

Series: Big Truths from Small Books

Philemon: Conversations from Heaven

Scripture Reference: Philemon 8-22

Introduction

People want to know WHY things are happening; Christians want to know WHAT God is doing. Revelation 4:2 *At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne.*

Revelation 5:7 *And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.*

Context

- The story of a runaway slave who longs to be restored to his master.
- Is there another story in the Bible that makes you think of?
- The Prodigal Son has many parallels with this book; just to give you something to think about as we begin this morning.

1. Starting Point (v.8-9)

- Philemon's character is the basis for Paul's reasoning
- God acts according to His character: He is love
- 1 John 4:8 *Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.*
- Illustration: Isaiah 43:1-3 *But now thus says the LORD, He who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you.*
- God could have left everyone to themselves with nothing but the standard of His righteous commands and had that be what people were judged against (and it will be!) but He didn't leave us there. Instead He acted on the basis of His character: LOVE

2. Sent, Separated, Scarred (v.10-16)

- Through love, He sent His Son.
- We are Onesimus. We were the runaways.
- He sent His Son to come get us
- Where we were useless, Christ was completely and abundantly useful to achieve salvation.
- Consider: how much did it actually cost for Jesus to leave heaven and eventually die?
- Isaiah 53:10 *Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.*
- Romans 8:32 *He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?*
- Illustration: a parent and their child
- Illustration: a tiny glimpse through the current situation

- God concerned for slaves-Matthew Henry
- Galatians 3:27-28 *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*
- Galatians 4:7 *So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.*
- Because all this happened we aren't what we once were (v.15-16)

3. Strong Plea (v.10,17)

- Paul makes a strong request for Philemon to receive his servant back (especially since a change has taken place).
- So too now, everything is different since Christ has come, so God tells us, come now to me to receive salvation, it's free.
- 2 Corinthians 5:20-21 *Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*
- Isaiah 55:1-3 *"Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.*
- We have "ruined" our lives through sin and yet He offers reconciliation? What kind of God is this? How great a salvation must this be?

4. Sin Credited (v.18-19)

- Paul tells Philemon that however Onesimus had caused him harm, he (Paul) would repay him (Philemon).
- This is a picture of what the Son said to the Father before He went to the cross and what He says now as our Mediator.
- Heart of the Gospel
- Colossians 2:13-14 *And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.*

5. Simple Restoration (v.22)

- Paul hoped to eventually be with Philemon again, even if it wouldn't be until heaven. But he hoped that through Philemon's obedience, Onesimus and Philemon would be reunited and restored.
- God has made it possible through Christ for us to be restored to fellowship with Him.
- Deuteronomy 30:19 *I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live,*

- Ezekiel 18:32 *For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord God; so turn, and live.*"
- When restoration happens, all of heaven rejoices!
- God gets glory and delights when we are restored to Him and obey, just as Paul would be overjoyed at Philemon's obedience to receive Onesimus (v.20-21)
- He wants our whole heart not just a guest room
- You're going to meet Him one way or the other: in joy or in judgement.
- "Bound in Hell or Free in Heaven" -John MacArthur

Conclusion: the 4 B's of Philemon

Because of the conversations we've heard from heaven...

- Bear Towards Christ (v.7)
- Be Effective (v.6)
- Based in Love (v.9)
- Be Merciful (v.18)