

## Philemon

**Message** - Paul's request for Philemon to accept Onesimus back into his household because Onesimus is now a useful brother in Christ.

**Theme** - Our life in Christ can and should change every relationship!

**Background** - Philemon and Colossians are closely related:

- 1 – The were written during Paul's first prison term in Rome, probably around 61 AD.
- 2 – The same key people are mentioned in both Colossians and Philemon
  - Epaphras – Col. 1:7, 4:12 and Philemon 23
  - Mark (John Mark, Barnabas' cousin) Col. 4:10 and Philemon 24
  - Aristarchus – Col. 4:10 (my fellow prisoner) and Philemon 24
  - Demas – Col. 4:14 and Philemon 24
  - Luke – Col 4:14 and Philemon 24
  - Archippus – Col. 4:17 and Philemon 2
  - Onesimus – Col. 4:9 and Philemon 10
- 3 – Paul sent the letters of Colossians and Philemon by Tychicus and Onesimus – Col. 4:7-

### Outline:

- I. Introduction (1-3)
- II. Praise of Philemon (4-7)
- III. Plea to Philemon (8-17)
- IV. Pledge to Philemon (18-21)
- V. Conclusion – Personal Matters (22-25)

### Introduction (1-3)

*Paul a prisoner of Christ Jesus* – Eight times in his epistles Paul refers to himself as a prisoner of Jesus Christ. This is his only letter that begins with this designation.

The addressees:

Philemon – Probably well to do, converted by Paul (most likely at Ephesus)

Apphia – Probably Philemon's wife (wives often managed the slaves in a wealthy household)

Archippus - Either their son or the interim pastor or both

The church in Philemon's house – Even though it is a personal letter, Paul does not mind it being shared with the church that meets in Philemon's house. Perhaps Paul wants some witnesses!

*Grace and Peace* – Paul's greeting, used in every letter he wrote!

### Praise of Philemon (4-7)

1. Thanksgiving for Philemon
2. Intercession for Philemon and its content (v. 6)
3. Joy and comfort from Philemon (v. 7) The hearts of the saints have been refreshed.

### Plea to Philemon (8-17)

1. Paul's choice not to command Philemon (v. 8).
2. Paul's appeal on behalf of Onesimus (vv. 9-10).
  - For love's sake
  - As an old man
  - As a prisoner of Christ
  - As Onesimus' spiritual father
3. Paul's dispatch of Onesimus (vv. 11-12).  
Once *useless*, now *useful*! The name Onesimus means "Useful."
4. Paul's decision not to detain Onesimus (vv. 13-16).
5. Paul's plea (17).

### Pledge to Philemon (18-21)

1. Charge Onesimus's debts to my account, if he has caused you loss or owes you anything. I give you written guarantee of repayment, but remember that you owe your spiritual life to me!
2. Refresh my heart in Christ by letting me gain some benefit from you.  
Benefit = *oninemi*, a play on the name Onesimus.

### Personal Matters (22-25)

1. Final Remarks (vv. 22)
2. Greetings (vv. 23-24)
3. Benediction (v. 25)

### Challenge:

- Who is an Onesimus in your life?
- Who is a Philemon in your life?
- Are you a useful servant or a worthless servant?
- Do you serve God from compulsion or from love?
- Who in your life do you need to forgive and seek reconciliation?  
"If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men." Rom. 12:18

**Our life in Christ can and should change every relationship!**