

PHILEMON**THE GOSPEL:Redemption, Reconciliation, Restoration****Greeting**

**1 Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,
To Philemon our beloved fellow worker
2 and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house:
3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Philemon's Love and Faith

**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,
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.
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.**

Paul's Plea for Onesimus

**8 Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required,
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—
10 I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment.
11 (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.)
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.
15 For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever,
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.**

Final Greetings

**23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you,
24 and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.
25 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.**

1 / INTRODUCTION & MAKING CONNECTIONS

1. There is so much to keep in mind as we begin to read this personal letter and unpack its meaning and personal applications both to Philemon, the original recipient of the letter, and also to us...
2. This letter was sent to Philemon who was apparently the pastor of "*the church in your house*" / v 1

3. This church was in the same area and group of churches that were situated in the cluster of cities in Asia Minor that Paul addressed in the Book of Colossians – Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis / **Col 1.2; 2.2; 4.13, 15-16**
4. This letter was sent to them at the same time as the Book of Colossians – and in order to keep both Philemon and Colossians in context, in your mind remember that Philemon could well have followed Colossians in the order in which they appear in the Bible. It was not necessarily an attachment to Colossians, but it was a companion letter.
5. So, we would do well to keep the messages of Colossians fresh in our minds as we read Philemon – both the occasion and context of Colossians and also the Gospel instructions. They will coordinate, overlap, and intertwine with each other
6. In other words, when Paul personally instructs Philemon re: how he should treat Onesimus when he returns to him, he is assuming that Philemon will also have read and received his instructions in Colossians – both in regards to the doctrinal teachings of the Gospel and also how those same Gospel truths must be lived out in our lives and all our relationships

2 / LET'S MEET THE CHARACTERS IN PHILEMON & SET THE CONTEXT OF THE LETTER AND THE OCCASION FOR PAUL'S WRITING IT...

PHILEMON

1. As we have said: probably the pastor of *'the church in your house'*
2. Paul describes him as *'fellow-worker'* [v 1] and *'partner'* [v 17] because he was a fellow preacher, pastor, and minister of the Gospel
3. If you compare this personal letter with the Colossians epistle [**Col 4.9**], it might appear that Philemon was pastor of the church in Colossae
4. Paul also tells him in v 19 *'your owing me even your own self'* implying that Philemon had been saved himself under Paul's ministry of the Gospel during his time in Ephesus recorded in **Acts 19.10**
5. Though Paul says in **Col 2.1** of the saints in these churches *'who have not seen me face to face,'* we may assume that Philemon had visited Ephesus, had heard Paul preach the Gospel, and God had saved him – probably during annual feast times to the goddess Artemis [Diana] which the devotees in the surrounding cities would have attended [**see Acts 19.21-41**]

APPHIA – most probably Philemon's wife

ARCHIPPUS

1. Archippus may have been the son of Philemon and Apphia
2. He was also most probably the pastor of one of the churches in that cluster of Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis [maybe Hierapolis?]
3. Paul addressed Archippus in **Col 4.17**: *"And say to Archippus, 'See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord.'"*

ONESIMUS [His name means 'useful' by the way / see Paul's play on his name in v 11]]

1. Onesimus was a runaway slave who had also stolen from Philemon as he was fleeing / **Philemon 18**
2. Somehow, he had made his way all the way from Asia Minor to Rome where he had encountered Paul
3. This would have had to be intentional – there is no likely scenario in which he 'just happened' to find himself in Rome and 'run into' Paul in prison
4. It is not all unthinkable that Onesimus had heard of Paul through his relationship with Philemon. He knew of Paul's close friendship with Philemon. Maybe he felt remorse for his thievery, crimes, and dishonesty, and went to Rome to find Paul to see if Paul could intercede for him to return to Philemon.
5. Onesimus heard the Gospel and received Christ through Paul's witness / **Phm 10**
6. Paul mentioned Onesimus also in **Col 4.9** where Paul tells the Colossians that he is sending Onesimus to them along with Tychicus and the Colossian epistle. He calls him *'our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you.'*

3 / SO, WITH THIS BACKGROUND IN MIND – LET’S DEVELOP THE THEMES AND MESSAGES OF THE LETTER: Redemption, Reconciliation, Restoration

1. **Colossians and Philemon are ‘twin texts’ / companion texts**
2. Remember, this letter was sent to Philemon [in the company of Onesimus] along with the Epistle of Colossians.
3. So these two texts would have accompanied each other. Paul would have known and expected that anything he instructs Philemon to do in his relationship with Onesimus would have been reinforced also by his instructions in Colossians.
4. So, we have to read them both in tandem and side-by-side with each other ... and Philemon would have served as a follow-up and personal application of what he had written in Colossians
5. The theme of this personal letter of Philemon is the same theme[s] that run through Colossians: **Redemption, Reconciliation, Restoration.**
6. The significance being: in Colossians, Paul clearly defines the doctrinal anchor and underpinnings of these themes in Christ and the Gospel.
7. We have already seen and studied how Paul itemizes and details how we must live out the Gospel in all of our relationships – including the relationships between masters and bond-servants [slaves] / **see Col 3.22-4.1**
8. **ALSO:** Paul has written one of his several declarations that in Christ and His Gospel, and in His church, there is no inequality, distinction, or different treatment to be drawn between masters and bond-servants [slaves] / **see Col 3.11**
9. So now, here in Philemon, Paul will not only apply these Gospel relationships in general, or even as a principle, but he will address this particular personal case and example with Philemon and Onesimus.

So, what we will do is name these Gospel doctrines and...

[1] point to where they are declared in Colossians, and then

[2] show how they are personally and relationally applied in Philemon...

4 / REDEMPTION, RECONCILIATION, AND RESTORATION LIVED OUT IN PHILEMON

[1] REDEMPTION

In Colossians: Read Colossians 1.12-13 & 2.13-15 & 3.13

1. REDEMPTION means to purchase or buy another from bondage ... by paying the price that is sufficient to deliver from the ownership of the former holder into the ownership of the redeemer. In our case, the law of God that condemns our sins and executes His holy, just wrath against them is the former captor / **see 1 Peter 1.18-19**
2. AND ... REDEMPTION always includes the FORGIVENESS OF ALL SINS, TRANSGRESSIONS, AND OFFENSES of the offender – BECAUSE THE REQUIRED FULL RANSOM, RE-PAYMENT, AND PRICE OF REDEMPTION HAS BEEN SUFFICIENTLY PAID!

REDEMPTION In Philemon...

1. In Onesimus’s case, he must be redeemed from his crimes of running away from Philemon and the stealing and theft he committed in the act
2. Paul offers himself to pay the redeeming price required to repay and make whole the loss that Philemon suffered in Onesimus’s offense / **Phm 17-19**
3. **In so doing, Paul is acting out in himself what Christ has done for us in Himself – substitution, imputation, identification of the Redeemer for the redeemed!**
4. AND Paul appeals to Philemon to FORGIVE Onesimus as God had forgiven him [see Col 3.13] and also because Paul will REPAY anything Onesimus may have taken from him

[2] RECONCILIATION**In Colossians: Read Colossians 1.19-23**

1. RECONCILIATION is effected – and must be effected – because the offense that caused the separation of the estranged parties has been removed!
2. In the Gospel case, we have been reconciled back to the favor, acceptance, and graces of God because the sin that caused our separation and the breach of our fellowship has been FULLY AND SUFFICIENTLY PAID FOR BY CHRIST!

RECONCILIATION In Philemon...

1. In Onesimus's case, Paul appeals to Philemon to be RECONCILED back with Onesimus because Paul will pay the FULL AND SUFFICIENT PRICE to make Philemon whole from the breach of faith, trust, and relationship that Onesimus had caused by running away and stealing from him as he left.

[3] RESTORATION**In Colossians: Read Colossians 2.9**

2. RESTORATION means that the former relationships have been RESTORED – in fact, not just RESTORED, but also RESTORED to a fuller fullness than existed before!
3. In Christ and the Gospel, we have been RESTORED to the fullness of grace, fellowship, and relationship that even is enjoyed between the Father and the Son, Jesus Christ!

RESTORATION In Philemon

1. Paul appeals to Philemon to RESTORE Onesimus, not only to his former master-servant relationship through his forgiveness of Onesimus's offenses
2. ...BUT MORE! Paul appeals to Philemon to 'receive' Onesimus back in the same relationship that he recognizes and enjoys with Paul himself ... even 'as a beloved brother'!
3. *Read it! Philemon 15-17: 15 For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, 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.*

5 / IN SUMMARY: I want to quote from B. H. Carroll in his Interpretation of the English Bible. Carroll is writing from the perspective of a Baptist pastor in the South during the era leading up to and during the Civil War. He is writing to show how Paul is instructing Philemon how the Gospel should govern how he should receive Onesimus back into his Christian fellowship and into the church as an equal brother in Christ.

Here is how Carroll details from Philemon what the Gospel does to teach and effect REDEMPTION, RECONCILIATION, & RESTORATION in all our relationships

1. **It convicted the slave of the double sin of fleeing from the master and of robbing him.**
2. **It led him to repentance and reformation.**
3. **It converted him to Christ, thus bringing him into a blessed state of peace with God.**
4. **It manifested intense sympathy with and love toward this slave as a man equal before God with all other men in religious privileges.**
5. **It restores the now penitent fugitive slave, with his own consent, to his master, according to the laws of the land, but it identifies the slave with the apostle returning him, who assumes all that the slave owes the master by theft or loss of service.**
6. **It counts the converted slave as a spiritual son and as the very heart of the sender.**
7. **It commends him as a brother in Christ to the master, and intercedes for full forgiveness.**
8. **It assumes not to command that the slave be set free, but suggests to the master, as of his own free will, in expressing confidence that the Christian master 'will do more than is asked.' [see Philemon 21]**

