



Background Scripture:
Colossians 4:7-9; Philemon.
Devotional Reading:
Colossians 1:9-14.

Little known by Christians, seldom read and even less frequently understood, the Letter of Paul to Philemon is Christian masterpiece.

If the statement I have just made causes you to blink just a bit, let me assure you that it has taken me far too long to come to that conclusion. Like many, I have often felt a sense of embarrassment in regard to this letter. On the face of it, it seems that the Apostle Paul is giving in to unspecified pressures to return the former slave (although legally he was still regarded as one) to his legal owner, Philemon, of the city of Colossae (today's Turkey).

What one might wish for in this letter from Paul is one of his typical clear, forthright pronouncements against the evil of slavery. But for once, Paul disappoints us - his letter to Philemon doesn't "ring" or command. In fact, it is probably the Apostle's most low-key appeal in the New Testament.

Consider the facts: Onesimus had been the slave of Philemon and, at some time, had run away, probably stealing from his master in the bargain. Later, after his escape, he had come under the influence of Paul and been converted. In fact, it appears that Onesimus (won-ESS-ee-mus) had become one of Paul's trusted associates, possibly during the time that Paul was under house arrest in Rome. If the story had ended there, it would have had a happy ending. But for some strange reason, Paul decides to persuade Onesimus to return to Philemon. Because slavery was perfectly legal in those days and Onesimus was regarded as Philemon's personal property, Paul's request of Onesimus was putting him in a very precarious position. There was nothing to keep Philemon from inflicting bondage on Onesimus once again.

Yet, despite these appearances, Paul's letter to Philemon is more effective than any pronouncement or command. By appealing to Philemon, instead of compelling him to renounce all claims against Onesimus, Paul does a great deal more than simply secure Onesimus' freedom - he also manages to free Philemon from his bondage. As a slave owner, Philemon was even more a slave than Onesimus.

You may protest, however, that in using appeal instead of a command, Paul was subjecting Onesimus to a considerable risk. Not really, for Paul knows Philemon and his Christian commitment and he is confident that Philemon's prejudices cannot withstand the appeal of Christ's gospel: "...for love's sake, I prefer to appeal to you." Paul's letter is so skillful that there is no way that Philemon can turn him down.

How cleverly he plays on the meaning of the name: Onesimus actually means "useful". As a slave, Onesimus had not been truly useful to Philemon, but as a brother in Christ he would be "useful" in a way no slave could ever be. Because of the compelling power of Christian love, the "useless" one becomes forever "useful" to God and his children.



by Ellen S. Willis
Home Economics Extension Agent

Schedule
July 7-8, 1982 - EFNEP Nutrition Day Camp held each day at South Hoke School.

Hint: Use cold water rather than hot to operate your food disposer. This saves the energy needed to heat the water, is recommended for the appliance, and aids in getting rid of grease. Grease solidifies in cold water and can be ground up and washed away.

Zucchini. What can I do with them? This is the hottest question on our phone line. Zucchini is unlike winter squash in that it is perishable and should be refrigerated and used promptly. Luckily zucchini is very versatile. It is conducive to good seasoning and a natural partner to a number of vegetables and meats.

Whether you are cooking zucchini or any other type summer squash preparation is easy. The easiest are the following: To steam.

Call the Extension home agent's office at 875-2162 for the following recipes using zucchini. Stuffed Zucchini Casserole, Golden Crust Zucchini Cake, Tomato-Zucchini Bake, Zucchini Hors D'Oeuvres, Zucchini and Hamburger, Zucchini Pizza, Zucchini Nut Bread, Zucchini Tetrazzini, Tomato and Zucchini Stuffed Eggs, Zucchini and Chicken with Sour Cream Sauce, Zucchini, Potato and Tomato Salad, Summer Lasagna (micro-wave directions that can be converted to conventional oven) and Mock Pineapple.

As you see zucchini and its possibilities are limitless. Use them and enjoy their goodness.



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