

“Transformation”

Philemon 15-17

October 25, 2020

Philemon 10

10 I appeal to you for my child Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my imprisonment,

Philemon 15-17

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.

15 For perhaps he was for this reason separated from you for a while, that you would have him back forever,

- “For” – Paul wants Philemon to think about why this happened.
- Notice the word “perhaps.” “Philemon, think about this - maybe, just maybe, God is behind all of this. It seems to me that God is working in an unusual way here. Let me tell you what I see, and **perhaps** it will make sense to you.”
- Here is God’s sovereignty and providence, and human agency working together.
- God had planned this all along.

Let’s think this through for all of this to happen -

1. Onesimus must come to Rome – 1,300 miles away.
 - But Onesimus is the property of Philemon.
2. Onesimus must hear the gospel from Paul. But Paul is in jail.
3. Paul and Onesimus must be brought to Rome at the same time
 - at just the right time.

So how did this happen?

1. God calls into His service, Satan.
2. Satan tempts Onesimus, just at the right time, and persuades him to steal from Philemon and to escape.
3. Satan led an angry mob to have Paul arrested at Jerusalem and sent to Rome for trial.
4. Having robbed Philemon, Onesimus was filled with fear and by the providence of God, fled to Rome.
5. Lastly, on the appointed day, Onesimus comes before Paul, and Paul shared the gospel with him, God opens the heart of Onesimus, Onesimus repents and believes.

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- Notice the word “perhaps.” “Philemon, think about this - maybe, just maybe, God is behind all of this. It seems to me that God is working in an unusual way here. Let me tell you what I see, and **perhaps** it will make sense to you.”
- Here is God’s sovereignty and providence, and human agency working together.
- God had planned this all along.
- A temporary separation will lead to an eternal relationship.
- God’s providential grace takes finite circumstances and uses them for His infinite purposes.

“God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill,
He treasures up His vast designs
And works His sovereign will.”

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.

- This verse in that society was unheard of.
- Runaway slaves were demoted, not promoted.
- To take a slave and promote him equal to a family member is in the world’s eyes “insane.”
- “Philemon, think about it, you will get him back as not only a trustworthy slave, but as a brother in the Lord.”

Gen 50:20

20 "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result,

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“As a general rule, the most unworthy of the unworthy, the most loathsome of the loathsome, the most useless of the useless, the most vile of the vile are the objects of God’s grace. Who are you, and what am I that God should be merciful to us?”

- Don Fortner

1 Cor 1:26-29

26 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;

27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,

28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are,

29 so that no man may boast before God.

James 2:5

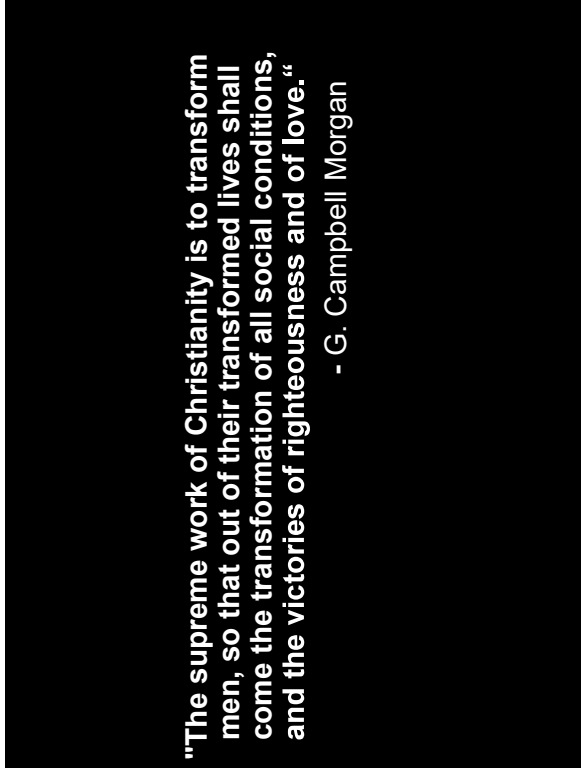
5 Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

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- "Philemon, think about it, you will get him back as not only a trustworthy slave, but as a brother in the Lord."
- This is how you abolish slavery forever.
- Paul does not presume Onesimus's emancipation because such a decision is Philemon's to make freely.

Philemon 14

- 14 but without your consent I did not want to do anything, so that your goodness would not be, in effect, by compulsion but of your own free will.
- This breaking of the distinction between master and slave was an absolutely revolutionary development.
 - It did far more to change society than the passing of a law prohibiting slavery.
 - The transformation of the *individual* is the key to the transformation of society and the moral environment.



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"if" – 1st class conditional "if" – "if, and I assume it is true, then you regard . . ."

"partner" – ΚΟΙΝΩΝΟΣ – an equal partner and partaker in the salvation found in Christ.

Gal 3:28

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

"receive" – προσλαμβάνω – compound word –

προς - toward λαμβάνω – to receive, to be hospitable, be aggressive = give a warm welcome.

How would Philemon welcome Paul to his house?

- Open arms.
- Embrace.
- With excitement and enthusiasm.
- Enjoy a great meal together.
- Warm conversation.
- "Here, Paul, is the guest room. All made-up and ready for you. Enjoy!"

Rev 3:20

20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.

- if you reject him you will reject me, if you punish him you will punish me

