

# Book of Philemon

## Synopsis



## Introduction

Book No	57
Name	Philemon
Written By	Paul
Testament	New
Category	Epistles
Date Written	Approx. 60 A.D
Place Written	Rome
Audience	Philemon
Purpose	To convince Philemon to forgive his runaway slave, Onesimus, and to accept him as a brother in the faith
History Covered	NA
Chapters	1
Verses	25
Key Verse	For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever; Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord? (1:15, 16)
Key People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Paul</li> <li>❖ Philemon</li> <li>❖ Onesimus</li> </ul>
Key Places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Colosse</li> </ul>

## Purpose of the Book

While the shortest of Paul's epistles, Philemon is a deep revelation of Christ at work in the lives of Paul and those around him. The tone is one of warm, personal friendship rather than apostolic authority. It reveals how Paul politely yet firmly addressed a central issue of the Christian life, namely love through forgiveness, in a very sensitive situation. It presents Paul's persuasion in action.

Life has many walls and fences that divide, separate, and compartmentalize. Not made of wood or stone, they are personal obstructions, blocking people from each other and from God. But Christ came as the great wall remover, tearing down the sin partition that separates us from God and blasting the barriers that keep us from each other. His death and resurrection opened the way to eternal life to bring all who believe into the family of God (see Ephesians 2:14-18).

Roman, Greek, and Jewish cultures were littered with barriers, as society assigned people to classes and expected them to stay in their place—men and women, slave and free, rich and poor, Jews and Gentiles, Greeks and barbarians, pious and pagan. But with the message of Christ, the walls came down, and Paul could declare, "In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us" (Colossians 3:11).

This life-changing truth forms the backdrop for the letter to Philemon. One of three personal letters in the Bible, the letter to Philemon is Paul's personal plea for a slave. Onesimus "belonged" to Philemon, a member of the Colossian church and Paul's friend. But Onesimus, the slave, had stolen from his master and run away. He ran to Rome, where he met Paul, and there he responded to the Good News and came to faith in Christ (1:10). So Paul writes to Philemon and reintroduces Onesimus to him, explaining that he is sending him back, not just as a slave but as a brother (1:11-12, 16). Tactfully he asks Philemon to accept and forgive his brother (1:10, 14, 15, 20). The barriers of the past and the new ones erected by Onesimus's desertion and theft should divide them no longer—they are one in Christ.

This work presents the incredible power of Christ to bring healing to broken lives. It includes the personal reunion between Jesus Christ and the runaway sinner, as well as the wonderful restoration of two believers who were formerly separated. Only with

Christ's example of forgiveness through the Cross are we able to overcome our hurts and mistakes and be reconciled to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

This small book is a masterpiece of grace and tact and a profound demonstration of the power of Christ and of true Christian fellowship in action. What barriers are in your home, neighborhood, and church? What separates you from fellow believers? Is it race? status? wealth? education? personality? As with Philemon, God calls you to seek unity, breaking down those walls and embracing your brothers and sisters in Christ.

### Overview

- ❖ 57<sup>th</sup> book of the BIBLE, 18<sup>th</sup> in the New Testament, 13<sup>th</sup> of the 21 epistles and 13<sup>th</sup> of the 14 epistles written by Paul
- ❖ The Book of Philemon:
  - Is one of the four prison epistles of Paul.
  - Ephesians
  - Philippians
  - Colossians
  - Philemon
- ❖ Is Paul's only one chapter book.
- ❖ Is Paul's shortest book. (334 words in Greek, and 445 in the KJV)
- ❖ Is one of Paul's four books addressed to individuals.
  - 1 Timothy
  - Titus
  - 2 Timothy
  - Philemon
- ❖ Philemon was:
  - A resident of Colosse. 1-2
  - One of Paul's converts to Christ. 19
  - Had a house large enough for the church to meet in. 2
  - A benevolent man. 5-7
  - Father of Archipus. 2
  - Was the owner of the slave, Onesimus.
- ❖ According to Roman law, a runaway slave could be severely punished, and even put to death.

- ❖ Concerning Onesimus:
  - He was a slave who had runaway from his master.
  - It is possible that he had stolen money from Philemon.
  - He fled to Rome.
  - He was converted to Christ by Paul.
- ❖ Paul writes the letter to Philemon and asks him to take Philemon back as a beloved brother.
- ❖ The letter was delivered to Philemon by Tychicus

## Hebrew Names of GOD used in Philemon

NA

## Revelation of JESUS CHRIST

This epistle powerfully applies the message of the gospel. Once an estranged slave, Onesimus is now “a beloved brother” in Christ as well (v. 16). Philemon is challenged to show the same unconditional pardon that he received through the grace and love of Jesus. Paul’s offer to pay a debt that was not his own on behalf of a repentant slave is a clear picture of the work of Calvary. Paul’s intercession is furthermore analogous to Christ’s ongoing intercession with the Father on our behalf.

## Work of THE HOLY SPIRIT

While not specifically mentioned in Philemon, the Holy Spirit was definitely active in Paul’s ministry and in the life of the church. It is the Holy Spirit who baptizes all believers, whether slave or free, into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13); and Paul applies this truth to the lives of Philemon and Onesimus. Love, a fruit of the Spirit, is evident throughout the letter.

## Mega Themes of Philemon

### FORGIVENESS

Philemon was Paul’s friend and the legal owner of the slave Onesimus. Paul asked him not to punish Onesimus but to forgive and restore him as a new Christian brother.

Christian relationships must be full of forgiveness and acceptance. Can you forgive those who have wronged you?

### BARRIERS

Slavery was widespread in the Roman Empire, but no one is lost to God or beyond his love. Slavery was a barrier between people, but Christian love and fellowship are to overcome such barriers.

In Christ we are one family. No walls of racial, economic or political differences should separate us. Let Christ work through you to remove barriers between Christian brothers and sisters.

### RESPECT

Paul was a friend of both Philemon and Onesimus. He had the authority as an apostle to tell Philemon what to do. Yet Paul chose to appeal to his friend in Christian love rather than to order him what to do.

Tactful persuasion accomplishes a great deal more than commands when dealing with people. Remember to exhibit courtesy and respect in your relationships.

### Life Lessons in Philemon

Truth	Lesson
<p><b>Growing in Godliness</b></p> <p>Sharing Jesus with others gives us a deeper insight into our inheritance in Christ. The godly person is immediately available for restored relationships. Sharing your home, food, and possessions with strangers is a greater blessing to the ones who show hospitality than it is to the ones who receive it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Understand that by sharing your faith in Jesus, you gain a fuller understanding of your inheritance in Christ.</li> <li>❖ Practice instant forgiveness of those who have offended you. Make room for the restoration of broken relationships.</li> <li>❖ Practice hospitality. Provide lodging for traveling servants of God.</li> </ul>

### Praise Points in Philemon

- ❖ The understanding that results when we share our faith (1:6)
- ❖ The fact that acts of love bring encouragement to others (1:7)
- ❖ Fellow believers who bring us encouragement (1:23)
- ❖ The grace he extends to us through his Son, Jesus (1:25).

### Worship Insights in Philemon

- ❖ The body of Christ can gather for edification and worship in homes (1:2).
- ❖ Words of blessing spoken in the company of God's people bring encouragement (1:3, 25).
- ❖ Prayer is a means by which we recall God's mercies to us, often demonstrated through other believers (1:4).
- ❖ All those who worship the Father are members of the same family (1:1-2, 16).

### An Outline of Philemon

#### I. A Letter of Love and Challenge: [Phm\\_1:1](#)

A. How Do You Measure a Person?: [Phm\\_1:1-7](#)

B. The Power of the Gospel: [Phm\\_1:8-16](#)

C. The Power of Persuasion: [Phm\\_1:17-25](#)