

“Philemon’s Decision”

Philemon 1 ¹ Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer,

Written by the Apostle Paul “and Timothy” (but not really)

Written between 60-62 AD while in prison in Rome at roughly the same time that he wrote Colossians and Ephesians

All three letters were sent with Tychicus and Onesimus

The shortest of Paul’s inspired writings

Philemon 1 ¹ Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer,

This is only prison epistles addressed to an individual and not a church

Philemon is fellow Christian in Colossae, known personally by Paul (as we’ll learn later)

Philemon 2-3 ² to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: ³ grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Apphia is Philemon’s wife, one of the churches in Colossae met in their home.

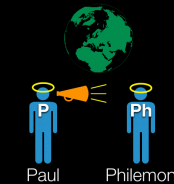
Archippus also served the church and may have been their son.

Philemon was wealthy. He had a house large enough to host the church, and he owned at least one slave.

The letter was meant to be read to the church.

Philemon 4-7 ⁴ I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, ⁵ hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints, ⁶ that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. ⁷ For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother.

EPHESUS



(several years earlier)

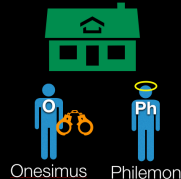
ROME



EPHESUS

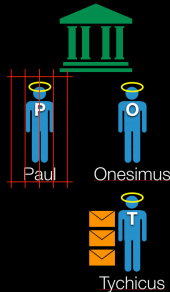


COLOSSAE



(several years earlier)

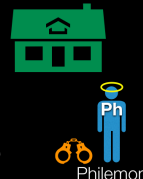
ROME



EPHESUS



COLOSSAE



ROMAN SLAVERY

- Roman Law had no limits to the power masters had
- Onesimus’ life was in danger
- Also a risk of slave catchers
- Romans dealt harshly with runaway slaves

SKEPTIC: “You know, your Bible contains scores of verses that mention slavery. But no where does it ever condemn the practice, per se.”

One commentator writes ... “The slavery in the Bible was not based exclusively on race. People were not enslaved because of their nationality or the color of their skin. In Bible times, slavery was based more on economics; it was a matter of social status. People sold themselves as slaves when they could not pay their debts or provide for their families. In New Testament times, sometimes doctors, lawyers, and even politicians were slaves of someone else. Some people actually chose to be slaves so as to have all their needs provided for by their masters.”

Another commentator writes ... “It is significant that the New Testament nowhere attacks slavery directly. Had Jesus and the apostles done so, the result would have been chaos. Any slave insurrection would have been brutally crushed, and the slaves massacred. The gospel would have been swallowed up by the message of social reform. Christianity, however, sowed the seeds of the destruction of slavery. It would be destroyed not by social upheaval, but by changed hearts. Marvin Vincent comments, “The principles of the gospel not only curtailed [slavery’s] abuses, but destroyed the thing itself; for it could not exist without its abuses. To destroy its abuses was to destroy it”

Open your mouth for the mute,
for the rights of all who are destitute.
Open your mouth, judge righteously,
defend the rights of the poor and needy.

- Proverbs 31:8-9 (ESV)

Philemon 8-9 ⁸ Therefore, though I might be very **bold in Christ to command you what is fitting,** ⁹ yet **for love’s sake I rather appeal** to you—being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ

Didn’t start with “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ”

Appeal (for love’s sake) vs Command (boldly)

Love is choice

Philemon 10-11 ¹⁰ I **appeal** to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten while in my chains, ¹¹ who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me.

“Appeal” use again

Paul led him to Christ ... my “son”

Unprofitable = “useless”

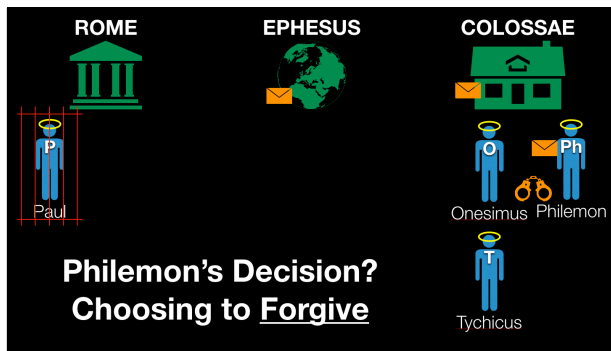
Profitable = “very useful”

Philemon 12-14 ¹² I am sending him back. You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart, ¹³ whom I **wished to keep with me, that on your behalf he might minister to me** in my chains **for the gospel**. ¹⁴ But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary.

Philemon 15-17 ¹⁵ For perhaps he departed for a while **for this purpose, that you might receive him** forever, ¹⁶ **no longer as a slave but more than a slave—a beloved brother**, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. ¹⁷ If then you count me as a partner, **receive him as you would me**.

Philemon 18-20 ¹⁸ But if he has wronged you or owes anything, **put that on my account**. ¹⁹ I, Paul, am writing with my own hand. I will repay—not to mention to you that you owe me even your own self besides. ²⁰ Yes, brother, let me have joy from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in the Lord.

Philemon 21-25 ²¹ Having **confidence** in your **obedience**, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. ²² But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you. ²³ Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, ²⁴ as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers. ²⁵ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.



Ephesians 4:30-32 ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. ³² And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

John MacArthur writes ... "We could say, in a sense, that God is never more like Himself than when He forgives. There are two extremely important corollaries to that truth. If God is never more like Himself than when He forgives, man is never more like God than when he forgives."

Forgiveness is NOT

- Forgiveness is not forgetting
- Forgiveness is not an elimination of all consequences
- Forgiveness is not a feeling
- Forgiveness is not the private, solitary act of an individual
- Forgiveness is not selfish
- Forgiveness is not the automatic restoration of trust

Forgiveness Defined:

God's forgiveness: A commitment by the one true God to pardon graciously those who repent and believe so that they are reconciled to him, although this commitment does not eliminate all consequences.

General human forgiveness: A commitment by the offended to pardon graciously the repentant from moral liability and to be reconciled to that person, although not all consequences are necessarily eliminated.

Colossians 3:12-14 ¹² Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. ¹⁴ But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.