My name is Jim Fleming and this is Our Sunday School. Our Sunday School is part of

Stuart Heights Baptist Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee. To prepare for

this lesson, please go to oursundayschool.com for a copy of today's handout.

Now, let's get to this week's lesson.

Well good morning everybody and welcome to Our Sunday School. Glad you guys are with us today.

What page are we on this morning Dave? We're on 41. Excellent. You got your blue

books. Head over to page 41. We'll read through Philemon in just a second. It's

gonna be my new weekly reminder though. Like are we reaching out? Are we asking

folks? Telling folks? Are we praying for them? Have we told them we're praying for

them? Are we thanking God for them? Are we telling them we've thanked God for them?

This is our ongoing homework in our class. So pick a member, any member or two or

ten or how many and let's go do this work. So I'll read our... I'm just gonna

keep reading this song. I really like this song. So I speak O Lord and so we'll

go from here. So speak O Lord as we come to you to receive the food of your holy

word. Take your truth, plant it deep in us. Shape and fashion us in your likeness

that the light of Christ might be seen today in our acts of love and our deeds

of faith. Speak O Lord and fulfill in us all your purposes for your glory. Teach

us Lord full obedience, holy reverence, true humility. Test our thoughts and our

attitudes in the radiance of your purity. Cause our faith to rise. Cause our eyes

to see your majestic love and your authority. Words of power that can never

fail. Let their truth prevail over unbelief. Speak O Lord and renew our

minds. Help us grasp the heights of your plans for us. Truths unchanged from the

dawn of time that will echo down through eternity. And by grace we'll stand on

your promises and by faith we'll walk as you walk with us. Speak O Lord till your

church is built and the earth is filled with your glory.

Alright let's read through Philemon.

Brian's always paying attention. I don't know who's paying attention in the room, but Brian is always paying attention. I appreciate you brother.

Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus and Timothy our brother. To Philemon our dear

friend and co-worker. To Athena our sister. To Archippus our fellow soldier. To the

church that meets in your home. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and

the Lord Jesus Christ. I always thank my God when I mentioned you in my prayers

because I hear of your love for all the saints and the faith that you have in

the Lord Jesus. I pray that your participation in the faith may become

effective through knowing every good thing that is in us for the glory of

Christ. For I have great joy and encouragement from your love because the

hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you brother. For this reason

although I have great boldness in Christ to command you to do what is right I

appeal to you instead on the basis of love. I Paul as an elderly man and now

also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus appeal to you for my son Onesimus. I

became his father while I was in chains. Once he was useless to you but now he is

useful both to you and to me. I am sending him back to you. I am sending my

very own heart. I wanted to keep him with me so that in my imprisonment for the

gospel he might serve me in your place but I didn't want to do anything without

your consent so that your good deed might not be out of obligation but of

your own free will. For perhaps this is why he was separated from you for a

brief time so that you might get him back permanently no longer as a slave

but much more than a slave as a dearly loved brother. He is especially so to me

but how much more to you both in the flesh and in the Lord. So if you consider

me a partner welcome him as you would me. And if he has wronged you in any way or

owes you anything charge that to my account. I Paul write this with my own

hand. I will repay it not to mention that you owe me even your very self. Yes

brother may I benefit from you in the Lord refresh my heart in Christ. Since I

am confident of your obedience I am writing to you knowing that you will do

even more than I say. Meanwhile also prepare a guest room for me since I hope

that through your prayers I will be restored to you. Epaphras my fellow

prisoner in Christ Jesus sends you greetings and so do Mark, Aristarchus,

Demas and Luke my co-workers. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your

spirit. The letter to Philemon. Alright so today we pick up in the middle of verse

9 which is a weird place to stop but the punctuation in English kind of landed us

there so that's where we stopped last time. So the second half of verse 9

through 11 so I Paul as an elderly man and now also as a prisoner of Christ

Jesus appeal to you for my son Anasimas. I became his father while I was in

chains once he was useless to you but now he is useful both to you and to me.

So today we're going to cover probably the most common thing that gets taught

about the letter of Philemon and a couple of the things that might not normally

get taught about the letter to Philemon because you have to look a couple levels

way down deep right? Like way down deep. So page 41 top of page 41 I Paul.

So what's the Greek word for I? It is the Greek word for I. It's ego. Is that word

in the Greek here? I did not expect anybody to answer that question that's

fantastic Mitch. I love you so much man. Just some random Greek question and Mitch

answers it accurately. No this word is not here. We add it in the English so

that it doesn't just get super awkward because if you don't say I Paul you just

say Paul as an elderly man it almost makes it sound like Paul's not writing

the letter anymore at this point but Paul is writing the letter so we do this

twice in the English in the letter to Philemon. So Paul as an elderly man. So

this is my new favorite Greek word this is presbutes. I kid you not that is how

you pronounce it and I was so hoping that both of you knuckleheads would not

be in the room today sitting next to each other when I said this but it is

what it is. So the yeah the good Dr. Vincent said according to Hippocrates

which is so does anybody know when Hippocrates lived relative to when Jesus

lived and Paul lived? Yep exactly like four four hundred years earlier. So we're

quoting somebody who was four hundred years earlier but everybody in that time

period still used it this particular way. A man was called a presbutes from 49 to

56 which lines up really really nicely with how old we think Paul was at that

time. So if Paul's writing from Rome this puts this letter at a 60-61 AD ish kind

of time frame. We think Paul was probably four five six seven years younger than

Jesus and all that lines up very very nicely. So you know cool so even the word

that he picked helps us hone in on the specific timeline. The reason the

timeline matters is if it's a different timeline then he's in a different city

he's not in Rome yet. He's in Ephesus which was another place that he got

thrown in prison for a hot minute and he actually kind of did like a prison tour.

It was several different places where he thinks were yes his prison ministry yeah

the original the life of Paul the original prison ministry there you go

that's good. All right so this word presmutes shows up a couple of different

times in the New Testament it is used in Luke 1 18 a text that some of you might

be reading soon this is used of Zechariah and when we think about

Zechariah and he he is told you might remember the story in Luke 1 what about

Zechariah so fill me in on Zechariah.

Yes.

An angel shows up and was this normal? Does not appear to be normal in the

scripture from Zechariah's response it certainly does not appear to be normal

right and he calls himself this word which is good because at a very specific

age you were released from temple duty and this word fits in that time frame so

like all of these little things little bitty things that just add to and add to

and like like we're just beefing up the confidence that we can actually have in

God's Word. Titus flip over to Titus chapter 2 for a second I'll show you the

other time this should just be turned left in your Bible like two pages or

maybe one page even I don't know. Titus 2 so this is Paul writing to Titus verse 1

but you are to proclaim things consistent with sound teaching older men

press bootes are to be self-controlled worthy of respect sensible and sound in

faith love and endurance in the same way older women are to be reverent in

baton on and on and on we go so I think this is another example of Paul

exhibiting what it looks like and commanding it in a different place he

does this a lot in the New Testament so if you read through Philemon do you get

the sense that Paul is self-controlled could he have gone a different way with

this yes do you get the sense that he is worthy of respect in the way that he

handled this yes do you get the sense that he is very sensible in the way that

he handled this yes do you get the sense that he is sound in faith love and

endurance in the way that he said yes like so Paul gives us an example of what

it looks like to be in that phase of life with how he engages with Philemon

which I think is really nice like Philemon is what the gospel looks like

with work boots on like you like we're gonna go put it into practice and live

it out this is what it looks like fleshed out all right so that's the word

Paul's an elderly man so when when you see the phrase elderly man would you can

we go back one day would you have thought that we were 49 to 56 like no

not really right so just as a reminder life spans then are not what life spans

today are the infant mortality rate of that age was 30 40 50 percent was

terrible I'm using absolutely terrible so if you if you factor in infant

mortality into average lifespan average lifespan was early 30s if you take

infant mortality out of the equation average lifespan was just shy of this

like if you got to be 50 whoa like that was a long life okay so when we talk

about like the aged people this would have been somebody that made it to their

60s like what in the world so then when we get to John the Revelator who writes

Revelation when we think he's in his late 80s early 90s he's the oldest guy

anybody knew like you didn't live that long okay so I just want to have this in

our in our mind just a little bit now there is another Greek word for somebody

who is older than this and that word shows up in Jesus interactions with it's

not it's not Nicodemus it's who's John 3 is it Nicodemus it is okay I've had this

confused in my head all week long John 3 16 is engage with Nicodemus right so

Nicodemus says how can an old man be born again Nicodemus picks the word that

means like the oldest person you know this is not a like you're 30 you're 40

you're 50 no no you're in you you are in your 60s man like what in the world okay

so this is the range of the words themselves and what they mean all right

so I Paul an elderly man so why would he say he's old he is old right is any

other reason to bring it up all right so let me ask you something for any of us

that have gray somewhere on the hair in our bodies have you ever flexed that for

help I know you haven't Darla I know you have it have any of the others of us yes

like hey I'm an old person help me out here just say he's playing on this a

little bit now if you read 20 commentaries on this half of them will

say this word look at your footer and page 42 the footnote on page 42 this

word could mean or an ambassador it does not mean an ambassador it is absolutely

not what this word means this word never meant ambassador if you take this word

and change one of the letters then it means ambassador you're like well why

would they put the footnote in here because not every single manuscript that

we have from this time agrees and this is one of the things where there's a

handful of them that look like it means ambassador but the best ones mean old

man so we're gonna go with old man all right yes ma'am yes yes and this was a

very common thing in this culture as well this is not a the elderly had a

higher level of status and worth than the elderly do today yeah which is

shockingly unfortunate but a reality of the where we live so all right so I Paul

an elderly man and now also as a prisoner of and what would you expect

the next word to be Rome right I mean Rome has come in and they have locked me

up and and yet who does Paul acknowledge as responsible for his imprisonment

Christ Jesus so when we get an opportunity to look at the sovereign and

the sovereign we should remember who is really sovereign like the the king of

England right now is sovereign over a portion of the earth but there is a king

of kings who is sovereign over all things there are Lords in certain parts

of the world who have sovereignty over a very small piece of land but there is a

Lord of Lords who has sovereignty over all things and Paul puts us here and

reminds us that Christians are subjects of a sovereign and we can get that we

Jim hi my name is Jim I can forget really really quickly who the real

sovereign is and focus on what's right in front of my face and like it's right

here because Paul is chained to somebody while he is dictating this letter so

like there's somebody right next to him while he's saying these words and what

do you think went through that guards head when he heard Paul say I am a

prisoner of Christ Jesus I don't forget there was somebody listening to Paul

talk to the amanuensis who's writing this down that is called witnessing my

friends do you think the guard is going to have like I have questions about this

do you not know Caesar's name I feel like you should this was real common

knowledge is not like well I wonder who the senator from Nebraska is right now

no idea I was don't care either right now there you go that's good so so Paul

identifies as a prisoner of Christ Jesus because he is a prisoner of Christ Jesus

and Christians are subjects so let's recognize that and I would say let's

rejoice at that at our kind and loving King especially as compared to Nero

I mean we name our dogs Nero right when our kids I mean this is terrible

terrible terrible human being so Christians are subjects so let's

recognize and rejoice

all right so that finishes up verse 9 so I Paul as an elderly man and now also as

a prisoner of Christ Jesus this could be the portion of the letter where you

could think about him laying it on just a little thick here right some an old

guy who's locked up I appeal to you so this word appeal is the second time it

shows up in Philemon showed up last week's text as well

parakaleo this me I want you to look at the four definitions here and then we'll

look at how intensely personal this is for Paul let's go the next slide they

have things so the first definition is to call near so if he is he calling

Philemon to come stand near him here that didn't fit at all right okay let's

look at the fourth one does it look like he is comforting Philemon with the words

that he is saying right near that like not exactly right okay let's look at a

couple others to implore or to entreat or to ask for mercy or help okay I'm

gonna leave this as an option right and then the third one to exhort or to

counsel or to encourage that's it I feel like we're somewhere in that second and

third definition right maybe using a little of both there so this is the word

for appeal this is a singular so this is mean I Paul appeal I want you to look at

the you is a singular so he's appealing directly to Philemon for my singular son

singular keep going on page 44 I became his father singular while I was in

chains page 45 he singular was useless to you singular but now he is useful

singular both to you singular and to me singular this is an intensely personal

portion of this letter where he goes back and forth one on one one on one one

on one about one person right so we've gotten we've gotten into the I'm being

very direct with you now and it you can sort of pick up on this a little bit in

English but unless you look at the singular in the plural and you see this

is just all singular it's hard to see how intensely personal this is right

here all right so what's he appealing to him for he's just said I'm an old man

and I'm in prison what would you expect the appeal to be for yeah I need some

stuff right I'm lonely I've got whatever I'm I'm sick I'm cold I'm hungry I'm

fill in the blank here Paul does not make the appeal for himself I feel like

there is a lesson in there somewhere I appeal to you for my son anesimus so

Paul has some degree of influence here right and he is using his influence for

reconciliation he is not using his influence for himself now two things I

would say I might cover what you're about to say he might already have what

he needs covered from the other churches who are doing what they need to be doing

he Philemon may have already sent him something I don't know this was very

specific about anesimus and Philemon's relationship that's what the point of

this letter was and then we get an opportunity whenever we have influence

we can consume our influence or we can use our influence for others not just in

a and I'm not I'm not dissing this I don't think this is a bad idea but I'm

not only going to use my influence to pay for the Starbucks order behind me I'm

going to use my influence to do something that advances the cause of the

gospel just make sense so I want to I want to draw a distinction here and

again I'm not not dissing on anybody that's trying to just do good in

general this is specifically in advancement of the cause of the gospel

you're like well Jim how do anesimus and Philemon getting along advanced the

cause of the gospel where does this church meet and Philemon's house every

time they show up if anesimus is has been assigned to do something else oh

well the gospel doesn't matter at home oh well it's not for today it's not for

me it's for you right I mean these are all little bitty examples of does this

is this what the gospel really means is it significant enough can it bear the

weight of relationships and it can which is great news this is really really good

news so when we have influence we can use that influence for reconciliation

this is a really good thing all right so let's talk about anesimus his name for

just a second anesimus was a very common slave name what does anesimus mean

anybody oh not anesimus not Aristarchus not Aristarchus anesimus useful

profitable right I came across this lovely quote from FF Bruce who is a

lovely man as you can tell it was quite customary to give slaves names like this

not necessarily because they were in fact useful or profitable but in the

hope that if they were called by such a name their nature or conduct might come

to match it like I'm just gonna call you good job so many times until you do a

good job right it you do in our house we had dogs right growing up and you'd call

that dog good boy good boy good boy good girl good girl good just good good good

to reward that like yay we're hit and a lot of masters did this with their

slaves because it takes a lot of encouragement to get somebody to behave

exactly like you want them to behave right so this is probably the most

common thing that is taught thank you Davis connection probably the most

common thing that is taught about Philemon is that his name means

profitable or useful and if just in case Philemon didn't pick up on what Paul was

putting down Paul puts in verse 11 once he was useless right he was not

profitable to you but now he is useful his his name reflects who he is now

right so this is one of those Paul sets the tea and he just whacks it and whacks

it and whack you like oh he's he's making a play on the word definition

here yes he absolutely is all right so where else do we meet an

estimates in the New Testament in Colossians right where we just were

which is why we're doing Philemon now because we he this was in Colossae right

so in Colossians 4 9 we meet he has come is talking about Tychicus Tychicus is

coming with an estimates a faithful and dearly loved brother who is one of you

well that sounds like profitable that sounds like useful that's not like

somebody who the gospel has gotten a hold of their lives and it's made a

difference and he's making a difference for the kingdom they will tell you about

everything here so there was there was something that Tychicus and Onesimus

knew about Paul in Rome there's some personal hands-on experiential knowledge

that they had about Paul and Paul explains that here in verse 10 in

Philemon he says I became his father while I was in chains all right so

sometimes I think it's helpful to talk about what this can't mean this can't

mean Paul had relations and then bore a son and his name is Onesimus and he's

sending him back for the first time to like whoa whoa whoa so we're not talking

about a biological fatherhood here we're talking about a spiritual father some

type of a euphemism that's going on and Paul uses this particular language

several different times in the New Testament in 1st Corinthians 4 1st

Corinthians 4 apparently I haven't flipped through 1st Corinthians 4 in

this Bible yet because the pages are sticking together verse 14 is Paul

writing he says I'm not writing this to shame you but to warn you as my dear

children for you may have countless instructors in Christ but you don't have

many fathers for I became your father in Christ Jesus through the what through

the gospel so pretty much anybody who reads this text believes that Paul is

the one who explained to them the way of repentance and faith in Christ Jesus and

they placed their faith in Christ Jesus and became believers so Paul has a

fatherly type relationship to them because he has shared the gospel with

them and this looks like exactly what is going on here with Onesimus so most

people think this is a euphemism for there's 20 different ways to say this in

American Christianity I led someone to the Lord I I shared the gospel with them

they got saved when I did evangelist like you see where we're going here okay

so I became his father a couple of different things quotes here so Thompson's

got a great quote the if the language of brother and sister back in verses 1 & 2

evoke the bond of close familial ties by being in the family of God the language

of son and father emphasizes this bond even more like this is a family that is

happening here and then dr. Millick the relationship between Paul and Onesimus

was strong like a father and son the rabbi's often use that metaphor to

describe their disciples and it applied equally to such Christian relationship

so this would have been rabbinical ishy language that Paul would have heard and

used a lot earlier in his life and he just ports that right over to gospel

Christianity and like hey that's a good term great this works really well now go

back one slide for me Dave tell me what you guys notice about this picture go

back one more and this picture so this is one this is two this is one this is

two tell me what you notice about the difference between those pictures

there's gray hair yes how about the quality of this picture like somewhere

around garbage right cool this drives me nuts this picture drives me nuts so I

wrote dr. Millick an email because I'm that guy I'm like I teach a Sunday

school class and we like to read a lot and I put up pictures of you guys

because I think it's helpful for us to see you as human beings and brothers and

sisters in Christ and like we can pray for you and encourage you and show you

appreciation and all these things and I said and I've got a really crappy

picture of you and I'd like to not have a crappy picture of you can you send me

a not crappy picture of you and he wrote back this is so cool Jim thanks for

writing so I was like I was like geeking out you know this is kind of cool he

also told me that his Philippians commentary the one that we used in when

we went through Philippians was 35,000 words he's got an expanded one that's at

the publisher right now it's a hundred and ninety thousand words he's like I

pray it will be much more useful he's on vacation he's gonna email to when he

gets back to his office in a couple of weeks so there you go cool Darla getting

down to brass tacks like so so what like I want to see the picture right no he

did not say no I'm quite excited about he said yes all right no he's not dead

he's still in color so he's still in color all right so I became his father

while I was in chains while I was in chains I don't want us to miss that the

gospel can be shared anywhere right like Paul is literally shackled to somebody

and an estimates that I'm not gonna guess but an estimates in Paul come face

to face and Paul is sharing the gospel in an estimates is converted so if an

estimates is converted from the conversation he and Paul had who also

heard the gospel the dude shackled to him right I love it I love it I love it

I love it it's fantastic so I also became his father while I was in chains

and then verse 11 I think is the most beautiful framework for a testimony in

all of the scripture it is a beautiful framework for a testimony once before

Jesus he was useless to you but now after Jesus he is useful both to you and

to me if you want to give a testimony and we're gonna talk about it in here

just a minute because next week is testimony Sunday if you want to give a

testimony this is the basic framework before Christ this was my life Jesus now

my life and it is not I was poor and now I got cool blingy stuff it is I was a

sinner and now I'm a saint this makes sense awesome so once he was useless now

I want you to look at the Greek word here a crusts you see the a in front of

the crusts there you see it yep great slide down put your finger on that and

then slide down to useful look at the Greek word there you Christos the a in

front of a word in Greek means the same thing as does in English it's the

opposite so it's not useful the you the EU is a full of or lots of or like

cram-packed full of crusts is like really useful so in Greek Paul is doing

something with these words very very clearly now flip back a couple of pages

at the bottom of page 42 so it says and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus

crusts sounds an awful lot like Christos look at how it's spelled in Greek C H R

I s T OS one letter different you're like well Jim he didn't say Christ he

didn't but when you're hearing this read out loud and notice the order that Paul

put the words in in the verse before Christ Jesus so that's the emphasis that

he is putting on the name is the Christ part I think he is setting up this he is

lacking Christ and full of Christ not the exact words that he used but when

you hear it because remember that's how these Christians would have experienced

this text most of them would not have been able to read you had somebody who

is experienced with reading they would read the text out loud you would listen

to the whole thing being read at once and you would be listening for all these

different writing devices that the author was using to help the listeners

know to follow the letter and that is something thank you miss Chanda that you

will never ever ever get in an English translation because there is basically

no way in the world to show that in English but it's there and it gives us a

glimpse into how beautiful a writer Paul was and how much the spirit is working

through these specific word choices and the Greek language because that word

sounds like this word like that's incredible yes it is it's pretty awesome

all right so once he was useless this means useless it's a fantastic

translation to you but now but now he's standing in front of you which implies a

little bit of something I thought about this one for quite a bit before I

decided to put it in because I think it's true so I'm gonna stand over here

and say I think it's true by his return an estimates indicates he is as hopeful

Rick as Rick for reconciliation is Paul because if an estimates didn't believe

he was actually going to be able to be reconciled like don't go back just run

away go somewhere else so there was some degree of like I'm obeying here I

believe I think this is gonna happen but the really cool thing is after his

conversion after his conversion let's go forward there we go we see Paul

providing a helpful model for seeking to restore broken relationships right and

this is a beautiful picture of how all this can work and then one more he makes

his appeal on the basis of the transformation brought about by a new

life in Christ through the gospel he doesn't say an essence is useful because

an essence is useful and that's a big deal an essence is useful because Christ

made him useful and this is where we get to my favorite quote of all the

commentators maybe of all time but certainly of Philemon and this is

Luther's work we are all his capital H gods an SMI which is how you take an S

a must and make it plural so there you go

dr. Luther making your thing happen because we are made useful because of

what Christ has done in and through us via the gospel and before we're useless

right the framework for the testimony once before Christ useless now useful

both to you and to me because it's not just it's not just you're theoretically

useful is like no no you're standing in front of me let's look at the pace and

they can quote here today the gospel radically changes us on the inside which

is good that's really helpful we got to have that this has to do with how I look

to God however the gospel also changes us on the outside and this has to do

with how we look to others there's both an internal and an external change and

both of these are important I have to be rightly related to God but there needs

to be some difference in my life otherwise the gospel is not attractive

to anybody who is looking at my life that makes sense there with me excellent

all right so so next week then what are we doing next week well next week is

testimony Sunday so here's your framework for a testimony once before

Jesus and then your Jesus story and then now after Jesus which is good and I'll

tell you every Christian has a testimony anesthetizes was verse 11 that's it

that's all we have of his testimony once he was useless to you but now he is

useful both to you and to me and if you go that sounds cool I'll go with that

awesome but next week we will not be recording we will not be broadcasting we

will just be sitting I'm teaching the class next Saturday my voice will be

shot so you guys are gonna be leading the testimony part I'll share mine and

then we'll each give our testimony and if you've got a very specific piece of

scripture that was instrumental in your Jesus story I'd love to share that and

read that as well if not okay cool all right we got it that makes sense

yes ma'am no you sit where you are that's great yeah because there's no

need to record it we're not going to record it some of our Jesus stories are

not something we would necessarily want to share the before and the after so I'm

not gonna I'm gonna take this component out of it so that there's not a like

weird factor that work cool yes sir day oh good okay cool awesome all right so

next week is testimony Sunday so we'll start with the once to the now offer

gotta made a slide for it there we go yeah and then share the scripture

that's meaningful to you now and share one okay all right so next week we'll do

testimony Sunday the week after that Lord willing we'll pick up in verse 12

and hopefully finish up with part one of your handout which would be nice so

we'll pick up part two in 2025 that's just sounds weird to say all right cool

so that's the lesson for today let's move into our prayer time if you got any

updates prayer requests jot those down for those of you that did not see Cody

and Olivia had the baby and the baby is healthy and the it's a good-looking baby

and you will hear me say that probably twice in your life so this is a

good-looking baby when was the baby born Jules last week yes yes I didn't get

like a bunch of details I got a picture like Cody was communicating so I love

you bro but you communicate as well as I do so there's that all right so let's

move to our prayer time and then let's go worship the Lord thanks guys thanks

for engaging and don't forget to subscribe to our podcast YouTube channel

and weekly email you can subscribe to all three of those at our Sunday school

calm grace and peace to you