

PAUL'S LIFE AND TEACHINGS

Lesson 33

Paul's Letter to Philemon

Have you ever felt the need to try and convince someone to do something you thought important? Think through the times you have been either the persuader or the one that another has tried to persuade. What was the technique used for persuasion? Was it cold, clear logic? Was it an emotional appeal? Did someone try to frighten you into agreement? Was there some threat involved or the use of some emotional manipulation?

As a trial lawyer, I live a professional life of persuasion. I have seen trials where each of the above approaches were used in varying degrees and with varying success. It is always interesting to see how lawyers try to convince a jury to follow the attorney's lead and give a sought after decision.

One of my favorite efforts came in a trial in a small Texas town where I was the principal trial lawyer for a fellow who had been hurt in a boat rescue operation. I was convinced that the defendants in the case had not been honest with the jury, but had riddled their testimony with inaccurate stories. On the jury sat the small town Baptist preacher. I knew he was a preacher. The judge knew he was a preacher; and the jury knew he was a preacher. I believe several of the jurors attended his church!

Since we all knew the preacher was likely the foreperson of the jury, I directed some of my closing argument to him, thinking if I persuaded him, I could more easily persuade the rest of the jury. I began my closing argument:

“Ladies and gentlemen, you have heard the expression of ‘preaching to the choir.’”

Heads nodded in affirmation. I continued,

“I sort of feel like this is my opportunity to ‘preach to the preacher!’”

Several people chuckled, including the preacher. After a pause, I said,

“The text for my closing argument comes from the Old Testament prophet Micah, who in the sixth chapter, the eighth verse asked the question, ‘What does the Lord require of you?’ Micah then answered his own question explaining, ‘To do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God.’”

Several murmured approval. I explained,

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“That is your job, ladies and gentlemen, *to do justice*. And as you do justice, as you hold these two young men accountable, you are likely performing an act of mercy at the same time. For these men are both under 25, and they need to know they cannot make it through life making up stories to escape responsibilities. This is something we teach our children; it is certainly something we hope they know before they hit their twenties!”

I then launched into the facts to justify my claim that these two had been less than fully forthright with their testimony. After my closing argument (my effort to persuade), the defendants’ lawyer arose and moved in front of the jury to begin his persuasive effort. The lawyer must have thought that I was some legal snake oil salesman who had memorized some obscure passage of scripture so that I would come off as a man of devotion and scripture. This lawyer decided to take me on and put me in my place! He began his closing argument,

“I am amazed, ladies and gentlemen, that Mr. Lanier would stand before you and try to justify this lawsuit by using the Bible. Mr. Lanier does not know what he is talking about! He has quoted the wrong passage of scripture! The passage of scripture that applies in this case comes from the writings of the apostle John! The apostle John wrote, in the letter of First Corinthians...”

At which point, I loudly stood up, drawing all eyes to me, as I said,

“Objection, your honor, the apostle John did not write First Corinthians. That letter was written by the apostle Paul!”

Judge Sklar, himself a devoted church going man, leaned forward into his microphone saying,

“The objection is sustained! It was the apostle Paul, not the apostle John!”

At this point, the preacher on the jury started laughing, the other jurors laughed, the bailiff laughed, and in fact, most everyone in the courtroom laughed, save the defense lawyer and his two clients (I know, bad pun on the word “save”!)

This was a persuasive effort that consisted of logic, a sense of right and wrong, and the credibility of the speakers. We turn this week to another persuader, the apostle Paul himself! Paul’s persuasive effort is the one chapter book of Philemon.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

As we study this small letter, it does us well to consider the main people involved in the letter:

Philemon: He is the one to whom Paul wrote, and as such, is one of the two principle characters in the letter. In verse one, Paul writes, “to Philemon our beloved fellow worker.” This tells us that Philemon worked in some position that enabled him to take off the time necessary to help in the evangelistic work of the church. Paul uses this phrase to denote those who were workers within the church in some outward role that built up the fellowship.¹ We can fairly assume that Philemon was well to do because he seems to have had a number of guest rooms in his home,² had a home large enough for a house church’s meetings (verse 2), and was a slave owner. Some scholars suspect that Philemon was a businessman of some type because Paul uses the language of business as he tells Philemon to “charge that to my account” (v. 18). Because the church met in his home, scholars see him also as likely the leader of that house church.³ This was a church that most scholars place in Colossae, not only out of tradition, but also in recognition that Onesimus (see below) was “one of you” as Paul wrote to the Colossians in Col. 4:9.

Dunn also believes a fair appraisal of the Greek text leads one to understand that Philemon, “traveled from his home (presumably on business) to where he encountered Paul, most likely in not too far distant Ephesus” and that “He had been converted through Paul’s ministry, though not necessarily in an immediately direct way...and was close to Paul.”⁴

Onesimus: He was the runaway slave that belonged to Philemon, and the second principal character. Onesimus had wronged Philemon in some way (v. 18) and had run away (v. 12ff). Whether Onesimus had actually stolen from Philemon⁵ or was considered a thief by virtue of running away (since he belonged as “property”

¹ Paul uses the same description for Prisca and Aquila, Urbanus and Timothy in Romans 16 and 1 Thessalonians 3:2. In his Corinthians letters, Paul describes Apollos, Silvanus and Titus with as “fellow workers” (1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 1:24; 8:23) and others in Philippians and Colossians.

² In verse 22, Paul asks Philemon to prepare “a guest room for me” as opposed to “the guest room” which would have been the more likely Greek phrasing if there were only one guest room. See James Dunn, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary – The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, (Eerdmans 1996) at 346.

³ See Dunn at 301.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ “Most likely ... robbery or embezzlement of funds entrusted to him” Dunn at 303.

to Philemon) is unclear. Similarly unclear is how Onesimus and Paul happened to come together in Rome. Dunn believes it likely that Onesimus sought Paul out to clear up a conflict with Philemon. The more standard view is that it was simply God's hand that the two found each other in Rome. There is no doubt that a runaway slave would get "lost" much easier in Rome, a city of over a million people, so it makes sense that after running away, Onesimus would make for Rome. We do know that Onesimus left Philemon an unbeliever, but was converted while in Paul's presence. We also know that Onesimus, once converted, made quite an impression on Paul as a man of ability and service.

Timothy: While not a principal character, we can gather that Timothy was the actual writer of the letter that Paul was dictating ("Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother" v. 1). This same verse also lets us know that Philemon likely knew Timothy.

Apphia: Apphia was likely Philemon's wife.⁶ Paul addresses the letter to her as well as Philemon indicating that she likely had some role in the care or ownership of Onesimus. Paul calls her "Apphia our sister," a standard greeting for her as a Christian, although scholars admit that it is possible she was truly Philemon's sister who might have managed the household for him.⁷

Archippus: He was the final addressee of Paul's letter, indicating that he was likely part of the same family of Philemon, probably a son. Paul calls Archippus a "fellow soldier" (v. 2). "Fellow soldier" is a rare description for Paul, likely indicating the strong work Archippus did within the church. Other than here, it is used only in reference to Epaphroditus in Philippians 2:25. Paul encouraged Archippus in his letter to the Colossian church at large writing, "And say to Archippus, 'See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord'" in Col. 4:17.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE LETTER

We are reminded when studying Philemon that slavery was a longstanding institution in the first century Roman world. Slaves were from most every race. Slaves were typically children who were abandoned at birth, captured enemies in battle, offspring of other slaves, or people who became slaves over debts they could not pay off. Up to one third of the Roman population were slaves.

⁶ Lightfoot notes, "It is a safe inference from the connexion of the names that Apphia was the wife of Philemon" citing a number of inscriptions where this method of identifying a wife following the identification of the husband is found. J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (London: Macmillan and Co. 1886) 8th Ed. at 304.

⁷ See Dunn at 312.

Slaves were written up as “live chattel” or a “live instrument.” Slaves had zero rights under the law; no more than a shovel or hammer has rights. They were not even allowed to marry.⁸

Slave owners had absolute rights over slaves. They could treat them however they wished, including putting them to death.

As we look at slavery in the Roman world, we do well to remember that it was different than the Hebrew slavery allowed under the Jewish law. Hebrew slavery, while bearing the same name, was a much different type. Jews were never to forget that they themselves had been slaves in Egypt. Therefore, Hebrew slaves were considered members of the “owners” family with religious rights as well as social rights. They were protected from tyranny and violence. If they were Jews, then they were given liberty after 6 years of service.

As mentioned earlier, however, slavery in the Roman world was vastly different. As we consider that Paul wrote in the A.D. 60-62 time frames, it is useful to read from the Roman historian Tacitus who wrote of an incident that occurred in 61 A.D. Writing just 48 years later (109 A.D.), Tacitus recorded:

Shortly afterwards, the city-prefect, Pedanius Secundus, was murdered by one of his own slaves; either because he had been refused emancipation after Pedanius had agreed to the price or [out of jealousy of a love in which he could not win over his master's rivalry.] Be that as it may, when the whole of the domestics who had been resident under the same roof ought, in accordance with the old custom, to have been led to execution...⁹

This was major news in Rome. A debate was held in the Roman senate and the decision to carry out the penalty was upheld. All 400 slaves were killed en masse regardless of age, gender, or even knowledge of the crime. We do not know if this happened before or after Paul wrote Philemon, but it is interesting to compare Paul’s decisions and actions in Philemon with that of the Roman Senate!

THE LETTER

Philemon is like none of the letters we have studied thus far. Philemon is a personal letter from the heart of Paul to the heart of Philemon (and Apphia and

⁸ Lightfoot gives a good background to Roman slavery in his commentary on Philemon. See at 309f.

⁹ Tacitus, *Annals* Book XIV sec. 42. Loeb Edition, translated by John Jackson (Harvard University Press 1937) at 175.

Archippus) concerning one man: Onesimus. Of all Paul's writings, this is the only strictly private letter preserved for us today.¹⁰

The letter sets forth Paul's request that Philemon and his family welcome Onesimus back into their household. As set forth earlier, Onesimus was a runaway slave who came to know Jesus through Paul in Rome. Paul is sending the runaway back home to restore him to Philemon, the owner.

In studying the letter, we have several nuggets to gain from the letter itself. We will reach beyond the letter into church history as well for some reasonable conclusions that we can consider adding to our appreciation of the letter.

Paul writes as "Paul and Timothy" similar to what we see in many of his letters. But, here is a difference. Normally, Paul speaks in his letters as "we..." In Philemon, though, Paul uses the first person and writes the personal "I" over and over again. What Paul has to say is personal, extremely personal.

While in most of Paul's letters he terms himself an apostle, in this letter it does not happen. Here, Paul is not "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus" as he identified himself in the companion letter of Colossians. Instead, he is "Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus." Paul is writing on behalf of a runaway slave. Paul does not set out his apostolic office and authority. Instead, Paul writes of himself as a prisoner, not of an earthly captor or owner, but of Jesus Christ.

Paul addresses the letter to "Philemon our beloved fellow worker and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church that meets in your house" (1-2). As set out earlier, Philemon was the owner of the slave Onesimus, Apphia, most likely, Philemon's wife, and Archippus probably Philemon's son. We know from Colossians that Archippus was likely serving the Laodician church.¹¹

Paul writes warmly. Calling Philemon a fellow worker is high praise from the Apostle to the Gentiles. No doubt to the extent that Philemon's home served as the center for a house church, Philemon earned the moniker.

¹⁰ Later, we will study the Timothy letters and Titus. They are all addressed to individuals but unlike Philemon, they cover issues of church governance and discipline where Philemon covers strictly a personal matter.

¹¹ Colossians 4:17 follows on the heels of verse 16 where Paul instructs the Colossians to exchange letters with the Laodicians, a church 10 miles away. In verse 17, Paul urges Archippus to "complete the work" he has received from the Lord. Many scholars consider the comment in 17 following 16 as indicative that Archippus was serving the Laodicean church.

Paul wishes “grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” The “you” here is plural, reflecting Paul’s greetings to all three family members. But the letter pivots the attention after this verse. The remaining “you”s in the letter are mostly singular. Paul writes the remaining letter very personally to Philemon.

Paul begins his attention to Philemon with thanksgiving and prayer. “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” (4-5). We already see Paul’s delicate way of dealing with the slavery issue that forms the core of this letter. Paul is writing to reunite a slave (Onesimus) who is now a Christian with Philemon, his owner. Oh so delicately, Paul begins with thanksgiving for Philemon’s love for ALL the saints (which will now include Onesimus!).

Paul continues, “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.” Paul emphasizes the importance not only of our relationship with Christ, but also how we demonstrate that faith to those around us. Can you imagine Philemon reading this letter in his home, to the house church meeting there, handed to him by the very slave that had run away? As people watch Philemon read the letter, perhaps with the runaway still in their presence, Philemon reads the holy Paul’s prayer that those who watch Philemon would see Philemon’s faith actively shining “with the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ.” Not every slave and good thing we have materially, but every good thing we have in Christ.

Paul’s delicate touch continues, “For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.” Again, powerful words being read with the return of a runaway slave, now turned saint, present -- Philemon’s love refreshing the heart, even of Onesimus?!

With this background, Paul now turns to the key for his writing, a personal plea for Onesimus. In verse 8, Paul writes, “Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required...” Paul is not ordering Philemon to do anything. Paul is not invoking his apostolic authority. Paul does not say, “thus saith the Lord.” Paul merely asks, allowing Philemon to make the godly decision, for his “favor.” Paul says, “yet for love’s sake I prefer to appeal to you -- I, Paul, an old man¹² and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus.” Paul reemphasizes his position as a prisoner belonging to Christ as he seeks his favor.

¹² Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich give the meaning of Paul’s word “old man” (*presbutes* πρεσβύτερος) citing several sources for the proposition that it dates Paul between 50 and 56 years old. Their main source is the Jewish writer Philo, born around B.C. 20 and writing a few decades before

“I appeal to you for my child Onesimus.” Onesimus was not Paul’s literal son; he was Philemon’s literal slave, and Paul’s son in the faith. For Paul adds, “whose father I became in my imprisonment.” Paul was involved in the rebirth of Onesimus while Paul was in chains in Rome. (Remember Paul was under arrest and under 24 hour guard, but was in a rented house and able to receive visitors as well as go out into the marketplace.)

As mentioned earlier, we should not be surprised that a runaway slave would go to Rome, even from Colossae. Indeed, Rome as the capital with a huge populace would be the easiest place for a runaway slave to get lost in the masses. But even in Rome, God has his eye out on those for his kingdom. Onesimus, in ways we are not told, came under the influence of Paul and found a real Lord, as he was running to escape from just such a relationship on earth.

In verse 11, Paul writes a pun; again in the same delicate way he has written the whole letter. Speaking of the slave Onesimus, Paul writes, “formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.” The pun is off of the name “Onesimus” (Ὀνήσιμος), which comes from the Greek verb (ὀνίνημι) meaning “profit, benefit or help.” Onesimus’s name literally means “useful.” So referencing Mr. Useful, Paul writes that “formerly he was *useless* but now he has become *useful*” both to Paul and Philemon.

What made Onesimus finally true to his name and useful? The transforming work of Jesus Christ! In full confidence of how faith controlled Philemon’s actions, Paul sends Onesimus back to the one who could rightfully punish the runaway with death. Paul writes, “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 by your own accord” (12-14).

Paul’s words are again very delicate. Paul all but asks for Philemon to grant this runaway freedom, when the world would dictate the harshest of punishments.

Paul. Philo quotes Hippocrates as saying there are “seven ages, those of the little boy, the boy, the lad, the young man, the man, the elderly man, the old man and that these are measured by multiples of seven” hence the little boy is birth to 7, the boy is 7 – 14, the lad 14-21, the young man 21-28, the man is 28-49 (“seven times seven”), the elderly man, then, 50-56 (“up to seven times eight”) and after that, an old man. Philo (and arguably Hippocrates) uses *presbutes* for the “elderly man.” See Philo, *On the Creation*, section 105 (XXXVI) translated by Colson and Whitaker, (Loeb Classical Library 1929) at 87. Dunn also gives additional cites for the proposition the term could also mean a man in his 60’s. Dunn at 327.

But, Paul does not ask. Paul gives Philemon the chance to do the right thing on his own initiative. Paul sees reason behind the escape that exceeds the mind set, certainly of Onesimus when running, but also Philemon who discovered the slave missing. Paul writes, “For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever.” While Onesimus was “dear” to Paul, he should be even dearer to Philemon, “you might have him back forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother – especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh [as a man] and in the Lord” (16). Paul calls Onesimus a “*beloved* brother.” It surely did not go unnoticed by Philemon that Paul uses the very same description for Onesimus as he did for Philemon at the letter’s start! “Paul...To Philemon our *beloved* fellow worker” (v. 1).

With that build up, Paul goes a bit further in his request of Philemon. Paul writes, “So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me.” You have to figure at this point, Onesimus will not only not be put to death, but probably not beaten either! What about restitution? No doubt Onesimus took food at least, if not much more when he hit the road. Paul covers that as well. Paul writes, “If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account” (18). There should be little doubt that Philemon was not going to be issuing a bill to saint Paul!

Paul writes his salutation in his own hand (19) adding a last significant “suggestion.” Paul writes a pun once more asking for a “benefit” from Philemon in the Lord (20). The Greek Paul uses for benefit is the same basic word as Onesimus (ὀναίμην). Paul doesn’t come right out and ask for the granting of freedom for Onesimus, but leaves no doubt as to what should be done! Wanting Philemon to welcome Onesimus as Paul himself, and asking for a forgiveness of all debts, Paul adds, “Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that *you will do even more than I say.*” (21). Then, as if putting a cherry on top of a sundae, Paul explains, “Prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you...” (22).

After this, Paul concludes with the letter with additional greetings from others with him.

ANALYSIS AND HISTORICAL RESPONSE

F. F. Bruce analyzes the book around three questions: (1) What is Paul asking for? (2) Did he get it? (3) Why was the letter preserved? Each of these questions well deserves and answer.

(1) *What is Paul asking for?*

Paul asks for Onesimus's freedom, without punishment or payment. Paul does not order it, nor does Paul clearly ask for it. Paul lays out the case for it, with gentle prodding and future accountability. Paul allows Philemon to reach the conclusion of how one Christian Brother should treat another brother, even though the other is in his debt. This is delicately and beautifully done.

(2) *Did he get it?*

We do not know with 100% certainty for we are nowhere told. But can there really be any doubt as to what a fellow worker of Paul's would do when reading a letter like this? What rejoicing must have come from the liberation of Onesimus. Similarly, how hard must this once useless runaway have truly worked once set free by love proceeding from faith in Jesus Christ.

(3) *Why was the letter preserved?*

Again, this we do not know for certain. But there are some interesting historical facts that might shed some illumination. Conjecture is that Onesimus was late teens or early twenties when he ran away. (It does seem fair to assume that, absent absurdly poor treatment from a master - highly unlikely from what we know of Philemon- a slave who had long been in service would not run away.) Add to this age consideration that Onesimus likely continued to be of benefit to Philemon as Paul spoke, working in the church either directly in Colossae and even at some point in the mother church of the region in Ephesus.

We do have writings of the Apostolic Father Ignatius, who was the Bishop of Syrian Antioch.¹³ Just 45 to 50 years after Onesimus is freed (a date which would likely make Onesimus 65 or 70 if still alive), Ignatius writes to the Ephesian church while on his way to Rome to be thrown to wild beasts. The Ephesian church is presided over by a Bishop named Onesimus! Now, certainly Onesimus was a common slave name in the time period, but how odd a slave (or former slave) would rise to the Bishop position in the major church of the region!

In the first six chapters of Ignatius's letter, the Bishop Onesimus is mentioned by name 14 times. In this same part of the Ephesian letter, Ignatius echoes language from Philemon that certainly shows his familiarity with the letter. In 2:2, Ignatius even reiterates Paul's pun from verse 20 of Philemon. Paul wrote, "I want some

¹³ See Church History lesson 6 available for download at <http://www.biblical-literacy.com/lessons/CHL/Handouts/CHL06-Martyrs-Part3-Ignatius.pdf>

benefit (or “use”) from you” with “benefit” being the word *onaimen* from the same root as Onesimus. Ignatius calls out the Bishop Onesimus by name in 2:1 of his letter to the Ephesians and then immediately follows by saying, “may I always have *onaimen* in you” using the same word/pun.

One particularly curious aspect to this possible identification of Onesimus involves the collecting of Paul’s letters. Goodspeed and a number of scholars believe that the body of Paul’s letters was first put together at Ephesus toward the end of the first century.¹⁴ That is when Onesimus would have been Bishop, and most likely, the overseer of the collection. Might that not shed additional light on why Paul’s letter that generated Onesimus’s freedom was saved and added to the collection?

Whether such reasonable inferences are true, the Holy Spirit certainly saw fit to include in scripture this delightful letter demonstrating Christian love and life in a fallen world.

POINTS FOR HOME

1. “Though I am bold enough in Christ to command you...yet for love’s sake, I prefer to appeal to you” (v. 8-9).

The power of love runs throughout Paul’s letter to Philemon and Paul’s teachings in general. Love is what kept Paul from being merely a noisy gong (1 Cor 13:1). Paul uses love to persuade Philemon to do what is right. Philemon, the “beloved” doing right by the “beloved” Onesimus -- just as Paul had heard and thanked God for Philemon’s “love” toward Jesus and the saints. Paul had derived “much joy” and “comfort” from Philemon’s “love.” The power of love sent Jesus to the cross (Jn 3:16) and calls us today to take up our cross and follow him, seeking to live for Christ and his church rather than any particular rights of our own. May we be known as people of genuine caring and compassion, as people of love!

2. “Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me” (v. 11).

“Useless” – even though his name was “useful” – such was the life of Onesimus before God’s saving light illuminated his heart and life. In his salvation, came his true life as a benefit to Paul, the Philemon, and to the

¹⁴ See C. Leslie Mitton, *The Formation of the Pauline Corpus of Letters*, (London: the Epworth Press 1955) at 44ff.

kingdom of God. 1400 years later Luther would comment, “We are all God’s Onesimuses.” Luther was right. While we are made (and named) to be useful to God and his kingdom, our usefulness is never realized until we come into direct relationship with him. We then receive from God the blessed reception as sons, not slaves. We walk in relationship with him in love, not legal rules and strictures. This is our freedom to then really serve him and follow his guidance more fully than we ever could otherwise.

3. “Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say” (21).

Consider the persuasion of Paul! A. H. Drysdale commented, “I dare be bold to say there is not extant in all the monuments of ancient and modern oratory a more perfect pattern of persuasive eloquence than is this short Epistle of St Paul.”¹⁵ Yet, look at how Paul achieved his persuasion. He never pulled down the spirit of Philemon, nor did he shame him. Rather than stoke any anger that Philemon may have had from the theft of the runaway slave, Paul places things into their eternal perspective and calls on the noblest character of Philemon.

For what is at the root of Paul’s call to Philemon? It is to forgive Onesimus and to treat Onesimus as Philemon himself would like to be treated. Paul sets Philemon to living the most basic of the commands of Jesus Christ. John Chrysostom¹⁶ preached from this very text in the 300’s urging in his “points for home” (*i.e.*, at the end of his sermon), “Let us therefore in every way war against the devil. I have said nothing difficult, nothing burdensome. Forgive him that has injured thee, have pity on the needy, humble thy soul.”¹⁷

¹⁵ Rev. A. H. Drysdale, *The Epistle of St Paul to Philemon, A Devotional Commentary* (London: The Religious Tract Society 1906) at 12.

¹⁶ See church History Literacy lesson 30.

¹⁷ Chrysotom, *Homilies on Philemon*, 1.