LESSON 1: WE ARE FAMILY — DIVINE APPOINTMENT, PARTNERSHIP & ENABLEMENT

PASSAGE: PHILEMON 1:1–3

Written around AD 60–63 during Paul's first Roman house arrest alongside its "sister epistle" Colossians, Philemon is the shortest and most personal letter in the Pauline corpus. Rather than pulling apostolic rank, Paul writes a masterclass in *mitigated exhortation*—appealing as a friend and fellow prisoner on behalf of Onesimus, a runaway slave from Colossae who met Christ through Paul in Rome. Before Paul issues a single command (delayed until vv. 17–22), he opens in verses 1–3 by anchoring the entire conflict inside the spiritual reality of the Family of God: we serve by divine appointment, alongside dedicated family partners, empowered by grace and peace from our Father and Savior.

MANUSCRIPT TEXT & EXEGETICAL NOTES

MARGINS / NOTES	SCRIPTURE TEXT
Divine Appointment & Identity (v. 1a) • Drops "Apostle" (used in 9/13 letters) to appeal as friend • **"Prisoner of Christ Jesus"**: Bound by King Jesus, not Nero • Chains are a badge of office, not bad luck • Know *who* you are & *whom* you please **Serving with Family Partners (vv. 1b–2)** • **Timothy ("our brother")**: Spiritual kinship over rank • **Philemon ("beloved friend & fellow laborer")**: Host & Colossian leader • **Apphia ("beloved")**: Wife; day-to-day supervisor of household slaves (vital decision-maker)	**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: **3** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

MARGINS / NOTES	SCRIPTURE TEXT
• **Archippus ("fellow soldier")**: Son; spiritual warrior (Col 4:17) • **"Church in your house"**: First-century house church model (no church buildings until 3rd century) **Divine Enablement & Twin Source (v. 3)** • **Grace (*Charis*)**: Unmerited favor at the heart of the gospel • **Peace (*Eirēnē / Shalom*)**: Wholeness & reconciliation • **Twin Source**: Flows equally from God our Father & the Lord Jesus Christ (Full Majestic Title)	

DISCOVERY & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. _____

   PRISONER OF CHRIST, NOT CIRCUMSTANCES (v. 1): Out of his 13 letters, Philemon is the only one where Paul begins by calling himself a "prisoner of Christ Jesus" rather than an apostle. How does viewing your current limitations, workplace, or difficult circumstances as a "divine appointment" from King Jesus change the way you handle frustration?

2. **PLEASING SOMEBODY OVER EVERYBODY (v. 1):** Paul lived by a singular loyalty to his Messiah Savior rather than trying to impress Rome or manipulate people. Where in your life are you tempted to exhaust yourself trying to please everybody instead of focusing on pleasing Jesus?

3. **THE HOUSEHOLD AS A HEALTHY CHURCH (v. 2):** Notice that Paul addresses Philemon, his wife Apphia (who oversaw the household slaves), their son Archippus, and "the church in your house." Looking at Spurgeon's marks of a home-church (saved people, worship, unity, oversight, teaching, and outward ministry), how can your home become a stronger base for gospel hospitality and reconciliation?

4. **TWIN ENABLEMENT FOR HARD CONVERSATIONS (v. 3):** Before asking Philemon to forgive a runaway slave who likely stole from him, Paul blesses him with Grace (unmerited favor) and Peace (shalom) from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Why must we first drink deeply of God's grace toward us before we can ever extend true reconciliation to someone who has wronged us?