

Series: Order in the Church

Title: Philemon's Forgive, Restore, & Elevate

Text: Philemon

Philemon was a Christian of Colosse (Col 4:9)

Philemon was apparently won to Christ by Paul (vs 19) at

Ephesus, since Paul had not visited Colosse as of yet.

Onesimus was one of Philemon's slaves who had robbed him and ran away to Rome. (vs 16)

Onesimus obviously ran into Paul while at Rome, was saved, and ministered to Paul while he was incarcerated there.

Legally, Philemon could have Onesimus killed for his betrayal.

Paul had 3 reasons for writing this letter:

- 1. To Inform Philemon that his slave, Onesimus was safe and saved.***
- 2. To ask Philemon to forgive Onesimus.***
- 3. To request Philemon allow Paul to stay at his house after he is released from incarceration in Rome.***

Mega Theme: Christ is the Redeemer For all lost sinners.

Paul was willing to pay for Onesimus' debt.

Jesus was willing to die upon Calvary for our debt of sin.

Paul reminds Philemon that we are all accepted in the beloved (Eph 1:6)(2 Cor 5:21)

We are not accepted on our own merits.

When we arrive at heaven, we will be received as we were Christ, covered by His Righteousness.

Slavery was an accepted fact of the Roman Empire.

Slaves were bought and sold daily throughout the empire.

Paul had a tender interest in slaves.

(1 Cor 7:20-24)(Col 3:22-4:1)(Eph 6:5-9)

Paul encouraged them to be the best Christian possible, in order to win their freedom lawfully, and to win their owners to Christ.

Paul never attacked the institution of slavery directly; the Gospel itself, preached and lived in the early church, would ultimately destroyed this social problem

The Gospel is the Greatest Method for Social Reform:

Because it changes the Heart and Values of the Believer.

This letter is a classic example of how the Gospel of Christ changes a home, and society itself by changing lives.

It was not that Paul avoided the problem of slavery; rather, the true solution would be found as men and women gave their hearts to Christ.

I. Paul's Greeting: (vs 1-3)

1 Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer,

Paul repeatedly identifies himself as a *prisoner*: 7,13,22,23
Probably to remind Philemon of the price he was paying compared to the price he paid for Onesimus.

Paul was not the prisoner of Rome, but Christ.

Thus he was not shamed of his incarceration.

Paul accomplished more imprisoned than most free citizens.

2 And to *our* beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house:

Apphia: Philemon's Wife

Archippus: Philemon's son, who went on to pastor the church at Laodicea

There was a Church at Philemon's home.

3 Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

As always, Paul desires everyone to be empowered by Grace. (John 15:5) *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*

II. Paul's Appreciation of Philemon: (vs 4-7)

4 I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, Paul expresses sincere appreciation for Philemon.

5 Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints;

Philemon sounds like someone that everyone would love to have as a friend.

He was a man of life and faith:

Philemon's had a 2 fold Passion: **(1.)** Passion for Christ
(2.) Outward to all saints, w/o prejudice (Gal 5:6)

6 That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.

Philemon did not keep his faith to himself.

He shared it .. **Communication**

Paul prayed that Philemon's efforts would bear fruit-**Effectual**

7 For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother. - Philemon was a "*Refreshing Christian*"

Illus: Some people are a battery, some are a Drain.

Philemon was a Battery. Refreshing to others.

Philemon is about to face a serious test of his faith & love as he learns of the conversion of Onesimus.

III. Paul's Appeal for Onesimus: (Vs 8-17)

8 Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient,

Paul might have used his apostolic authority and order

Philemon to Forgive, Restore, and Elevate Onesimus.

Philemon probably would have done it (vs 18).

But that wouldn't help Philemon to grow in grace & thus receive the real blessing from God through faith.

The real power is not in the "*Stick or the Carrot*", but in the willing submissiveness to Christ.

9 Yet for love's sake I rather beseech *thee*, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

Paul wanted Philemon to broaden his spiritual understanding. That is why Paul uses the word: "**Beseech**".

Paul appeals to Philemon's Christian love; which he praised in (vs 5)

10 I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds:

“Son” - He announces how that Onesimus was now saved, and consequently Philemon’s brother in Christ.

11 Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me:

Onesimus ~ Name means profitable

Paul uses a play on words here.

“To Me” Onesimus has already been a help to Paul while he was in Rome.

12 Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels:

Paul had to convince Onesimus to hand carry this letter.

Here is the Request: - **“thou therefore receive him”**

Not as a runaway slave

“mine own bowels:” Ancient people thought the emotions welled up from the center of their being, thus their intestines. Philemon could have had Onesimus arrested & face severe consequences.

Paul urged Philemon to receive him from Paul’s own heart.

13 Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel:

Paul would have liked to have kept Onesimus with him in Rome.

“in thy stead” - Vs 1 *“unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer;”*

14 But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly.
He wouldn’t keep Onesimus w/o Philemon’s consent.

15 For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever; (Rom 8:28)

16 Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?

As a *Brother in Christ* we share more of a bond, than just friendship, but a *Family Connection*.

17 If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself.

“receive him as myself”

The Essence of our Identity in Christ.

We are accepted in the Beloved (Eph 1:6)

Onesimus was not returning as the same person as he left. Onesimus had a completely different standing now.

IV. Paul’s Assurance of Payment: (Vs 18-25)

18 If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account;

This is a picture of Calvary!

Christ found us, runaway slaves, law-breakers, rebels, but he forgave us and identified us with Himself.

He went to the cross and paid the debt for us.

This is the Doctrine of Imputation.

“Impute”~ to put to one’s account.

Our sins were put to Christ's account.

Christ's righteousness was put our account.

(Ps 32:1-2) *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. 2 Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.* (Rom 4:1-8, 5*)

Our sins were put to Christ's account even though He committed no sin: (2 Cor 5:21) *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

Our sins were laid on Christ, and His Robe of Righteousness was imputed to us.

"That we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

We must keep in mind the distinction between ...
"Accepted in Christ" and *"Acceptable to Christ"*.

The Saved are forever *"Accepted IN Christ"* & never rejected by the Father. (John 10:28-29)

When believers Sin, They are still *"Accepted"*, but there actions are not acceptable.

Repent/Confess are still necessary for Fellowship - (1 Jn 1:9)

Because we are *"Accepted in Christ"* we have *"Sonship"*,
As we live lives *"Acceptable to Him"* we have *"Fellowship"*.

19 I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: ... This is a Form of IOU in Paul's day.

Paul was Actually taking on Onesimus' debt upon himself.

Paul goes on to remind them of their obligations to him. Including their very salvation due to his missionary work.

albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides.

Paul had led Philemon to Christ & knew he held a special place in Philemon's heart.

Paul knew that Philemon would go the extra mile and do even more than he requested of him.

20 Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord.

Paul is encouraging Philemon's Spiritual Growth in this area.

21 Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say.

Paul was confident in the Lord working in Philemon.

It is touching to know that Paul had friends like I do:

22 But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.

I don't know how Christians survive without a church family. I am honored that People who pray for me.

How to Pray for the Preacher

- | | | | | |
|---------------------|---|------------|---|--------------|
| a. <u>Monday</u> | - | Protection | - | Health |
| b. <u>Tuesday</u> | - | Provision | - | Finances |
| c. <u>Wednesday</u> | - | People | - | Family |
| d. <u>Thursday</u> | - | Practice | - | Soul winning |
| e. <u>Friday</u> | - | Pondering | - | Study Time |
| f. <u>Saturday</u> | - | Power | - | Holy Spirit |
| g. <u>Sunday</u> | - | Preaching | - | Altar Call |

*Cause on Monday, I am going to pray for your Protection
On Teuesday I am going to pray for your Provision
On Wednesday I am going to pray for your People
On Thursday I am going to pray for your Practice
On Friday I am going to pray for your Pondering
On Saturday I am Going to pray for your Power
On Sunday I am going to pray for your (teaching,
exhorting, encouraging that you do for the Lord here)*

People who would open their home to me & my family.

We need to be this kind of a brother and sister in Christ to each other.

23 There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus;

Implied is that Epaphras was in detention with Paul.

An alternative view is that Paul wrote only figuratively, sharing in Paul's incarceration by being his companion and not ashamed of his bonds.

24 Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers.

Present with Paul still was *Marcus (John Mark)*. There clearly had been a restoration of fellowship between him and Paul which had been strained earlier.

Aristarchus was a brother from Thessalonica who had traveled with Paul to Rome. (Acts 27:2)

Though *Demas* would later forsake Paul (II Tim 4:10), he here was still loyal and faithful.

Lucas of course was *Luke* who remained with Paul throughout his first Roman imprisonment.

Paul notes them as his fellowlabourers in the Lord.

25 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

He thus concludes this brief epistle with his customary benediction, he invoked God's grace to his readers, in this case, Philemon, Archippus, and Apphia.

The epistle ends with the ubiquitous amen—so be it!

Are we this kind of Christian? God expects us to grow to be! (Matt 6:14-15) *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: 15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

(Eph 4:32) *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

*Can we forgive someone's sins for when they were lost?
Can we forgive a brother that has offended us?
Are we the kind of Christian who will open our home for the Gospel's sake?*