

Philemon

Author: Paul

Audience: Philemon (wealthy member of the Colossian church)

Date Written: 60 A.D. (during Paul's first imprisonment of Rome) Colosse, Rome

Setting: Slavery was common in the Roman empire, even amongst Christians. However, Paul does not use the letter to condemn slavery, but emphasize brotherhood

Writing Style: Paul writes this as a personal letter to Philemon

The writing helps in dealing with personal obstructions from one another.

How do we handle a difference of opinion (approach/thought)? (I.e. Do we accept it, reject it, try to correct it, etc.)

Do we have tolerance to understand any other perspective other than our own?

The atmosphere of Philemon's day is wrestling with Roman, Greek, and Jewish cultures and their differences.

Philemon is a Greek landowner living in Colosse. He had been converted under Paul's ministry and the Colossian church met in his home. Onesimus (useful) is one of Philemon's slaves.

Paul challenges Philemon's faith in God! A challenge of maturity.

Chapter 1

Paul's Appreciation of Philemon (v. 1-7)

- Paul greets Philemon, Apphia, Archippus, and the church – that means, Paul didn't mind all of the above receiving the contents of this letter.
- Paul then takes a moment to thank Philemon for his faithful work to spread Christianity and let him know...I'm praying for you.
- Paul personalizes what Philemon's service means to him

Do we serve like Philemon? Or are we discouraging one another with our complaints?

Paul's Appeal for Onesimus (v. 8-25)

- Paul could have ordered Philemon on what to do, however he showed him courtesy and respect.
- Onesimus runs away from his problems with Philemon and runs into a relationship with Jesus in Rome. (Paul
- Paul appeals to Philemon to now look at Onesimus as a brother and no longer a slave
 - Philemon has the right to kill a runaway slave.
 - Paul is asking Philemon to forgive the wrongdoing and view Onesimus differently – tall request.
- Paul expressed the usefulness of Onesimus and discretely referenced the *new usefulness* of Onesimus to Philemon, if he were to return.
- Onesimus takes a little time away.

- Paul asks Philemon to charge Onesimus' wrongdoings to Paul's account (Christlike) He was self-sacrificing.
- In this letter, Paul was challenging the social/cultural norms of how to deal with one another. We are all equals in the sight of Jesus!
 - How we treat each other is a reflection of our Christian commitment.
 - Do we see each other as partners or competitors or tolerate one another?
 - Our common thread of Jesus saved us, should anchor our feelings of gratitude for Christ's love with our brothers and sisters.
- Paul urged Philemon to reconcile to Onesimus..... Christ reconciles us to God.

Life Application

What did you walk away with?

How will you handle your thought life differently?

How will you engage differently with believers and nonbelievers?