Paid In Full!

Prepared by Nathan L Morrison for Sunday October 27th, 2019

Text: Philemon 1-25

# Intro

1. When we think of the phrase, “Paid in Full,” what do we think of?
   1. Bills! Our mortgages, car payments, credit card debt, loans, etc…
   2. How much more joyful should we be if it is our freedom?
2. This is the story of a man who committed crimes worthy of death who came into contact with another man who paid his debt and set him free!
3. The letter to Philemon is one of the most personal of Paul’s writing, if not the most personal.
4. How we love to hear those three words, “Paid in full!”

# Philemon *(Str. G5371: “Friendly” – from G5368 phileo: be a friend)*

1. Philemon is a “beloved brother & fellow worker” with Paul – vs. 1
   1. In good company as a fellow worker with Paul – vss. 23-24
   2. His name means “friendly, affectionate,” and apparently he was true to his name because Paul describes him as “our beloved brother (NASB) / friend (NKJV) and fellow worker.”
2. Philemon hosts the church in his house (very commendable!) – vss. 1-3
   1. Most likely in Colossae (Col. 4:9: Onesimus was one of their own; Epaphras, who was a fellow prisoner with Paul was also a member at Colossae – Col. 4:12; Philemon 1:23-24)
   2. Letter also addressed to Archippus. Because of Paul’s admonition to him in Col. 4:17 to fulfill the ministry from God he may have been an elder or the preacher at the church in Philemon’s home. In either case, Paul included him as a recipient of the letter, possibly so that Archippus would read the letter with Philemon and encourage him to take Paul’s advice!
3. Philemon is praised for his love & faith – vss. 4-7
   1. Paul gives a glowing account of Philemon’s love for the brethren.
   2. Paul mentions that other believers are refreshed by Philemon’s love for the believers.
   3. He is a man who loves Christ and all God’s children.
   4. We get a good picture of the character of Philemon.
4. Philemon was a faithful saint and Paul calls upon him in faith & love to do the right thing!

## Onesimus *(Str. G3682: “Useful”)*

1. Onesimus is Philemon’s runaway slave – *vss. 8-16*
   1. Paul could justifiably say to Philemon, “Now, my brother, it is your duty as a believer to forgive and restore this runaway, and that's exactly what I'm telling you to do.”
   2. Paul could have ordered him to do it, and Philemon would no doubt have obeyed. But that would have been a hollow victory in this case.
   3. He leaves the choice up to Philemon, to do as his namesake implies: be friendly! Show brotherly love!
2. Onesimus, once a useless slave, but now as his name implies, is useful! – vs. 11
   1. Under Roman law a runaway/disobedient slave could be killed if caught.
   2. Paul is sending this runaway slave back to his master! (must have been a scary thing to do for Onesimus!)
   3. Paul housed Onesimus and sheltered him when the slave ran to Rome. While with Paul, he was converted *(Philemon 1:10, 16).*
   4. Paul was a prisoner (1:1) and knew what physical chains were like.
   5. By the time Philemon reached the name of his derelict slave in this letter, he was completely disarmed. Imagine his surprise when he learned that the “scoundrel” had been converted and, even more surprising, had been led to Christ through Paul, the prisoner!
   6. Through his obedience to the gospel Onesimus was set free from sin (spiritual bondage – Rom. 6:16-17), and now Paul seeks his physical release!
   7. Paul sends him back to Philemon to deliver this message personally, and along with Tychicus to deliver the epistle to the Colossians (*Col. 4:7-9) – Possible the church at Colossae met in Philemon’s home (Col. 4:17).*
3. Paul wanted to keep Onesimus with him in Rome but wanted Philemon to have the chance to do the right thing and free him by his own choice – vss. 12-14
   1. He also wanted Onesimus to make reconciliation by returning to his master.
   2. Onesimus may have run away with something of Philemon’s (theft) or destroyed something as he ran away – vs. 18
4. Onesimus returns not as a slave but as a “beloved brother” – vss. 15-17
   1. Paul also makes mention in *Vs. 15*, that it was God’s providence that he should run away, for out of it a soul was saved.
   2. Paul tells Philemon to receive him back as he would receive Paul!
5. So Onesimus ran away, came to Paul as a slave and fugitive, and returns home a fellow brother in Christ and a free man.
6. *How did he return a free man?*

# Paul’s Promise To Philemon

1. Paul appeals to Philemon to accept Onesimus not just as a brother, but as he would Paul himself – vs. 17
2. Paul says if Onesimus wronged Philemon in any way before he left, to charge it to his own account! – vss. 18-19
   1. He takes the debt of Onesimus on himself.
   2. Paul sends Onesimus bearing this note, or bill as we would call it, stamped with “Paid In Full!”
   3. Paul says he will pay it, whatever is owed!
3. He reaffirms his confidence in Philemon’s faith and love by saying that he knows he will do more than what Paul even asked for – vs. 20-21
   1. He wasn’t just buttering him up earlier; he was reminding him of who he was: a faithful saint and fellow worker with Paul.
   2. He also reminds him that he too is a debtor who owed Paul – v*s. 19*
4. Paul sends back a formerly useless runaway slave to his master bearing a note saying, “Paid in full!”

# Paid In Full

1. Does this all sound familiar? Do we see how Paul imitated Christ here (I Cor. 11:1)?
2. Jesus told a parable in the book of Matthew.
   1. *Mt. 18:23-35:* Parable of the slave who was forgiven a large debt, then went out and showed no mercy to a fellow slave who owed him far less.
   2. Paul learned from the slave in this story who did not forgive his fellow slave.
3. We are all debtors to God and slaves to sin…
   1. Jn. 8:34: Those who practice sin are slaves to sin.
   2. Rom. 3:21-26: We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.
4. …but in Jesus, our debt is: Paid In Full!
   1. I Cor. 6:19-20: We are not our own, we were bought!
   2. I Pet. 1:18-19: The price was Christ’s blood. Paid in full with His own blood!
   3. I Pet. 2:21-25: He bore our sins for us that we might live. Paid in full!
   4. Jesus paid the ransom and set us free.
   5. We are the slaves in the parable: when we do not forgive as we have been forgiven (Col. 3:13; Eph. 4:32), we are guilty as that slave was guilty & subject to the same punishment!
5. Paul practiced what he preached, “Be imitators of me as I am of Christ” (I Cor. 11:1)
   1. Christ took on our debt of sin, freed us from the wrath of God, and through His blood purchased us.
   2. Paul had compassion on a fugitive slave, taught him the gospel, and bought his freedom by offering up himself as security.
6. Paid in full! What a thought we can all rejoice over!

# Conclusion

1. This is a story of our lives and has three parts to it: Onesimus, Philemon, and Paul.
2. **Sometimes we are like Onesimus**:
   1. A slave to our sins.
   2. Fugitive from God.
   3. Often hurt the ones we love.
   4. And like Onesimus, need to take courage to go and be confronted by our sins.
   5. Right the wrongs we have committed.
   6. Ask for forgiveness.
3. **Sometimes we are like Philemon**:
   1. When wronged it is a natural tendency to get angry and stay mad, hard to forgive.
   2. We need to forgive when asked, to grant mercy.
   3. We need to see and treat them as a “beloved brother,” or “beloved sister.”
   4. We also need to remember that we are debtors to God.
   5. Christ paid our debt, so we are to forgive one another *(Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13).*
4. **And sometimes we are like Paul**:
   1. We may know of someone who has sinned and may have caused hurt to another.
   2. We may need to remind them to take courage and do the right thing: confront the person they sinned against and ask for forgiveness, and make amends.
   3. We may know of someone who has been wronged and need to remind them of their character and to forgive as Christ forgave *(Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13).*
   4. We may need to help someone out when they need it (Luke 14:13-14: Help those in need, especially if they can’t repay you!)
   5. Paul’s role didn’t end there: Onesimus, as a former slave on the run, may not have had the means to make it right with Philemon, so Paul went the extra step, exemplifying Christ, and paid the slave’s debt.
   6. *I Cor. 11:1:* Paul imitated Christ by putting himself up as security.
5. The 4th part in all this is Jesus: They were obedient to Him in that Paul was seeing to it that the wrath spoken of in that parable *(Mt. 18:23-35)* would not fall on these two men whom he loved as brothers. God was glorified.
6. This letter is a story of our life as we each take on these different roles in various forms in our relationships throughout our lives.
7. It is a story of Christian living: repenting and forgiving.
8. We are all fellow debtors, and the price for our sins has been paid in full by Jesus on the cross!
9. If you are not a child of God, you are still a slave and a fugitive from God.
   1. Onesimus had to come to Paul in Rome to gain his freedom, so you must come to Christ for your freedom and to see God. *Jn. 14:6: “No one comes to the Father but thru Me.”* Repent of your sins & be baptized.
10. If you are a child of God with sin in your life, you need to get rid of it, repent of the wrongs you have committed, take courage to face your responsibilities, and you will be received in love and compassion.
    1. As Onesimus came before Philemon with his debt paid in full so you too can stand before God on the Judgment Day as your debt is charged against you, and have Jesus stamp it “Paid in Full.”
11. Whatever your requests, make them known ***NOW*** while together we stand and sing!