

## Daily Devotional, August 18, 2020

### “More than a Slave—A Beloved Brother”, (Philemon 16, NKJV)

*“For perhaps he departed for a while for this purpose, that you might receive him forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave—a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.”* (Philemon 15-16)

Paul wrote this very personal letter from prison to Philemon, who had been converted through the ministry of the apostle (Philemon 19). As providence would have it, a certain slave belonging to Philemon, Onesimus by name, had also been converted through Paul’s ministry (Philemon 10). Paul sends Onesimus, the runaway slave who had just gotten saved, back to Philemon his master. And he urges Philemon to receive Onesimus back into his household with grace, and with rejoicing that he has gained a spiritual brother, and a more diligent worker.

Now the Bible does not condemn slavery as an institution, although it can certainly be inferred that it was not part of God’s original plan. The creation of humankind was done with dignity and implied freedom. God does not give men individual dominion over one another, but over the animal kingdom. *“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth””* (Genesis 1:27-28). Instead, Scripture argues that *“there is neither slave nor free in Christ Jesus”* (Galatians 3:28). The great equalizer is not found in social justice or ethnic or racial identity, but it is found in Jesus Christ. The New Testament is first and foremost a gospel movement, and everything else is a very distant second.

Let us further apply. We all serve somebody. Those of us that are employed serve our employers. We may volunteer at our church. We may serve in the community. Wherever we go, we serve either the flesh or the Spirit. We serve the devil or we serve the Lord. If you are saved, you ought to be known by your employer as a diligent and top performing worker. Before all this, Onesimus was a slacker, but now this saved man would be working as unto the Lord. He and Philemon could rejoice together, and the bond of common faith would henceforth be a benefit and testimony to all the household. If you are a Christian, do you excel in your work, without complaining and grumbling? Are you working *“as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart* (Ephesians 6:6)?