

## Philemon Part 1: The Whole Story

**This letter to Philemon is one of the most brilliant & compelling letters of reconciliation in ancient history.**

3 weeks to study it

A) Today look **at the Story as a whole. Doctrine of Imputation**

B) WEEK 2: **Onesimus a transformed slave.**

C) WEEK 3: **Philemon a Master called to forgive.**

**V.1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,**

A) Paul usually begins his letters by identifying himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ.

B) **This time, however, he's a prisoner of Jesus Christ** **WRITING FROM PRISON**

1) I wish I was more like Paul - when I feel chained by circumstances or imprisoned by problems,

C) **I MOAN AND GROAN – complain**

D) Paul's perspective: the Lord has me right where He wants me - **I am HIS PRISONER!!!**

**E) Paul was used powerfully because he had this understanding**

1) wherever **found himself** was not due to the politics of man, but to the sovereignty of God

2) Great thing to remember

**Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer, 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.**

**Paul had not founded the church in Colossae, nor had he visited it.**

A) It is likely that the church started as a result of his ministry in Ephesus.

B) It seems that two men **Epaphras mentioned v.23 & Philemon** – { both gentiles - Not Jewish

1) They probably journeyed from Colossae to Ephesus to hear Paul and were converted.

C) They went back and started a Church in Philemon's home – Epaphras was the Pastor -

D) Two other people are mentioned in V.2 Apphia was Philemon's wife & Archippus was his son

**E) Some believe that Archippus because of other writings about him succeeded Epaphras as the Pastor**

F) So Paul is writing his friend: Philemon

**RD V.4-7**

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

**Philemon had a reputation for being a loving guy, a fact that brought Paul much joy and comfort.**

A) Note Paul's description: **the hearts of the saints had been refreshed by you.**

B) What an awesome trait to have – where ever you go pp leave refreshed!!!!

1) Built up – inspired: - **I want to be that kind of Guy!**

**Set up the Story:**

**A Slave on the Run**

A) Philemon had a Slave whose name was Onesimus

**B) Slavery was a normal part of the 1<sup>st</sup> century Roman Empire**

1) However Slavery in those days was a bit different than the Slavery we know of in our American History

C) Slaves were of no particular race, and slaves were considered the work force of the empire.

D) Many slaves were highly educated, many of the doctors and people in medical field were slaves.

1) School teachers were slaves – more of private tutors for the children of the wealthy.

E) Many Slaves during that time were treated as being a part of the family

1) or at the very least an honored employee.

**But there two things that were not tolerated for slaves – One was to run away – the other theft**

A) Onesimus was guilty of both.

B) One day escaped – He also stole some things from Philemon's property before he left –

1) He headed for Rome

C) Have you ever had your kindness betrayed?

1) LANI in Oregon

**D) We would assume by Paul Description of Philemon**

1) that he would have been a good/kind master.

E) Put yourself in Philemon's shoes – how would you have felt to be betrayed like that?

**It was logical that Onesimus escaped to Rome, the biggest city of the Roman Empire.**

A) Commentator said **"Rome was the natural cesspool for the unclean of humanity."**

B) The Las Vegas of our day/ - **What happens in Rome stays in Rome**

1) Also like New York - It was the best place to not be NOTICED – blend in

C) The story: - Starts with a Slave on the Run

**A DIVINE APPOINTMENT**

**While in Rome Onesimus somehow encounters Paul! Probably got into trouble and ended up in Prison himself – there that Paul led him to Christ**

A) NOTE: **Onesimus ran away looking for freedom and ended up in CHAINS**

B) ISN'T that the way it always is with sin – We run away thinking – I am bound – marriage/ parents

**C) I want to spread my wings – and fly –**

1) We end up in Bondage and despair –

D) The Plight of Onesimus

**But Onesimus was to soon discover that although there is slavery in "freedom"- World's way**

A) There is also freedom in Slavery: How so?

Jesus declared; Matthew 11:28-30

**28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."**

B) Jesus calls all who are weary and heavy laden to take His yoke upon them, to be chained to Him.

C) Two Oxen – Woodend – beam – tied them together

D) SO Jesus calls us to Yoke ourselves to Him But He is a good Master!.

1) That's why Paul said, **"I am a bondsman"**— a slave by choice

E) Bondsman was a willing slave

**So The question in this life is not whether or not you're yoked, but to Whom are you yoked?**

A) If we are yoked to Jesus, we are yoked to the most excellent Master,

B) to the One who loves us so much, to the One who's so good *for* us, and so good *to* us.

C) So Onesimus came to see that although Paul was in chains, - **Paul was the freest man ever met!**

1) **Onesimus becomes a follower of Jesus**

**D) Onesimus ends up spending some time in Rome with Paul**

1) He was discipled by Paul and ends up helping Paul while in Prison –

E) But then the time comes – Released: Paul says – **I am sending you back – where we pick up this letter:**

## AN APPEALING LETTER-

A) Paul sent Onesimus back along with this letter to Philemon.

RD V.8-11— <sup>8</sup> Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to **command you what is fitting** <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup>

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

NLT - 8 That is why I am boldly asking a favor of you. I could demand it in the name of Christ because it is the right thing for you to do. <sup>9</sup> But because of our love, I prefer simply to ask you. Consider this as a request from me—Paul, an old man and now also a prisoner for the sake of Christ Jesus.

<sup>10</sup> I appeal to you to show kindness to my child, Onesimus. I became his father in the faith while here in prison. <sup>11</sup> Onesimus hasn't been of much use to you in the past, but now he is very useful to both of us.

A) Paul says I am appealing to you as a friend – **as a brother in the Lord !**

B) Something has happened to Onesimus – he has found Jesus – **he is like a son to me**

1) Please be kind to him- deal gently with him

C) Put yourself in Philemon's shoes – hard-

1) Betrayed – broken trust – violated – stolen from.

**D) See Under Roman law the slave owner had complete and total control over his slave.**

**Roman laws against runaways were strict.**

A) A captured, runaway slave might be crucified,

B) or branded with a red-hot iron on the forehead with the letter "F" for *fugitive*.

C) **That could have been Onesimus/** Under Roman law Philemon would have been justified by such action

D) But Paul is asking Philemon to respond according to a different law – **the law of love and grace.**

1) To not do the natural thing but the Supernatural thing

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

**Now Philemon must have flipped reading this letter and taking note of the words that Paul was using to describe Onesimus.**

A) Onesimus – **name means Profitable** – but it seems that he was anything but that to Philemon-

B) Paul says in **v.11 formerly he was unprofitable to you** – Seems he wasn't a very good worker

C) Plus he stole from Philemon

**Note: Paul says he may not have been profitable to you – but he has been extremely profitable to me!**

A) Paul refers to Onesimus **as his son** / and one who ministered **to Paul** in his chains

B) That is a pretty awesome transformation

**This is a wonderful picture of our relationship to God – The transformation of our Position**

A) **We go from being Unprofitable** – to Profitable as His workmanship created in .....

B) We go from being - Those who caused God great grief – to those who now can bless His heart

C) **Those who were lost** – to those who are sons –

**RD V.15-16 very interesting**

For perhaps he departed for a while for this purpose, that you might receive him forever, <sup>16</sup> 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.

Now Paul says something really interesting here in v. 15 perhaps he departed for a while for this purpose !

A) Paul is trying to get Philemon to see the big picture –

B) Onesimus left – (Yes that was wrong) but it was this very thing that brought him to Christ

C) v. 15 Paul suggests to Philemon that God was using this evil to produce good (Joseph Gen. 50:20)

1) You meant this for evil .....good .....many saved

God wanted Onesimus to be caught / not so he could be killed and forever lost

A) But God had something else in mind – a Divine appointment that must of freaked Onesimus out –

B) Sure he had heard of Paul – now he was with him

C) Love it when God does that: Divine appointments

1) God's plan – for Onesimus – Saved & transformed!

Story of a man who was going thru heavy stuff

One day he stopped to watch some men building a stone church. One of them was chiseling a triangular piece of rock. *'What are you going to do with that?'* he asked

The workman said, *'Do you see that little opening way up there near the steeple? Well, I'm shaping this down here so that it will fit up there.'*

A) When the man heard that -Tears filled the eyes of the heart-broken man as he walked away. Understood

B) What he was going through here – was shaping him for something that was coming.

C) Purpose of the trials – refine us and do a work on our character – Shape us for eternity

Your situation today: Life can be hard – maybe you are going through it! - Rock Quarry Jerusalem

A) Massive stones – Fit perfectly on the Temple wall

B) Temple itself

C) This life is the rock Quarry – Chipped away

1) Sometimes the chipping is the result of our sin and the consequences of that sin

D) Other times: It is the result of someone's sin against us { Other times – Just life!!!!

Listen, if you know the Lord as your Savior, you need not despair.

A) GOD IS WORKING: - HE ALWAYS IS

B) Romans 8:28 *"all things together for good – to those who love God and who are the Called according to his purpose."*

C) He is making you more like Jesus!

1) Remember to SEE THE BIG PICTURE!

Paul is asking Philemon to do just that!

A) To see how the Lord used this circumstance to transform Onesimus.

B) Onesimus left a slave, but returned no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother.

1) New Man

C) So Onesimus had Changed – but what about his Punishment? – What about Justice?

1) This is where the story gets really good!

RD V.17-19 <sup>17</sup> If then you count me as a partner, receive him as *you would* me. <sup>18</sup> But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account. <sup>19</sup> 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.

Paul did not suggest that Philemon ignore the slave's crimes & forget about the debt Onesimus owed.

A) The Bible teaches clearly that restitution needs to be made in such cases

B) Onesimus could not possibly have paid back all he owed Philemon.

C) So Paul is not saying – just forget it / Rather, Paul offered to pay the debt himself. *“Put it on my account—I will repay it!”*

#### **D) Paul deals with the issue of restitution and of Justice**

1) by asking Philemon to **accept him as you would me.**

*if He owes you anything – Charge it to my account.*

Here we see one of the grandest illustrations of full substitution and the Doctrine of imputation.

“I know this man is a criminal and deserves punishment. Yet this slave is my friend, so if you punish him punish me also.

#### **I stand beside him to take his punishment**

#### **B) Does that remind you of Someone? JESUS**

1) Paul’s willingness to meet Onesimus’s debt to restore his relationship with Philemon is a marvelous picture of Christ’s work.

C) Listen we all owed a debt – The wages of Sin is death – **Guilty – Debt we couldn’t pay**

#### **D) Philemon had been wronged by Onesimus sin**

1) Just like we wronged God - / offended – rejected –

E) WE took the life he had given and stole it – we lived for ourselves –

#### **Philemon, like God, had been wronged.**

A) Onesimus, like us sinners, stood in need of redemption and reconciliation.

B) Paul offered to pay the price to bring about that reconciliation.

C) That is the same role Jesus plays in the relationship between the sinner and God.

D) Jesus did pay the price for our sin – **He says charge that to my account**

#### **D) Our debt had ETERNAL CONSEQUENCES**

1) Result: The sinner is received on the same standing that Christ is received.

#### **E) ENEMIES TO FRIENDS – His beloved Sons and Daughters!!!**

1 John 2:1-2

**My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.**

#### **Advocate = Defense attorney**

A) **atan** the accuser of the Christian – Prosecutor – lays out our sins

#### **B) Jesus agrees – He is guilty** – He did all of that –

1) But Charge it to my account – I paid the Price at Calvary – See these scars

C) **Propitiation = Satisfaction** – Jesus in his death on the Cross – **satisfied the righteous requirement of a Holy God for sin – Covered paid in Full**

1) Charged to his account –

*Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.* Romans 4:8 - **Impute = Hold against**

D) God doesn’t Hold our sin against us! – Why?

**Your sin was imputed to JESUS so that his righteousness could be imputed to you.**

A) 2 Corinthians 5:21 “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

**B) “A sin less Jesus became sin filled so that sin filled people could be sin free**

1) So Paul is not asking Philemon **to forgive and forget** – He is saying Forgive and I will pay the debt

**Jesus says to His Father: Forgive THEM because I did pay the debt –**

A) And the father responds by saying I will forgive Him and I will forget that it every happened

**B) Justified – Declared righteous in my eyes !**

C) Great NEWS: THE sacrifice OF JESUS is **SUFFICIENT** for the whole world.



1)But it is **only EFFICIENT** for those who trust in Him.

**D)APPLICATION: If you have not given your heart to Jesus – do so today!**

**1)Receive His forgiveness – Be welcomed into the family of God.**

Years ago a man visited a doctor in Florence, Italy. He was filled with anxiety and exhausted from lack of sleep. He couldn't eat, and he avoided his friends. The doctor examined him and found that he was in prime physical condition.

Concluding that his patient needed to have a good time, the physician told him about **a circus in town** and its star performer, **a clown named Grimaldi**. Night after night he had the people rolling in the aisles. **"You must go and see him," the doctor advised. "Grimaldi is the world's funniest clown. He'll make you laugh and cure your sadness."** "To which he said, "I am Grimaldi!"

**You might have everybody fooled into thinking that YOU are the happiest man/woman on earth.**

**A)You might be the one that everyone else comes to for advice.**

**B)But deep down inside you know that YOU have no remedy for the emptiness of heart and life.....**

**C)YOU have no real answers for your own dilemma.**

**You NEED a Savior..... You NEED Jesus.**

**D)He alone fills the VOID – HE ALONE – FILLS THE EMPTINESS**

**D)HE ALONE – REMOVES THE GUILT**

**E)EMBRACE HIM TODAY!**

**1)You must own Jesus as your personal Savior.**

**BELIEVER: May you, like Onesimus, celebrate the freedom of your salvation.**

**May you, like Philemon, embrace others, knowing their sin has been imputed to our Lord's account.**

**And may you, like Paul, be a peacemaker.**