

2. To see Philemon and Onesimus fully reconciled as brethren in the Lord would be an occasion of joy to Paul. To this end Philemon would have to receive and forgive. Paul pleads “let me have joy of thee.”

Observation: Christians must be eager and glad “to receive and to forgive.”

Verse 21 “... even beyond what I say...”

1. Paul expresses confidence
 - a. Not only
 - b. Beyond
2. Probably confident that Philemon would set Onesimus free and allow him to return to Rome to minister to Paul.

Observation:

1. Good to have and express confidence in others
2. It is good to be deserving of the confidence of others.
3. The Gospel of Christ has tended to abolish slavery where it has gone and made men equal and at peace.

Verse 22 “...prepare me a lodging...”

1. Paul’s request
2. Paul’s confidence (Phil. 2:10, 23, 24)
3. To this end Paul requested prayers of Philemon

Observation:

1. There is power in prayer. If Paul needed the prayers of others, how much more do we need the prayers of others.

Verse 23 1. Paul send the greetings of Epaphras

2. He calls Epaphras “my fellow prisoner in Christ.” Cf. Col. 1:17; Col. 4:12

Verse 24 “...my fellow workers...”

1. Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke
2. Cf. Col. 4:10, 14

Verse 25 Concluding prayer

1. Prays for God’s grace to be on Philemon
2. This is common in Paul’s conclusions.

PHILEMON, A PERSONAL NOTE FROM PAUL

Key vs. 10.

INTRO:

1. Written by Paul in 60-62 A.D.
2. It was written from Rome where he was imprisoned, vs. 1.
3. It was written to Philemon, a wealthy member of the church in Colossae, Col. 4:9, also Col. 4:17, compared with Phil. 2 (Archippus).
4. The purpose is to reconcile Philemon and his runaway slave, Onesimus, whom Paul had converted.
5. The classic dealing with slavery:
 - a. The New Testament does not specifically advocate abolition of slavery. Rather the Christian love and respect for others, Matt. 7: 12, did destroy it.
 - b. All forms of work were considered improper for Roman citizens, proper only for slaves.
 - c. Some think there were 60,000,000 slaves in the Roman Empire, 600,000 in the city of Rome alone.
 - d. The economy of the Empire was sustained on slavery.
 - e. Slaves had no rights, personal, civil or legal.
 - f. They could be beaten, mutilated, crucified or fed to wild beasts at the whim of their owner.
 - g. They were referred to as "bodies" not regarded as having souls.
 - h. Compare also Col. 3: 32-4: 1, I Cor. 7: 20-24.
6. Background and Occasion for writing:
 - a. Philemon was converted by Paul, vs. 19.
 - b. The Church met in his home, vs. 2.
 - c. Onesimus, his slave, ran away taking money or other things of value, vs. 18.
 - d. He travelled several hundred miles to Rome.
 - e. There he came in contact with Paul the prisoner.
 - f. He became a Christian, vs. 10.
 - g. He became Paul's personal helper, vs. 13.
 - h. He must return and make things right with his master.
 - i. Paul writes to intercede for him.

Onesimus means "useful". Notice Paul's pun on this meaning in vs. 11.

7. Archippus is probably minister for the church in Philemon's house, Phil. 2, Col. 4:17.
8. This epistle is beautifully rendered by J.B. Philips in his paraphrase. It will be most helpful to read it.

OUTLINE OF PHILEMON

Introduction and Greetings vs. 1-3.

I. Thanksgiving for Philemon, vs. 4-7.

- A. For his love and faith.
 1. Toward the Lord.
 2. Toward the saints in hospitality.

II. The appeal for Onesimus, vs. 8-21.

- A. He suggests to Philemon he could command it, but will trust his friend's sense of love, vs. 8-9a.
- B. Philemon should receive Onesimus without harshness because of Paul's:
 1. Great age, vs. 9.
 2. His imprisonment, vs. 9.
 3. His spiritual relationship to Onesimus, vs. 10.
 4. His spiritual relationship to Philemon, vs. 11-14
 5. Because of Philemon's new spiritual relationship to Onesimus, vs. 15-16.
 6. Because Paul offers to repay personally whatever Onesimus may owe him, vs. 17-19a.
 7. Because Philemon owes a debt to Paul, his salvation, vs. 19.
 8. Because Paul, his brother asks for Onesimus' release, vs. 20.
 9. Paul expresses his confidence in Philemon's goodness, vs. 21.

III. Conclusion, vs. 22-25.

- A. Paul's hope to visit Philemon, vs. 22.
- B. Greetings from Paul's co-workers, vs. 23-24.
- C. Benediction, vs. 25.

Verse 18 #4 An account paid. – v.18-19

“...put that to mine account...”

1. Paul allows the possibility that Onesimus had “wronged” Philemon, or “owed” him something.
2. The “if” construction (in the Greek) indicates the reality of the situation. The extent of the wrong would probably depend in great measure on Philemon’s attitude and reckoning– the loss and the cost which the “run away’s” absence had occasioned.
3. Paul says: “If this is the case, charge it to me.”
4. Paul emphasizes–
 - a. Put that to mine account
 - b. I write it with my own hand
 - c. I will repay it

Observation:

1. As Paul pleaded the cause of Onesimus, and was willing to take the debt of Onesimus– just so Christ pleads our cause and took our debt.
2. Paul wanted complete and perfect fellowship between Philemon and Onesimus. This would require genuine repentance on the part of Onesimus, and forgiveness on the part of Philemon.
3. We must be willing and eager to correct our mistakes– and we must be forgiving.
 - a. Onesimus’ debt to be paid by Paul
 - b. Our debt paid by the Lord

Verse 19 “... even thine own self...”

1. Paul gives a gentle (yet pointed) reminder that Philemon himself owed himself to Paul.
2. This seemingly refers to the fact that Paul converted Philemon, probably while in Ephesus.

Observation:

1. We are– in a special way– indebted to those who taught us the truth and led us to the Christ.

Verse 20 “... let me have joy...”

1. Paul again pleads that Philemon will do what he (Paul) beseeches him to do.

Verse 15 “*for a season*” parted, that Paul might have Onesimus “*forever*” as a brother.

#4 Slavery – v. 16-17

#3 Observation: Providence (Esther 4:14)

- 1) v. 15-16 A marvelous reference to God’s providence, “perhaps he departed for a while for this”. This passage shows:
 - a. The fact of God’s providence
 - b. Paul’s belief in God’s providence
 - c. How God can and does work through men and their affairs
- 2) Note the equalizing influence of the gospel of Christ.
 - a. The same messages goes to all.
 - b. All stand alike before God.
 - c. All Christians are “brethren.”

Verse 16 Upon return, Onesimus would be a “servant” but much more, a “beloved brother,”

- a. especially to Paul
- b. more so to Philemon
 - 1) A servant (flesh)
 - 2) But a fellow Christian

Verse 17 “Receive Him”

#6 An Advocate –v. 17; 1John 2:1;

1. Key portion of the book. Paul requested a Christian reception for Onesimus.
2. If you therefore regard me a partner, receive him (Onesimus) as you would receive me.”

Observation:

1. How Philemon received Onesimus would be clear evidence of his attitude toward Paul. Just so our reactions to the Lord’s instructions are clear evidence of our attitude toward him. cf. 1John 5:3; John 14:15.

LESSONS TO REMEMBER:

1. Early Christians often assembled for worship in their homes. We can have Christianity without modern church buildings.
2. As Philemon practiced Christian hospitality, so should we.
3. Our converts are as dear to us as our children.
4. The confines of house arrest did not keep Paul from winning souls.
5. The importance of restitution.
6. We should be willing to be involved ... to intercede for fellow Christians with problems.
7. The need for proper tact and psychology when dealing with knotty problems.
8. The importance of forgiveness.
9. The power of a personal letter.
10. We see the incompatibility of slavery with Christian love.

PHILEMON: (See chapter division outline)

Verse 1 Note the description of Philemon, “*beloved*” “*fellow laborer*”

Verse 2 *Apphia*. fem, probably wife of Philemon.

Archippus: probably son, cf. Col. 4:17

“*church in your house*”

Evidently church at Colossae met in the house of Philemon. He was well off enough to have facilities to have a meeting place for the church.

Like Lydia at Philippi, and Aquila and Priscilla in Rome.

#5 Philemon: As A Christian Example

- A. Christian stewardship v. 2
- B. Faith & Love v. 5
- C. Evangelism v. 6

Verse 4 Lesson: We always need to be praying for one another.

Verse 5 Lesson: Our love and faith must be something that can be “seen” and “heard”.

Verse 6 Lesson: The Christian faith must be shared – by word and deed.

Observation: Philemon was practicing what the Lord taught .. Matt. 5:16

Verse 7 “consolation” = comfort

Lesson: Christian fellowship gives joy and comfort. [Example in congregation]

Observation: Philemon refreshed the hearts of the saints.

Lesson: The Christian life is a life to share with others.

#8 Christian love, compassion and concern for others

A. Paul for Onesimus and Philemon - v.7

B. Philemon for all the saints - v. 5

Verse. 8 Paul mentions that his authority would enable him to *command* Philemon to do what was proper.

v. 9 He states however that the course of love dictated – not “commanded” but “besought”. He beseeches Philemon as: 1) Paul the aged; 2) Paul the prisoner.

Verse 9 Paul the aged – “Paul the old man”

Verse 10 Beseeches Philemon on behalf of “*my child*” “*begotten in my bonds*” Onesimus.

Observation:

Paul had authority as an Apostle. That was authority to **command**. What an apostle commanded and taught must be heeded. [Easy to abuse authority. Authority inherently involves responsibility to use it rightly.]

Paul was loving and humble. Often used the word “beseech.”

Paul’s love and consideration – seen in his anxiety to plead the case of another, to help someone else.

Lesson: Onesimus had Paul– we have Christ to plead our case– 1John 2:1.

Verse 11 Onesimus – v. 10-14 Background

1. Note play on name Onesimus (meaning “helpful” “profitable”); but v. 11 he was once “unprofitable”; once, he was not living up to his name.

a. To both Philemon

b. And “profitable” to Paul.

Observation #1

1 **Onesimus** is another example of Paul’s unceasing labor.

a. While a prisoner Paul taught and labored and his labor was rewarded.

b. We must never cease to teach and preach the gospel, and our labor will not be in vain – 1Cor. 15:58.

2. Paul would like to keep Onesimus with him v. 13

a. That he might minister to Paul in behalf of Philemon

b. would not do so without consent of Philemon

c. wanted Philemon’s *goodness* to be “freewill” and not constrained.

Observation 2

Though Onesimus was Paul’s spiritual son, Onesimus did not call him “Father Paul” 1Cor. 3:9-10, The Corinthians didn’t call Paul “Farmer Paul” or “Builder Paul”. 1Thess. 2:7. The Thessalonian brethren didn’t call him “Nurse Paul.”

Verse 12 #7 Reconciliation – v. 11-12

A. Repentance

B. Forgiveness

#1 Honorableness – v. 12, 13, 14

A. Do all things honorably – rom. 12:17; 2Cor. 8:20

Verse 12 #2 Restitution - v.12

Observation #3 Conversion changes one from the “unprofitable” side of God’s ledge to the “profitable” side.

Observation #4 The case of Onesimus shows that conversion demands restitution (restoring, making wrongs right) as far as possible.

Verse 13 Observation #5 Just as Paul indicated Philemon could minister to him in the person of Onesimus– we realize there are ways we can minister (evangelize) when we send (support) another in our behalf.

cf. 2Cor. 8:23; Luke 10:33-37

Verse 14 Observation #6

Paul was concerned about doing all things honorable. cf. 2Cor. 8:20-21; Rom. 12:17 He did not want “of necessity” help from Philemon, but only “free will” assistance.

God wants the same attitude toward our giving – 2Cor. 9:7

Verse 14 “*goodness*” is not only an attitude, but a work or works. NKJV “*good deeds*” Philemon’s ministering to Paul would be Philemon’s “*goodness*” or “*good deeds*.”