**An Appeal For Brotherly Love**

*Philemon*

Introduction

1. Fellow Christians have a commonality that should, and will if said Christian is living according to the name by which he is called, lead to a natural affection.
2. We should treat each other lovingly at all times.
3. The epistle of Philemon is a small, but powerful section of scripture dedicated to this subject.
   1. **In it we can see how brotherly love acts.**
   2. **In it we can see the powerful nature of brotherly love in overcoming difficult situations.**
4. The Need For Brotherly Love
5. Commanded and Expected
   1. ***“Let brotherly love continue” (Hebrews 13:1).***
      1. *Philadelphia* – fraternal affection
      2. **Special mutual regard for one another regardless of outer differences. It springs from the commonality in Christ.**
      3. **1 Thessalonians 4:9-10 –** You are taught by God to love one another.
      4. To be added to our character **– *“to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love” (2 Peter 1:7).* (**Second only to *agape***)**
      5. Not without action 🡪
   2. **1 John 3:16-19** – love in deed and in truth.
      1. **It is not the mere feeling of affection, but that affection expressed in word and deed.**
      2. **Colossians 3:8-15** – it is acted out with mercy, humility, meekness, etc. (It does not harm the other person.)
6. Ensures Unity Among Brethren
   1. **Philippians 2:1-4** – brotherly love is expressed by the value one has in another, and as such, a wish for their well-being.
      1. If brotherly love continues we will not seek to hurt one another.
      2. **We will seek out each other’s interests instead of our own even in the most difficult situations.**
      3. **As such, a like-mindedness is promoted, and the result is unity.**
   2. **1 Corinthians 6:7-8 – when brotherly love is lacking.**
      1. These brethren were not considering that the person they had conflict with was a BROTHER IN CHRIST **(v. 8).**
      2. **If they had fraternal affection, the problem would work itself out as each followed accordingly.**
   3. *Brethren must have such care for one another that allows even the most difficult of situations to be resolved.*
      1. ***“Love suffers long and is kind…does not seek its own is not provoked, thinks no evil” (1 Corinthians 13:4-5) “does not take into account a wrong suffered” (NASB)***
      2. The Corinthians were not using their spiritual gifts with love. They lacked brotherly love, and as such were hurting each other as the unity of the congregation was compromised. This ought not to be so.
7. An Appeal For Brotherly Love (**Philemon**)
8. Philemon is a short personal epistle sent by Paul to Philemon, a son in the faith – one whom Paul loved.
   1. Not written on Philemon’s behalf, but for him on Onesimus’ behalf.
   2. Onesimus’ – Philemon’s slave who ran away from him.
      1. **V. 10-11, 15-16** – came into contact somehow with Paul, and was converted.
      2. **V. 18** – As a runaway slave, it is likely he caused Philemon some kind of loss.
   3. An appeal by Paul to Philemon to express brotherly love in this sensitive situation.
      1. Within the law, Philemon had every right to punish Onesimus.
      2. **Paul has great care for Onesimus – *as should we for our brethren* – and seeks to appeal to Philemon’s better nature to receive Onesimus in a friendly, forgiving, and brotherly way.**
9. Praise for Philemon’s consistent expression of brotherly love. (*Setting the foundation for his request concerning Onesimus.*) (**v. 4-7**)
   1. **(v. 4-6)** – Paul has heard of Philemon’s character and love, and wishes for it to continue. (He wants Philemon to continue doing what is right.)
   2. **(v. 7**) – Philemon’s expression of brotherly love has been cause for **JOY, COMFORT, and REFRESHMENT**.
      1. Brotherly love works wonders.
      2. We edify one another with the word, but there is need for interaction on all levels. **We should show an interest in one another, and help each other out as we have opportunity.**
10. Plea for Onesimus to Philemon. **(v. 8-16).**
    1. **(v. 8-9, 13-14)** – ***“for love’s sake” (v. 9)***.
       1. Paul did not make a stern command, though he could have as an apostle.
       2. He appealed to Philemon’s past of brotherly love.
       3. **(v. 10-11)** – Emphasis is placed by Paul on the change in Onesimus’ situation.
          1. **He was “begotten” by Paul – taught the gospel and obeyed.**
          2. Unprofitable – ran away.
          3. Profitable – will return. (For Paul, helped him while in prison.)
          4. **(v. 12)** – receive him. (my own heart – Paul had great love for him).
       4. **(v. 15-16)** – no doubt his running away was wrong.
          1. However, Paul suggests that God may have used this in His providence to bring about his conversion.
          2. **Now you can receive him, not simply as a slave, but as a brother in Christ – forever. How wonderful!**
11. The degree of reception and Paul’s confidence in Philemon. (**v. 17-22**).
    1. **(v. 17)** – No doubt, Philemon and Paul were very close.
       1. (**v. 19b)** – seems as though Philemon was Paul’s son in the faith as well.
       2. **Philemon treated Paul with great kindness and love.**
       3. Paul was confident Philemon would continue to show him such in the future **(v. 22)**.
       4. **Philemon was to treat Onesimus the same way**. (Despite the wrong Onesimus committed – forgiveness and mercy.)
    2. **(v. 18-20)** – Paul loved Onesimus so much he was willing to repay Philemon according to his debts.
       1. **(v. 20)** – Paul would greatly benefit from Philemon treating Onesimus accordingly.
       2. He had great love for other Christians, and wanted them to do right, and be treated right.
    3. **(v. 21)** – Paul was confident in Philemon because of his proven character, and because of the effective nature of brotherly love.
       1. Onesimus was no longer simply Philemon’s slave – **he was his brother in Christ.**
       2. **This was enough for Philemon to treat him with kindness and forgiveness, and instead celebrate his conversion.**

**Conclusion**

1. Brotherly love is commanded and expected by God.
2. We must treat one another accordingly.
3. With brotherly love, even the most difficult situations can be handled appropriately, and effectively.
4. **Paul’s epistle to Philemon serves as a wonderful example of the bond Christians have, and how that is to be expressed in the action of love.**