



Stuff They Didn't Teach Me In Sunday School



Episode 171 - Should I Threaten or Appeal?

(Philemon)

In Onesimus' Place

- If you were Onesimus, what fears would have crossed your mind when Paul told you to go back to the master you had wronged?
- What is the worst part of facing someone you offended?
- What comfort could Onesimus have drawn from knowing God's forgiveness, and also carrying Paul's letter?
- How does God's forgiveness encourage us to confess to someone we have wronged?

Command or Appeal?

Paul could have used his apostolic authority to compel Philemon to forgive Onesimus, who had wronged him.

- Why is it tempting to use the threats and guilt of the Law to force people to do what we want?
- What is the drawback of using the Law to motivate behavior?

Paul chose Gospel over Law, reminding Philemon of God's amazing grace, in giving His own Son Jesus into death to forgive him all his sins. In gratitude Philemon should be quick to turn and forgive Onesimus.

- Why is this Gospel solution to Onesimus' sin far superior to the compulsion of the Law?
- Why was it important to empower Philemon to choose what he would do with Onesimus?
- What lessons in forgiveness have you learned from this letter?

Changing the World from the Inside Out

Paul chose the Gospel appeal over the Law's compulsion in a way similar to what Jesus did when He used the promises of the Gospel to turn the world upside down, one heart at a time.

- Name some social issues in which you think our country is going in the wrong direction today.
- What are the drawbacks of trying to address these through legislation (consider prohibition)?
- Why is it more effective to let God work *through* us to change people's hearts?