



Tweets from Heaven

#3 Philemon: Acceptance

I. Introduction

Instead of rejecting Onesimus (as he had every right to do, as his society urged him to, as his natural inclination was), Paul exhorted Philemon to “receive to himself (vs 17) ‘for love’s sake” this runaway slave.

Acceptance: Webster says that involves giving admittance or approval to someone...and this admittance comes without protests or reactions.

II. The opposite of being accepted is rejection...it’s isolation and loneliness

- A. From the very beginning, God knew that it was not good for man to be alone. See Genesis 2:18
- B. The home is the basic unit that God established to meet the needs of human beings
 - Genesis 2:24 – Cleaving to his wife
 - Ruth 4:14-15 – For the extended family
- C. God instituted the church (the body of Christ) to be focal point for the many varied lives it represents.
 - 1. The term for church, “ekklesia” means a called-out assembly, a gathered group out from behind our closed doors, fenced yards and isolated streets.
 - 2. The first church focused on relationships, not building – Acts 2:41-47.

III. On what basis are we accepted by Almighty God?

- A. An Old Testament perspective: The old covenant was based on the keeping of the law.
 - 1. Moral law – the 10 commandments. See Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5
 - 2. Sacrificial laws – regarding the priesthood, tabernacle and sacrifices. See the book of Leviticus.
 - 3. Social laws – regarding the social, political and economic rules affecting Israel. See Ex. 21-23:13.
 - 4. It was conditional: “If...then” See 2 Chron. 7:14

5. God delights His redeemed people. See Isa. 60:7 where the gifts on offerings "shall come up with acceptance or mine after." They were accepted (found "delightful") by God. It is similar to the "living, holy sacrifice" that is acceptable in Rom. 12:1.

B. A New Testament perspective

1. Col. 1:20 *"and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."*

Peace through the blood

2. Rom. 5:1 *"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we^[a] have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,"*

Justified by faith

3. Rom. 5:8 *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

While we were sinners

4. Eph. 1:6 *"to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves."*

Accepted in the beloved

5. Rom. 15:7 *"Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God."*

Accept one another

IV. Paul asks for Philemon to accept Onesimus

Biblical acceptance transcends the natural response of man. It asks for a "supernatural" attitude – one that would have to come from God. It is not an automatic reaction, it is an act of the will when directly led by the Holy Spirit.

V. That kind of acceptance involves understanding that:

A. No one is perfect: Acceptance involves lowering our expectation levels.

1. Look at the Christian Hall of Fame (Hebrews 11). Great heroes of faith had their weaknesses:

Noah – Gen. 9:21 Became drunk after the flood

Abraham – Gen. 12:11-20 Lied and offered his wife to Pharaoh

Gen. 20:1-7 Lied and offered her again, this time to Abimelech

Sarah – Gen. 16:3-4 Urged her husband to lay with her handmaid

Gen. 18:12 Laughed at God over His promise

Moses – Ex. 2:11-15 Was a murderer

Rahab – Josh. 2:9 Was a harlot

Samson – Judges 13-16 Was a womanizer

David – 2 Sam. 11 An adulterer, had a man killed

- B. There needs to be some allowances made for imperfections, sins, mistakes and disagreements (we're not talking about accepting those who are in unrepentant sin – see 1 Cor. 5:9-13)

Look at the illustration found in Joshua 20:1-3 – the cities of refuge

- C. Acceptance doesn't ignore sin, it just focuses its attention on restoration.

Consider Jesus and the adulterous woman: "go and sin no more" in John 8:11

- D. Such acceptance is tough, it involves an act of our will, whether or not our emotions agree.

VI. **A word about "accepting" your own acceptance in Christ. Eph 1:6 "Accepted and Beloved"**

- A. Remember: to be disappointed with yourself is to have believed in yourself

- B. "The Proper Attitude of Man Under Grace:"

"To believe, and to consent to be loved while unworthy, is the great secret. To refuse to make 'resolutions' and 'vows'; for that is to trust in the flesh. To expect to be blessed, through realizing more and more lack of worth...To rely on God's chastening [child training] hand as a mark of His kindness..." (Bible.org – acceptance)

VII. **So what?**

Who do you have in your life that you need (for love's sake) to accept?

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think it is so hard to accept some people and not others? What triggers your compassion?
2. When does "acceptance" begin to look like "acquiescence"? What should be the standard?