

Outline of Philemon

This outline of Philemon is intended to assist you as you study the Bible. May you discover God's character as you read His letter to you.

We know very little about the person, Philemon. That he was apparently a resident of Colossae is supported by the fact that his slave, Onesimus, was a Colossian (Colossians 4:9). Also, those involved in the Colossian church appeared to be involved with Philemon, including Epaphras (apparently the evangelist who brought the gospel to Colossae (Colossians 1:7; Philemon 23), and Archippus, a minister in the church (Colossians 4:17; Philemon 2). Each of the persons mentioned in Philemon are mentioned in Colossians, except for Philemon and Onesimus.

The letter apparently was sent at the same time as the letter of Colossians. This is the one personal letter preserved of Paul's writing that is not an instructional letter to a church or church leader, but a letter of appeal to a slave owner on the behalf of a run-away slave. Onesimus had apparently fled to Rome and there was converted by Paul (verse 10). Now, Paul sends him back to Philemon, though he would really like to keep him (verse 13). Paul commends Onesimus to Philemon, no longer as a slave, but as a brother. Paul, like Christ, asks for any of the wrongs of Onesimus to be put on Paul's account (verse 18).

The book is about bondage and love, forgiveness and joy. Mostly, it is about Jesus Christ, who is mentioned 11 times in 25 verses.

- Paul is a prisoner of Christ — vs. 1, 9
- Grace and peace come from Christ — vs. 3, 25
- Christ is the object of Philemon's love and faith — vs. 5
- Every good thing is in us in Christ — vs. 6
- Boldness is found in Christ — vs. 8
- There is a brotherhood in the Lord — vs. 16
- There is a shared joy in the Lord — vs. 20
- There is a refreshment in the Lord — vs. 20
- There is a fellowship of suffering in the Lord — vs. 23

Date: 61 A.D.

I. Introduction vs. 1-3

II. Thankfulness for Philemon vs. 4-7

- A. love for Jesus and all the saints
- B. faith in Jesus and in all the saints
- C. sharing of faith
- D. you are refreshing to the saints

III. Paul's Appeal for Onesimus vs. 8-22

- A. I could command what is right
- B. But I'll appeal for love's sake
- C. Receive Onesimus (he is my own heart)
- D. I wanted to keep him, but I would not do so without your consent
- E. he is a beloved brother, especially to me
- F. Receive him as you would me
- G. Place any of his wrongs on my account
- H. Please, give me this joy and refreshment
- I. I know you will, and you'll do even more
- J. prepare a guest room

IV. Closing vs. 23-25

Key Idea: In Christ, both slaves and free are united as one

Key Passage: vs. 16

Key Lesson: Forgiveness enriches by removing wrongs and gaining brothers