**THE BROTHERHOOD OF BELIEVERS**

**PLEASE do not read these comments until you have prayed and read the Bible for this lesson to learn what the Holy Spirit wants you to teach your students. Then let Him guide you in using these notes. When you follow this procedure you will be a better teacher of your students.**

**Lesson Aim:** To show Christian brothers and sisters how they ought to treat each other.

**Suggestion:** This lesson will call attention to important truths in this week's Lesson. After the lesson, give your class next week's Student Lesson so they can share their answers in class next week.

**Introduction:** Paul's letter to Philemon is like a window through which we can see the brotherhood of believers in action. "Brother" is used four times in this letter: once of Timothy (1:1); once of Onesimus (1:6); twice of Philemon (1:7, 20). Apphia, who may be Philemon's wife, is called "sister" in some of the manuscripts. Even the greatest sinners that receive Jesus as Savior are to be treated as brothers. If Philemon did this to Onesimus, Paul would say, "Yes, brother, let me have joy of you in the Lord: refresh my bowels [heart] in the Lord" (Philemon 1:20).

**How is Philemon an example to us as a believer in Christ? 1:5-7**

Philemon had love and faith toward the Lord Jesus and toward all saints. These two characteristics in believers will unify and build strong churches. It will cause believers to forgive each other so problems between them can be resolved. Faith becomes effective in us when we recognize the good things that we have in Jesus Christ (1:6). Love brings joy and comfort to others by refreshing their hearts (1:7).

**How did Paul treat Philemon to keep a problem from arising between them? 1:8-9, 13-14**

He wanted to keep Onesimus with him in Rome, since he had led him to the Lord. He was a big help to Paul while he was in prison, but he did not want to force Philemon to agree with such an arrangement since Onesimus belonged to him. So he sent Onesimus back to Philemon so avoid a problem.

**How was Paul an intercessor for Onesimus like Christ was an intercessor for us? 1:10-21**

Paul led Onesimus to Christ for salvation while he was bound as a prisoner in Rome. Then Paul interceded for Onesimus, a runaway slave, that he be treated well by Philemon, his owner, when he returned to him (1:10). Christ saved us by His bonds on the cross. Now He intercedes for us before God, our Owner in Heaven (1 Jn 2:1; Rom 8: 34).

Onesimus was an unprofitable slave to Philemon when he ran away, but he became profitable to Paul and to Philemon when he became a Christian (1:11). We were unprofitable to God when we ran away and wanted nothing to do with Him, until our Intercessor saved us. That made us profitable, both for God, our Owner, and for others that we served. When Christ saved us, He transformed us into new persons (2 Cor 5:17).

Paul sent Onesimus back to his owner and asked that he be received as if he were Paul (1:12, 17). Christ sends us back to our Owner and we are received by Him as if we are His beloved Son (Eph 1:6).

Onesimus was away from Philemon for a short time, but after Paul led him to Christ for salvation and sent him back to Philemon, he would serve his master as a Christian in this life and live with him forever (1:15). We were away from God for a short time, but Christ saved us and returned us to our Owner to live with Him and serve Him forever (Deut 10:20; Lk 4:8; Jn 14:6; 17:3, 20-21;).

Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon as a slave, but even more, as his brother in Christ (1:16). Christ sent us back to our Owner as bond slaves, but we are more; Christ has made us children in the family of God (Jn 1:12).

Paul told Philemon to put any wrongs or debts on his account that Onesimus owed him (1:18-19). Christ took all of our sins and debts that we owed God and paid for them in full (Jn 19:30; 2 Cor 5:21).

Paul interceded for Onesimus and knew that Philemon would do more for Onesimus than he had asked him (1:20-21). Christ intercedes for us and God has done more for us than we can imagine. Not only has he removed the punishment that we deserve, but He has given us the Holy Spirit to dwell in us (1 Cor 6:19-20) Who convinces us that we are children in God's family (Rom 8:14-16). He also tells us that we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ (Rom 8:17) and will rule with Christ in His Millennial Kingdom (Rev 3:21; 20:4, 6).