



N.T. Survey

# Philemon

Theme: Appeal to Forgive

Outline:

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|------|--------------------|--------------|
| I.   | Praise of Philemon | (vss. 1-7)   |
| II.  | Plea to Philemon   | (vss. 8-17)  |
| III. | Pledge to Philemon | (vss. 18-25) |

**Content Summary:** In the most era-typical personal letter in the New Testament, Paul pours out his heart to Philemon as an advocate of brotherly love and forgiveness. The church in Colossae, and through the ages, is blessed by this powerful example of seeking forgiveness, granting forgiveness and encouraging genuine reconciliation among believers. Boldly written from prison, Paul is confident that the Holy Spirit will lead Philemon to welcome Onesimus with Christlike affection, as if Onesimus were Paul himself.

## Key Passages:

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|----------|--|
| vss. 8-9 | Though I could order you...for love's sake, I appeal to you... |
| vs. 16   | ...no longer a slave. a beloved brother...                     |
| vs. 17   | accept (Onesimus) him as you would me                          |

## Key People:

Philemon: Believer owed something by Onesimus; Paul appeals to him to forgive Onesimus  
 Onesimus: former slave, saved through Paul's ministry who was sent back to Philemon by Paul

Epaphras: Believer who came to Paul in prison from Colossae and also sent greetings to Philemon  
 Paul: led Onesimus to saving faith in Christ and loved him

## Structure of the Book

### I. The Prologue (1-7)

The Salutation (1-3)

Paul's Thanksgiving for Philemon's Love (4-7)

### II. The Body: Paul's Appeal to Philemon to Accept Onesimus as He would Paul (8-20) [appeals as a beloved brother in Christ and partner in the Gospel]

### III. The Epilogue (21-25)

Notes:

## Introduction to Philemon:

Title: "To Philemon, our beloved fellow worker"

Author: Paul

Recipients: primarily Philemon, also the church in Colossae

Date: 61 AD

## Major Themes in Philemon

**1. Paul the Prisoner—how Christians are to advocate forgiveness.** The work of Christ gushes out of Paul throughout this personal, powerful appeal for reconciliation (1, 9, 10, 13)

**2. Philemon—how Christians are to grant forgiveness.** The prominent church leader whose former slave has been sent back to make things right and serve (1-2, 4-7, 17-22a)

**3. Onesimus—how Christians are to humbly seek forgiveness.** The former slave who trusted God enough to go back to the owner he sinned against. (8-16)

Application Points:

1. Like Paul do I \_\_\_\_\_ this radical love and forgiveness in the relationships God has me involved in?
2. Am I characterized by radical \_\_\_\_\_ and do I seek to \_\_\_\_\_ right as I seek forgiveness?
3. When others come to me for forgiveness, and I \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ enough to grant it. Thus allowing the whole church to be blessed by it?

Can you see the powerful picture of Christ's forgiveness and atonement that is worked out in this relationship Paul is writing about?

## Purpose of Philemon

Paul appealed to Philemon to accept his newly converted slave, Onesimus, as a brother in Christ and partner in the Gospel.

Other Notes: