

Cheerful Forgiveness

So if you consider me a partner, accept 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 to you that you owe me even your own self. Yes, brother, may I have joy 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. - Philemon 1:17-21 HCSB

A king once had a wise steward who he placed in charge of the royal treasury. It was such an important position that many jealous men often accused the steward of wrong doing, not out of a loyalty to the king or a particular hatred toward the steward, but out of a twisted desire to take the position and be someone of importance.

The king received so many accusations that he decided to check up on the steward. First, he chose an old woman to go in and ask for alms. The steward greeted her as though she were his long lost mother, fed her, clothed her, made sure she had somewhere to stay and sent her on her way with a coin in her hand.

The king sent a wealthy business man with the instructions to be particularly rude and haughty. When the business man returned, he reported to the king that the steward had remained calm and polite throughout the conversation. Try as he might, the business man was incapable of making the steward say or do anything untoward.

One after the other, the king sent in his emissaries, each as unsuccessful as the last in finding any sin in this wise steward. Finally, the king himself called for the steward and asked him, "How is it that you remain cheerful and calm regardless of with whom you are conversing? What is the secret of your sweet spirit?"

The steward promptly bowed and replied, "Oh great king, I imagine that each person I meet is you in disguise. This is your kingdom. Each person belongs to you. When I serve them, I am serving you. Thus, I have endless patience."

Paul asked Philemon to accept Onesimus as if he were accepting Paul himself. Then he subtly reminded him that the joy and refreshment would be in Christ. By treating Onesimus fairly, he would be honoring Paul and by proxy, Christ Himself.[1]

We all must deal with endless petty wrongs in life. There are plenty of rude and obnoxious people out there. However, each belongs to our King and when we serve them well and kindly; not merely grudgingly enduring their presence but exhibiting a cheerful manner as we forgive their slights, we are serving our King. He forgave us while we were yet sinners.[2] Can we not do the same for other sinners?

[1] Matthew 25:34-45

[2] Romans 5:8
