



Step by Step

■ 57. Philemon



Author // Paul and Timothy

Original Recipients // This small letter, more like a postcard was written to a wealthy citizen of Colossae named Philemon and the others who participated in the church that met in his home.

Date of Writing // Philemon is part of a collection of Paul's letters known as the Prison Epistles, which also includes Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. These letters were written around 60 AD.

Type of Literature // Didactic

Major Themes // Forgiveness; Restoration; The Power of the Gospel to transform culture.

Occasion for Writing // While in prison in Rome Paul came across a fellow prisoner named Onesimus who had stolen from his master Philemon and fled. Divine providence put him into contact with Paul who led this young man to Christ. Now he was being sent back to Colossae to face his master. This letter was written to help restore the broken relationship and illustrates how Christian principles are to override social mores and customs.



Simple Summary // Philemon is a story of redemption, transformation and forgiveness. The book is named after its recipient, Philemon, who was a wealthy leader in the church in Colossae. His slave, Onesimus, had run away to Rome. While on the run, he met Paul and became a believer. Paul asks Philemon to receive Onesimus back as a brother in Christ and forgive him of the wrongs he has committed. The theme of the book is forgiveness and the power of the gospel of Christ to transform lives and culture. While oppression and slavery may exist in Rome forgiveness and brotherly love are the values of Christ's Kingdom

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Outline // J Sidlow Baxter gives the following outline:

1-3 // *Intro*

4-7 // *Paul's Praise for Philemon*

8-16 // *Paul's Plea to Philemon*

17-22 // *Paul's Pledge to Philemon*

23-25 // *Farewell*



Key Verses

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

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

1:10-11 // I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten while in my chains, who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me.

1:15-16 // For perhaps he departed for a while for this purpose, that you might receive him forever, 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.

1:17 // If then you count me as a partner, receive him as you would me.



Jesus in Philemon

Christ is the Redeemer. The same Savior who bled and died for Philemon the slave owner also died to redeem Onesimus the slave. Once we have been redeemed, the gospel makes human relationships right, regardless of the arbitrary divisions among us.

