

A Bird's-Eye View for Me and You

Philemon

Each time that this broadcast goes out, I'm reminded that it is a good life serving the Lord, and I hope that you have found that in your life, that it is a good life because you have trusted Christ as your Savior.

Today, we continue our study on a "A Bird's-Eye View for Me and You," the books of the New Testament. We're in study number eighteen, the book of Philemon. Let me encourage you to get your Bible if you're in a place where you can get the Bible and read it, and, also, if you would, get a piece of paper, a pencil, a pen, whatever you have to write with there. If you would, do that and write down some Scriptures as we go through the book of Philemon.

Let me invite you to look at our website today, www.LRWM.org. On that website, you'll be able to download free of charge a transcript of this program, "It's a Good Life." You'll also be able to hear this message once again, and you'll also be able to hear other messages of "It's a Good Life."

You can also write to me, Lewis Woodard, 497 Judith Avenue, Fruitland Park, FL 34731. I'll also be glad to send you a transcript, free of charge, of this program, a printed transcript, and it would be good hearing from you today. Thank you for joining me once again for "It's a Good Life."

In the book of Philemon, we understand as we look at this book that it's a book of few words. In the King James Bible, we see that there are 445 words in this book, but this book is very important as all of the Scriptures are as we've studied and we've seen, as we look at the Bible. It's awe-inspired. It's the inspired Word of God, so it's all important, but as we go through these books of the New Testament, there are messages not only for those people to whom it was written at that time, but it's also good for us today to look at these books and to

understand that they're also written to us for our benefit.

Now, some of the background on this book is Paul the apostle was the author of this book, and he wrote this book while a prisoner and he was under house arrest in Rome. Timothy was Paul's helper, and Philemon 1 and 19 talk about this. It says, *Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer.* And we know that Paul wrote this book and in Philemon 19, it says, *I Paul have written it with mine own hand....* So Paul was the author of this book of Philemon.

Now, the date that this took place would have been around 62-63 A.D. and this would have been near the end of Paul's ministry. Philippians was written between 62 and 63; Colossians, between 62 and 63; Philemon, between 62 and 63; Ephesians, between 62 and 63; and we notice that Paul was a busy man. He was not only in prison, but he was writing letters to the churches and to the people of the churches. Luke was written around 63 A.D., and Acts was written around 64 A.D.; I Timothy, around 65 A.D.; and Titus, around 65 A.D.; and of course, the book of II Timothy around 66 A.D. Now those dates may not seem important to you, but they are very important because this was when these books of the New Testament were written, and many of these were written as Paul was in prison, either in his first imprisonment in Rome or his second imprisonment.

The setting was, of course, while Paul was in prison, and we see that there was a man by the name of Onesimus, and this would have been a convert of Paul, and Philemon was this man's owner. Yes, back then, there were slaves, and Onesimus was Philemon's slave. But now, Paul is sending Onesimus back to Philemon and he wants Philemon to know certain things about this man who was working with Paul in Colosse at this time.

Colossians chapter 4 and verse 9 says, *With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here.* In other words, he was sending someone back with Onesimus.... "they." Paul was sending this letter back to Philemon.

And the key verses here would be, of course, Philemon 10, 11, and 17, I believe. The theme of this book, I believe, can be summed up in three words: forgiveness, pardon, compassion. We see that through the book as Paul is admonishing Philemon to receive the slave, his slave Onesimus. In verses 10, 11, and 17, the Bible says, *I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds....* This is Paul speaking. In verse 11, it says, *Which in time past was to thee.... To Philemon in other words.... unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me.* Verse 17 says, *If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself.* He is asking Philemon to receive Onesimus as he would receive Paul himself. So this man, Onesimus, had been forgiven of sin, he had received Christ as Savior, Paul had led him to the Lord, and now he was ready to go back to see Philemon, if you want to call him his owner, his boss, or the man who was done wrong by Onesimus. A lot of times back during this period of time, a slave would run away and end up in Rome, and that's no doubt how Onesimus met Paul, of course, was in Rome, but they would run away and they would many times steal from their owners, the people they lived with and for there. And in this case Onesimus had probably stolen from Philemon and he, of course, was considered a property of Philemon at this time, but Paul says "I want you to understand, Philemon, that this man has been saved. He's coming back. He's going to make restitution to you."

Well, by sending Onesimus back to minister in the Gospel is one of the purposes of this book. In Philemon 12 and 13, it says, *Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels...* In other words, "receive him as you were receiving me"....¹³ *Whom I would have retained*

with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel. "Instead of you being here, Philemon, I would keep Onesimus here, but he needs to come back to you, and I'm sending him there to you."

And another reason is, by receiving Onesimus as more than a slave now, Philemon was told to receive him more than a slave, but now as a beloved brother. Philemon 16 says, *Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?* God had made Onesimus a new creation, so Philemon needs to treat him like he has treated the rest of the saints, and at the same time, Onesimus' job does not need to change, according to what Paul is telling Philemon here.

In II Corinthians 5:17, it says, *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.* Ephesians 6:9 says, *And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.* And we see in these Scriptures that I've just read that the Lord is reminding us and reminding the individuals who have overseership or those people who are managers or those people who are bosses, those people who have servants, they're to treat those people as they would treat themselves as the Master in Heaven would treat them, and they are to treat these people with respect. Colossians 4:1 says, *Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.*

Well, what are some of the lessons we can learn from this book of Philemon? We need to thank God for those in the ministry and pray for them. Philemon 4 says, *I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers,* and verse 5, *Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints.* He's talking to Philemon here. We are to refresh and uplift the

hearts of the saints. We are to encourage those people who are around us. That's one of the lessons we learn from Philemon. Philemon 7 says, *For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.* Paul is talking to Philemon. And verse 20 says, *Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord.* "Refresh me, brother; encourage me by receiving Philemon back into the fold, into your home, as a servant but above all as a brother in Christ."

Well, there are ways brethren can be helped to do what is proper according to this book. The church can order, first of all, a person to do what is right according to Philemon 8: *Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ....* Paul says...*to enjoin thee that which is convenient....* In other words, to do what is right.

We also see that the church can appeal to a person through love. In Philemon 9, it says, *Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.* We can appeal to people to do what's right.

And then we also see that appealing to our brethren for proper action allows Godliness and love to be shown by the one appealing, Philemon 9. We also see that goodness and love can be shown by the one appealed to. Verse 5 says, *Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints.* Paul says love can be seen in and shown by Philemon by the way he treats Onesimus. Philemon 16 says, *Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?*

We also can understand that there can be a challenge to Christians based on their relationship with the Lord and the worth of other Christians.

Do you know the Lord today as your Savior? Paul says in his closing there in Philemon, verse 23 and

24, *There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus; Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers.* And a closing benediction, Philemon 25, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.*

And that's what I want to leave you with today....the grace of the Spirit of Christ. May you ask Him to come into your heart today if you've never trusted Him.

And if you have, may you be living for Him. Trust Him as your Savior, not only to take you to Heaven, but also trust Him to be able to lead your life while living in this world.

Until the next time, may the Lord bless you richly is my prayer.