

# The Book of Philemon

Passage: Philemon 1:1-25

Title: Appealing for Love's Sake

Summary: Philemon is a personal letter, written about a personal friend, about a personal problem. Paul never knew that 2000 years later we would not only be reading his mail, but studying it. Studying it on how to deal with relationships, deal with difficulties, and the redeemed work of Jesus Christ. But God knew, and God made sure that it made its way to the church, and us today, for we will see patterns that all of us are to follow.

*Philemon (NKJV)* <sup>1</sup> Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer, <sup>2</sup> to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: <sup>3</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, <sup>5</sup> hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints, <sup>6</sup> that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. <sup>7</sup> For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother. <sup>8</sup> Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting, <sup>9</sup> 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—<sup>10</sup> I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten while in my chains, <sup>11</sup> who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me. <sup>12</sup> I am sending him back. You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart, <sup>13</sup> whom I wished to keep with me, that on your behalf he might minister to me in my chains for the gospel. <sup>14</sup> But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary. <sup>15</sup> For perhaps he departed for a while for this purpose, that you might receive him forever, <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> If then you count me as a partner, receive him as you would me. <sup>18</sup> But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account. <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> Yes, brother, let me have joy from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in the Lord. <sup>21</sup> Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. <sup>22</sup> But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you. <sup>23</sup> Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, <sup>24</sup> as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers. <sup>25</sup> The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

## Overview

A short little letter with a powerful, practical, punch. A message that will write on the tablets of our heart. In this study we are going to read someone else's mail. This letter was probably never intended to be distributed publicly. All of Paul's letters were to exhort churches and leaders, and done knowing that they would be distributed publicly.

Philemon is a personal letter, written about a personal friend, about a personal problem. Paul never knew that 2000 years later we would not only be reading his mail, but studying it. Studying it on how to deal with relationships, deal with difficulties, and the redeemed work of Jesus Christ. But God knew, and God made sure that it made its way to the church, and us today, for we will see patterns that all of us are to follow.

This is written approximately 62AD, Paul is imprisoned; this was his first Roman imprisonment, which was more like a house arrest. Paul could come and go as he desired in the city, but at all times he would be chained to a Roman Soldier.

Somewhere, somehow, Paul leads a runaway slave named Onesimus to the Lord. The amazing thing is that Paul had lead his master to the Lord, some 900 miles away in Colosse. So Onesimus, goes on the run, only to run into his master's friend, who happens to be the greatest evangelist of the day.

The Divine appointment resulted in Onesimus giving his life to Jesus Christ, and finding true freedom, a freedom that the world cannot give, nor ever take away. Now Paul is sending Onesimus back to his master in Colosse, to set things right. But to help ease the return, he writes this letter from his heart to his old friend Philemon.

Theme for the Book of Philemon:

*(Philemon 1:17 NKJV) If then you count me as a partner, receive him as you would me.*

#### Outline For this Book

Introduction: 1-3

The Testimony of Philemon: 4-7

The Testimony of Paul: 8-10

The Testimony of Onesimus: 11-16

The Testimony of Christ: 17-19

Farewell: 20-25

#### Prayer

The Word of God is Living and Powerful, and is ready, and will do a mighty work in our lives.

*Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV) <sup>12</sup> For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

#### In Every Study

- Who Is God? (How Great is He?)
- What Does He Think of Me? (How Wonderful Are His Thoughts Towards Me?)
- What Does He Want Me to Do?
- What Can I Boldly Request of Him?
- What Do I Need to Be on Guard of When I Leave Here Today?

Boldly come to the throne of grace, ask God to reveal Himself in a mighty way to you, and to do I might work in you, and through you.

*Hebrews 4:16 (NKJV) <sup>16</sup> Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

#### Introduction: 1:1-3

**(Philemon 1:1 NKJV) Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer,**

Instead of the "Apostle of Jesus Christ", he starts off with a "prisoner of Jesus Christ". But notice he is not a prisoner of Rome, or Caesar, but of Jesus Christ. Paul is saying Jesus has me right where He wants me. Do we realize this, that whatever position or situation we are in, God has us right where he wants us. That if we feel chained by circumstances, or imprisoned in a situation, that we are in this position because Jesus Christ is orchestrating and directing all things in my life.

Paul was able to be so upbeat, and used so powerfully because he had this understanding that whatever and wherever he was, he wasn't a victim, but that the sovereign hand of God was at work – Paul a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

Paul's attitude and approach was sanctifying to him, because he set his life apart for whatever the Lord determined, so that God would be glorified.

Paul adds Timothy to his introduction, for Paul later in this letter will refer to himself as the aged (v.9), so Paul knows that either through age or circumstance, he was going to be with the Lord soon, and he wanted to prepare the people to receive the ministry of Timothy, as he would take over the lead for Paul. Leaders, you need to be raising up leaders, when you see that God's hand is upon them, then put your support behind them so the people will receive his/her ministry.

*2 Timothy 2:2 (NKJV) <sup>2</sup> And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*

**(Philemon 1:2 NKJV) to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house:**

*Apphia, Archippus* - these two are possibly Philemon's wife and son.

to the church in your house – Parents, do you want your children and family on-fire for Jesus Christ? Then turn your house into a church. Teach the word there, have times of worship, let prayers be lifted up from your home, have communion as a family. Your house is your church. You teens you can be youth pastors to your little brothers and sisters by ministering the things you have learned in your studies, to them.

Philemon opened his home to invite others in, we can all do that. Invite your neighbors, co-workers over for coffee or dinner, and minister the love of Christ to them. Do this and watch you and your family's life changed. In Revelation, the seven churches, each church had an angel over them, and Jesus stood in the midst of the churches. Turn your house into a church, and the same will be true for you.

[Revelation 1:20 \(NKJV\)](#) <sup>20</sup> *The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.*

A few years ago I was at a conference up in the mountains of western Pennsylvania and at break I went for a hike out in the woods it was a beautiful cold snow covered day I came upon a little country church that was abandoned and what once was the center of the community. I went into the church it had a few broken windows, dust and debris on the floor, and I said all I have to do turned us into a church again is to worship, to pray, and to open and read the word to which I did and I turned that little abandoned country church into a House of worship again. And you know parents that's all we need to turn our homes into a church with our spouses and our children to worship the Lord pray to him open and read his word we will have a church in our house it won't be living and breathing church because Christ will be in the center of it holding it in his hands.

Hey dads, don't only take your children to church, make your house into a church, and watch and see the great works God will do.

**(Philemon 1:3 NKJV) Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

It is all grace (G0ds-Riches-At-Christ's-Expense). The price (expense) of grace is costly, the very Son of God, our salvation is expensive, extravagant and abundant, therefore we are not just saved a little bit, we are not just forgiven a little bit, we are saved and forgive to the degree of the price to be saved and redeemed, and that was the extravagant love and blood of God's Only Begotten Son. So lets live like, and lets impart that grace to others as well.

[John 3:16 \(NKJV\)](#) <sup>16</sup> *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

Paul's interface with the world, grace and peace. Everywhere and everybody Paul met, he wanted to impart to them the grace and peace of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**The Testimony of Philemon: 1:4-7**

**(Philemon 1:4 NKJV) I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers,  
(Philemon 1:5 NKJV) hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints,**

Big discussion on Medicare reform this year. But here is some preventative medicine right here. Pray for each other; and notice Paul is praying for them while they are doing well. They have love and faith, things are going well in their life. Philemon is well off financially (for he has servants), he has a family, he has the love of Christ in his life, he is loving the saints, and he has a home church. Philemon needs prayers, because you can be sure that the enemy is not pleased and wants to disrupt all the blessings that are going on.

Paul prays for him while he is doing well, so he may continue to do well. We have a tendency to pray for those who aren't do so well. We pray for people who are ill, or who are struggling with

sin, depressed, or discouraged. We should do that, but we should take Paul's example here and pray for each other always, so that others who are doing well, will continue to do well.

Come to Corporate prayer, as some times it will be prayers for your needs, and sometimes it will be prayers for others' needs, and sometimes it is just preventative maintenance to get us all through this crazy and messed up fallen.

*Matthew 21:13 (NKJV)* <sup>13</sup> And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.' "

I give thanks to the Lord for each of you; how you are continuing on in the faith, how you are staying in the fight, and the faith, how you are a testimony to the world around you of what Christ can do with a life set apart and given unto Him.... I give thanks for each and every one of you.

**(Philemon 1:6 NKJV) that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.**

**(Philemon 1:7 NKJV) For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother.**

Paul prays that Philemon will be able to communicate the faith even greater, that the furtherance of the gospel will go even deeper than he has taken thus far.

*the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother.* – what a testimony, he was refreshment to the other believers. Verse 5 tells us he had love and faith towards all the saints.

Are you a refreshment to others? When people leave your presence, are they refreshed or more drained. Have you encouraged them or discouraged them? When people would be around Philemon, come to his house, they would be refreshed, encouraged in their heart. Sadly however, there are people who everything is about them, or for them. Every conversation is about what is going on in their life, their trials, or struggles, they never have an ear to hear what is going on in others' lives. They tell of their problems, every detail of it, or complain about every detail, and when they leave, the other person is just drained, zapped of energy. They look at the church as only what can the church do for me, how can the church and the people in it bless me, they never look at how can I bless the church, and people of this church.

Now, we are to share one another's burdens, the church is a place where the afflicted can be comforted, but everyone should equally be saying, how can I comfort the afflicted, how can I refresh them, let me remember it isn't always about me.

Do you want joy in your life, do you desire to be like a Philemon? Then take the biblical example shown here for joy:

*(Philemon 1:5 NKJV) hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints,*

J-O-Y: Jesus first, others second, and yourself third, and you will begin to experience joy in your life. Your joy will come through the refreshing of others. Continually ask yourself, how can I bless someone else today. My friend Mark always answers the phone at his ministry, "hello this is Mark, how may I bless you?". All I can say about Mark is, he does have a life of joy.

What a testimony of Philemon, he refreshed the hearts of the saints.

#### **The Testimony of Paul: 1:8-10**

**(Philemon 1:8 NKJV) Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting,**

**(Philemon 1:9 NKJV) 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;**

I love this phrase...."for love's sake I appeal to you". Oh the beauty if we moved and flowed in and out of our hearts towards each other, especially in difficult situations, to appeal in love, rather than the law. Oh how we would be moving in love to respond with love.

Now don't confuse me, God's word is final, and so is the Law of this land, and for the kids – the law of the Home is final. But areas like these, we have to trust the Lord and let go, and let God.

Now understand this, it was within Philemon's legal right to administer punishment to Onesimus for running away, and it appears stealing from him. At the time of this writing, it is estimated there were 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire, and Rome wrote laws to maintain order in the empire, to protect the economy, and slaves were the vital part of the economy. A runaway slave could be put to death, or had an "F" burned/branded into their forehead so if they ran away again, the authorities and all people would know this person was a "Fugitive".

Here is Paul giving us more practical examples in dealing with relationships; notice he doesn't lord over Philemon, he doesn't pull rank. Paul doesn't say I am number one apostle, instead he talks as a brother. Paul lets Philemon make his own decision. Paul allows God to work on Philemon's heart. You see if we take this example, if we don't tell people what they must do, if we let them make their own decisions lead by the Holy Spirit after seeking the Lord in prayer, then their decision will stand the attacks of the enemy, and keep unity and peace among the brethren.

If Paul said Philemon, you must do this, then Philemon may have held resentment towards Paul for being forced into something. Also, if Philemon suffered a financial set-back, or some type of hardship due to Paul saying you must do this, then that would have caused a division between the two of them.

Rather Paul makes a request, and trusts the Lord will work it out. Anything the Lord works into us, will stand the attacks of the enemy. If Philemon or ourselves makes the wrong decision, we were in the flesh, then we again have to trust that God will still work all things together for good.

I by no means think Paul is manipulating Philemon. I believe like any good friend, or father-like person in someone's life, Paul is saying listen, you are about to make a decision that is going to affect your whole reputation, and even your legacy, so I want you to seek the Lord, and think it through, for your decision will affect not just your life, but many others also.

**(Philemon 1:10 NKJV) I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten while in my chains,**

Look at Paul's heart here, *I appeal to you for my son Onesimus*, he goes to bat for a slave. What an example for us. In those days that was unheard of, slaves were common property, used or abused as the owner chose. We read Paul's epistles and many times we see him being very direct and challenging when it comes to sin, but here we see his compassion, and his soft side. It is situations like these here in our lives that show the difference between a Bible Quoter, and a Bible Lifer.

We see him going to bat, risking reputation and all to help the so-called undesirable of that day. Are we like Paul, will we take risks, get dirty, for the so-called undesirable of our day. The great apostle, preaching to Kings, and ministering to the homeless and runaways. Ohh that we would all be like Paul, that we would take his example and reach-out to those that have no one that nobody cares about.

### **The Testimony of Onesimus: 1:11-16**

**(Philemon 1:11 NKJV) who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me.**

Onesimus means profitable, but he became unprofitable to Philemon when he ran away. But God, praise the Lord for the But God, in the Bible, for God can take a wasted, broken, and unprofitable life, and turn it back into something profitable, something that will bless people, and bless God, and vessel of honor.

Here is the power of the gospel, a life changed. Do you realize, that Onesimus could have kept running, even claimed he was a new creation in Christ, but he was willing to yield to God, and do whatever God required of him. That is the power of the gospel, and that is when you know you are His, because there is a change not just in word but deed and action, a willingness to obey and fulfill the word of God in your life.

*1 Corinthians 7:20–24 (NKJV)* <sup>20</sup> Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. <sup>21</sup> Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it. <sup>22</sup> For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave. <sup>23</sup> You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. <sup>24</sup> Brethren, let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called.

We say it all the time, salvation looks like something, it looks like a changed life. Repentance means to change, turn, follow.

*Acts 3:19–20 (NKJV)* <sup>19</sup> Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, <sup>20</sup> and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before,

**(Philemon 1:12 NKJV) I am sending him back. You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart,**

Notice here, Paul tells Onesimus that he must fix what is wrong, he must do what is right, he must pay restitution. Being saved wipes out the debt of our sin, but it doesn't wipe out debts to society. A new life doesn't release us from old debts.

We have an obligation to pay old debts. Onesimus ripped off Philemon by running away, he rob Philemon of earnings. We as Christians must pay our credit debt, repay our friends and family, pay the child-support, pay our car insurance. A lot of folks reject the gospel because they have been ripped off by Christians.

Zacchaeus is a great example of repaying old debts. Zacchaeus was a tax collector, they were shady characters, they were known for ripping off the taxpayers, but when Zacchaeus met Jesus, he knew he had to set things right with those whom he owed a debt to. But he, like Onesimus, did it willing, for the Spirit of God was at work.

*Luke 19:7–9 (NKJV)* <sup>7</sup> But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner." <sup>8</sup> Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold." <sup>9</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham;

If you break the law, you have to pay your sentence. You can't circumnavigate the laws because you say well I confessed to God and repented, therefore I don't have to confess to man. Wrong, getting saved doesn't release you from paying your debts. You have to do whatever you can to make things right.

It truly comes down to a trust thing. Lord I trust you that if I do what is right, you will bless me in the end. You will take care of all things.

**(Philemon 1:12 NKJV) I am sending him back. You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart,**

**(Philemon 1:13 NKJV) whom I wished to keep with me, that on your behalf he might minister to me in my chains for the gospel.**

**(Philemon 1:14 NKJV) But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary.**

Paul said I would love to keep him, but I can't, for he is yours, he is your slave. Yes he has been a blessing to me, yes he has and can help me in the ministry, I am sending him back to you for he is yours.

I appeal to you for love's sake!

**(Philemon 1:15 NKJV) For perhaps he departed for a while for this purpose, that you might receive him forever,  
(Philemon 1:16 NKJV) 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.**

Can we pray this for our prodigal's right now, and ask God to use their state and place "for a purpose". Can we pray that they find emptiness in the world, and come home not just to us but to the Lord. Onesimus fled from his master, saying I don't want to be a slave in this home anymore, but when he got to the place he thought was freedom (Rome), he found Rome was as empty. May we pray the prodigals find the same.

*that you might receive him forever, - for eternity, from a slave to a brother.*

Onesimus is definitely a praise report, a testimony of how he was a runaway slave, but got saved on the road. He lived a life of sin, but then met this preacher and committed his life. This is what happened, and Paul says perhaps this is why he ran away, so that God would work on him while he was on the run. Perhaps.

But you know there was an easier way, there was a church right there in Philemon's house, he could have got saved in the very same house that he ran away from.

We always here, ohh what and awesome testimony; ole Joe was on drugs, ran with the gangbangers, but then he met Jesus. Or ole Mary ran away at 14, lived on the streets for 8 years, but then she met Jesus. Yes they are awesome testimonies.

Let me tell you an equally awesome testimony, Allison got saved when she was three, loves the Lord with all her heart, walked in His ways, was obedient to His word, and today she is married with three kids.

Listen, anybody can go out and sin, and live for the flesh, that's easy. But live a life of obedience from your youth, now that is truly amazing - Awesome. To live a life set-apart for the Lord from your youth, with all the lures and temptations put before them, that is a powerful testimony. You youth, don't be fooled by what the church calls an awesome testimony, I believe the people almost go oh ho hum, you never did nothing, you were a goody-goody all your life, - bring on the Biker. You youth, don't quit, keep on keeping on, you are building a testimony of power, an awesome testimony.

Plus, you are being protected from the gunk and the junk that pollutes the minds and lives of those who didn't keep-on keeping-on.

### **The Testimony of Christ: 1:17-19**

I call these verses the testimony of Christ, because they are the testimony of Christ working in and through people. It is a glorious thing when a man, woman, or child become like Jesus, and doing the things that Jesus would do.

**(Philemon 1:17 NKJV) If then you count me as a partner, receive him as you would me.**

Paul says Philemon, receive Onesimus, just as if I was coming to you. There is power in this example, application for all of us. Philemon may have been bitter or resentful at Onesimus for

bailing on him, but Paul says don't be, forgive him, look at him as if you were looking at me. Receive him to your home just as if I was coming to your home.

Jesus would say the same to us today. If you are bitter or resentful at that boss of yours, your parents, your spouse, or ex-spouse, that old boyfriend or girlfriend. You say someone has to pay, I have been wronged by them, Jesus says to you today, someone has paid, I paid for them on the cross, isn't that enough?

Jesus says I love them, I love them so much, they mean so much to me, that I went to the cross and died for them. If you count me as a partner, then receive them, just as if you were receiving me. If we are partners, then how can you hold bitterness towards them, how can you gossip about them, find faults and point them out to others, how can you do that if you are my partner?

Whatever they did to you, is covered by the blood, their faults and failures to you are hidden and concealed.

In the Ark of the Covenant there were three things inside of it: The two tablets of the 10 Commandments, a jar filled with manna, and the Rod of Aaron which had budded. All these are mighty symbols of God's wonders, but they also represent something else. All three of these things represents Israel's failures. God provided daily yet they complained about the manna, they broke the 10 Commandments, and the budding of Aaron's rod came after the people rebelled against God's leadership He had established in Aaron and Moses.

*Hebrews 9:3-5 (NKJV) <sup>3</sup> and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, <sup>4</sup> which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; <sup>5</sup> and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.*

They represent Israel's failures, but see where they rest? They are inside the ark, the coffin, and they are covered by mercy seat. It was on the mercy seat that the blood was sprinkled for the forgiveness of sins.

Whatever they have done to you, it is concealed, it is hidden, it has been covered by the blood.

Your failures are in there too!

If you count me as a partner, receive them as you would receive me.

**(Philemon 1:18 NKJV) But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account.**

**(Philemon 1:19 NKJV) 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.**

Paul here is a picture of Jesus Christ. I will take on a debt I didn't incur, so that another may be free. A beautiful picture of substitution, we will really study this deeper in Hebrews, but for now, notice the hear of Paul. Paul was willing to take on a debt that wasn't his, go the extra mile for another. You see, the more you become like Jesus.....the more you become like Jesus.

**Farewell: 1:20-25**

**(Philemon 1:20 NKJV) Yes, brother, let me have joy from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in the Lord.**

**(Philemon 1:21 NKJV) Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.**

*I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.* – No doubt Paul is talking about not just receiving him back, not just letting him live (for runaway was punishable by death), but even more than that – setting him free.

Calvary Chapel Anne Arundel  
Pastor Ray Bollas



Notice Paul isn't trying to lead a movement to abolish slavery. He isn't trying to be a politician, he wasn't trying to legislate morality. Paul just worked on Philemon's heart. He works against slavery was one heart at a time. Paul was allowing the Holy Spirit to change people from the inside out. Do you want to see abortion reduced, go win a young girl to Christ. Do you want to see the gay and lesbian movement reduce, win a gay to Christ. Do you want to reduce teen pregnancy? – then get involved in the youth group. We will never be able to legislate morality, people will find a way around the law to satisfy their flesh. But win someone to Christ, and let the Holy Spirit work on them from the inside out, and we will see changes. Cultures and communities are changed when people are born-again. One heart at a time.

**(Philemon 1:22 NKJV) But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you.**

**(Philemon 1:23 NKJV) Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you,**

**(Philemon 1:24 NKJV) as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers.**

I'm coming to visit you when I get out of prison Paul says. I don't think by any means Paul is manipulating Philemon. He is literally saying, no matter what you decide, I still love you and whatever you decide, it will not affect our relationship.

Each one of these people listed here has a story to tell of God's greatest, and I look forward to meeting them. Saying Epaphras, I know recognize your name because I read my bible. So tell me what was it like ministering with Paul, were you in jail too, how did that happen? Ahh heaven is gona be a blast.

But as we said in 2 Timothy over and over, oh my what happened to Demas. He had sweet fellowship with Paul and the brethren, but found himself drawn to the world, and leaving Paul and the ministry. How sad.

*2 Timothy 4:9-10 (NKJV) <sup>9</sup> Be diligent to come to me quickly; <sup>10</sup> for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia.*

**(Philemon 1:25 NKJV) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.**

We started this letter with grace, and end in grace, for it is all about grace, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace is something owned by Jesus, it is His very being, part of His very person. And grace is something given by Jesus. And (or a but) grace is something we can receive or choose not to receive. I pray you will receive His grace today, and live in the peace of grace.

If Paul didn't end most all his epistles with "grace". I might think he was ending with a zinger on Philemon, but he ends as he always does. But how fitting for Philemon, as he literally holds the power of life or death in his hands over Onesimus (as Rome law would allow him to kill a runaway slave). But in grace, God had the right by law to kill man for breaking His holy law, but in grace, He not only forgave us, but set us free. And after being set free, we said where would we ever want to go Lord, it is good in my Father's house and I am going nowhere.

When Paul closes with grace in his epistles, especially this one, what a reminder, a sweet reminder of who we once were, slaves on the run, but set free by a loving master.

### **Conclusion:**

Which of the three characters in this book best describe you?

Onesimus submitted to the Lord, he went back. He could have run, he must have thought about it on his 900 mile journey back home, but he didn't. If he did, then we wouldn't be reading about

him, and talking about him today. You never know how or where your obedience to the Lord will lead on this earth, but one thing I can guarantee you, it will lead closer to God.

Philemon, based on his testimony, I believe he would have been all too eager to refresh Paul. I believe he sent Philemon back to Paul, as a free man. A man who didn't hold a grudge or resentment towards Philemon, but forgave him, accepted him as a brother.

Paul, the peacemaker, interceding to bring peace to two people at war. Paul did this in meekness, not lording over the situation. Paul willing to get his hands dirty, to get involved to bring peace, even to the point of willing to pay the debt if needed.

Some day's we have to be all three, or just on, but may the practical teachings of this book write on the tables of our heart, and we can be a refreshment to the saints, let the Holy Spirit do the work in people's lives, seek out the so-called undesirable, set things right where they need to, and that we would be counted as a partner and let the wrongs be covered by the mercy seat.

The book of Philemon, what a wonderful, so often overlooked, book.

#### Outline For this Book

Introduction: 1-3

The Testimony of Philemon: 4-7

The Testimony of Paul: 8-10

The Testimony of Onesimus: 11-16

The Testimony of Christ: 17-19

Farewell: 20-25

#### Prayer

The Word of God is Living and Powerful, and is ready, and will do a mighty work in our lives.

*Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV) <sup>12</sup> For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

#### **In Every Study**

- Who Is God? (How Great is He?)
- What Does He Think of Me? (How Wonderful Are His Thoughts Towards Me?)
- What Does He Want Me to Do?
- What Can I Boldly Request of Him?
- What Do I Need to Be on Guard of When I Leave Here Today?

Boldly come to the throne of grace, ask God to reveal Himself in a mighty way to you, and to do I might work in you, and through you.

*Hebrews 4:16 (NKJV) <sup>16</sup> Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*