

Where the Rubber Meets the Road!

Part 1: "How Far You Can Go!"

By Cere Muscarella

Pauline Writings... 13/14 of 27 NT "books" of the Bible... Hebrews is in contention for authorship! The theme is "draw near to God..." The pathway is "faith..." I am on the side of his writing as a "Jew to the Jews – to save some!"

Ten 'Church' epistles! **Romans, 1&2 Cor, Gal, Eph, Phil, Col, 1&2 Thess, Hebrews** Three Pastoral letters: **1&2 Tim, Titus** And one private letter: Philemon, *where the rubber meets the road!*

Philemon... A personal letter to Philemon... Drawing in "Apphia and Archippus, and the church that is in your house..." for an inclusive and monitored decision! **v1,2** "I thank God... hearing about your love and faith in Jesus and all the good things in you toward all the saints..." **v3-6** "I have great joy and consolation in your love because you are moved from your core to 'refresh and give rest' to the saints..." **v7** "Though I could be bold to command you in what is right; because of your inclination and for our loves sake, I entreat you to hear your old friend who is now a prisoner of Christ! **v8-9** "I beg you for my son, Onesimus... who was saved during my incarceration... the one who was to you 'unprofitable' is now 'profitable' to you and to me... because he has ministered to me in your place!" **v10-11**

Asides... Paul is not buttering Philemon up to get what he wants... This is not psychological manipulation... It's not spiritual bullying... Paul knows, what all of us know about ourselves...

That we can have lives that produce a lot of good... And spaces that are still dark, and names that cause pain, that need to be touched in a gentle way to be transformed!

Philemon... "Though I wanted to keep him with me, I am sending him back to you. To be my son, he needed to come back and make things right... though it may well be that he left you for a time so that he could be your brother forever thru salvation! He is no longer merely a servant, but even more, a beloved brother to me and you, in the flesh and in the Lord... If you count me as your partner, receive him like you would me... if he has "wronged you, put it on my account! By my own hand, I will repay it; though I hesitate to remind you that your own soul is secure because of me! My brother, do this for me, make me glad from your life in the Lord, refresh me, give me rest in the Lord! And I know now, even as I write, that you will do what I am asking and even more! I can't wait to see. Pray with me that I will be with you soon!" **v12-22**

Of all Paul's writing... Of all the letters Paul wrote that have become doctrinal... **This letter draws us to daily practices!** All the information must become incarnational; alive in us! At some point/time our principles have to give us traction to get down the road! The things we know have to become the things we do! Spiritual concepts must meet our reality! *The rubber has to meet the road of life!*

In this case... Philemon's faith had to touch down with the truth about financial loss! Onesimus, did him wrong and it involved money/value ("no one leaves alone!")! Somewhere our spirituality has to be bigger than money/profit/stuff! Money DOESN'T grow on trees... **RIGHT!** But your resources are not limited! What can anyone take away that God cannot replace?

When do we start acting like it is the least of things on the earth?

In this case... *Philemon's faith had to touch down with the truth about disappointment!* Onesimus had done him wrong! And it obviously hurt the family! Apphia/Archippus both included in this restoration interest! Not only a theft, but a breach of trust! This is the eternal problem with putting trust in people and loving God!

When do we trust God alone with the people we love and even the ones we can't trust!

In this case... *Philemon's faith had to touch down with the truth about forgiveness!* Onesimus had done him/family wrong! What/Who is the name of your pain? How long will you remain tied to each other by unforgiveness? How long will you walk with the one at whose hands you have suffered? Treat offense as part of life, trust God to work out the details, move on free!

When will we forgive others their sins against us as all our sins against God have been forgiven in Christ Jesus?

Bonus point! *And when will we sponsor the reconciliation of people we love, like Paul did for his first friends Philemon, Apphia, Archippus and his new friend, Onesimus?*

Sponsorship... *Paul could see the blind spot in Philemon!* And he wanted to present him to the Lord "without spot or wrinkle!" ***Paul could see the necessary thing for Onesimus development!*** He needed to make acknowledgement and trust God with the outcome!

Who are you willing to go to the mat for? Who do you know who needs to forgive? Who needs to be free of their past?

In the end... "In Jesus, nothing matters but faith that works by love... Galatians 5.6

"In Jesus, nothing matters but being a new creature; creation, formation, building!" Galatians 6.15

"Nothing matters but keeping the commandments of God..." 1Cor 7.19

And this is My commandment, that you love one another as you have been loved! John 15.12

The end of the story... Roll ahead fifty years... Early Church Father, Ignatius, wrote in his letters to the church at Ephesus much about their beloved Bishop... *ONESIMUS!* He uses the same pun that Paul used in his letter to Philemon... **The unprofitable has become profitable!**

There is just no way to tell how far a little forgiveness can take a person and what a difference mercy can make!