

Session #4—'Paul' versus 'Paul' on Slavery in the Ekklesia

Colossians 3:22-24

3:22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything, not with a slavery performed merely for looks, to please people, but wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord., 23 Whatever task you must do, work as if your soul depends on it, as for the Lord and not for humans, 24 since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you serve the Lord Christ. [NRSVue]

Ephesians 6:5-8

6:5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and trembling, in singleness of heart, as you obey Christ, 6 not with a slavery performed merely for looks, to please people, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the soul. 7 Render service with enthusiasm, as for the Lord and not for humans, 8 knowing that whatever good we do, we will receive the same again from the Lord, whether we are enslaved or free. [NRSVue]

Titus 2:9-10

2:9 Urge slaves to be submissive to their masters in everything, to be pleasing, not talking back, 10 not stealing, but showing complete and perfect fidelity, so that in everything they may be an ornament to the teaching of God our Savior. [NRSVue]

Philemon

1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To our beloved coworker Philemon, 2 to our sister Apphia, to our fellow soldier Archippus, and to the church in your house:

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

4 I thank my God always when I mention you in my prayers, 5 because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith toward the Lord Jesus. 6 I pray that the partnership of your faith may become effective as you comprehend all the good that we share in Christ. 7 I have indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother.

8 For this reason, though I am more than bold enough in Christ to command you to do the right thing, 9 yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love—and I, Paul, do this as an old man and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus. 10 I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment. 11 Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me. 12 I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you. 13 I wanted to keep him with me so that he might minister to me in your place during my imprisonment for the gospel, 14 but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your good deed might be voluntary and not something forced. 15 Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him back for the long term, 16 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.

17 So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. 18 If he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything, charge that to me. 19 I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it. I say nothing about your owing me even your own self. 20 Yes, brother, let me have this benefit from you in the Lord! Refresh my heart in Christ. 21 Confident of your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask.

22 One thing more: prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping through your prayers to be restored to you.

23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, 24 and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my coworkers.

25 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. [NRSVue]