

Philemon

Chapter 1

Notes and Thoughts

Philemon 1:1-18.

*"I Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellow labourer,
2 And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in thy house:
3 Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
4 I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers,
5 Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints;
6 That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.
7 For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.
8 Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient,
9 Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.
10 I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds:
11 Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me:
12 Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels:
13 Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel:
14 But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly.
15 For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever;
16 Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?
17 If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself.
18 If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account;
19 I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides.
20 Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord.
21 Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say.
22 But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.
23 There salute thee Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus;
24 Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellow labourers.
25 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen."*

Written from Rome to Philemon, about Onesimus, a servant.

PAUL'S LETTER TO PHILEMON

This letter is a private correspondence of Paul.

Paul writes to his friend Philemon on behalf of Onesimus, a slave who had run away from Philemon, his master. Verse 18 suggests that Onesimus may have also stolen something from Philemon.

After running away Onesimus met Paul and was converted. In the letter Paul is asking Philemon to take back his slave Onesimus.

Onesimus went to see Paul while in the Roman prison. He became a believer and follower of Jesus.

Verse 1: Paul starts off by designating himself as *"a prisoner of Jesus Christ,"* with Timothy his brother in Christ to Philemon a fellow labourer. His imprisonment is also mentioned in verses 9,10,13,23 and how much Onesimus had cared for him.

Paul also mentions Onesimus in his letter to [Colossians 4:9](#).

"9 With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. "

For Paul to send Onesimus home to Philemon was going to be costly to Paul, because Paul needed Onesimus far more than Philemon, the man had become a very important help in elderly Paul's personal comfort and welfare in the prison. However, Paul also knew that restoration of the two men's relationship would have a far greater effect on the church in Colossae. It would show the christian brothers relationship and forgiveness, the humility and restoration through Jesus. The gospel message would get great benefit. There is some evidence that Philemon may have been also been a church leader.

Paul does not give any teaching on slavery, but today the Christian faith now views the act of slavery as incompatible to the principles of the Gospel. Through the action of Jesus on the cross there is a new arrangement of the Believers brotherhood and relationships while on the earth.

Verse 4-7: Paul firstly shows his care for Philemon, *"I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers,"* It appears that Paul and Philemon had a very close spiritual fellowship.

Philemon would have received no warning of the returning slave. Brother Tychicus, the messenger carrier, travelling with Onesimus would hand over the letter from Paul, which he hoped would permit the greatly differing social class of Master and slave to be reconciled.

Paul also hoped that Philemon would release Onesimus from slavery, verse 16,17, so that Onesimus could return to help Paul during his prison period.

Verse 8,9: Paul could have used his apostolic authority but he asked that Philemon would chose the right action *"for love's sake I rather beseech thee,"* because of their own personal relationships in the ministry. The Law at the time permitted a master to execute any slave which was causing problems. Though Onesimus was now a believer, he was also still a slave and could suffer the consequences of his previous action.

[Colossians 3:22,23](#).

"22 Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye service, as men pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:

23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;"

Onesimus had to be freed from slavery by the decision and instructions of Philemon only.

Colossians 3:22,23

Paul sent Onesimus back home with this letter. Paul asks Philemon to forgive Onesimus. Paul wants them to become friends again because they both love Jesus. This letter shows how love in Christ Jesus can overcome the wrong things people do.

Verse 15,16: Paul appears to suggest that it was part of the desires of God that Onesimus would escape *"for a while"* to be converted *"that thou shouldest receive him for ever;"*

Verse 17: Receive him because of our relationship and partnership in the Lord.

Verse 21,22: I have confidence that you will forgive and then return him to me as a free man. Please continue to pray for me and my imprisonment.

We have no record of what happened, but history records that 50 years later there was a Bishop Onesimus in the Ephesus church.