

# Philemon



# Zephaniah

### **Doctrine for the Mind and Heart**

*Westminster Shorter Catechism Question Q 58.*

What is required in the fourth commandment?

*Answer*

The fourth commandment requires the keeping holy to God such set times as he has appointed in his Word, in particular, one whole day in seven.

*Proof Texts*

Exodus 31:13,16-17

### **Memory verse of the week.**

Proverbs 16:2,3 “All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit. Commit your work to the Lord and your plans will be established.”

**Psalm of the Week.** Psalm 110B. The words are on page 8.

### **Pray for;**

Mon – Dale and Natalie Ward

Tues – Eric, Samantha, Charlotte, Abigail, Hazel, Ezra White

Wed – Josh, Elisha and Caleb Zuiderveen

Thur – Renato, Amparo, Renata, and Helena Ayala

Frid – Joy Ayer

**7<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> December 2020**

**Produced by Ottawa RPC to help family worship.**

*The notes on Philemon by Rev. Stephen McCollum (RPCS) have been considerably modified, with questions added.*

*The notes on Zephaniah by Rev. Craig Scott (RPCNA) have been slightly modified, with questions added.*

## Monday – Philemon 1:8-12 - Useless To Useful

Even though Paul has the authority to tell Philemon what to do he now appeals to Philemon in love to take Onesimus back. In many ways it is not a straightforward request given that Onesimus previously was useless to Philemon. A useless slave is unable to please their master. Whilst man in his natural state does ultimately bring glory to God, in and of himself, he is unable to do good. We read in Romans chapter 3 that no one is righteous before God. In man's natural condition, he does not seek for God. His thoughts are against God. His lips pour out all kinds of evil against God. His every action is rebellion against God. Natural man ought to respect and fear their Creator but he does, and will not.

So, on what basis did Paul make his appeal to Philemon? He did so because Onesimus had been converted. Paul had preached, and Onesimus had heard. Onesimus had believed the message of the good news of the Gospel and by the grace of God come to a conviction that in he was a sinner in need of a Saviour. He had then by faith believed in the Lord Jesus as his Saviour. And so, verse 11 tells us that the formerly useless Onesimus was now useful. By formerly, Paul means before his conversion, before he believed. But now that he is a Christian he is of use to God, and to Paul, and Philemon. Onesimus is useful to the church.

Once Onesimus was converted, he had for the first time the potential to be useful. When a man or woman is made alive in the Lord Jesus, they are placed in a position where they can begin to willingly fulfil their true purpose in life. We should rejoice in this truth. Serving our Saviour becomes a joy filled desire, the fruit of gratitude and love.

Note how Paul speaks of this as being a matter of his heart.

### Questions:

1. How does Paul describe Onesimus' previous worth to Philemon?
2. Why does Paul appeal to Philemon to take Onesimus back?
3. How does Paul describe his level of involvement in this?

## Tuesday – Philemon 1:13-16 - Slave To Family

Paul says that he would have been glad to have kept Onesimus to have served, helped him, during his imprisonment. But he does not do so because of the right of ownership that Philemon still has on Onesimus, even though Onesimus is now a spiritually free man in Christ. And so, Paul sends Onesimus back to Philemon with the desire and expectation that Philemon will take Onesimus back.

Through Paul's mediation Onesimus would be accepted back into Philemon's household as a slave. Yes, but much more than that, now not only as a slave but as a beloved brother because he shared in the same faith as Philemon.

Imagine being Onesimus, returning to Philemon, no longer just a mere slave, now a brother in the Lord. What joy he must have had and how this would have affected his attitude towards his service.

So too of us. Christians are accepted into the household of God as family. We are welcomed in. We are sons of the most High God. We are adopted into the family of God. What a privilege and blessing. And all because the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God became man, suffered, and in so doing As the writer to the Hebrews says in chapter 2:10/11 in chapter 2:11, brings many sons to glory that is why he is not ashamed to call us brothers.

Having been adopted into God's family we shall continue forever as servants of God. The question is how should the knowledge of our adoption affect our service of our Father in heaven.

### Questions:

1. Why did Paul not ask Onesimus to stay and help him during his imprisonment?
2. How would Philemon receive Onesimus?
3. How would Onesimus conversion have impacted his service to Philemon.
4. How should the knowledge of our adoption affect our service to the Lord?

## **Wednesday – Philemon 1:17-19 - The Basis For Forgiveness.**

Paul appeals to Philemon to forgive Onesimus because God has transformed Onesimus' life. If the Gospel had not taken root in this man's life, then Paul would have no basis to appeal to Philemon to forgive. But the Gospel has taken root in Onesimus' life, powerfully so. Onesimus is changed, totally transformed. To nail it home, Paul appeals further, showing that Onesimus is now a brother in Christ. Another change has taken place in him: as we saw yesterday that of adoption. How can Philemon fail to forgive someone who is now in the family?

Paul appeals yet further in verses 17-19, acting as the mediator. Philemon will have been well aware that Paul is using the same sort of language that is used of Jesus Christ, the only mediator between God and man. Paul is purposely reminding Philemon of the Gospel, of Jesus Christ who paid all of Philemon's debts, and who was the very basis that Philemon himself was accepted by God the Father as a justified man. Paul has chosen his words carefully.

The basis of forgiveness is always the Gospel. Just as we love because He first loved us, so too we forgive because He forgave us first. The one who realises just how much he has been forgiven will forgive much. If you don't understand the Gospel, you can never really forgive others. People in the world hold grudges. It is very easy to hold a grudge. But we are not to be like that. We are to be like Jesus, who forgave. Jesus forgave Peter who had denied Him. Jesus forgives Christians for their sins against Him. So, if you find yourself in dispute with a fellow Christian, look to the Gospel first. Don't even begin to deal with that person until you have thought about how you have wronged God, who saved you. It is Gospel thinking that will enable the problem to be addressed appropriately.

### **Questions:**

1. What does Paul ask Philemon to do?
2. Why does he ask this of Philemon?
3. How must we respond to others who have wronged us and are desire to put it right?

## Thursday - Philemon 1: 20-25 - The Benefit in Forgiveness

What does the book of Philemon teach to us about how we are to deal with brothers and sisters who have wronged us?

It teaches that we must first look to the Gospel. See the person as someone whom Christ has saved. They are members of the same family because of the same Gospel by which you have been saved. Note that just as Onesimus did not have to earn Philemon's forgiveness, so too you cannot require the person who has offended you to work earn your forgiveness. You have freely received the forgiveness of God. So, when a brother or sister who has sinned against you comes seeking your forgiveness, you must forgive them because Christ has forgiven you.

In fact, we should be going to those who have sinned against and gently asking them to seek forgiveness of us because Christ sought us out while we were still sinning against Him.

The joy is that by forgiving that brother in Christ, you are refreshing the hearts of the saints. You are promoting the peace of the Church. What a wonderful blessing to the Church.

What does the book of Philemon teach those who have offended others and who need receive forgiveness? It teaches that forgiveness cannot be earned. If you have wronged a brother in Christ, you don't deserve their forgiveness, but because of what Christ has done to them, they can forgive you. And realise as well just how difficult it is for them to forgive you. The Gospel tells us that our forgiveness cost God His one and only Son. Forgiveness is not a light thing.

What does the book of Philemon teach those who are mediators, who are the go-betweens? It is always difficult being in the middle of a dispute. But if you find yourself there, you can know that there is refreshment for you when reconciliation is won the proper way.

### Questions

1. What does this book teach us about receiving and granting forgiveness?

## Friday – Zephaniah 1:1; 2 Chronicles 34 – Introduction.

Today we start a new study in the Prophecy of Zephaniah using notes by Rev. Craig Scott minister in the Grand Rapids RPCNA congregation.

This is a book you may not have read before, but it is one that will hopefully challenge and cause you to think about your own Christian walk. The book brings us a message about the dangers of worldliness and the need to have a strong desire for holiness? It presents what happens when the people of God drift into a place where God is not foremost in their lives.

Zephaniah lives during a testing period as the church is recovering from idolatry. 100 years previously Northern Israel was punished by God for her sin and was taken captivity by the Assyrians in 720 BC. The Southern Kingdom of Judah seems to be heading the same way as the two previous kings in Manasseh and Amon lead the church into idolatry. Josiah is crowned King at 8 years of age and commences a period of reformation as he exhorts the people to follow God's Word once again.

It is during this reformation where Zephaniah prophesies to the Church. The book is split into two sections. Section 1 (1:2-3:8) warns the church of the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord is when God will judge sin and pour out His wrath. Temporally this was fulfilled in 587 BC where Jerusalem fell and was exiled to Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar. Ultimately though, the Day of the Lord is the last judgement where God judges all peoples. In section 2 there is a message of hope. Zephaniah proclaims mercy and salvation to those who repent and turn to the Lord.

Zephaniah teaches that God will chastise His people if they are not holy and devoted to Him. We see these warnings both in Zephaniah and in John's prophesy to the seven churches in the book of Revelation. It is a blessing to be made aware of such warning that we may think about and pay heed to them in our own lives and congregation.

### Questions

1. Who is Zephaniah?
2. Which nation is Zephaniah speaking to?
3. What is the background to Zephaniah's prophesy?
4. What is the Day of the Lord?

## Psalm 110B - The LORD Has Spoken to My Lord

1. The LORD has spoken to my Lord:

“Sit here at My right hand  
Until I make Your foes a stool  
On which Your feet may stand.”

The LORD from Zion shall extend

The scepter of Your pow’r:

“Rule all surrounding enemies,  
And be their conqueror.”

2. When You display Your mighty pow’r

Your people come to You;

At dawn, arrayed in holiness,

Your youth appear like dew.

The LORD has sworn, and from

His oath He’ll never be released:

“Of th’order of Melchizedek,  
You’ll always be a priest.”

3. The Lord at Your right hand will strike

Earth’s rulers in His wrath.

Among the nations He will judge;

The slain will fill His path.

In many lands He’ll crush their kings,

His wrath will be their dread.

And from the wayside brook He’ll drink,

In vict’ry lift the head.