

# Philemon 1

Sunday 8/21/2005

Anybody who has any kind of brain at all, looking around us, will see how God is blessing us and how we are growing. We are having people saved. The nursery looks like ants at a picnic over there with all the kids we have. I love that. That is great. God has given us people that are getting saved and bringing people into our church. It is just the way it is supposed to be.

I learned a long time ago that the best way to build a church is just to simply preach the Bible and let God bring the increase, and just take it from there. Then take the people that really have an aptitude or really want to be used of God, and then focus them as God grows them up spiritually for them to be used. So we are excited about what the Lord is doing. A lot of things are going on. I am going to be talking to you about some of that in just a few short weeks here. We are going to put it all together as we go into our fall. I have some exciting things that we want to talk about, and we are just looking forward to having a great time.

## I. Introduction to Philemon

Today, again, we enter into this little book here called Philemon. Philemon is a great little book. The word Philemon means "loving friendship." I think that probably no other book in the Bible really focuses on a specific aspect of leadership and men and women who really want to have a relationship with God that produces all the right things in their life.

It is not commonly taught as one of the pastoral epistles. We opened up and we started talking about the pastoral epistles and how they really are written for men who were pastors at that time that Paul was dealing with. But yet, I always saw this book as a great book for the pastor. I always saw it as a book that, if somebody had desired to be a pastor or was an elder in the church, somebody who helps the pastor, or someone who was just a deacon or a leader, I always thought that this book was a great book in that aspect. I always, in my mind, put it together with the other ones.

I never really saw it as just a small book. It only has one chapter. It only has 25 verses. But you are going to find, and I am not sure why this is, but usually the books that only have one chapter and a few verses have so many principles and concepts in them. This book is no different. This book, again, really shows you the underlying mindset of what we have to have as men and women who really try to serve the Lord.

The breakdown of the book is really simple:

1. In verses 1 through 17, the story simply focuses on the adoption of a slave.
2. Then in verses 18 through 25, to the end of the book, it focuses on the concept of the redemption of a slave.

You will find that the storyline is pretty straightforward. But it is from this basic storyline that all of the Bible principles that we need to know really come into play here. This is what makes the book not only come alive, but makes the book exactly what we need to have.

## II. The Story of Philemon, Onesimus, and Paul

Now, it is called Philemon. Let me tell you about Philemon. Philemon is a saved man. The Bible does not say exactly that he is a pastor. The indication is that he probably is. Whether he is or he is not is beside the point. Philemon 1:2 says that he has a church in his home. Remember now, back in these times when Paul and Christianity were beginning to flourish and begin to start, and Paul was going around building these churches and evangelizing and starting churches, they did not have church buildings like you and I have today. They met in people's homes.

Today, the concept of the New Testament local church really does not permit that. I do not think anybody has a house big enough that we could all meet in. You have to go to the place where you meet in a building someplace that is designated. Well, they did not have that option back then. Of course, the Roman Empire was not happy with Christianity or the church anyhow. So many times they did not even have homes. Many times they met in a field someplace under a tree. Many times they did not have a tree. Many times they just met together wherever they could. But Philemon, whether he is a pastor or not, he has a church in his home.

Now, Philemon has a slave, a servant. The name of this slave is Onesimus. In the story here, Onesimus, his slave, has run away from his master, Philemon. Through circumstances, God being behind the scenes—and that is another great lesson in this chapter, in this book—it is showing you how that in the ordinary circumstances of life, that many times we just take for granted that are just the natural course of things, God is behind the scenes using the events in our lives for a purpose.

Remember last week I talked to you about the ability to see more than just what is happening. I called it a multi-dimensional concept: being able to look at a circumstance in your life and see it for what God is trying to do through it, not just in what you are doing with it. Well, here is a classic example. Paul, who is in jail, is down there, and Onesimus runs away from Philemon. He is out there and he gets picked up by the police. They throw him in jail. He looks around and there is a guy by the name of Paul. Paul begins to talk to this boy. Paul begins to witness to him. Onesimus gets saved.

Then in the course of Onesimus telling Paul about the circumstances, Paul finds out that Onesimus is Philemon's slave. Paul says, "Hey, I know that guy. We started a church in his house. He is a friend of mine." So what happens now? Paul writes this little letter, Philemon, explaining to Philemon how God's hand has been in this circumstance. How many times, ladies and gentlemen, if you are paying attention, will God orchestrate the events in your life for you to have the ability to tell somebody the story of Christ?

The problem is, and we look at it today and we think, "Wow, it is really tough to get people saved. It is really hard to build a church." No, it is really not. God's Spirit is as fluent today as it was back in the book of Acts. But what is hard is getting God's people to be in tune with the Holy Spirit of God to understand what God is trying to do. That is the key. Paul wins this kid to the Lord. Onesimus begins to lay out a story running away from Philemon. Paul says, "Hey, you are not going to believe this. Me and him are buddies. I helped start a church in his house." So he

writes this letter to Philemon explaining that God's hand is behind the scene, this boy, Onesimus, has gotten saved. He is coming back to receive him, and he tells him to receive him in light of the fact that he is now a new brother in Christ.

Now, that is the storyline. If you want to put a little paragraph someplace, which you should, around that, as we are talking about defining the books in the Bible, you can condense that, but that is the story you have. But out of that storyline come the great lessons that this book has for us that are very many and very powerful. This little book sets for us something that 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus have not done yet. We saw in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus how Paul dealt with personal accountability in the ministry. We saw the 12 charges that he gave to young Timothy. We saw last week the aspect of stewardship that he gave to young Timothy, over all that God had given him. We saw how it affects your life and my life.

Now, Philemon does something that the other two books do not do, and this is why I say it is so vital a part of the pastoral epistles, because Philemon shows you and I the mindset of how we are to view the ministry. Remember now, the ministry is people. Not only does it tell us how we are to view the ministry, which is people, but it shows us how we are to view ourselves. This is a great little book. Let us pray and we will ask God to bless.

Father, we thank You today for the Lord Jesus. We love You. We thank You for all that You do and pray now, Father, that You will just help us put together all that needs to be said today. We thank You for those that You brought today. We thank You for the families that have showed up today. May we help them do a better job in all that You have called them to do. May this church stand to be their support. May they rest in this church to know that we stand behind them in their job as parents, in their responsibility as husband and wives. We are not here to dictate to them. We are here to lovingly show them what the Word of God says and help them identify with the great principles and put them into their own lives. We will just thank You and praise You today. In Jesus' name, for His sake, we ask it. Amen.

### III. The Bible's Position on Slavery and Man's Fall

Now, the first great lesson in here, and this is vital, you have got to see this. We are going to take this slow because I know that sometimes you cannot hear everything I say or just because of how I say it and how fast I talk sometimes. Well, I am going to slow down here because this is what I want you to do. The first great lesson that comes out of this book is the Bible's position on slavery. You have got to see this. This is an incredible thing that is the key to not only the book, but it is the key to your life and my life and our success as a child of God.

Now, the first great lesson here, I am going to say it again, is the Bible's position on slavery. It is a great concept. Now, I want you to know that in this subject, I am not going to get into the debate of the right or wrong of slavery. That is not my intent this morning. I am not going to pick up the subject and run a flag up for it and preach against slavery or preach for it. That is not what I am doing here. I want you to understand that. I am not going to enter into the debate on the issue of slavery today, whether it is right or it is wrong. I am not. I do not care about that. My

position is very clear. My position is as simple as it has always been as far as just taking the Bible's position.

Now, here is what you have got, and you need to understand it. In Genesis 1, Genesis 2, and Genesis 3, here is what you have got: God made—and this is my position, this is the Bible's position. In Genesis 1, 2, and 3, God made man. We all know that. God made man, and when He made man, He made man totally free. He did not have any bills to pay. He did not have to go to work. He did not have to pay income tax. He did not have to go out and hunt for his food. God made a society and a situation where God put man in it and made him totally free. God provided everything that man needed. Man's only thing that he had to do was hang out with God and be with God. He made man totally, absolutely free. No oppression, no governments, no society, no nothing. It was him and God.

At some point, man—not God—man chose to reject God. When he chose to reject God, he chose to become a slave to his sin. He chose to become a slave to another master. When he was free in the garden under God, God was his master, and God said to him, "I am going to give you all the freedom in the world. Yes, I am your master. I am your creator, and I am going to give you all the freedom you want." But man, when he chose the devil over God, signed up to be a slave to the worst master, taskmaster that the world has ever seen—the devil himself. So it was man, not God, that chose to give up his freedom and to become a slave.

Now, I want you to understand that. Because we are in the 20th century, 21st century today, and a lot of things are confusing, and you hear a lot of things said, a lot of things preached, a lot of things written. You hear a lot of people saying a lot of different things, and we have got to get back to that lowest common denominator in the Bible that helps you understand that man was once free, and then man chose to become a slave and become a slave to sin. Now, that is just as simple as I know how to say it.

At that point, when man became by his own choice to be a slave to the devil and to sin in this world, from that point on, planet earth is under a terrible curse, and all the inhabitants on the earth are under this curse. Now, here is what you have got to understand. Slavery, as war, as disease, cancer, leprosy, tuberculosis, heart attack, stroke, as sin, rape, murder, drunkenness, drugs, child pornography, all the rest. As every leader that has murdered millions of people—Castro, Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, Saddam Hussein, wherever you want to go—and every dictator and fascist totalitarian government that has murdered and oppressed people down through history, as tornadoes, as hurricanes, and now we are living in the 20th century, there are not just hurricanes, now we have himacanes. It cannot be discriminative. It used to be kind of an unsaid thing that they named women hurricanes, for the obvious reason. I mean, not a bad thing. Now, in our society, that cannot stand because we discriminate against a certain group of people, so now we have got to call them Hurricane George. We have got to have himacanes, and that is how the thing breaks down.

But all of these things—disease, sin, oppressive governments, tornadoes, hurricanes, wars, and slavery—are part of that curse. God never intended it to be. God's plan was that it was going to run perfectly and beautifully without any kind of breakdown, and it was man who decided

otherwise. So now you have man and men and society and government trying to eliminate, when any time anybody tries to eliminate any of the above, including slavery, and does not deal with the real issue on the bottom level, that it is man's choice of sin and slavery that makes us slave, Genesis 1, 2, 3. You will never get it right, you will never see it right, and you will wind up in history making the biggest blunders and mistakes and making the most asinine statements that you will ever hear in life. Why? Because man does not understand that slavery did not start with God. Slavery started with sinful man who once had his freedom and gave it up. To catch slavery separate from war, from disease, from tornadoes, and all the other things, simply means you do not understand that. It is by design that God wanted us to be free. It is by design that man chose to dump God and be free. A proof of that is simply this: you and I as human beings have been dumping God ever since. We simply, when push comes to shove, God is the one that takes it, and we are in the eye and we go on and do our own thing for the most part.

#### IV. Societal Decay and the Church's Role

Now when you get to that point and you do not understand that, then that is what forms our reasoning thinking today. I heard a guy say not too long ago on a documentary, he said, "The Civil War," he said, "the Civil War was a war where America lost more people in one war than all the other wars in our country's history combined. The reason for that is because both sides were Americans." Then he said this, he said, "But that is what we had to do with our country to free the slaves." I thought to myself when I said that, "You know what, you did not free anybody. You did not free anybody with the Civil War."

I heard a guy say, "Well, Woodrow Wilson at the end of World War I, they started the League of Nations which became the United Nations. At the end of World War I, Woodrow Wilson stood up and addressed the whole United States and he called World War I the war to end all wars." There have been 338 wars since he made that statement. You know why? Because, and the two biggest ones yet to come in the Bible have not even hit yet. The answer to all this is simply this: war, as slavery, is because of sin. Until you understand that and you deal with it, you have got to come to the place where you realize you are not going to fix anything, and then you get caught up on all the false issues. This is what you have got to see in Philemon. We are going to go on here, but I am taking my time, threading my way because I want no misunderstandings about this.

As a child of God, you and I know this. Sometimes you just have to take the world with a big spoonful of sugar. This place is a freight train on a downhill grade, and it is out of control. There is absolutely no sane explanation for anything that goes on today in this world, in this country, and in our society other than looking at it in the light of the Bible. You know what it is a lot like? If you ever studied history, you know this is true. The Roman Empire had existed for almost 400 and some, almost 500 years. It had come to the place where after the Greeks were defeated in about 100 B.C., the Roman Empire came on a steady incline to the time that probably about the time of Christ, it was at, or maybe 100 years before, it was at the zenith of its power. It was the greatest military power. It was the greatest economic power. It literally ran the world. But by the time you get 200 or 300, 400 years after Christ, the Roman Empire is eroding.

I do not know how much you listen to talk radio or whatever that thing, and I listen to it only for the amusement of people trying to call in and make sense out of a world without any answers that they cannot make any sense out of it. But a guy by the name of Michael Savage, he is on late at night, he wrote a book, and this book, the title of his book is simply called *The Enemy Within*. He is talking about that what is wrong with our country is what is on the inside. For years and years and years we worried about being attacked from the outside. We worried about the communists, so we had a cold war. Before that we worried about the Japanese, so we had World War II in the Pacific. Before that we worried about the Germans, so we had World War II over in Europe. Now today it is terrorists coming out from the outside and destroying our country.

Let me tell you something. I am not saying that those were not threats. I am not saying that terrorists did not do a job on us in 9/11, and maybe they will do a job on us most probably again. But what I am saying is this: they are not the real enemy. The real enemy is us. We are just like the Roman Empire. We are eroding from within. We are eroding from the inside to the place that, just like before their collapse, socially, morally, they were in such decline and such disarray that they absolutely collapsed on themselves. That is what you are seeing today. There is no one man in the world today, whether he is a Democrat or a Republican, who can fix the problems in America. They are too out of control. The gas is going to go higher and higher and higher. We in America, who have thought now for a long time that we had it made in the shade, have come to the place where it might just not be as easy as we thought it was. Because we are going to come to the place where we are going to see everything escalate. That is going to force God's people into a more understanding concept of trusting God for everything.

There are going to be a lot of God's people when it comes down to having enough gas to go into church or go into the lake. Go into the church or go into the ballgame. You are going to see, just like it was in the early Christian centuries, that you are going to see that where we had the Roman Empire, that if you went to church you got killed. It weeded out the Christians that were not serious. You are going to find today something as simple as a gallon of gas. It is going to weed out who has really got this thing down and understands it and the priorities versus just doing your own thing.

America is in a mess. Nobody is going to fix it. We are reaping what we sowed. For years and years and years, we are trying to run a 21st century technology on 19th century refineries. Why? Because within our own country, we would not let us drill oil anywhere because the environment is crowded. We have oil, oil, oil up in Alaska and those places, but because we did not want to get soot in the eyes of caribou, we stopped it. Now today, here we are. Caribou are seeing fine. You are paying \$3.50 a gallon before too long. That is where it breaks down. It is all because of the fact that we do not want a refinery in our backyard. We do not want anything, but we want everything.

Crime? My goodness. Let me tell you something. We are killing people in this city. If you just watched it, we are killing people in this city. 14-year-old boys are calling up for a restaurant, ordering food, and when a guy comes, killing him. They get \$30 so you can go to a dance. Now, there is something wrong with our society, and you know what? Nobody is going to fix it. There is too much wrong. We are collapsing, as I speak, from the inside. The terrorists know that. They

know that we are so weak on the inside. We are so disjointed that we talk about terrorism. We talk about stopping it. We are hand-searching 80-year-old ladies at the airport, strip-searching them, but yet our borders on the south are coming in like ants at a picnic. Why? Because we have got political undertones. You see this thing? It is all breaking down. It is all absolutely collapsing on the inside.

America, I am sorry to say this, but it is true. America has reached the reprobate mind stage of Romans 1 in everything that we do, and everything you see around us reflects that. If there was ever a time for God's people to get closer to each other, get banded together in a church, to get around that book, to hold on to what is coming, because that is all you are going to have, is each other. We are in trouble, and I do not say that with dismay or despair. Hey, I am ready. I am looking forward to it. I think a lot of it is stupid, but in this country, it is an endless maze with no way out. Men have no answers to the problems that we have because the only answer is in the Bible, and we dumped that book a long time ago because of that.

There is no personal accountability. Our personal responsibilities are gone. There is no reality in our society anymore. America truly is an insane asylum run by the inmates. You eat at McDonald's, you eat there every day, you do not discipline yourself and eat Big Macs all day long, four or five times a day, and then your children become obese or you become overweight, and what do you do? You sue McDonald's because of the fact that they sell food that will make you overweight. You go through the drive-thru. You buy a cup of coffee. It is hot. You drink it and burn your little lips, and then you turn around and sue McDonald's because you burned your lips on their hot coffee. Now, you tell me what is... And the only thing stupid in that is the judgments these people are getting by suing these companies. They want to sue gun manufacturers. You know why? Because if somebody goes out and shoots somebody with a gun, instead of putting him in jail or executing him, no, no. We will let him go and come back and sue the gun makers because that will fix the problem.

I am telling you, it is a breakdown everywhere we go. In our society, we have been turned upside down, and we have lost our reasoning when it comes to the Word of God. Now our society, as I said, our society is looking for everything, everything that now cannot be different. There can be no right. There can be no wrong. There cannot be anything that pulls it all together and puts it in its proper place. We are seeing it. We are seeing it in every aspect, every aspect. You know what? It is not going to stop there. There is something of time very quickly when you are not going to have a Kansas City Chiefs because calling the Kansas City Chiefs discriminates against Indians. So it will be the Kansas City Individuals. I do not know. There will be no Cleveland Indians. It will be the Cleveland People. There will be no Washington Redskins. You see, those are discriminatory concepts that absolutely have lost their reasoning. It is all a breakdown. It is all a breakdown.

Of course, I just saw it last couple weeks ago, August 8th marked the 60th anniversary of us dropping the bomb on Hiroshima in World War II. There are actually high schools in this city that were forming up debate groups. Whether or not President Truman was a war criminal because he dropped the bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. That is what they are teaching your kids how to question. Forget the fact that if we would have invaded Japan, the homeland of

Japan, we would have given up. One million American boys would have lost their lives in that assault. Forget that. You see, we have lost our touch with reality. We have lost our touch with realities.

50, 60 years ago, it was a fact that gays and lesbians and same-sex marriages were unheard of. Today, we have got to have Gay Pride Week. We have got to have Gay Day. You know what? If you disagree with any of them in their lifestyle, then you are a racist. The key in that is, if I disagree with a lifestyle that is sinful and I am a racist, that means they are looking at themselves as a race. See that thing? That is where it goes. I am telling you, it is a mess. It will not be long, and it is already happening to some degree, that Bible-believing, soul-winning churches will become racist because you say one religion is wrong and the Bible is right. The moment you take that extreme position, you are going to be called a racist. It is only a matter of time. It is going that way because this world cannot stand right or wrong. This world wants everything and everybody to be right.

Now, let us talk about the reason for this. It is very clear. You overheard the expression, and it is a true saying, what happens on the West Coast, it just does not matter. California is nuts. We all know that. If you are from California, no offense, but California is nuts. In fact, you are not living anymore. Prove what I just said, so do not get mad at me. The saying is that what happens out there, only a matter of time shows up here. When the weird clothes come in there, they show up here. When the earrings in the ears and the nose and the belly buttons and through your head comes in here, it shows up here. It is just a matter of time. It is just a matter of time that what happens there comes here.

Well, in history, that is true of the church. God designed the body of Christ to be a preservative to the world. We are likened to salt; salt is a preservative. God knew that the world was in a constant state of decay. Why? Because of the curse and man's choice to dump God and become a slave to sin. So when that took place, when that happened, God put the church. The church was to act as a preservative. It was to act as a stopgap where with the Bible and the preaching and God's people intermingling and preaching against the thing and holding up truth and righteousness, it would stay off and preserve any society from totally eroding. Of course, you know how that went.

Now, the proof of that is the fact of the Philadelphia church and the Laodicean church, two churches in church history. You know that the Philadelphia runs from about 1600 to 1900 and then the Laodicean from there right up to the time that we are living in. You see the example of that when the church held up the Word of God and preached it, the world saw revival like it had never seen before. When the church does not do it anymore, the one we are in now, you see how the world goes. In other words, what I am saying is this: as goes the church, so goes the world. I do not know how else to say it. It is just as simple as that.

The reason why we have groups today like the Anti-Defamation League, civil rights groups, the reason why we talk about being politically correct, the reason why we have human rights groups, the reason why in the Christian circles we have the moral majority, or the immoral majority, however you will look at it, and the Christian coalition, the reason why we talk about affirmative

action with affirmative action groups and have the ACLU and the NAACP and all the liberal movement in this country is because it takes man's rights to a new level. It brings it to a new level because the church period that we are in is called the Laodicean church period, which means rights and justices of the people. In other words, we are seeing in our country today exactly the attitude on a broader scale, in a more liberal scale, exactly where the church is at. The church today, Revelation 3, is more concerned about their rights than they are the rights of Almighty God. As goes the church, so goes the world.

## V. Jesus, Paul, and True Freedom

Now let me ask you a question. Now we are in a pondering mode. This is not really a sermon or a preaching. I am philosophically talking to you today. So let us look at this as a philosophy class. Now let us philosophize together for just a moment. Let us ask ourselves some questions. I had a friend of mine one time that preached in an insane asylum. He was a great preacher, and he always started his messages the same way. Because he wanted to invoke the thoughts of the people that were listening. Every time he preached, he would get up and he would come to the pulpit, he would lay out his material, he would look at the crowd, he would raise a finger and he would say this, "Today, let us ask ourselves why we are here." Then he would proceed to philosophically go through and bring them to Christ.

Well, the day we preached at the Stark County insane asylum—that is not what it was called but I cannot remember the name of it—it was his turn to preach. He had about the same number of people that are here. I was standing over the side, and he came up there and he said, "Today, let us ask ourselves why we are here." A guy jumped up in the back and said, "Preacher, we are here because we are not all there." Amen.

So let me philosophically play with your mind for a minute. Did you ever ask yourself this question? Why in Jesus' time, 33 A.D., and all that He had done and all that He had preached, never one time preached against slavery? Now keep in mind that slavery at this time was rampant. In fact, the nation of Israel had been made slaves of Rome. Take it one step further, the whole world had been made slaves of Rome. Israel as a nation were now under the iron heel and they were slaves of Rome. Have you not ever seen Ben Hur? They are out there, they have got the chariot and the hestin get thrown down there in that galley and they chained them to the thing. That is what the Roman Empire did. You are sitting down there, rowing your little heart out, and you have some big guy sitting over there with two things going. Then when they start coming after you, it is, and you have got to row to that beat, "ramming speed," you know how that thing went? Then the other guy runs into the side and all the Romans get off and they say to the slaves, "Sorry," and you are chained to the deck and you drown. Terrible situation to be in, but that is what it was.

How come in all that Jesus said and preached, and the New Testament, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, records literally hundreds of times, how come the Lord Jesus never took up the cause of slavery? In everything that He said, how come He never took the position that, and preached, "We should free the slave"? I am not saying we should or we should not. I am saying, did you ever ask yourself that question? Think about it.

I will tell you something else. How come Paul, when he meets Onesimus, and he wins him to Christ, sends a letter back to his owner, his master, saying, "Receive this guy, he is going to be a better slave now than he was before"? Is that what Jesse Jackson would have done? Is that what Martin Luther King would have done? Is that what Malcolm X would have done? Is that the decision the Supreme Court would hand down today, after the ACLU and the civil rights groups and the human rights groups? Why, if that is what it is all about? Why did not the greatest Christian that ever lived, and the greatest founder of the Christian faith, the Lord Jesus Christ, when they were here, you have example after example, that faced with slavery, faced with the issue of a man owning another man? I am not justifying one way or the other. I am saying, man got himself into that fix. God never intended it. You looked at God, and you looked at the devil, and you said, "I will see you, God," and you took this master, and when you got this one, you got shackles. You got this one, you got freedom. Now that is as simple as the way it is.

So when Paul meets Onesimus, wins him to Christ, he sends him back with a letter saying to his master, "He is going to be a better slave than he was before." That is exactly what it is. You do not see Jesus walking around saying, "I have a dream, free at last, free at last, free at last." No. He knew that freedom came because a man trusted Christ as his own personal Savior because he understood what freedom is.

## VI. A Biblical Understanding of "Racism" and God's Discrimination

Now, before we go any farther, let me make my confession to you. I want you to hear this very carefully. Please listen to me very carefully. I do not want any misunderstanding. I am a racist. One of the best times I ever had in my life. Sometimes God just puts you in these situations. I got a summons one time, about five or six years ago, in a lawsuit. This lawsuit was by a woman against a church who claimed this church had stole \$40,000 from her. They called me to be a material witness because they thought I had information that would help the woman. I had the greatest time of my life. I will tell you what, I went in there, and they are sitting all down and the lawyers are all sitting around there. Here is the deal. Here is what they do. The lawyer for the woman was trying to make the church out as terrible as they could be. That is what lawyers do. They want a judgment so they will try to pick up every piece of dirt. They will even manufacture dirt when it is not there. This guy was going after this church, and he was trying to get this church portrayed as a racist church. Now, what that had to do with them taking this girl's money, but you see, it is not about that. It is what they want to assassinate your character and show you that you are so low life that certainly you would steal the money because look at all the other things that are wrong with you, even when it is not true. So they were working them over.

I am sitting over here, and then they called me. Now, this lawyer for the woman, he wants me to side with him. In fact, he already told me this before we went in there, that that is why they were calling me. So they sent me in there, and boy, I get a battery of questions. The church's lawyer talked, I was there for four and a half hours, and it was the funnest time. I mean, I did not have to pay anything for admission to this. It was so fun. It was one of those classic moments that God puts you in that you just never forget. I will never forget, I was sitting down there, and this guy

was saying, "Now, this church, you have firsthand knowledge of this church, this church, is not that true, that this church put certain kind of ethnic pictures on targets to shoot at?" I would say, "No, that is not true." "Is it not true that this church," and he did not wait, once he said, "Is it not true," he has a whole list. If it is not, he can just get one. He is not getting what he is going to get, he did not want. He said, "Is it true," and I love the way they walk, "Is it true?" In fact, I do it a lot too. "Is it true?" Like, this means something. "Is it true?" And he would swing your leg. "Is it true, Mr. Alexander? Is it true?" I would shut up and I would say, "No, it is not." He would hold it.

Then he came to the question, and I was waiting. I knew it was coming, and I was waiting for it. He says, "Mr. Alexander, let me ask you one last question." This is how he did. He walked, you have got to get this. You are me, okay? You be me? Okay. "Mr. Alexander, let me ask you one more question. Mr. Alexander, are you a racist?" I said, "Yes, sir." Oh, he loved it. He said, "Aha!" He said, "Mr. Alexander, would you explain that statement to the people here?" I say, "Yes, sir. I say, I am a racist. I believe that the Jew is going to run the world someday, and I believe that your salvation and my salvation came from a Jew. The Bible says there is no salvation outside of Jesus Christ who was a Jew. I do not believe in white power. I do not believe in black power. I believe in Jew power because Revelation 21, 22 says they are going to run the world someday." It was just that quiet. He looked at me. I looked at him. He said, "Dismissed."

You bet you I am a racist. I believe that God's book and God is true, and everybody else is a liar. You can be a white supremacist, and you can believe that black people are wrong, and you can believe that Black Panther, and believe that white people are wrong. You can be against the Chiefs, the Indians, or whoever you want, and it is just a bunch of little guys running around playing, having a little fun. I will tell you what, let me tell you something. All that matters is God in that book, and God chose His people, and someday the whole world is going to be subservient to that Jew. You better grasp that. It is not about slavery here. It is not about who is on top and who is on the bottom. It is about God made man and made him free. Man chose to be a slave to sin. He has been a slave to it ever since. You know what? We do not like the fact that God is favoring that nation over us.

I do not have to worry about it anymore, because I am not a Gentile anymore. The day I got saved, I became a Christian. Old things are passed away. All things become new. Those things do not bother me anymore. I am not a Democrat, nor am I a Republican. I am a Christian. Which one do you side with? I side with this one right here. That is the only one I side with. I realize that the Republican and the Democrat, they are all crooked. It does not make any difference. It just does not make any difference. When I read my Bible, I understand that when Jesus, who was on this earth, never preached one sermon against slavery, Paul told a slave to go back to his master, because they understood something that you and I for the most part do not understand. So we get caught up in this thing today about discrimination.

God discriminates. He put one nation over everybody else on planet earth and gave them promises. He gave monetarily, spiritually, economically, financially, and governmentally that He never gave anybody else. Then He is going to take that nation and He is going to put them at the pinnacle of the universe. Everybody else is going to come and worship at their feet. Whoo! You

see? The world does not like that. Now let us see how clear it becomes. Let us get the point here. When we quit burning cars, burning buildings, marching through the streets, let us see how clear it becomes. We just open up a Bible.

You know what? I do not know if you ever saw this or not. Do not turn to it. Just listen to me now. In Matthew 27:32, a guy by the name of Simon of Cyrene, the Lord Jesus Christ is bearing the cross on the way to Calvary. The Bible says that one Simon of Cyrene is compelled to help Him carry that cross. I do not know if you know it or not, but he is a black man. Cyrene is in Benghazi. Benghazi is in Africa. In Acts 8, you find the story of Philip going out to the backside of the desert and winning a young Ethiopian eunuch to Christ. That is the first story in your Bible where you and I see and understand salvation in the New Testament entirety the way that it is. It is almost like God panned back the TV cameras and allowed us to look and see exactly how you and I were going to have to get saved with every component in it. You know what? The first man that way is a black man. Boy, if you are a white supremacist, you have a tough time with that, do you not?

I will tell you something else. Now, with this one, you want to turn over to your Bible. Turn over to your Bible.

Acts 13:1

*Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.*

There is your N word. It is a Bible word. You know what it means? It means black. It is man that takes it and makes it a racial slur. It means you go down to Spain or you go down to a southern culture where they speak Spanish, that is negro. It means black. Look at Simon. That was called Niger and Lucius of Cyrene. There is the same Simon there that helped carry the cross to the Lord. Made an impact on him. Of course, maybe it would on you and me too.

My point is this. When you go to Matthew 27, you find Simon of Cyrene, a black man, helping Christ to Calvary. When you go to Acts 8, the first man saved in the Bible is a black man, Ethiopian eunuch. When you come to Acts 13, the hotbed of Bible Christianity in Antioch, there are black men within the church and they are part of this key thing because of the concept that in this mindset that when you and I get saved, you need to realize that you are bought with a price. You and I need to understand that you are bought with a price. You are not your own, the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. You and I do not have any rights. The reason why Paul and Jesus do not crusade to end slavery and Paul sends his slave back is because of one great truth that God's people have lost: that true freedom has nothing to do with you being a slave or not. True freedom has to do with you being free in Christ Jesus. When you are free in Him, nothing else matters. That is why the Bible says whatever state you are in there with, to be content, that is where it is at. When you understand that, it does not matter how you find yourself. It just does not. There is no freedom outside of Christ.

Oh, I understand. We think we make men free when we take off the shackles from their hands and their feet. Let me tell you something. That is not freedom. When they lose that master, booze becomes their master. Or crack cocaine becomes their master. Or heroin or marijuana or whatever, gambling, pornography. It does not make any difference. We got into sin and slavery of sin because God made us free and we chose another route. Man giving man his freedom, when in fact man rejected God and put him under slavery of sin, you cannot free anybody.

Oh, I know the old "Battle Hymn of the Republic," what a great song that is. I am not sure how much it is a hymn, but it is a good song. It talks about there in one of those choruses about Christ as He died to make men holy. Christ did not die to make anybody holy. On his own, you have got to trust Him as your own personal Savior. It says as He died to make men holy, "Let us die to make men free." You cannot free anybody by dying. Christ already died. You have got to understand the concept here, the mindset. When you and I get saved, we are a bond slave. That is why the key places in the Bible, where it has the impact of everything that goes on in Christianity, you find a servant of servants of the day, a black man who was looked at at that time as a servant, and a servant of servants. God chose those men because of what they represent. They represent what you and I ought to be. We do not have any rights. When we got saved, Christ died on the cross. He bought us. He paid our price for us.

This is why in Ephesians 6, you find Paul when he writes there, what a great passage.

Ephesians 6:5-8

*Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;*

*Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;*

*With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:*

*Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.*

Then he says this:

Ephesians 6:9

*And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.*

You know what he is saying? He said, "If you find yourself being a servant, be a good servant. If you find yourself being a master, be a good master, because the bottom line is this, God is going to judge you for it one way or the other." I am telling you, I am not here to debate the merits or the demise of slavery. I am smarter than that. I know that all the debate means absolutely nothing because the very men that are against slavery are the very men that chose to become slaves when they rejected Christ. So what is your point? What is your point?

But I am going to tell you something, and God's people today, they have missed this. They have missed this concept. It is a lost concept that shows you the truth and the reality. Let me tell you something. I do not care if you are black. I do not care if you are yellow. I do not care if you are red, white, and blue. When you become a child of God, you are my brother in Christ. It is as simple as that. You are not black anymore. You are not white anymore. You are not red anymore. You are not whatever color you are. You are in Christ, and now we are in the same family together. I would die for you. You should die for me. We labor together. We work together. There is no racial barrier ever needs to be in God's family. We have all been alienated from God. If anybody had a right to be racist against us, it is a white, perfect, holy, shining God with black, vile sinners like us. He bridged that gap, and you and I need to understand that my aspect of slavery is this: when I get saved, I am a slave, and my whole goal in life is to free slaves. My goal in life, your goal in life, the goal of this church is to free, to be oppressed, and to liberate the slaves of sin. And win them to Christ. That is why, and God's people cannot get this, and this is part of what I talked about earlier, how extreme this thing has gone, and how far, and how it has broken down.

## VII. The Moravian Missionary Example

To illustrate my point, some of you know this and have heard this before, I am going to tell you one story about this concept, and I have got two more points, and then I am done. But the whole concept is this. Back in church history, around 1700 to 1760s, there was a group called the Moravians, the Moravian brethren, and they were severely persecuted, and they had no place to go. A man in Germany by the name of Count Zinzendorf had a large estate, owned thousands of acres. He allowed the Moravian brethren to settle on his property, giving them sanctuary. He was a saved man. They began from that point building a work of training men and women who before the Reformation ever started, before the great missionary movements ever started in England—excuse me, not the Reformation, the great movements in England started—these men were going literally around the world. They started a training center there for world missions, and Zinzendorf and August Spangenberg, another German, began to train these Moravian brethren, which formed in time into the Moravian missionary movement.

They sent these men and women around the world. They trained them in the philosophy that you go into a country, go into a city, and you get a job in that city, and you support yourself, and then you begin to build one at a time, men and women, winning them to Christ, bringing them together, and in time you build a church. They were tentmaker missionaries. They were not supported by the church. The church did not have any money. They were trained to go out and get a 9-5 job and use the money they made to support their own selves in missions, and they raised themselves up and they trained them.

It was those same Moravian missionaries who understand what I am talking about today about slavery and freedom, and maybe some of you cannot grasp it. I do not know. Maybe some of you are just not far along yet. Maybe some of you do not want to grasp it. I do not know, but this illustrates my point clearly, and you can refute me, but you cannot refute history. The Moravian missionaries, many of them, who were free men, went into Jamaica, went into the Ivory Coast of

Africa, and went into even the United States in Georgia, and they sold their freedom and went in as slaves with the black people that were coming over from Africa, and slave trading was a horrendous thing at this time. These Moravian missionaries would go to Ivory Coast of Africa, down in Jamaica, down in Puerto Rico, and on the eastern seaboard there in Georgia, and they would come in there and they would go up and they would sell themselves as slaves. Why? Never to be free again. Never to be able to go to their own home when they wanted to. Never to be able to go back to their mother's funeral. Never again to be able to go and celebrate with their friends. They sold themselves, their persons, into slavery that they might better reach as missionaries the black man that was in slavery.

We cannot even comprehend that today. The reason why we cannot is because we have lost the concept of Philemon. It did not matter to the Moravian missionaries whether they sold themselves their freedom and went to be slaves to reach black men and women for Christ because they understood that being saved, they were free. There was nothing on this planet, no shackles, no iron, no cell, no ship, no slave ship, nobody, nothing that could ever take that freedom from them. Because they understand that true freedom only exists in Christ and any other freedom is only an illusion and a figment of your imagination. True freedom comes in becoming God's child. Then it does not matter what you do. You know why? Because one is your master, that is Christ.

## VIII. Personal Accountability and Confidence in Ministry

Now, in our church, we need to grasp that because that is the concept that will make it or break it in these last days. I know it is tough and I know it is hard because we are always bombarded. Some of you are bombarded by your past lifestyles, by your circumstances, by financial things. I understand that. All I can say is this, let me help you one step at a time. Let the men and women in this church help you one step at a time. But I am telling you, in the days that we are living in, if you and I do not band together in this little Bible-believing church and pull our families together and pull our wives and our husbands together, this thing is going to suck us under. It takes God's people understanding these principles that you and I do not have any rights.

Then quickly, out of that great truth, and that is the single theme of that book, but there are a couple of other things we have got to see.

Philemon 1:10-12

*I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds:*

*Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me:*

*Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels:*

He says, "Receive him like you do me." Now, this is what you see. Look, guys, I am telling you right now, I see a lot of things you do not see. That is my job. I see a great host of men and women in this church that have the potential to make an impact in these last days. I cannot tell you how it fills my heart. Sometimes I can hardly stand it. I see within this group that God has given us in the last couple of years and the people that God keeps bringing in, men and women

who have the ability in these last days to band together if we just get some things down. One of the things you see out of this thing here, we have already talked about the mindset of understanding you are a slave. Now the next thing I see here is the fact that Paul takes the personal accountability and responsibility for the boy he won to Christ. He stands up for him. He takes personal responsibility and personal accountability for the people that God has put in his life. He says, "I beseech thee for my son Onesimus." He was not his son. But he was in Christ because Paul recognized the events. When God put somebody in your life, when I as the pastor give you somebody to work with, you need to understand your personal accountability and responsibility of doing with what God has given you. It is as simple as that.

I am telling you, it is one of those things where Paul stands behind him as he writes this letter to Philemon. In fact, so much Paul says, "You know what, if this kid caused you any financial hurt, put it on my account, I will pay it." That is how much I believe in him. He went beyond just the spiritual. He said, "If this kid Onesimus, Philemon, if he has caused you any problem, if he has caused you any heartache, if he has cost you any money, put it on my account."

Then look at Philemon 1:16-19.

Philemon 1:16-19

*Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?*

*If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself.*

*If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account;*

*I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides.*

What a great thing that, let me break it down for you. First thing I want you to see there, Paul says he is not your servant anymore, even though he still is, but he is your brother. That tells me right off the bat that there is no room for racism in the body of Christ. If you are truly saved and I am truly saved, it does not matter. Jesus died for them all. Now we are all together. We are all one. It is one of those things where just as a man gets saved and he is no longer a sinner, when a man gets saved, he is no longer whatever nationality he is as far as the Bible is concerned. We are in Christ now. We are one. We are brothers. It does not matter if he is black, yellow, red, and white. He is my brother simply because the blood of Christ washes us all the same color. That is clean.

Then Paul reminds Philemon of Philemon 1:19. He says, "I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides." You know what he is saying? He is saying, "Hey, let me put it in the street talk for you." He is saying, "Look, Philemon, I love you, but you owe me something. Because you know what? God put me in your life and you did not look too hot the first time I got my hands on you. You did a lot of stupid things. Remember the time you did that dumb thing and this dumb thing? I did not cast you off. I stayed with you. I walked through it with you. You know why? Because I was responsible for you and accountable for you and I take

my responsibilities, okay? You are his master. He is the slave. You know what? You need to do the same thing with him. Cut him some slack." You know what, Philemon, the bottom line is, God has cast you a lot of slack. That is why Paul said in Romans 1, he says, "I am a debtor." Paul lived his whole life trying to pay back a debt he never could. That debt is simply the fact that God did it for him and he appreciated it so much that he did it for others. Here he is telling Philemon, just what God has done for you, showing you grace, show this boy grace, and bringing back not as a servant but as a brother.

Then lastly, and I think this is probably from a practical standpoint the greatest concept and statement he makes. Look at Philemon 1:21.

Philemon 1:21

*Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say.*

You know, Proverbs 25:19 says,

Proverbs 25:19

*Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint.*

In other words, they are useless. You have a broken tooth, you cannot eat. You have a broken foot, you cannot walk. You cannot get much done. You know, and training men and women to in time take over portions of this ministry. You know what, and I have said this over and over again, you have got to know more than just the Bible. You have got to know how to apply it. But more important than all that to me is, I have to have confidence in you and I want you to listen to me very carefully with this. I have to have confidence in you that when I give you a ministry, I give you somebody, I have to have confidence in you that you are going to do what is right with them. It is as simple as that. He says down through there, he says, "Having confidence in thy obedience." He had confidence that he was going to not only do what was right, but Philemon was going to do more than Paul asked him to do.

You know what, that is so true. You find some of God's people, and they are good folks, they are. But you will find across Christianity, there are some of God's people that are good folks, but they just give the minimum, the minimum effort. They always just have more on their plate for themselves, and basically if God gets anything, He gets what time is left over. It is a tragic thing, and they are good people, but you know what, that is just the way that it is. Then you have some of God's people who do what is right, they do what is required, but that is where it stops. They just do what they know they have got to do, and it never goes any farther. But the ones that really grasp the concept, like Philemon, and get the mindset, like Philemon, that they understand that your whole job is doing what is right, and when it comes to the things of God, not just giving 100%, giving 200%, going over and above what it takes to get the job done.

You know what, I talked to you a couple of weeks ago, not you guys, but the boys that are in the softball thing on Wednesday night, and I talked to you about seeing this thing as it really is, and I did talk to you guys last week, we talked about the concept of ministry and athletics and all that,

but I watched this thing, and I did not know how many of you saw it. I came out to the first game because I did not have an appointment that night, and I came out to that game, I just watched what was going on. You know what, let me tell you something, boys, whatever you do, look more than what you have. Look around on the peripheral, because that night, and God always does this, He drifted in from nowhere, two people that were just there for the taking, two people who were looking for answers, two people who God just dropped in, and if you are looking this thing more than one, you just see it, and you learn that that is the way God does things. He will give you something to do, and then out in the peripheral someplace will be somebody that God just brings in that if you are paying attention and you just do a few right things, you can bring them right in.

I watched that night and I sat down there and I watched you guys playing, and I thought to myself, this is an interesting problem, because I wonder if anybody on here is going to see what they have right here, other than 10 guys, 11 guys playing a ball game. You know what? You did. I am not even going to tell you about it. I am just going to tell you, you did. Maybe you all did not, but two or three of you, I do not know how many of you did, but you did, because I get my reports back and I know now what some of you have done and responded, and you know what? I am not even going to stand here and say you figured it all out. You know what? I know you did not figure it all out. I know you did not just go out there and see, you know what it is? It is you being in touch with the Holy Spirit of God, God bringing those people in, and then God through His Spirit in you, without even you knowing the theological reasons behind it or the wherewithal, because you have not been in this that long yet, but allowing God's Spirit to open up and do what you have got to do, and that is how you do it. I am pleased. Next week, I probably will not be, but today I am pleased. I am pleased. That is what I am talking about.

You know, I have been asked this question on Thursday nights, many times. Somebody will ask me the question, "You know what? Why back there in Genesis did God choose Abraham?" You know how many people were on planet earth back in, oh, about 1912 B.C.? Why did God, out of all the people, reach down and pick one man to start the nation of Israel from? What was more special about him than everybody else that was down there? Now, the answer to that is found in, you do not have to turn to it, I will read it to you, it is found in Genesis 18:19. It simply says this, God talking about Abraham:

Genesis 18:19

*For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.*

You know what God is saying? He is saying the same thing that Paul is saying to Philemon. "I have confidence in Abraham. He is going to do what is right with his children," there is his family, "and his household." There is being steward of all that God has given him. God saw in Abraham a man that would do what was right. Paul saw in Philemon a man that in this situation he had confidence that he would be obedient to what was right. That is all I look for. The path to leadership in this church is simple. I need men and women to ride to that point with where we are

going. In a couple of weeks we are going to take, and I am going to take a Sunday, and I am going to lay out this fall concept for you where we are going, and it is going to take a lot of you to help pull this thing off, but it is what we have got to do. But I am always looking for men and women that I have got the confidence in that in any given situation, I give you a ministry, I give you people to work with, whatever, that my confidence in you is simply this: I know you are going to do what the Bible says that is right with them. I have the confidence in you to do that.

To me it has never been about how much you know the Bible. I have got people right now teaching other people the Bible that do not know one-fifth of what they are going to know in the Bible in ten years from now. But you know what? That is not my point. My point is I have confidence in them that they will do exactly what needs to be done with the information they have. That is all. That is what it is all about. That is what stewardship is.

## IX. Conclusion: Stewardship and True Freedom

In this great book, that is exactly what it has. It sets up a mindset, the mindset of the Moravian missionaries that you and I do not have any rights, that we are simply bond slaves for God, prisoners of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our master. We do not have a right to argue with what He wants us to do. But within that bond slave concept, He has made us a steward of His house. We have to be faithful in that and obedient to do what is right in the aspect of ministry.

Philemon is a great book and it lays out all other aspects and shows you God's concept on slavery. Slavery was not started by God. It was started by man. When it got started by man, God is the only one that can end it. Man will never end it. Man will spend the rest of his life taking the shackles off people's arms and legs and letting them go down and die and spend eternity in hell. You know why? Because real freedom is only in Christ. Every head bowed and every eye closed.