



# The Tri-Cities Edifier

Volume 6

March 24, 2019

No. 12

## Paul's Letter to Philemon

The book of Philemon is such a unique book. It is a personal letter written by the apostle Paul to a specific individual, Philemon. Philemon is a man who loves the Lord Jesus and is faithful unto Him. (vs. 5). Naturally, his love and faith therefore extends to his brethren. (vs. 5) The hearts of his brethren are refreshed by his loving care. (vs. 7) We also note that the church is meeting in his home. (vs. 2)

Paul's letter is about one of Philemon's slaves who was no longer profitable to Philemon. His slave Onesimus had become a Christian and was serving Paul in a vital way while in prison. Paul's request is that he might be able to keep Onesimus with him but he did not want to do so without Philemon's consent. (vs. 13-14) What would Philemon do? Would he oblige Paul or would he require his runaway slave to return?

It is interesting that the letter does not reveal what Philemon's choice was, but knowing what you know about this man, what do you think he did? The apostle Paul was confident that he would comply with his request. (vs. 21) Paul was willing to pay for any of his losses should he find it necessary to do so. (vs. 18) In a most delicate situation however, Paul reminds him of the debt he owed Paul. "you owe me even your own self besides" (vs. 19).

Paul is so confident that this good brother will act in obedience regarding this matter that he instructs him to get a guest room ready for his visit. (vs. 22)

Philemon and Onesimus' relationship was changed the minute Onesimus was converted to Jesus Christ. While the master slave relationship still existed, surely their fellowship in Christ would supersede it. What a great letter.

## I Have To Die to Get Better

Doy Moyer

Have you ever felt that way? You feel so sick that you about wish you'd go ahead and die so that you'd feel better? We even say that as a bit of a joke (or maybe not). Of course, at the time that we feel so badly, we do wish for pretty much anything to happen that would improve our condition. Being sick is no fun.

Spiritually, the concept is indeed a statement of truth. In order to get better, in order to be free from sin, in order to experience forgiveness, in order to get better, we have to die. Paul put it this way:

"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory." (Col 3:1-4)

"So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Rom 6:11).

Before that forgiveness, that we are dead in our trespasses and sins (Eph 2). Then, we must die to self and sin to be brought back to life by God. We have to die in order to live.

"How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." (Rom 6:2-4)

By God's grace, we can die so that we can live. But this goes beyond our spiritual death and new life here. This points to an ultimate life that comes from Christ conquering death through His resurrection. So we die to live now. Then, because death has been conquered, our physical death is not something to fear because we, too, shall take part in the resurrection of life.

We don't really want to die. We want to live. Yet as physical death is necessary to resurrection, so also is death to self and sin necessary to the new life in Christ. By God's grace we can experience both.

In order to get better and live, we must die.

Have you?

## An Anecdote from "Raccoon" John Smith

- by Louis Cochran

In passing a Methodist camp meeting one day in September, John Smith stopped to watch a young Methodist preacher baptize a howling, rebellious infant by sprinkling water on the squirming body. When the service was concluded, Smith stepped to the front of the crowd and, identifying himself, took the preacher firmly by the arm and attempted to lead him toward the creek a few yards away.

"What are you trying to do, Brother Smith?" the young preacher protested. "Are you out of your mind?"

"What am I trying to do?" (Smith pretended deep surprise.) "Why, sir, I am going to baptize you by immersion into the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to his commandment."

"But I have no desire for such baptism. I know of you; you are called 'The Dipper'. But you are not going to dip me. I'm a Methodist; let me go!"

Smith tightened his hold on the man's arm while the crowd watched, some in apprehension, others in amusement. "That is a scoffer's blasphemy of a holy ordinance," John said sternly. "Are you a believer?"

"Of course I'm a believer," the preacher said indignantly. "But I'm not willing to be immersed. It would do no good for you to baptize me against my will. It would be wrong!"

"I don't understand," Smith said. "Only a few minutes ago you baptized a helpless baby against its will, although it screamed and kicked. Did you get its consent first? Come along, sir, we will have no more of this foolishness."

The crowd broke into open laughter, and Smith gave the young preacher a quick pull toward the creek, and then as suddenly released him.

**"He who believes** and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." Mark 16:16