

“What’s in Your Account?”  
Philemon 15-18

The apostle has asked Philemon to grant him the favor of forgiveness for the slave Onesimus. Paul desires that this be done voluntarily, not by compulsion. In verse fifteen Paul surmises that the purpose of God was to be accomplished in the life of Onesimus even in fleeing from his master. Remember the story of Joseph and his brothers (Gen. 37, 39 thru 50). Joseph is sold into slavery by his brothers (Gen. 37:2-36). He performs admirably and is in charge of all of Potiphar’s house, but is falsely accused by his wife (Gen. 39:6-20). He lands in prison for two years where he again excels in administration and interprets the dreams of the butler and baker (Gen. 40). God is preparing his heart for a greater task, the salvation of Israel and extending forgiveness to his brothers. “You meant it for evil, **but** God meant it for good (Gen. 50:20).” God’s sovereign hand was upon Naomi and Ruth as they lost their husbands. It was on Daniel and the Jewish children taken as slaves to Babylon. It was on the life of Christ and on the life of Onesimus. It is on your life as well (Rom. 8:28; Phil. 2:13).

Paul now makes an appeal based upon the change in the life of Onesimus (2Cor. 5:17). The one who left a slave returns physically the same but spiritually as a beloved **brother** (Greek word *adelphos*, from the womb). Onesimus has experienced the same birth (John 3:3-6) as Philemon and has the same Father (Rom. 8:15). They are now part of the same family (Eph. 3:15). There is neither slave nor free in Christ (Gal. 3:28). Jesus said His brothers and sisters are those who do God’s will (Matt. 12:46-50).

If our relationship be as close as a partner (1Cor. 10:20; 1Pet. 5:1; 2Pet. 1:4), Paul inquires, then receive Onesimus just as you would me, Paul then commands. Furthermore, if he has wronged (Col. 3:25) you or owes (Matt. 18:28, 30, 34) you, put it on my account. What a grand illustration through the apostle of the Christ’s substitutionary death and atoning sacrifice (Isa. 53:4-6, 10, 12; John 1:29; 2Cor. 5:21). The **wages** of our sin is death (Rom. 6:23). **But** God put our debt on Christ’s account! God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself (2Cor. 5:19). If we were reconciled to God by the Son while we were enemies, how much more are we saved by His life (Rom. 5:10)! Now believers are given a ministry of reconciliation (2Cor. 5:18-19). Paul desires that for his friends as we should for all we know.

