

What can we learn from Philemon?

There are several small books in the bible that God placed there for our learning and our admonition. Even this small New Testament book of prophecy has great lessons for us today.

1. What issue was Paul addressing as recorded in the book of Philemon?
Philemon **1:4-7** Philemon **1:10-11**

There are two basic messages that Paul is revealing in Philemon. The first is a message of confirmation to Philemon regarding the reality of Philemon's love and faith toward Jesus and the other believers. The second message is that Onesimus who was a servant of Philemon, left Philemon and somehow encountered Paul. For whatever reason, while Onesimus was with Philemon, he was thought of as being less than useful, possibly a trouble maker.

2. What did Paul say should be done?
Philemon **1:8-9** Philemon **1:12-18** cmp Genesis **50:19-20**
Philemon **1:19-20** Philemon **1:21-22**

Paul clearly communicates that the solution to Onesimus' uselessness and trouble making nature was Jesus Christ. The solution to acts of rebellion begin and end with a relationship with Jesus Christ by faith. Having received the Gospel, Onesimus is to be returned to Philemon for reconciliation and possibly restoration. Paul also communicates that if Philemon is willing, Paul is willing to bring Onesimus with him for the work of the ministry. Paul also wants Philemon to remember the relationship that exists between the two of them and to act according to the reality of that relationship. In so doing, Paul is also letting Philemon know that he will be visiting, thus encouraging him to treat Onesimus as Philemon would treat Paul for Paul will know the reality of the situation.

3. What does the Christian need to be careful of regarding the book of Philemon?
Leviticus **19:16-18** 2 Corinthians **9:5-8**
James **5:8-9** 1 Peter **4:8-10**
1 Corinthians 6:1, **6-8**

One of the things that Christians need to learn and remember is to not hold a grudge. The Christian who holds a grudge is not living as Christ lived but is living as the world lives. Christians also need to be careful about "protecting their rights". As Christians, our rights come from God. We need to remember that any "right" that comes from man or is considered to be a right that does not come from God is not an actual right. Only God provides the basis for any true rights that we have and those rights are bound in the person and work of God and Christ.

4. What should the Christian do instead?
Ephesians **4:14-15** James **5:20**
2 Corinthians **10:3-5** Ephesians **4:31-32**

As Christians we need to follow after the commands of God and Christ and not get caught up in the professions of the world in regards to what is right and wrong. That includes speaking the truth to people about sinful behavior. If God calls a behavior sinful, it is sinful and without excuse or justification before God. The greatest call of the Christian is to be a witness of Christ before the world so that through our witness and care, the sinner might find Christ and be saved from the just wrath of God that awaits. Furthermore, as Christians, we need to remember to extend forgiveness to everyone who has offended us simply because God has forgiven us all sin. The only thing we can hold against another person is that which God, through Christ, will hold against us or the other person and refuse to forgive.