

# Philemon

Paul is requesting Philemon reconcile, restore and forgive Onesimus.

- Paul addresses Philemon's wife, Apphia, because she may have been the one in charge of Onesimus' daily activities
- Paul addresses the church because they will:
  - Need to understand why Philemon is accepting and forgiving Onesimus.
  - Need to also accept Onesimus' restoration
  - Be used by Paul to hold Philemon accountable (Philemon really will not have an option unless he is going to now publicly reject Paul's advice and Onesimus' confession, conversion and return.)
  - Watching a illustration of actual theological application: What good is forgiveness and restoration with God if those who are in fellowship with God cannot do the same for others?
  - Be given a perfect illustration of the process of Salvation:
    - Onesimus = Sinful Man;
    - Paul = Christ;
    - Philemon = God.

This is Paul's shortest letter – 335 words in the Greek

- longer than most letters from this time period
- more typical of first century letters than any of Paul's other letters.
- The letter to Philemon is a well thought out letter. It is crafted and not quickly written. The wording is intentional.
- The book includes love, wisdom, tact, even humor.

Paul establishes a secure system to ensure Onesimus' acceptance and prepares a safe environment for Onesimus to make his return.

1. Apphia is prepared to understand, agree and support Philemon.
2. Paul accepts the responsibility for the financial loss. Philemon has no legal charges to file.
3. Onesimus freely returns with Paul's letter accepting responsibility. Philemon no longer has a run away slave.
4. This private letter is addressed also to the church for public reading. Philemon is the one put on the spot, not Onesimus.
5. Archipus, the pastor, is addressed and able to hold Philemon accountable.
6. Paul says "Prepare a guest room for me," which indicates he himself will eventually be making an appearance and will observe first hand if Philemon restored Onesimus.
7. Paul indicates full confidence that Philemon agrees with the intention of the letter.
8. Paul refers to Onesimus as "who became my son."
9. Paul refers to Onesimus as "who is my very heart."
10. Paul refers to Onesimus as "useful both to you and to me."
11. Paul asks for Onesimus to be restored, but hints at giving him his freedom or sending him back to serve Paul.
12. Paul refers to Philemon's partnership, prayers, faith, love, work of refreshing the saints and hosting the church in his house.

13. Paul contrast himself as a prisoner in chains in prison with Philemon's freedom of ministry to serve the saints in his luxury villa along with his wife.

**Basic Outline:**

- Verses **4-7**
  - Paul is thankful and encouraging to his friend Philemon
- Verses **8-9**
  - Paul relationship with Philemon on the basis of:
    - authority – as an apostle Paul “could be bold and order [Philemon] to do what [he] ought to do”
    - love – as mature believers Paul will “appeal to [Philemon] on the basis of love.”
- Verse **10**
  - Paul mentions Onesimus for the first time and calls him “my son”
- Verses **11-13**
  - Paul describes how “useful” Onesimus is and would like to keep him.
- Verses **14-16**
  - Paul identifies Onesimus as:
    - Philemon's property
    - a useful slave
    - as a man
    - a brother in the Lord.
- Verses **17-21**
  - Paul tells Philemon to:
    - welcome Onesimus back
    - to charge anything he owes to Paul's account.
  - Paul reminds Philemon that Philemon owes Paul is own life.
- Verse **22**
  - Paul asks Phlemon to prepare a room for him because he plans on visiting when he is released from prison.

**Greek Words:**

- 'ευχρηστος – *euchrestos* – useful, serviceable, profitable, meet for use, 11.
- 'ελλογεω – *ellogeo* – imput, put on account. This word was a technical term in business used to refer to charging to someone's account.18.
- σπλαγχνον – *splagchon* – the inner organs, inward affection, bowels, used to refer to the total person at the deepest levels, 7.

**Theme in Letter:** Redemption, Restoration, Forgiveness, Imputation

**Philemon 1 – “Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved fellow worker**

- Timothy is mentioned because Timothy may have been in Colosseae, spoke at the church and new many of the believers including Philemon, his wife Apphia and the acting pastor Archippus.

**2 – “and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house:**

- People mentioned in this letter and people we know are involved in this letter:
  - Philemon – husband, master of the house and household slaves, believer and owner of the house where the church meets
  - Apphia – wife, believer and supervisor of the household slaves
  - Archippus – acting leader of the church of Colosseae in the absence of Epaphras who has gone to visit Paul in Rome and has stayed there for the time being
  - Tychicus – was a native of Asia.
    - Tychicus was with Paul in Greece and Ephesus
    - In 2 Timothy Paul sends Tychicus to replace Timothy in Ephesus
  - Onesimus – slave owned by Philemon, a runaway slave, met Paul in Rome, became a believer.
    - Onesimus is one of two men carrying the letter of Colossians back to Colossae. Tychicus and Onesimus would have the responsibility of carrying, delivering, reading and explaining the letter of Colossae.
    - They also (Colossians 4:7) are to provide a report about all of Paul’s activities and condition in Rome while under arrest.
    - They are to report everything that has taken place in Rome (Colossians 4:9).
    - Onesimus was also to encourage the hearts of the Colossians (Colossians 4:8)

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

**4 – “I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers,**

**5 – “because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints,**

- Paul had heard from Epaphras (and, possibly, Onesimus) a description of Philemon’s character.
- Paul may have met Philemon if Philemon had traveled with Epaphras and others to hear Paul speak in Ephesus during his three years stay.

**6 – “and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ.**

- Paul considered Philemon a man of faith with the opportunity to effectively share his faith and the full knowledge of what it means to be in Christ.
- This verse captures the essence and purpose of the book of Colossians.

**7 – “For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.**

- Philemon is doing work for the saints

- Philemon is recognized as:
  - Loving the saints
  - Refreshing the saints
  - Also, serving the saints
  - And, teaching, explaining to the saints

8 – “Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required,

- Now, the issue at hand: Onesimus
- Philemon is caught between two worlds. Philemon is both the slave owner and the slave.

9 – “yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus—

- Paul desires to appeal to truth and righteousness and have both himself and Philemon act in love, maturity and the character of Christ.
- Paul identifies himself as:
  - “an old man” – this phrase is used by Paul to point out he is now dependent on others to help him and get the job done.
    - The idea many have here is to consider this to be a phrase that refers to “elder” or “ambassador”, but this is unlikely since:
      - The text is clear – “old man”
      - Paul just laid down his right to give commands, demand obedience and speak like an apostle with authority in the previous verse.
    - Basically, Paul is calling on Philemon to consider Paul’s helpless state and take up the mantel and do the right thing not out of fear, but out of love.
  - “a prisoner also” – like Philemon and like Onesimus the man writing this letter is also a prisoner and slave of Christ (and, at this time, Rome). Paul also is caught in two worlds.

10 – “I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, Whose father I became in my imprisonment.

3870 [e]	4771 [e]	4012 [e]	3588 [e]	1699 [e]	5043 [e]	3739 [e]	1080 [e]	1722 [e]	3588 [e]	1199 [e]	3682 [e]	
Parakalō	se	peri	tou	emou	teknou	hon	egennēsa	en	tois	desmois	Onēsimon	
10 Παρακαλῶ	σε	περὶ	τοῦ	ἐμοῦ	τέκνου	,	ὃν	ἐγέννησα	ἐν	τοῖς	δεσμοῖς	, Ὀνήσιμον
I exhort	you	for	-	my	child	,	whom	I have begotten	in	-	chains	Onesimus
V-PIA-1S	PPro-A2S	Prep	Art-GNS	PPro-G1S	N-GNS		RelPro-AMS	V-AIA-1S	Prep	Art-DMP	N-DMP	N-AMS

11 – “(Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.)

3588 [e]	4218 [e]	4771 [e]	890 [e]	3570 [e]	1161 [e]	2532 [e]	4771 [e]	2532 [e]	1473 [e]	2173 [e]	
ton	pote	soi	achrēston	nyni	de	kai	soi	kai	emoi	euchrēston	
11 τόν	ποτέ	σοι	ἄχρηστον	, νυνὶ	δὲ	καὶ	σοὶ	καὶ	ἐμοὶ	εὐχρηστον	,
-	once	to you	useless	, now	however	both	to you	and	to me	useful	
Art-AMS	Prtcl	PPro-D2S	Adj-AMS		Adv	Conj	Conj	PPro-D2S	Conj	PPro-D1S	Adj-AMS

- This is a play on the name Onesimus:
  - “Onesimus” is *Onesimos* and means “useful”. This was a common slave name.
  - “Useless” is *achrestos* and means “useless”, “unprofitable”, “detrimental”
  - “Useful” is *euchrestos* and means “useful”, “serviceable”, “very profitable”

12 – “I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart.

13 – **“I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel,**

14 – **“but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord.**

- According to the law of the land Onesimus was Philemon’s property
- Paul could not have set Onesimus free because Paul was not the Roman government
- Paul set Onesimus as free as Paul could: He led him to the Lord and led him back to the believing community.
- Now, the only one who could set Onesimus free from criminal charges and from a life of slavery was the slave owner who had been robbed by Onesimus

15 – **“For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever,**

- The greater of the two worlds is now available to Philemon and Onesimus’ relationship

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

17 – **“So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me.**

18 – **“If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account.**

19 – **“I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self.**

20 – **“Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ.**

21 – **“Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.**

22 – **“At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you.**