

Scripture Reference: Philemon 17-25

Date: November 30, 2014

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Focus: Investing in Others (Philemon Series 4 of 4)

"What sets Christianity apart?" What's your answer?

A quintessential distinctive of Christianity is evidenced in Jesus's statement, "*greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for a friend*" ([John 15:13](#)).

This declaration embodies God's very nature. He left His glory and clothed Himself in Human flesh. Not stopping there, He gave Himself for the purpose of redemption. God faced judgment He did not warrant, abuse He did not deserve and died a death that was not rightfully His ([Phil. 2](#)).

This example of self-sacrifice was entrusted to disciples who thought first of themselves despite Jesus' repeated calls for them to first love God and then their neighbor.

The passage of time has turned Jesus' sacrificial example into an excuse for self-promotion. We declare, "Jesus died for me!" Overlooking that He died and rose for all, from your neighbors to those in the remotest parts of earth and time.

We bask in the glory of God's great gift to *me*. While failing to follow His example of service to God that benefits God and others.

The Heart of Paul's Letter to Philemon

When Paul asks Philemon to accept Onesimus back, this letter comes to a head. It is the purpose for which Paul wrote.

Similarly, what God does in the life of a disciple is meant to be an expression of His glory as well as a blessing to others.

Verses 17-21 are a call to service for Philemon. Paul is asking him to act selflessly and in obedience to God.

To do this Philemon's faith and worldview will come head to head. What is in his *best interest* must be released.

Paul has asked for big concessions from Philemon.

v. 17; "Accept him as you would me."

Paul asks Philemon to look at Onesimus as though he were Paul.

Paul experienced and knew the ramification of being "born again." Therefore he asks Philemon to look at Onesimus in light of who he would become, not who he had been. In Paul Philemon would find an example of the eternal life God provides.

2 Cor. 5:15-17; "[Jesus] *died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*"

Philemon would have to release his bias and preconceived ideas to be obedient on this issue.

It cost God to redeem us. It cost Jesus to afford the means of relationship with God and new life. Will it then not cost us?

v. 18; “*If he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything, charge that to my account.*”

Paul was willing to put himself on the hook for Onesimus.

How many of us as disciples are willing to stand up for another. Not just for injustice, but to put our name, reputation, and resources on the line for another?

Loving God and others is the heart of being His servant. This however, does not mean it is easy. There are risks and dangers inherent in being a disciple of Jesus.

Matthew 16:24-25; "*Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.'*"

The Last 18 Inches

Though it cost the person nothing, a relationship with God is not free. It cost God dearly.

Being His disciples does cost. Loving God and others requires something of those living eternal life.

Are you willing to take a stand for others? If not, why?
Investing in Others (Philemon Series 4 of 4)

