

I. Our Identity: Christ

- a. Paul starts by reminding Philemon of his identity – who he is in Christ.
 - i. Philemon loves Jesus, loves others, shares his faith.
 - ii. Gives joy and comfort to others. Philemon “refreshes others.”
 - iii. Philemon had opened his home to be used as a church.
- b. When we are facing a challenge, we need to be reminded of who we are.
 - i. Philemon had been “wronged” by Onesimus (vs. 18).
 1. Offense: Paul implies that Onesimus owes him money.
 2. The Greek text [translates] “*since* he has wronged you.”¹
 - ii. Before dealing with the offense, we look to Christ.
 1. “For the sake of Christ...” v. 6.
 2. God is the only one with complete perspective/full knowledge.
 - iii. Christ -followers surrender their “rights.”
 1. Taking on the identity of Christ requires surrender (Galatians 2:20).
 2. The question is not, “Is this fair?”; the question is, “What would God have me do?”
 - a. “Fair” can be difficult to assess.
 - b. We are the recipients of GRACE (Ephesians 2:8-10).

II. Our Responsibility: Redemption

- a. Identifying with Christ makes us behave like Christ: REDEMPTION.
- b. Onesimus:
 - i. Runaway Bondservant (slave):
 1. Slavery during the time of Jesus, 1st century. Several categories:
 - a. Debt repayment: become slaves to pay off a debt.
 - b. Employment: volunteered vocationally.
 - c. Slave Trade – humans traded as property.
 2. Jesus and Paul condemned slave traders:
 - a. Jesus opposed every form of oppression (Luke 4:18).
 - b. Paul condemned slavery.²
 - i. 1 Timothy 1:9-10, “slave traders” are included in a list of those who are “lawless, disobedient and ungodly.”

¹ Belleville, L. L., & Kuo, J. C. (2016). *Philemon, Letter to*. In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D.

² Copan, Paul (2011). *Is God a Moral Monster?*, pg. 152.