



PHILEMON 1:1-25

THE FORGIVER AND THE FORGIVEN

Introduction:

Author: _____ the apostle Written while Paul was in prison.

Recipients:

This letter is addressed to a church member, Christian brother, and slave owner, _____ as well as _____, who is believed to be Philemon's wife and _____, who is believed to be Philemon's son. Philemon was apparently a convert of Paul and one of the Colossian churches primary meeting places was in his home.

Date and Purpose:

It is generally accepted that Paul wrote this letter **sometime between A.D. _____ - _____**. Paul wrote Philemon at the same time he wrote the letters to the Colossians, Ephesians and Philippians.

The purpose of this epistle is to express Paul's strong desire that there be reconciliation between Philemon and a runaway slave, Onesimus. Onesimus had stolen from Philemon and escaped away. At some point Onesimus meets Paul and is led to Christ. Now, Paul's desire is for Onesimus to be returned to Philemon, but no longer as a slave but as an equal and a brother in Christ. In his plea, Paul even offers to pay full restitution for any loss Philemon has incurred.

Outline:

I. Greeting (VS 1-3)

II. Appreciation: (Philemon is a man of love and service) **(VS 4-7)**

III. Appeal: (The reconciliation of Philemon and Onesimus) **(VS 8-21)**

IV. Acknowledgements: (Paul's intention and greeting from the brethren) **(VS 22-25)**

Themes:

1. _____

At the time Paul wrote Philemon, slavery was an unfortunate but normal and essential part of Roman life. Across the Roman empire there were about six million slaves, representing between fifteen and thirty percent of the population. Slaves were considered legal property who could be bought, sold, or freed by their owners. They worked in homes, farms, businesses, and skilled jobs. (Such as doctors and community leaders) While some masters treated slaves kindly, the law gave owners almost complete power over them. Runaway slaves like Onesimus could face severe punishment, which is why Paul's appeal to Philemon was so significant.

Philemon is an important book regarding the subject of slavery. While slavery of any kind is reprehensible and wrong, Paul's letter shows the underlying subversiveness of the gospel. While Philemon doesn't overtly condemn slavery in a culture steeped in it, it shows an entirely new way of living life, breaking down the walls of male and female, slave and free, Jew and gentile and creating one body in Christ. **(1 Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:28, Colossians 3:11)** Paul's admonition to Philemon is that he receives Onesimus back into his care, no longer as a slave but as a brother in Christ. This attack on slavery, then, launches from relationship and not revolution.

The gospel that changes the _____, changes the nation.

This new paradigm of Christian life is the very tool that God has used over centuries to reveal the evil of slavery and unveil the equality of the believer where there are no "slaves" and "masters." There is only one master, Jesus, and in Him we are equal. Slavery throughout the centuries has been diluted and even abolished because of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

2. _____

In Philemon, forgiveness is revealed as a defining characteristic of the Christian life. Onesimus had wronged Philemon, yet Paul urges Philemon to welcome him back as a brother in Christ. Paul doesn't command or threaten, but appeals on the basis of love, reminding Philemon that both he and Onesimus have been forgiven in Christ. This shows that true forgiveness goes beyond simply overlooking a wrong, it restores relationship and gives the offender the same grace we have received. In Philemon we see that because Christ has forgiven us, we are called to forgive others, breaking down barriers and creating unity in the family of God.

The Bottom Line:
The gospel of Christ turns slaves to brothers
And foes to family through the power of _____.

Two notes on Philemon's love and faith: (VS 5)

1. His faith in Christ and love for the saints is _____.
2. Genuine faith and love will eventually be confronted by _____.

Sharing (VS 6)

Koinonia (BDAG)

Association, communion, _____, close relationship

When we gather in the fellowship of our faith, it should cause us to recognize and experience all the good things that come from relationship with _____. **(VS 6)**

Genuine love and faith result in _____ and _____ for the family of God. **(VS 6)**

The critical, selfish and gossipy don't bring joy and comfort, they bring _____ and _____. **(VS 7)**

How to change a culture: (VS 14)

1. Change the _____
2. The individual changes the _____
3. The church changes the _____

The true encouragement of Christ doesn't come only in relationally good times but in the midst of _____. **(VS 20-21)**

Notes:
