Christ in Philemon

TRANSCRIPT (AUTO-GENERATED)

House rules. What are some of the house rules you had growing up? As in, in our house, we do things this way.

What are some of your house rules?

If you cook a meal, that person eats first.

No, you can't eat before that person eats. Chef eats first?

Yep.

Any shoes off of the door, families? Yeah. Other house rules?

If you win a board game, you have to clean it up.

Win a board game, you have to clean it up.

That sucks. I don't want to win a game then. House rules.

No TV at the dinner table.

Yeah, that's a good one.

No TV at the dinner table. We had a rule, it was unspoken, but it's probably similar to Hamish. If you open a bag of chips, you can't take the first chip.

You must offer it to somebody else first. Also, you know, the first shall be last and the last shall be first. Somebody says, grace for dinner, and we all wait, because no one wants to be the first person to go to the table.

House rules. Did you know that the word economics means house rules? Economics in English comes from two Greek words, oikos and nomos, house law, house rules.

So economics is the laws of the house. And a fun thing about getting married, I know there's a bunch of engaged couples in the room tonight, the fun thing about getting married is your house rules clash.

Because you have your house rules and they have their house rules and sometimes they're very different. And so one of the things that happens when you get married is a clash of economies, a clash of house rules.

I think the same thing happens when you become a Christian. You grow up with the economy of the world, the house rules of functioning, excuse me, functioning in the world. And then you become a Christian and there's new house rules.

There's a new economy in the kingdom of God that you have to learn. Tonight, we're going to see a clash of economies, a clash of house rules. We've come in our Christ in Scripture Project to the halfway point, 33 out of 66 books, halfway.

And we come to this book from that previous slide. How do you pronounce that? We got Philemon, any other takers?

Philemon, yeah, Phileminion, I've heard before. In Greek, it's Philemon. I'm going to say Philemon.

We come to that book, the Book of Philemon, really, of course, the Letter to Philemon. And you might remember the rule when you're reading letters in the New Testament. You always have to remember what?

That's a good rule. That's not the rule I'm thinking of. I mean, I suppose it is the rule.

The way that I say the rule is you're reading somebody else's mail. That's really important in all 21 of the Letters in the New Testament. It's especially relevant for the Letter to Philemon.

Chelsea, in a second, is going to read for us the Letter to Philemon, but here's a few things you need to know before she reads it for us.

Philemon was a wealthy patriarch living in the city of Colossae, as in Colossians, living in that city, and he ran a house church in his home. Now, Philemon lived in a big house. He was the patriarch of the house, and he had a slave.

It was common to own slaves in that time, and he had a slave called Onesimus. Everyone say Onesimus. Onesimus ran away and probably took some money when he did.

And so Onesimus, the runaway slave, takes a bit of money and then meets the apostle Paul and gets saved somehow. We don't know the story, but he becomes a Christian. And Paul knows Onesimus.

Paul knows Philemon. Paul knows that Onesimus is the runaway slave of Philemon. And so Paul writes this letter that we're reading tonight in order to convince Philemon to accept Onesimus back home again.

That's the context of this letter. It's Paul's shortest letter. Jack pointed out to me that this morning we did Paul's longest letter, Christ in Romans.

Tonight we come to Paul's shortest letter. So Paul writes this letter to convince Philemon to receive Onesimus. And Chelsea is going to read to us the letter to Philemon.

Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus and Timothy our brother, to Philemon, our dear friend and fellow worker, also to Ephiah, our sister and archipelago, our fellow soldier, and to the church that meets in your home, grace and peace to you from God our

Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, because I hear about your love for all His holy people and your faith in the Lord Jesus.

I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ.

Your love has given me great joy and encouragement because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people.

Therefore, although in Christ, I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, yet I prefer to appeal to you on the basis of love.

On the basis of love, it is as none other than Paul, an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus, that I appeal to you for my son, Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains.

Formerly, he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me. I am sending him, who is my very heart, back to you.

I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I'm in chains for the gospel, but I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do would not seem forced, but would be voluntary.

Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever, no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother.

He was very dear to me, but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord. So if you would consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me.

I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back, not to mention that you owe me your very self. I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord.

Refresh my heart in Christ. Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you would do even more than I ask. And one thing more, prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers.

Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ, Jesus sends you greetings. And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

That is the Letter to Philemon.

It's cool when you preach on a short enough book that you can read the entire thing in one go. So thank you, Chelsea, appreciate that.

In the new economy of the kingdom, we partner in faith. In the new economy of the kingdom, we partner in faith. Paul has a big ask to make of Philemon to receive onesimus back into his household.

And the first thing that Paul does in the Letter to Philemon is remind Philemon of what they have in common, of their partnership, of their common faith. We read in Philemon 4. I'll read this again quickly.

I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, because I hear about your love for all his holy people and your faith in the Lord Jesus.

I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ.

Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you brother have refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people. We partner in faith.

As you would have heard when Chelsea read it for us, Paul does his usual greeting thing, from Paul and Timothy to Philemon, and then he gets into a prayer. It's common for Paul to pray at the start of his letters. The New Testament scholar, NT.

Wright, has this little helpful tip that very often, what Paul prays for in his letters, gives us a clue to the meaning of the letter as a whole. It's not a random prayer, it's a specific prayer.

And when you look at this prayer that Paul prays for Philemon, it's filled with thanksgiving. He says, I thank my God as I remember you in my prayers. You brother have refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people.

A prayer of thanksgiving. The key word in this prayer, indeed the key word of all of Philemon is partnership.

In verse 6, I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. The Greek word behind the English partnership is koinonia. Everyone say koinonia.

It's a really fun word to say, koinonia. I'm going to say it a lot because it's really fun. That word koinonia appears 19 times in the New Testament.

It gets translated in different ways. Fellowship, participation, sharing, partnership, community. But literally koinonia means common being.

To have something in common with another person is koinonia, common being. So it makes sense that you could have koinonia with anyone for many different things. Hands up if you have blue eyes.

Okay, a couple of people. We have koinonia. We are the koinonia of the blue-eyed people.

Hands up if you are monolingual and can only speak English. We are the koinonia of the monolingual here tonight. Hands up if you really like Marvel movies.

The koinonia of the Marvel... It was a bit of this. Yeah, sort of.

The koinonia of the Marvel fans. You can have common being with anyone for any reason. You have something in common.

But Paul is talking about something deeper. He's talking about partnership in the faith. He says in verse five, partnership in the faith of the Lord Jesus.

And for Paul, that means two things, a deeper identity and a greater mission. A deeper identity. He says, in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ.

Some of us in this room share blue eyes. Some of us have a so-so relationship with Marvel movies. Paul is going to the deepest thing that we have in common, and that is our identity in Christ.

He's establishing koinonia on a deeper identity, but also a greater mission. He says, I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective. This is kind of mission language, that we would work together for the same goal.

As Steph mentioned, we had a prayer walk at OneGen on Wednesday, and we had like 25 young adults on mission together, spreading out, praying for our neighbourhood. This is a greater mission. A deeper identity, and a greater mission.

That's the common foundation that Paul builds with Philemon. Have you heard of the Robbers Cave experiment? The Robbers Cave experiment.

In 1954, a bunch of scientists in America started a summer camp, and they invited 22 11-year-old boys, all of whom were white, middle class, and Protestant. That's actually important, so remember that.

And they took these 22 11-year-old boys on a camp in Nebraska, and they split them in two groups of 11. So one group at one end of the camp, on the far other end was the other 11, and the groups didn't know that the others existed.

So within each group, naturally, through camp activities and stuff, they start to bond friendships and community. They even made a flag together. They came up with a team name.

These guys were called the Rattlers, and these guys were called the Eagles. It's great, community, koinonia. And then the researchers told the groups that the other group existed.

And instantly, among these 11-year-old boys, there was name calling, and there was vilification of the other group that they had never even met before. And the irony is that all 22 boys are white middle-class Protestant boys.

They have everything in common, but there's this tribalistic division that began. And so then they took the two groups, and they had them compete in sports and challenges. And there was conflict, and there was animosity between the two groups.

Apparently, one of the groups even burned the flag of another group. And so that group, in turn, broke into their cabins and destroyed all the cabins and left. There's like chaos between these two groups.

Animosity, division, not community. And then the researchers intentionally got the food truck stuck. And these boys want to eat.

And so that brought the 22 boys together to fix the food truck that was stuck. And suddenly, all of the animosity in the division between the two groups was dissolved, and they worked together.

Likewise, there was a leak in the water tower at the top of the hill. And so all the boys, if they wanted to drink water, had to work together to get the rocks out of the way and fix the leak.

And from that moment on, the two groups had become one, and they had become united. When the researchers had concluded the Rubber's Cave experiment, they realised two things.

What brings people together is a superordinate identity and a superordinate mission. In other words, a deeper identity and a greater mission. This is kind of human psychology that we come together when we have a deeper identity and a greater mission.

And that's what Paul begins his letter by appealing to. Not to the fact that we have blue eyes in common, or that we kind of half like Marvel movies, or that we live in Hornsby. But he gets to the foundation of what the believers have in common.

They are in Christ. They share every good thing for Christ. And also, they are part of the much greater mission that God has in this world.

A deeper identity and a greater mission. So let me ask you some questions. These are kind of pointy.

Who is your deepest koinonia? The people who know you best, your deepest community. Is it the community of the blue-eyed people, or the Marvel fans, or the sports team, or the work colleagues?

All of us find community, and that's a very good thing. But I think part of what Paul is encouraging us to is the deepest identity that you and I have in common. We are in Christ.

Let this be the deepest koinonia that we experience. Secondly, what mission are you giving your life for? What's the task that motivates you to wake up?

Career advancement, earning a certain amount of money, retiring early, that holiday that's coming up.

Paul says, we have a much bigger mission that unites us and compels us, and that is the mission of kingdom come, seeing God's kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.

In the new economy of the kingdom, we partner in faith, and secondly, we appeal in love.

So Paul started his letter with a greeting and then a prayer, and then in verse 8, we come to the crux of the letter, the body, the main guts, the reason why Paul wrote his letter.

Paul reckons that on the basis of their partnership in faith, their common identity, their greater mission, Philemon should receive onesimus back into his household. He has to ask for that to happen. How does he articulate the ask?

How do you ask someone to do something so massive? We read in verse 8. Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, yet I prefer to appeal to you on the basis of love.

It is none other than Paul, an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus, that I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains. Formerly, he was useless to you. Onesimus means useful, by the way.

There's a play on words. His name means useful. Formerly, he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me.

I'm sending him, who is my very heart, back to you.

I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the gospel, but I did not want to do anything without your consent so that any favor you do would not seem forced, but would be voluntary.

Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever, no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother.

He is very dear to me, but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord. We appeal in love. Roman households, the kind that Philemon was the patriarch of, were very big.

When you think household, don't think of the modern nuclear family, mum, dad, and two and a half kids. Roman households were big, and they were hierarchical.

At the top of, and when I say big, like many dozens, maybe a hundred people in one big household, they were hierarchical as well. So the patriarch is at the top, his wife is next, the kids, the extended kin, and then the slaves at the very bottom.

Philemon is the patriarch at the top, and Onesimus is the slave at the bottom. And Paul is trying to get that guy to welcome this guy back into the house. How is he gonna articulate that question?

Paul could have employed the economy of Rome, the economy of the world. Paul could have ordered Philemon to do what he ought to do.

Paul could have said, Christ is king, I am his delegated apostle, I outrank you, therefore you must welcome Onesimus back into your house. Paul could have ordered in power, but Paul lives in a different economy.

He lives in the economy of the kingdom. In verse eight, we read, Paul says, Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, yet I prefer to appeal to you on the basis of love. I like that.

In the kingdom of God, we don't order in power, but we appeal in love. That's the new economy of the kingdom that we live in. To order in power is to forcefully exert my will against your will.

To push Pat over even though he doesn't want to be pushed, to make Pat go and get me a piece of cake right now, please. You're meant to say no. To order in power, but to appeal in love is to ask, hey Pat, can you please get me a cake?

Is that what you want? No, thanks. I'm actually preaching.

I can't eat a piece of cake while I'm preaching. To order in power versus to appeal in love. In a couple of weeks time, it's Courtney and my four-year engagement anniversary.

So we got engaged four years ago in a couple of weeks. And when you're asking somebody to marry you, it's like the biggest, most important question of your life. Maybe second to Jesus saying, will you follow me?

And you say yes. And there are two options to get somebody to marry you. Option one is, Courtney had an, I order you to marry me or else.

What's Courtney gonna say? No, I'm out of here, we're done. That's not what I said.

I'm guessing that's not what the guys who've got engaged recently said. Courtney had an, would you make me the happiest man in the world by marrying me? Appealing in love versus ordering in power.

In the economy of the kingdom, when you want something, which should you do? Order in power or appeal in love? Which, appeal in love most of the time.

I went on a very interesting logical rabbit hole in thinking about that question. I realized there's actually a place for ordering in power. It's probably not the place that you think.

These two words, to order and to appeal, epitasso and parakeleio in Greek. The word epitasso, most often in the New Testament, is used when Jesus commands demons to come out of people.

For instance, you deaf and mute spirit, Jesus said, I epitasso, I command you come out of him. Jesus calmed the storm, the disciples said, who is this? He commands even the winds and the water.

What authority is this? The crowd said, Jesus even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him. Epitasso is most often used of Jesus commanding demons to leave.

But the word parakeleio, to appeal in love, is most often used of people asking Jesus to heal them. Isn't that cool?

For instance, people brought all their sick to Jesus and begged him, parakeleio, begged him, appealed to him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak.

The synagogue leader, Jairus, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him, that word, parakeleio, pleading, begging, asking, appealing with him to come to his house.

A man with leprosy came to Jesus and begged him on his knees, if you are willing, you can make me clean. So the word appeal in love, most often in the New Testament, appears of people asking Jesus to heal them. I think that's significant.

I might not be making my point clear. There is a place for appealing in love and there's a place for ordering in power.

It may be necessary to order in power, to restrain evil, to cast a demon out of a person, but it is preferable to appeal in love, in promoting good. Let me illustrate.

I was in youth ministry for seven years as a youth leader and then as a youth pastor. And I trained a lot of youth leaders to join the team. And one of the things that I would say to the leaders is a youth leader is a shepherd and a sheepdog.

Those two roles, shepherd and a sheepdog. They're a shepherd because they're supposed to care for the flock of teenagers, care for them, ask them questions, get to know them.

But youth leaders also need to be sheepdogs because you guys know, teenagers can be wild. And we need some order here. And so I found that quite helpful when you're dealing with 25 rowdy teenagers.

Sometimes you need to be a sheepdog and kind of get things to order. One night, I remember, it was a particularly rowdy night, and I won't say who, because they're not here, but it doesn't matter.

Certain youth people who were not in this room, don't worry, Latana, you're good. Certain people were super rowdy, and we do the usual things of asking them to be quiet and to respect, and they weren't listening. It's like, okay, do I ask again?

How many times do I ask? They were not doing what we said. And I realized in that moment, don't listen to this Tristan, youth pastors have way less power than everyone thinks they do.

Because truly, if a teenager doesn't want to do what you say, what are you going to do? If they literally will not stop talking or throwing things or... what are you going to do?

You can only appeal in love so many times. In fact, I sort of reasoned that I would never step in and forcefully stop a teenager from doing something unless they were hurting somebody else.

I would step in and restrain them and stop them from doing that. And that's the place that power has. When we're talking about victims of child sex trafficking, there is no place for pleading with the traffickers to let these kids go.

That is a place for power to step in and set these kids free from evil. But that is the exception. Power is to be used to stop evil, but appealing in love is the economy of the kingdom.

Power is zero-sum because I get my way and Trotty doesn't get his way. But appealing in love is positive-sum. I get to ask Trotty something and Trotty is allowed to say no, or he's allowed to say yes, but it dignifies the both of us.

The economy of the kingdom is based on appealing in love. So can I encourage you, if you want something big, ask for it. Appeal in love, in prayer.

Isn't prayer just appealing in love? Have you discovered that you and I do not have the power to say, God, give me this thing that I want or else? You guys haven't learned that?

No, we've learned that. You can't order God around. But prayer fundamentally is this posture of, God, I know you're good.

I know you care for me. I know you have a plan here, but I would like daily bread. Would you please provide for us daily bread?

So we appeal in love in prayer. We appeal in love in relationships. I have done a course that technically makes me an accredited marriage premarital counselor.

And one of the things they teach you is assertiveness and active listening, the art of the request.

It's a really good thing in a relationship between two people or in a community for somebody to ask for what they would like to happen or not happen, and then for the other person to hear that request and respond to it.

There's no power dynamic in that kind of relationship. You can't force somebody to do something, but you appeal in love because it's the economy of the kingdom.

Thirdly, we embody the cross. Paul has established partnership, a deeper identity and a greater mission. Then he has said what he had to say.

He has appealed in love. But then finally, in the final section of Philemon, Paul seems to kind of anticipate the consequences of what he has just asked for. Philemon, verse 17.

So if you consider me a partner, that's the same word, koinonia, a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand.

I will pay it back. Not to mention that you owe me your very self. I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord.

Refresh my heart in Christ. Confident of your obedience, I write to you knowing that you'll do even more than I ask. We embody the cross.

It's curious to me that in the Letter to Philemon, Paul doesn't once mention the death or resurrection of Jesus. It's such a significant theme in all of his other letters, but Paul doesn't once talk about the fact that Jesus died and rose again.

But I think it's because he doesn't have to talk about the cross because he is modeling the cross in his behavior. He is embodying the cross.

In verse 18, Paul says, if Onesimus has done any wrong to you, Philemon, or owes you anything, charge it to me. He doesn't have to talk about the cross because Paul is embodying the cross.

Scholars think that when Onesimus ran away, he probably took money, probably a lot of money and ran away. So then Philemon is down a slave, which is a commodity in the ancient world, and money. He's in debt, he's in the red.

And so Paul embodies the cross by saying, as you receive Onesimus back into your household, charge me the debt. Paul steps in and embodies the cross.

I remember my theology lecturer, who's also Jack's uncle in law, great uncle in law, Ross Clifford, who was the former principal of Moreland College. I remember him teaching on a couple of things that sin does in Genesis 3.

The first thing that sin does in the story of Adam and Eve and the snake, is it ruptures the relationship between God and humanity. This vertical rupture, estrangement of relationship.

You see that in Genesis 3, God's walking through the garden saying, where are you and where are Adam and Eve? Hiding. There is a rupture of vertical relationship.

But the second thing that sin does, is it ruptures horizontal relationship between human beings. Because remember, Adam and Eve were naked and what? Ashamed.

They covered themselves. They were broken from relationship with each other. So we have a vertical rupture of relationship and a horizontal rupture of relationship.

And isn't that the shape of the cross? Isn't that the gospel that Jesus reconciles us to the Father and then to each other? In fact, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5, therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come.

The old has gone, the new is here. All this is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them.

And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. That's the cross. Reconciliation with God, and then reconciliation with other people.

That's what Paul does. Paul is stepping into the conflict and the injustice between Philemon and Onesimus, and he's taking the cost on himself. He is part of the reconciling work of God.

And that's what we get to be a part of as well. Remember Jesus said, whoever wants to follow me must take up their what? Cross.

So we are invited, like Paul, to embody the cross, meaning to be part of God's reconciling work between humans, between others and God. I'm in Enneagram 9. Any Enneagram 9s in the room?

Either you guys don't know what that is or I'm the only one. Do you know what the code name for the nine is? Of course you don't.

Oh, the Peacemaker. Yeah, thank you. The Peacemaker.

The Peacemaker. I read this on the Enneagram Institute website. The Peacemaker at their best is able to bring people together and heal conflicts.

And I'm like, yeah, let's go. Peacemaker. Queen Elizabeth II, Peacemaker.

Abraham Lincoln, Peacemaker. Walt Disney, Homer Simpson. So I'm in good company.

It's us Peacemakers. And then I looked a little bit further down on the website of the way that the Peacemaker brings peace and I'm like, oh, I'm not a Peacemaker. I am what the psychologist Edwin Friedman calls a Peacemonger.

Not a warmonger, a Peacemonger. He says this in the best book on leadership you'll ever read. You can have that for free.

Peacemonger, a highly anxious risk avoider, someone who is more concerned with good feelings than with progress. Someone whose life revolves around the axis of consensus.

A middler, someone who is so incapable of taking well-defined stands that his, quote, disability seems to be genetic. Someone who functions as if she had been filleted of her backbone. Someone who treats conflict or anxiety like mustard gas.

One whiff, on goes the emotional gas mask and he flits. That's me. But that's not Paul.

You think about the context of Philemon, that's not what Paul did. He did not just say, guys, can we all be friends? Like treat him extra nice.

Paul stepped into the conflict between master and slave and embodied the cross, taking the penalty of the literal monetary debt that Onesimus owed to Philemon. He took that on himself in order that reconciliation might happen.

So I feel like flipping challenged by that, to not be a peacemonger, but a peacemaker. And we are all called to do that as followers of Jesus, to step into situations of pain and suffering and injustice.

And by the grace of God, with the power of the Spirit, to be part of God's reconciling work, to embody the cross. So where's the cross that you're called to carry? Where's the cost that you're called to count?

When we take up our cross, we follow our Savior who did the same thing. And as we follow our Savior to the cross, we follow him to the resurrection on the other side of the cross. In the new economy of the kingdom, we partner in faith.

We have a deeper identity and a greater mission. We appeal in love. We ask for big things.

We don't order in power and we embody the cross. Horizontal reconciliation with God and sorry, vertical reconciliation with God and horizontal reconciliation with each other. Those are the new house rules.

If you're a Christian, Paul's saying that's the economy that you live in. You don't live in the economy of Rome, the economy of Sydney. You live in the economy of the kingdom.

And in the kingdom, we partner in faith, we appeal in love and we embody the cross. The big question is, as we finish, did Philemon receive Onesimus back into his household?

Paul writes in Philemon 21, confident of your obedience, I write to you knowing that you will do even more than I ask, did Philemon receive Onesimus back? We don't know, unfortunately.

What we do know is that 50 years later, Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch wrote a letter to the Bishop of Ephesus, who had a very interesting name. What do you think that name was? Onesimus.

We can't say for sure, but there is good evidence that Philemon received the runaway slave back into his household.

And this lowly slave who had no hope in life beyond being the bottom rung of the big Roman household became the leader of the church in Ephesus. That is the gospel at work. That's Christ in Philemon, reconciling us to God and then to each other.

So let that be an encouragement of what the new economy of the kingdom looks like. A slave can become a bishop, and you can become a reconciling agent of God's power.