

“Useless to Useful”
Short and Sweet, Pt. 9 – Philemon 10-11
August 25, 2019

I. What’s In A Name?

- A. The name Onesimus meant “useful” in Greek.
- B. Before coming to Christ, Onesimus had not lived up to his name.
- C. But through faith in Jesus, Onesimus had become useful.

II. The Transforming Power of the Gospel of Christ

- A. Paul recognized gospel change in Onesimus because he had experienced it himself.

Galatians 1:22–23 - ²² *I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ; ²³ but only, they kept hearing, “He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy.”*

- B. Everyone who encounters Jesus in the gospel is made different.
- C. This transformation does not look the same for everyone.

- 1. John-Mark’s life looked untransformed, and useless, for some time.

Acts 15:36–40 - ³⁶ *After some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.” ³⁷ Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also. ³⁸ But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. ³⁹ And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. ⁴⁰ But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord.*

- 2. Change did eventually arrive (2 Peter 5:13).

2 Timothy 4:11 - *Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service.*

III. Hope during Incomplete Transformation

- A. Even the most faithful succumb to sin.
- B. All Christians will die imperfect.
- C. Hope is found in Christ’s death for our sins.
- D. Hope is also found in Christ’s ongoing intercession.

Romans 8:33–34 - ³³ *Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; ³⁴ who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.*

1 John 2:1b - *And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*

E. God will ensure that a believer's transformation is complete.

1 Thessalonians 5:23–24 - ²³ *May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.*