

Philemon Gospel Portrayed

Jesus

- **God's Revelation:** History, Poetry, Prophecy, Gospel now **Epistles/Letters**
- **Philemon:** Only letter of Paul that does not mention Jesus Death/Resurrection

Thesis: Philemon is about a runaway slave named Onesimus from Colossae who ends up at a Roman jail where he meets the Apostle Paul in chains. Of course Onesimus didn't have a prayer being in such close contact with Paul. Onesimus is saved by Paul who then writes to Onesimus' master Philemon asking him to receive Onesimus back as a new brother in Christ even as Paul offers to pay any debt Onesimus may owe to Philemon. [NJC]

The **Primary Purpose** of this epistle is to reveal Christ's love for us in what He did for us in pleading our case before God...The **Practical Purpose** is to teach brotherly love. [JV McGee]

I. Greeting

1 Paul, a **prisoner of Christ Jesus**, and **Timothy our brother**, To **Philemon our beloved friend** and fellow **laborer**, 2 to the beloved **Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier**, and to the church in your house:

- **Paul:** Author. Prisoner of Christ

I have never experienced an opportunity
That did not first present itself as a problem

- **Paul writes 4 Prison Epistles...**

1. Ephesians
2. Philippians
3. Colossians
4. **Philemon:** Recipient of this letter

- **Timothy:** Lit. Timothy the brother. In Rome w/Paul.

- **Philemon:** In Colossae

1. Beloved Friend of Paul
2. Saved in Ephesus at School of Tyrannus?
3. Fellow Laborer in Gospel

- **Apphia:** Wife of Philemon? Paul calls her beloved.

- **Archippus:**

1. Son of Philemon? Paul calls him...
2. Fellow Soldier/Champion for Christ/Warrior as another guy...

Philippians 2:25 [I'm sending] Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need ...**29 Receive him** therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and **hold such men** [warriors] **in esteem**; 30 because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to **supply what was lacking in your service toward me.**

Colossians 4:17 [Paul to church in Colossi] ...say to **Archippus**, "Take heed to the **ministry** which you have received in the Lord, **that you may fulfill it.**"

Philemon, Apphia and Archippus
Family with a house church in Colossae

- Paul/Timothy bless Philemon, his family, and the Church

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

II. Philemon

4 I thank my God, **making mention of you always in my prayers**, 5 hearing of your **love** and **faith** which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints, 6 that the **sharing of your faith** may **become effective** by the **acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus**.

Colossians 1:4 ...since we heard of your **faith in Christ Jesus** and of your **love for all the saints**...

- **I Pray for you Philemon**
 1. Thank God for your **Faith in Jesus**
 2. Thank God for your **Love for Saints**
 3. Thank God for your **Desire to Share**

I ask God to make the sharing of your faith effective
As you acknowledge that any/all good in you is because of Jesus

- Philemon is rich w/one outstanding debt...

Romans 13:8 Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.

- Faith in Jesus/Love for Saints/Desire to share...

7 For **we have great joy** and consolation **in your love**, because the **hearts of the saints** have **been refreshed by you, brother**.

Your Faith is Working
You show your love for people by refreshing people

- **Refresh:** Cause or permit others to cease from any movement or labor in order to recover and collect their strength

Proverbs 11:25 The **generous soul** will be made rich, And **he who waters will also be watered himself**.

Romans 15:32 [I hope to...] come to you with joy by the will of God, and may **be refreshed together with you**.

1 Corinthians 16:17 I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, **...18** For they **refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men**.

Paul loved to acknowledge those who refreshed him...

2 Corinthians 7:13 ...we have been comforted in your comfort. And we rejoiced exceedingly more for the joy of Titus, because **his spirit has been refreshed by you all.**

2 Timothy 1:16 The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often **refreshed me**, and was not ashamed of my chain...

Workers need Refreshment...You do that Philemon
The hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you brother! ...

III. Onesimus

8 Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting [obvious] , **9 yet for love's sake** I rather appeal to you—being such a one as Paul, **the aged**, and now also a **prisoner of Jesus Christ...**

- **Therefore:** Since Philemon is your name/refreshing is your game...
- **Philemon:** lit. means one who kisses. rt. to love/Show signs of love...

I'm going to ask a favor of you as a friend *rather than* command you as an Apostle
IOWs I want you to be motivated by love rather than duty

...10 I appeal to you for **my son Onesimus**, whom I have **begotten** while in my chains

- **Onesimus**
 1. Slave of Philemon in Colossae. Servant of Paul in prison
 2. 1 of 60 Million slaves Roman Empire of 120 Million. IOWs ½ were slaves
- **Slavery in the Word of God**
 1. Never condoned in Scripture
 2. Described not Prescribed
- **Philemon:** Blown away by what Paul begins to say...
 1. **How** does Paul know my slave Onesimus?
 2. **Why** does Paul call Onesimus his son. As Timothy/Titus
 3. **What** does it mean Onesimus was begotten by Paul while in chains
- **God's Sovereignty in View:** Runs from Philemon into Paul and is saved

If the Son sets you free you are free indeed!

11 ... [Onesimus] who once was **unprofitable** to you, but **now is profitable to you and to me.**

- **Onesimus:** Lit. Profitable. IOWs Onesimus is now really Onesimus

He just got saved. Here is what I ask you Philemon...

12 I am sending him back. You therefore **receive him**, that is, my own heart, **13 whom I wished to keep with me**, that on your behalf he might

minister to me in my chains for the gospel. 14 But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might **not be by compulsion**, as it were, but **voluntary**.

I'm sending him back to you...I appeal to you to receive him, then...
Send him back if you like...But do it willingly or not at all

- We are to be **motivated by our love of Jesus**

1 John 4:19 We love Him because **He first loved us**.

Revelation 1:5b ... [Jesus] who **loved us** and washed us from our sins in His own blood...

2 Corinthians 9:7 ...**let each** one give as he **purposes in his heart**, not grudgingly or of necessity; for **God loves a cheerful giver**.

Be moved by love or not at all...

1 Peter 5:2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, **not by compulsion but willingly**, not for dishonest gain **but eagerly**...

Roman penalty for running away is death...

One ancient writer described how a slave carried a tray of crystal goblets, and he dropped and broke one. The master instantly demanded the slave be thrown into a fishpond full of lampreys that tore the slave to pieces. "Roman law... practically imposed no limits to the power of the master over his slave. The alternative of life or death rested solely with Philemon, and slaves were constantly crucified for far lighter offenses than this." [Lightfoot]

I'm sending him back to you...I appeal to you to receive him cheerfully
You received mercy...Show mercy

Matthew 5:7 Blessed are the merciful, For they **shall obtain mercy**.

15 For perhaps he departed for a while **for this purpose**, that you might **receive him forever**

Paul appeals to God's Sovereign Purpose
Maybe he *departed?* for a while so he would get saved because you weren't the guy?

1 Corinthians 3:7 ... neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. 8 Now **he who plants and he who waters are one**, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

Onesimus returns to you as a brother to us both
We are fellow workers toward his Salvation

...16 no longer as a slave but more than a slave—a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

- **Onesimus:** No longer a slave but a Beloved Brother

[The Word of God] brings the institution of slavery into an atmosphere where it could only wilt and die. Where master and slave were united in affection as brothers in Christ... [Bruce]

- New Relationship to God/others

We are no longer a slaves to sin but brothers/sister of Christ
No longer slaves to the devil and enemies of the Lord but friends of Jesus

John 15:15 No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but **I have called you friends**

IV. Paul's Appeal

17 If then you **count me as a partner, receive him as you would me.** 18 But if he has wronged you or owes anything, **put that on my account.** 19 I, Paul, am writing with my own hand. **I will repay—not to mention to you that you owe me even your own self besides.**

- We can be partners

It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit. [Harry Truman]

- **Not a competition:** God gets the credit. God gets the glory

Onesimus is Saved...He's coming to you a New Man

- Receive him as if he is me/If he owes you I will pay it. Stole?

Paul as a typology of Jesus

Advocates/Taking the penalty of guilty Onesimus to buy his freedom for him

1 John 2 My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an **Advocate with the Father**, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins...

- **Paul typology of Jesus:** Receive the least of these and you Me

Matthew 18:5 Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.

Romans 15:7 Receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.

- Receive Onesimus as you would receive me
- **If he owes you I will pay it...**

Jesus to the Father: If _____ has wronged You or owes You anything put it on My account and I will pay it in full.

BTW Remember Philemon, you owe me your life. IOWs I saved you

20 Yes, brother, let me have joy from you in the Lord; **refresh my heart in the Lord.**

- **Joy:** lit. Profit. rt word of name **Onesimus**. IOW Let me have Onesimus back from the consequences of his crime

I heard you were the Refresher of Colossae...Refresh me too in the Lord!

21 Having **confidence in your obedience**, I write to you, **knowing that you will do even more** than I say.

Some people you can just always, always count on...

2 Corinthians 7:16...I rejoice that **I have confidence in you in everything.**

2 Thessalonians 3:4 ...we have **confidence in the Lord** concerning you, both that **you do and will do the things we command you.**

Proverbs 25:13 Like the cold of snow in time of harvest Is a faithful messenger to those who send him, **For he refreshes the soul** of his masters.

Some people you can just always count on. Go the extra mile
That's you Philemon...I know you will do more than I have asked for Onesimus

22 But, meanwhile, also **prepare a guest room for me**, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you.

- Paul counting on a good verdict from Caesar

V. Farewell

23 **Epaphras**, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, 24 as do **Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers.**

- **Epaphras:** Pastor of Colossi. Back/forth to Rome
- **Mark:** Once AWOL ...now back w/Paul
- **Aristarchus:** lit. Best ruler. Now fellow prisoner w/Paul

It seems that Aristarchus had an interesting habit of being with Paul in hard times. Some (such as William Ramsay) suggest that he actually made himself Paul's slave so that he could travel with him on this journey to Rome.'

- **Demus:** Fellow Laborer
- **Luke:** Beloved Physician. Author of Luke and Acts. Joined Paul Acts 16

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

- **Spirit:** gr. pneuma.
 1. Sometimes Holy Spirit.
 2. Here: Mental disposition: Vital principal by which the body is animated
- **Demas**
 1. **Philemon:** My fellow laborer
 2. **Colossians:** Just Demas
 3. **2 Timothy:** AWOL from the Faith

2 Timothy 4:10 ... for Demas has **forsaken me**, having **loved this present world**

Jesus is Cleansing/Preparing His Bride for the Wedding

1 John 2:18 Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. 19 They **went out from us, but they were not of us**; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but **they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.**

The Rapture [Gathering Together] is Imminent...Apostacy is a Sign

2 Thessalonians 2:2...be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. 3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come **unless the falling away comes first...**

Is the Falling Away Apostacy or the Rapture?

- **Falling away:** gr. *ap-os-tas-ee'-ah* lit. defection, apostasy. rt. to divorce

Occam's razor: The simplest explanation is preferable to one that is more complex... distinguishing between two theories either by "shaving away" unnecessary assumptions or cutting apart two similar conclusions... the simplest, most elegant explanation is usually the one closest to the truth.

- Best commentary on Scripture is Scripture...

1 Timothy 4:1 Now the **Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart** [lit. fall away] **from the faith**, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons...

Cleansing of the Church will take place before the Rapture of the Church

Ephesians 6:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and **cleanse her** with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might **present her to Himself** a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be **holy and without blemish.**

Revelation 19:7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the **marriage of the Lamb has come**, and His **wife has made herself ready.**" 8 And to her it was **granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.** 9 Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' " ...

Paul appeals to Philemon as Onesimus Advocate...
He will pay his debt to set him free