

Solitary Refinement
Philemon
Week 4: Paul on Being Owned

Opening Question: What is your most prized possession?

Read Philemon

“Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our **beloved fellow worker** and Apphia our sister and Archippus our **fellow soldier**, and the church in your house: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, because I hear of **your love and of the faith** that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, and I pray that **the sharing of your faith may become effective** for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. For I have **derived much joy and comfort** from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you. Accordingly, though **I am bold enough** in Christ to **command you** to do what is required, yet for love’s sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and **now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus**— I appeal to you **for my child, Onesimus**, whose father I became **in my imprisonment**. (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.) I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my **imprisonment for the gospel**, but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your **goodness** might not be by compulsion but of your own accord. 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**. I, Paul, write this with my own hand: **I will repay it**—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self. Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ. Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you. Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.” (Philemon, ESV)

Michael summarized the book like this: “Philemon, a letter to a wronged disciple about a reformed disciple. Returning the offender to the offended to do what he will with the gospel in mind.

The Gospel Changes People

Tell them: Michael reminded us how Paul’s encounter with Jesus changed Paul. It changed his thoughts, his actions and his reactions to the rest of the world.

Ask them to: Pick 2 words to describe your heart before Christ, and then 2 words to describe your heart after Christ.

The gospel changes reactions

Michael said: “Compulsive kindness is not kindness, but we need to give people the chance to do the right thing knowing that God is in control.”

How do we give people the chance to do the right thing?

The gospel changes ownership

God owns it all: “The gospel changes our concept of ownership. We go from possessing people to a possessed people.” How were we purchased? What did that purchase?

How does it affect your heart towards your stuff, your loved ones, your family to think that God owns it all?

TIME FOR APPLICATION

Change our relationships

The world tells us to live conditionally. We give because we get and when we don't get, we don't give, but the gospel changes relationships.

Discuss this statement by Pastor Michael: “The gospel makes every relationship one of discipleship.” What happens when someone goes from stranger to neighbor, neighbor to child, and child to brother or sister?

Who is/was your spiritual father or mother (who disciplined you?) Who are you discipling?

Change our reactions

How does the gospel change our reactions (or how should it?) The fruit of the Spirit is a sign of a changed reactions versus the reactions of the flesh. **Take a look** at Galatians 5:22-23 and discuss how these aspects of the fruit of the Spirit should be present in our reactions; which is the hardest aspect to find in your reactions? What's changed in your reactions in your life pre/post gospel?

We need to change our Economy

I can freely give you what you need because I don't own it anymore. In the economy of God, He owns it all.

Ask: How has the gospel changed your economy? Where or what is hard for you to release your grip?

Discuss how possessions can end up possessing you. How is God leading you to be possessed by Him?