A quick summary of the book is this: The apostle Paul is writing a letter from prison in Rome to a dear Christian friend named Philemon. Philemon was pretty wealthy and, in this culture, even owned bondservants and slaves. One of his bondservants named Onesimus had run away and come to know the apostle Paul. Paul discipled him and he became a Christian. Then, Paul knew Onesimus needed go back to his master Philemon. In this letter, Paul urges Philemon to welcome back Onesimus not as a slave, but as an equal brother.

This book was written around 62 A.D. Notable people found in the book of Philemon would include the author Paul, Onesimus, and Philemon himself.

The heart of the letters is found in Philemon 1:15-18 which says: “For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, no longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account.”

Think about how radical this idea is! Paul is asking a master to welcome back his runaway slave as an equal brother! This idea would have been totally countercultural in ancient Rome. In this, we see a beautiful picture of the Gospel. Jesus gave His life to forgive our sins and reconcile our relationship with God, to bring us back into a relationship with him forever. Paul is saying that

under the cross of Jesus, we are all equals! Paul even says that if Onesimus had wronged him in any way to charge it to Paul's own account. Again, we see the Gospel—that our judgment that we deserve, our own sin was placed on Jesus. Jesus took our punishment on His account and gives us His perfection.

So here's the key takeaway from the book of Philemon, the Gospel changes everything! If we truly believe in the Gospel, then it should transform every relationship we have here on Earth. Because our relationship with God has been restored, we can now find unity in all relationships with fellow believers here on Earth. No matter our social status in this world, spiritually we are all equal under the cross.