

ONE STORY | ONE SAVIOR - UNIT 7 | LESSON 17




Letters – The Promise Explained Through the KING’S Church

God is a PROMISE Completing God

JESUS as the 1) **PROMISED KING** has 2) **RESCUED** His people through His Perfect Law Keeping Life and Sacrificial, Substitutionary Death on the Cross, whereby 3) **DEFEATING** the enemy of sin and death, and is 4) **RESTORING** them to the PLACE OF REST where Heaven and Earth are rejoined and God reigns and abides 5) so that His people shall be with Him forever for their **JOY**.

“More Than A Bondservant” Philemon 16

¹⁵ For perhaps he was for this reason separated from you for a while, that you would have him back forever, ¹⁶ no longer as a slave, **but more than a slave, a beloved brother**, especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. ¹⁷ If then you regard me a partner, accept him as you would me.

	<p>THE HEAD - To Know the power of the gospel can change an individual and enemies into friends. Q – Who do you know whom the gospel changed?</p>
	<p>THE HEART - To Choose the power of the gospel to change you. Q – What are some ways we change? Where do we go for change that is everlasting?</p>
	<p>THE HAND - To Pray for those who need JESUS ONLY. Q – What are some ways to share the gospel with those who do not know Him?</p>

EMPHASIS

The **EMPHASIS** of this lesson is . . .

The gospel radically changes relationships, not just in the vertical, but also in the horizontal. Because we are now viewed as righteous in Christ and treated as such by the Father, so also are we to view others as righteous in Christ and treat them as such.

“The theological premise is that upon conversion even a slave becomes an equally important part of the body of Christ, the Christian family; the premise is that, in Christ, there is no longer slave nor free (cf. Gal 3:28).”¹

“The theme of Paul’s letter is the power of the gospel to transform individual lives (v. 11) and human relationships (v. 16). Onesimus had experienced that transforming power in his life (“formerly he was useless” but “now he is indeed useful”; v. 11). Paul therefore urged his friend Philemon to form a new relationship with Onesimus, his runaway slave.”²

“The Gospel is the basis for Paul’s outlandish request. If a slave wronged a master and fled, then the master would have every right to reject the slave and even have him imprisoned. That being said, the power of the Gospel is on display in this letter. The element of the Gospel that is highlighted is of being in Christ together. This focus permeates the letter and defines the request of a restored relationship. The narrative of Scripture can be in view where the creation narrative sees humans falling away from union with YHWH. The Gospel restores that relationship and the Cross brings together union with Christ and union with one another.”³

“Paul’s message to Philemon was a simple one: based on the work of love and forgiveness that had been wrought in Philemon’s heart by God, show the same to the escaped and now-believing slave Onesimus.”⁴

LITERARY CONTEXT

“Paul wrote this letter to Philemon, a believer in Colossae who, along with others, was a slave owner (cf. Col 4:1). One of his slaves, Onesimus, had apparently stolen from him (cf. v. 18) and then run away, which under Roman law was punishable by death. But Onesimus met Paul and through his ministry became a Christian (see v. 10). Now he was willing to return to his master, and Paul writes this personal appeal to ask that he be accepted as a Christian brother (see v. 16).”⁵

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

“What Are Some Distinctive Features of This Book?”

Philemon is the shortest and perhaps the most personal of Paul’s epistles. It is a letter addressed to a private individual; as such, it does not include much doctrinal content. Nevertheless, Paul’s plea for Philemon to reconcile with the slave Onesimus illustrates how the doctrines of the gospel apply to daily life—in this case, showing that our relationship with Jesus Christ brings us into a familial relationship with all other followers of Christ and highlighting the importance of mercy and forgiveness.”⁶

- The book of Philemon gives us insight into the social fabric of the New Testament church, especially the relationship between masters and slaves within the same local church.
- There may have been 60,000,000 slaves in the Roman Empire in the first century.
- Philemon is a personal but not a private letter.
- This letter shows how Paul bridged social differences between masters and slaves.
- Philemon and Colossians are associated because they were written by Paul and dispatched by the same messengers.
- Paul does not sponsor slavery and neither does Christianity. He dealt with the social structure of the Roman Empire as it was.⁷

STRUCTURE

From the Letter to Philemon, we can make five observations concerning the power of the gospel in any culture and community.

Let us note five [5] radical changes produced by the gospel in our horizontal relationships as noted in the Letter to Philemon.

- I. First, the gospel makes us family (vv. 10, 16, 17).
 - Child / father (v. 10)
 - More than a bondservant, as a beloved brother (v. 16)
 - If you consider me your partner (v. 17)
- II. Second, the gospel changes us from what we were [in Adam] to what we become [in Christ] (v. 11).
 - Formerly useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me (v. 11)
- III. Third, the gospel puts the “needs” of others above one’s own (vv. 13, 14)
 - I preferred to do nothing without your consent (v. 14). See also Philippians 2:3.
- IV. Fourth, the gospel brings reconciliation and restitution where possible (vv. 17-19).
 - If he has wronged you at all charge that to my account (v. 18). Sin creates debt; grace pays debt [i.e. redemption].
- V. Finally, the gospel brings obedience (v. 21).
 - Confident of your obedience (v. 21). The Implanted Word produces gospel fruit. Obedience is a natural consequence of the implanted Word.

JESUS IN THE TEXT

What Paul requests, Jesus secures. This ‘shadow’ in Philemon comes from the ‘substance’ that is Jesus. Through the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, reconciliation has been secured.

APPLICATION

- What are some things that make you different than others?
- How do you view and treat others who are different than you are?
- How have you changed because of the gospel?

VISUALS | CRAFTS

1. GOLDEN RULE PUZZLE

- Directions: download pdf below; copy; kids color and cut out; kids put the verse in order
- Supplies: paper, crayons, scissors
- Notes: you might want to have baggies for them to put the pieces in when they're done

2. HAVE A bowl of mud that the kids get their hands dirty in. Then have them wash them in another bowl. The gospel is the soap and water that cleans us up.

MEMORY VERSE

¹⁵ For perhaps he was for this reason separated from you for a while, that you would have him back forever, ¹⁶ no longer as a slave, **but more than a slave, a beloved brother**, especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. ¹⁷ If then you regard me a partner, accept him as you would me.

RESOURCES

ENDNOTES

¹ <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/philemon-theology-of.html>

² <https://www.esv.org/resources/esv-global-study-bible/introduction-to-philemon/>

³ An Overview of Philemon, Jacob Michalski, July 4, 2020.

⁴ <https://www.insight.org/resources/bible/the-pauline-epistles/philemon>

⁵ <https://www.biblica.com/resources/scholar-notes/niv-study-bible/intro-to-philemon/>

⁶ <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/new-testament-study-guide-for-home-study-seminary-students/introduction-to-philemon?lang=eng>

⁷ <https://versebyversecommentary.com/books/introduction-to-philemon/>