A Comprehensive Appeal

Philemon 8-19

Introduction:

He who would have friends…Prov. 18:24

“A man (who would have) friends ﻿﻿must himself be friendly, but there is a friend *who* sticks closer than a brother.”

Friends don’t come by osmosis, there are prerequisites. Friendliness produces friends.

Paul had his moments - Acts 15:36 -- He separated from Barnabas because of John Mark. But, Paul was reconciled with both of them:

John Mark – Col. 4:10﻿ -- Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him.

Barnabas – 1 Cor. 9:6 – “Or *is it* only Barnabas and I ﻿﻿*who* have no right to refrain from working?”

Even if Paul was wrong in this case, toward the end of his ministry he was the soul of tact. He was “walking on egg shells” to keep from telling Philemon what to do. He approaches him along three lines of argument:

Necessity, Responsibility, Liability

I. Alone the Line of Necessity – 8-13

A. Paul Gives His Rights - 8

“Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting,”

Paul was an Apostle – (#13) – the Apostle to these Gentiles. We need to know who we are and what rights we have. We should be confident in who we are in Christ. At the same time, we must stress that our rights are “in Christ” I am nothing; He is everything.

B. Paul Gives-up His Rights – 9-13

1. In Favor of Higher Ground - 9

“yet for love’s sake I rather appeal *to you*— being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ”

Aged: He was an old man of 57. The average life expectancy was 50-60 (Wikipedia) Paul lived another 5 years – 62

Prisoner: {Not of Rome or Jerusalem} of Jesus.

2. In Favor of Higher Gains – 10-11

a. I Gained a New Son – 10

“I appeal to you for my son ﻿﻿Onesimus, whom I have begotten”

Probably Paul led him to faith in Christ, *“while* in my chains,”

Paul didn’t have many one on one evangelistic opportunities in prison. If I have no more contact with him, we have had a good relationship.

b. You Gained a New Slave - 11

“who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me.”

The greatest gain went to Philemon. He receives his slave back with - interest.

The word ﻿“Onesimus” means “useful”. Paul uses a literary devise called. Paronomasia - a play on words. We use a much shorter word for the same devise - pun.

Paul uses Greek word, χρηστοs. Onesimus the (ἄχρηστον) unprofitable – now both to you and to me (εὔχρηστον) profitable.

3. In Favor of Higher Goals – 12-13

a. For Philemon: Receiving or Not Receiving - 12

“I am sending him ﻿﻿back. You therefore receive him, that is, my own ﻿﻿heart,”

Philemon could mistreat him or even kill him.

b. For Paul: Retaining or Not Retaining – 13

“whom I wished to keep with me, that on your behalf he might minister to me in my chains for the gospel.”

Paul wanted to keep him. He is going to serve someone, why not Paul who is the one who turned him around? But Paul chose to forgo his desires.

II. Along the Line of Responsibility – 14-17

A. The Duty of Responsibility – Legal Restoration – 14

“But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, ﻿that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary.”

If Paul kept him, he has made Philemon’s decision for him. But, as it is, Philemon has a choice. Paul may not get his way, but that is the risk of tact.

B. The Responsibility of Onesimus - Life Redemption – 15

“For perhaps he departed for a while for this *purpose,* that you might receive him forever,”

His life has changed. Out of gratitude he should serve, not only his human master, but more so his spiritual Master, Jesus

C. The Responsibility of Philemon – Love Relationship – 16-17

1. The Negative – 16a

“no longer as a slave”

Legally, he may still claim that Onesimus is still his property. But human laws are not the ultimate law.

2. The Positive – 16b

“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.”

He now is more than a slave, to Paul and to Philemon - to the flesh and to the Lord

3. The Superlative – 17

“If then you count me as a partner, receive him as *you would* me.”

He goes from, “no longer a slave” To “much more than a slave” Now to the same as Paul. How great is that??

IV. Along the Line of Liability – 18-19

A. What was Owed to Philemon – 18-19a

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“But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account. I, Paul, am writing with my own ﻿﻿hand. I will repay”

How is great is this? You don’t lose a thing. Whatever he stole – Paul will pay. Whatever time he was away- Paul will pay. Just put that on my account.

This is a good non-spiritual picture of Imputation. We owed God a tremendous debt. We had no way to pay it. On the cross Jesus said (in effect), “Whatever he (or she) owes you,

put it on my account, I will pay.” And He did,

2 Corinthians 5:21.

“For ﻿﻿He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become ﻿﻿the righteousness of God in Him.”

*“I owed a debt I could not pay; He paid a debt He did not owe.”*

The Father did this only by the Son’s willingness

*Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—*

*In the volume of the book it is written of Me—*

*To do Your will, O God.’ ”*

Paul is putting himself into debt with Philemon He is saying, put that on the debit side of my page in your ledger.

B. What was Owed by Philemon – 19b

“not to mention to you that you owe me even your own self besides.”

Paul brings the iron fist in at this point. But he put on the velvet glove. Now he brings up credit side of his page in the ledger. While you’re there, check on how much credit I have.