

Expositional Preaching from the Authorized Version of the Holy Bible

Scriptures for Today: Philemon 1-7 – *The Introduction and Context of the book*

Today's Message:

"Seeking Reconciliation"



INTRODUCTION

Today, we begin a new book – *Philemon* – with an overview and introduction. We were introduced to Philemon at the end of the book of Colossians with the messenger Onesimus. Philemon was a wealthy Colossian believer and longtime friend of Paul. The church at Colosse apparently met in his house. In this incredible epistle of Paul, he demonstrates his love for the slave Onesimus by interceding between him and Philemon. Paul is a friend that sticks closer than a brother. He lives out the example of Christ's advocacy for us to the Father. What an incredible picture of the grace of God as the Holy Spirit paints this truth upon the tapestry of life, history, and the word of God. This is God's message to you...

FUNDAMENTAL INFORMATION

Overview of Philemon

Title Means: Affectionate one. **Time:** 62 to 64 AD

The Numbers: Chapter(s): 1 | Verses: 25 | Words: 445 **Ps 12:6-7; Prov 30:5**

Author: Paul Written during his first imprisonment in Rome; 1 of 4 prison epistles (E, P, C, P).

KJV footnote: Written from Rome to Philemon, by Onesimus,

Theme: The reconciling power of the grace of God.

Context: Apparently, Onesimus had stolen from his master Philemon and fled to lose his identity within the great anonymous throngs of Rome. In an incredible turn of events, that only the love of God can orchestrate, Paul and Onesimus cross paths! As he often did, Paul used his bonds as a means of setting people free and leads Onesimus to saving faith in Christ. In discipling this new believer, Paul knew he must be reconciled with his master if he was to truly experience the freedom he desires. As Paul sent his letter to Colossians by the hand of Tychicus, he included this personal correspondence to Philemon to prepare the way for Onesimus' return. The letter is a masterpiece of reconciliatory tact and ethics as Paul requests that Philemon receive Onesimus not as a disobedient runaway slave, but as a brother in Christ.

THREE BASIC APPLICATIONS

- 1. Historical** Paul's personal letter to his dear friend and fellow laborer Philemon, encouraging him and the church in his home to receive the repentant Onesimus as a brother.
- 2. Doctrinal** The intercessory work of Jesus Christ on our behalf, by whom we have been made free from the bondage of sin, received by the Master, and accepted in the beloved.
- 3. Devotional** This is a pattern for us to follow and teach. The life-changing, reconciling power of the grace of God that enables servants to be free, free men to become servants.

OUTLINE STRUCTURE

Verses 1-10 – Paul the *mediator*. | Verses 11-16 – Paul the *advocate*. | Verses 17-25 – Paul the *substitute*.

LEARNING TOGETHER

❖ The Text Philemon 1-7

A. The Pattern of Humility – a pattern to follow to initiate reconciliation.

1. Paul chose not to lead with **AUTHORITY**, but with **humility**.

Why the Opening Matters in Reconciliation

Paul is about to address:

- A personal offense
- A broken relationship
- A situation involving authority, property, and trust.

He does not begin with correction. He begins with connection.

- **Philemon 1** – Paul, a **prisoner of Jesus Christ**, and Timothy our brother ... unto Philemon our **DEARLY BELOVED**, and **fellowlabourer**,
- **Philemon 2** – And to our **BELOVED** Apphia, and Archippus our **fellowsoldier**, ... and to the church in thy house:

Paul includes **his family**: wife and son. Reconciliation is **personal**, but rarely **private-only** in the church.

Comparing Scriptures

- **Romans 1:1** – Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, **called to be an APOSTLE**...
- **1 Corinth 1:1** – Paul, **called to be an APOSTLE** of Jesus Christ through the will of God...
- **2 Corinth 1:1; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Coloss 1:1; 1 Tim 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1; Titus 1:1**

Key Truths

- Hard conversations should begin with humility: the goal is reconciliation. **Gal 6:1**
- People are more willing to face correction when their value is first acknowledged.
- Paul does not elevate himself over Philemon: but rather beside him under Christ.

Practical Applications

- It has been well said, “If your only tool is a hammer, everything looks like a nail.”
- Reconciliation rarely begins with being right; it begins with being gracious.

B. The Power of Grace – the reconciling power of the grace of God (*the theme*).

2. Paul **PRAYED** the very character qualities Philemon will need to forgive Onesimus.

Important Note

Philemon's life was a testimony of love in action. His faith was real and visible, not just theoretical.

- **Philemon 3** – GRACE TO YOU, and **peace**, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- **Philemon 4** – I **thank my God**, making mention of thee ALWAYS IN MY PRAYERS,
- **Philemon 5** – Hearing of **thy love and faith**, which THOU HAST toward the Lord Jesus...
- **Philemon 6** – That **the communication of thy faith** may become EFFECTUAL...
- **Philemon 7** – For **we have great joy and consolation in thy love**, BECAUSE the bowels...

Comparing Scriptures

- **James 2:17** – Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.
- **James 5:16** – Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another...
- **1 John 3:18** – ... let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

Key Truths

- Paul prays before communicating. Order matters – grace first, then peace.
- Paul is saying... “May God supply what you will need to do the right thing.”

Practical Applications

- People must know that we **CARE**. Seek true *reconciliation* – not just *resolution*.

Questions to consider: When you need to address conflict, do you lead with authority or humility? Do you affirm the person's value or identity in Christ before addressing their actions? Are you seeking reconciliation or simply resolution? Have you prayed for restoration? Grace comes before peace.

Galatians 6:1

Brethren, if a man be OVERTAKEN in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.