

WEEK 14

## **Philemon and Colossians discussion and Philippians background**

### **Philemon discussion**

#### Theme

Ryrie: not an attack against slavery, but a suggestion about how Christian masters and slaves could live their faith in that evil system. There were other slaveholders in the Colossian church, so letter gives guideline for Christian masters in relation to their slave-brothers.

Haley: intercede with Philemon to forgive Onesimus and accept him as a Christian brother

#### Bible discussion questions

What did you think was the theme of Philemon ?

What picture do you have of the church/believers after reading Philemon ?

How is that the same/ different from our experience today?

Which passages encouraged you? Which passages challenged you?

What can we learn from this letter for today?

What can you infer that we owe to our employers? What do they owe their workers?

What should we do when we have wronged or stolen from someone?

In v. 6, why does Paul pray that Philemon will be active in sharing his faith?

Philemon is commended for refreshing the hearts of the saints? How can we do that?

In v. 15-16, Paul suggests that perhaps this all happened for a good reason—what is it?

Has something like this ever happened to you, where God allowed something to be taken away, but later replaced it with something better?

#### After the epistle

Tradition says that Philemon freed Onesimus and sent him back to Paul

It's been suggested that Onesimus became a minister and later bishop of the Ephesian church

## **Colossians discussion**

### Theme

Ryrie: supremacy and all-sufficiency of Christ

Haley: being a Christian is about loving Christ, not just believing a doctrine or obeying a commandment.

Search the Scriptures: Christ is pre-eminent in every sphere and all-sufficient for a believers needs

### Bible discussion questions

What did you think was the theme of Colossians ?

What picture do you have of the church/believers after reading Colossians ?

How is that the same/ different from our experience today?

Which passages encouraged you? Which passages challenged you?

What is Paul praying for in regard to the Colossians in 1:9-14?

why should we be thankful? 1:13

How does he talk about Christ in this letter?

doesn't emphasize his humanity, but his divinity and supremacy over everything else

Look at all the references to their philosophy: 2:2-3 complete understanding of mystery

Christ in whom is ALL treasures

2:8 hollow and deceptive philosophy

2:16-17

What 4 defects are there in the false teachings? 2:8

Hollow,deceptive, human tradition, principles of this world & not of Christ

What was circumcision? Sign of covenant with God

How are we circumcised/ what is the outward sign? 2:11-12

In 2:13-14 Paul say Christ has forgiven us and cancelled the "written code" that was against us.

A written code was an IOU written by someone who owed a debt. We are in debt to God because of sin. Christ cancelled the IOU by nailing it to the cross. Compare this with how we might act if someone freely paid off all our debts (even our mortgages!)

What other “written code” might Paul be referring to? the law  
mercy has triumphed over righteousness thru works of the law

What happens when you lose connection to the Head (Christ)? 2:18-19

How can we keep that connection? 3:1-2

What does Paul say in 2:18-19 about angel worship?

What does he say in 2:20-23 about asceticism?

Why doesn't asceticism work? 2:22-23

In verse 3:11 he breaks down all the barriers that were dividing the church in that day.

BTW, Scythians were the lowest uncouth barbarian nomads, known for their cruelty.

What divisions do you see in the church (or in ourselves) today?

Paul talks a lot about being thankful. What did you learn or start to practice about being thankful this week?

He gives a lot of pictures of a drastic change—black and white with no gray area –

dominion of darkness/light 1:12-13

once enemies/now reconciled 1:21-22

put off sinful nature/ dead in sins 2:11,13 3:1-5

died with Christ to principles of this world 2:20

old self/new self 3:10

taking sin off/ putting righteousness on 3:7-9, 12-13

Why do you think this is significant? others should see a change in us, God is the one who did it through what Christ did—not what we do

## **Philippians background**

### Timeline

Paul receives \$ from church to help support him in foreign missionary work,  
brought by Epaphroditus, who becomes gravely ill, then recovers

61 Philippians; sent back with Epaphroditus

### Who wrote it?

Paul

### About the epistle

One of the prison epistles, written from Rome

### About the church

Founded on Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey

"the church that began with prayer, song, and an earthquake"

It was the first church in Europe ; Timothy and Silas helped found the church

Philippi was a small military outpost city, with special privileges, in a strategic spot  
on the great Northern Highway between the East and the West

Noted for its gold mines

Lydia and the jailor were early converts in Philippi

Luke was pastor here for the first 6 years

After 10 years, the Philippians were still being persecuted

Many in church from humbler classes or slaves, though there were  
some prominent people, like those from Caesar's household.

The church helped Paul financially multiple times

Church seems to have been free of serious errors in doctrine or moral problems

There were some rivalries in the church which were a problem

Judaizers an issue (of course!), though they hadn't made as much headway as in other churches

Emphasizing the law, quarreling over unimportant matters

Some were becoming legalistic and perfectionistic

Antinomians — this was a group that may have influenced the church

think Christians are free from moral , civil, or scriptural laws due to the grace of Christ

the opposite of legalism