



EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

Philippians, Colossians, Philemon Sermon Series
Supports Session 13: Restoration
Sermon Title: How to Treat Others
Passage: John 13:34-35; Ephesians 4:32

Connection to Philemon 8-21

Jesus called for His disciples to love each other at He had loved them. This demonstration of love would set them apart in the world. As Paul urged his friend Philemon to accept the wayward slave, Onesimus, in love, not harshness, Paul was relying on brotherly love to be the determining factor in Philemon's conduct.

Introduction/Opening

We generally respond in kind to the way we are treated. If an employee is rude to us at the auto parts store, we may be harsh with them. However, if we are in a bad mood but treated with respect by that same employee, we might even get a smile on our face. However, a loving heart, not our environment, should control our conduct.

Outline

1. Love is better than we deserve.
 - a. We are not saved because we deserve salvation or have so much to offer the Lord by our membership in His church. We are sinners, dysfunctional in our relationships and crazy in our affections. We are saved **ONLY** because God is love (1 John 4:8), and He loves us while we are still sinners (Rom. 5:8).
 - b. Try treating people better than they deserve to be treated and see what happens. For instance, if a store clerk growls at you, smile back at them. If a waitress has an attitude, tip her anyway. Most will be flabbergasted that they received kindness when they did not deserve it. Sure, some hearts are quite cold but not all. Many are open to change. We just need to be cared for effectively by love.
 - c. Paul knew both Onesimus and Philemon, having led both of them to Christ. He knew Onesimus would do the right thing and return to Philemon, but harsh treatment at the hands of Philemon was still a possibility. So, what was Paul to do? He appealed to both of their hearts.
2. Love is better than guilt.
 - a. Guilt is a negative emotion, like sadness. Guilt is the feeling of being responsible for something that has gone wrong and brought harm. Since it is negative feeling, it does

- not serve well as a motivating factor; it is temporary and can change with feelings of happiness or other pleasant sensations.
- b. Paul could have employed guilt with Onesimus by finding fault with his action of leaving his master. Returning to Philemon could have been seen as putting right a wrong he was responsible for.
 - c. Paul could have also used guilt with Philemon. Onesimus faced the possibility of punishment upon his return. Paul could have commanded Philemon to accept Onesimus back with no penalty.
 - d. Instead, Paul appealed to Philemon on the basis of “love” not a “command.” (Philem. 8-9). We do not know the outcome of the personal letter to Philemon, but the conclusion easily drawn by the tone of the letter is that Onesimus returned of his own will, and Philemon received Onesimus with respect.
3. Love is best through example.
- a. Jesus demonstrated how to love the undeserving by His example. He said to love one another as He loved them. On the cross His disciples heard Jesus pray for His persecutors’ forgiveness (Luke 23:34). They had witnessed Jesus reach out in love to Matthew and Zacchaeus, who were both despised tax collectors. They also witnessed Jesus demonstrate God’s love to Mary Magdalene, who was possessed by a demon and lived an immoral lifestyle.
 - b. Early in his missionary career, Paul had a harsh dispute with Barnabas over the suitability of John Mark’s presence with the missionary team. So deep was the disagreement that Paul and Barnabas split up over the matter (Acts 15:36-41). Later, in 2 Timothy 4:11 Paul asked for Mark to be sent to him because he was “useful” (Greek: *Euchrestos*, literally “good and easy to make use of”). Interestingly this is the same term Paul used in his description of Onesimus. He had been “useless” (*a-chrestos*) but now was “useful” (*eu-chrestos*) to Philemon (v. 11). Forgiveness made a useless person useful.

Conclusion

The golden rule works: “Therefore, whatever you want others to do for you, do also the same for them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matt. 7:12). And so does love: “But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into him who is the head—Christ: (Eph. 4:15)

Peace will come to our lives when we do not feel compelled to preach so much as we are compelled to live an example. Our lives will become powerful beacons as others experience the power of grace through our actions.

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