

## Philemon Part 2: A Transformed Man

**The Book of Philemon is an amazing story of redemption and Reconciliation.**

**A) It is the only one of Paul's prison epistles that is written directly to a person: Philemon.**

**B) Last week we looked at the story as a whole.**

**C) If missed it quick recap - The story is about a run away slave – named Onesimus**

**1) From the city of Colossae**

**Onesimus ran away from his master Philemon and ends up in Rome in Prison – cell mate Paul**

**A) He gets converted to Christ – ends up being a help to Paul –**

**B) When it was time for Onesimus to be released –**

**1) Paul sends him back home with this letter that He is supposed to deliver to his master.**

**C) Roman culture a master could have his slave beaten – branded F or even killed for running away**

**E) Paul asks Philemon to receive Onesimus back – not as a slave but as a brother –**

**1) If He has wronged you in anyway – Charge it to my account – Beautiful pic of what Jesus did for us!**

Read beginning V.1-13

1 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.

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.

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—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.

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.

**Today – zero in on Onesimus – a story of true conversion and transformation.**

**A) Justification is the miracle of a moment .....**

**B) Sanctification is the process of a life time.**

**1) True every single one of us is a work in progress - never arrive until glory – see Jesus – like Him**

**C) But that being said – When someone is truly converted – a change should be evident.**

**D) What we see in the story of Onesimus are some evidences of true conversion**

**Start with his background:**

**A) He was living in the city of Colossae – Asia Minor**

**B) As far as places go it wasn't a bad place to live**

**C) Located on the Lycus river it was a city of trade – many new faces coming thru –**

**It was a City with a decent population Base – City of industry –**

**A) Wool was the prominent industry but not the only industry.**

**B) So there was plenty of opportunity in Colossae**

**1) Problem He was a slave – He belonged to someone else – He was not his own.**

**Now as far as masters went – Philemon was a good one – He was known as a loving man**

**A) V.7 tells us He actually had a reputation for refreshing the hearts of those who were around him**

**B) His life – blessed others – He was one who had respect and care for people**

**So as a slave we could say Onesimus had it better than most – But still he wasn't free!**

A) That is what He wanted – He wanted to be free!

B) So when the opportunity came to run – run He did – **He Ran fast and he ran far – ROME**

1) In order to survive life on the road – **he took what was available – from his masters house.**

C) Rome was the logical place – It was far / it was big – easy to blend in – easy to get lost in the crowd

1) Rome was the kind of place where there would be lots to do/ lots to explore/ lots to experience {good/bad

D) Rome was an **Evil place – decadent place**

1) The kind of place where a newly freed man would choose to express his new found freedom.

**When I read the story of the Onesimus – I am reminded of the story of the prodigal son.**

A) Like Onesimus – the prodigal son thought the grass was greener on the other side.

B) He felt stifled in his dad's house – rules – thought he was missing something

1) Dad – I want my share of the inheritance now

C) Dad gave it to him – he went and spent his money on Wild LIVING

1) Soon his money ran out and so did his friends

**D) Famine hits – the prodigal son ends up working for a pig farmer – pig slop**

E) It is there in the pig pen – the prodigal son comes to the end of himself

1) When a man comes to the end of himself he comes to the beginning of God

F) In that moment the prodigal makes a decision to return God and home to his dad

1) Welcomed with open arms

**Like the prodigal son – Onesimus is going to come to the end of himself – He does in a prison cell!**

A) That is where his life intersects with the apostle Paul

**B) Onesimus ends up in prison and meets Paul there**

1) How did that happen?

**B) Insight from V.23 - <sup>23</sup> Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you**

C) Recall – last week mentioned that the church in Colossae started after Epaphras and Philemon went 100 miles to Ephesus –

**D) There they heard Paul – converted – went back and started a church in Philemon's home**

1) Epaphras was the first Pastor

**But now Epaphras is in prison with Paul in Rome <sup>23</sup> Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you**

A) We read in Colossians 1 that Epaphras had brought a report Paul in prison of how the church in Colossae was doing

B) It is there in the book of Colossians that Paul mentions Epaphras as the one who taught the truth of Jesus to the church there.

C) The significance to our story is that Epaphras is with Paul in Prison when Onesimus shows up

1) Save to say that Epaphras made the introduction

D) Talk about Divine appointments {Prayer night

**Onesimus finds in Paul a man who although he was in prison – he was perfectly free – He was content**

A) **He was SATISFIED** - His heart was at rest – His life had purpose – All because of Jesus

B) In a weird sort of coincidence – it was this very man Paul who had introduced his master to Christ.

C) **It was there in that Jail – that Onesimus – gave his life to Christ/**

1) Finally He understood what freedom was

**Perhaps you are here today or watching online**

A) You have run away from God or run away from something thinking the grass is greener....

B) Jesus has been running after you – not to punish you but to rescue you – LOVES YOU

C) LIFE IN HIM – PURPOSE THRU HIM

Well Onesimus gave his heart to Jesus– He was disciplined in the faith from Paul

A) **V.11 He ended up being a Help to Paul** in his ministry there in Prison –

B) In fact Onesimus became a blessing to Paul

C) He was a Changed man

Redpath VCF - “The Christian life is the replacement of one life by another, it is an exchange of sovereignties: Self is dethroned, Jesus is enthroned. Nobody can pray thy Kingdom come until first he prays – My kingdom go!”

**Onesimus stands as a Picture of a man who had a true Conversion:**

A) There was a marked change in his life!

**B) BIG IDEA: True conversion is noticeable**

**Mickey Cohen** was one of the most infamous gangsters of the fifties, - John Gotti or the El Chapo of his day.

On one occasion he visited an evangelistic meeting and there showed an interest in Christ.

Christian leaders, realizing that Cohen’s conversion could have a great influence upon others, visited him regularly.

One night after a lengthy conversation on Revelation 3:20, he “**professed faith in Jesus**”

There were great expectations, but as the months passed there was no real change in the gangster’s life.

Finally his Christian friends confronted him. Cohen responded that “no one had told him he would have to give up his work or his friends.

After all, there were Christian football players, Christian cowboys, Christian politicians; why not a Christian gangster?

C) This is all too common today – People who “come to Christ” –

1) But there is no real change in their life

**Onesimus conversion was marked by a noticeable change**

A) I want us today to consider –the Characteristics that marked his Change/ his conversion

B) Taking note – there are **three things I want us to consider about the marks of his transformation**

1) Three Marks of a true Conversion

**#1 There was a confession:**

A) Wait a minute you say: I don’t see that in this story – **in fact I can’t see where Onesimus said anything**

B) True but consider this in v.11 Paul says in the past he was unprofitable to you –

C) I ask you – how did Paul know that? PAUL had never been to Colossae – never met Onesimus  
1) How would Paul know what kind of slave he was?

**He could have been a great worker**

A) He might have been Philemon’s most trusted slave

B) a slave who was so good – his master trusted him w/ more responsibility

1) Which might have explained why he was able to get away. – His freedom - More opportunity to run

C) He no doubt had been planning his escape for some time – the right opportunity came

1) he took it

**So How would Paul know that he wasn’t a very good slave at all – He was useless –**

A) I believe it was because – Onesimus told him – He told his story

B) He might have said something – like : **My attitude was all wrong – cut corners**

1) Took advantage of Philemon’s kindness -

C) I think it is clear: Paul knew Because Onesimus confessed – He told his story

**One of the first marks in a person who has had a true conversion to Christ true Change– they are real.**

A) Especially about their sin – When it comes to sin **They quit making excuses –**

B) We live in the age of excuses and blame shifting

1) Hard to find someone who wants to take ownership for their sin

C) We live in an age where people want to blame their wrong behavior on their parents

1) Their upbringing – their Diet

D) Crazy - Studies have been done – the wrong diet can result in violent behavior

**Even if it is true that your upbringing or your diet can play a part in wrong behavior**

A) The fact of the matter is everyone still has a choice in how they are going to respond

B) But Blame shifting goes all the way back to the garden

C) ADAM in the garden: It was the woman – that **YOU GAVE ME!**

D) IT is either her fault or I it is your fault but it is not my fault.

E) Blame shifting Comes Naturally – **Amanda**

**But When a person is truly converted they are NOT trying to make excuses for their sin –**

A) Not trying to Blame shift – **THEY OWN IT**

The cartoon character Calvin says to his tiger friend, Hobbes, **"I feel bad that I called Susie names and hurt her feelings. I'm sorry I did it."**

Hobbes suggests. **"Maybe you should apologize to her,"** Calvin ponders this for a moment and replies, **"I keep hoping there's a less obvious solution."**

**When we want to restore our relationship with God,**

A) We need to remember that he has a liking for the obvious solution.

**B) True Brokenness calls it sin !**

1) David..... **I have sinned against you God only you!**

C) Person who is truly broken – **takes ownership for their actions**

1) they own up to their shortcomings – failures – mistakes

**They are able to say: I was selfish – I wasn't a good husband – I wasn't caring**

A) I wasn't a good wife –

B) **I was a Hypocrite in the Church –**

1) Pretended to be something I wasn't

C) Now the Bible says – 1 John 1:9 **<sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

1) Confess carries the idea – **Say the same as** - See it as sin – like God does – we confess – **MY FAULT**

D) That is where true conversion is first seen in the life of a person who says – **I have sinned**

1) **I was WRONG – It is my fault – GUILTY**

**When a person is broken and willing to take responsibility for their sins, God can do a great thing**

A) Psalm 51:17 **The sacrifice God wants is a broken spirit. God will not reject a heart that is broken and sorry for sin.** NCV

B) GOD always moves toward the broken hearted sinner in grace – when there is confession.

C) The Law is for the rebellious – Grace and mercy are for the repentant.

**So true confession is the 1<sup>st</sup> mark of a real conversion**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Mark is Repentance!**

A) Repentance is a change of mind, that **results in** a change of heart that **leads to** a change in direction.

B) Idea of doing a 180 – going in the opposite Direction.

1) **To turn from going the wrong way and to start going the right way!**

**John the Baptist preached repentance:**

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" - **Matthew 3:11**

### **Jesus Preached repentance:**

From then on Jesus began to preach, "Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near."- Matthew 4:17 NLT

### **Peter at Pentecost**

<sup>38</sup> Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. – Acts 2:38

**Paul Acts 26 before King Agrippa –reflecting on his calling as a minister of the gospel.**

Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, <sup>20</sup> but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, **and do works befitting repentance.** - Acts 26:20

### **Absence of the preaching of repentance today**

**True conversion to Christ is marked by a Change:**

A)Attitude about sin – Turning from Sin and turning to God

B)**The repentant attitude of Onesimus** is seen in the fact that he was **willing to return**

1) Willing to go back to Philemon and face the music

C) There is **no hint** in the story – that he balked at the idea – begged Paul not to send him back

1) No hint of him having an attitude of – Isn't it forgiven and forgotten – I don't need to do that

**In fact some Bible commentators believe that it was Onesimus who had the idea to return not Paul**

A) The Fact was he was still a runaway slave and he needed to return – needed to put things right

B) Paul would send him with a letter asking Philemon to forgive &

1) **Paul offered to pay Onesimus debt-** But there was no guarantee

C)But it was the right thing to do/ that is what he did

D)We see a similar thing in the conversion of Zachaeus – Tax collector – **THEIVE –**

1)OVER TAXED FOR THEIR OWN GAIN – one lunch with Jesus – this is his response.

**Zachaeus – Luke 19:8-9** Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold."<sup>9</sup> And Jesus said to him, "**Today salvation has come to this house.**

**E)So too Onesimus showed that his conversion was real -because he was willing to go back**

1) His conversion was marked by a real repentance

F) He left Colossae going in the wrong direction – now 180 – heading in the right direction

**So the conversion of Onesimus was marked by 1<sup>st</sup> confession / 2<sup>nd</sup> repentance**

A)The 3<sup>rd</sup> mark that happens to a person who has truly been converted is this

B)They want to make a contribution – they want to be involved in the work of Christ - SERVE

1)They want to help others find Jesus

C)They move from being self-centered – to others centered.

D)We definitely see this in the life of Onesimus V.10 again

<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. <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.

C) Paul says I know that at one time – he was not profitable or useful to you –

1) but he has been extremely useful to me –

**D) So much so that I wish I could keep him here so he could continue to minister to me in my chains.**

E) **A Minister** means to wait on someone and attend to their needs.

**Now in his past life as a slave Onesimus served because he had to. Because he was required to**



A)He waited on others because it was his duty.

B)But now he was doing it willingly – he did it gladly

C)Take on the mind and heart of Christ!

1) “**Came not to be served but to serve – Give his life for others.**”

**This is a true mark of a person who is really growing in Christ who’s had a True encounter with Christ**

A) They are becoming much more others centered than self-centered.

B)The desire to see my needs get met is replaced by a desire to meet the needs of others

**Onesimus discovered what Jesus said is true: it is more blessed to give than to receive.**

A)The inference in the original language of the text was he stayed and ministered to Paul even when he could have left – long before.

B)So Onesimus Conversion: Marked by his:

- ❖ **Confession**
- ❖ **Repentance**
- ❖ **Contribution to the Kingdom**
- ❖

**Was this the end of the story? Surely not.**

A) Onesimus and Philemon went on to lead even more productive lives for Christ.

B) Many believe that Philemon, in RESPONSE to Paul’s expressed desire to have Onesimus back –

1)returned him to Paul in Rome, where he further developed into a great man of God.

C) The historical evidence supports this.

Fifty years later when Ignatius, one of the great Christian martyrs, was being transported from Antioch to Rome to be executed, he wrote letters to certain churches.

**In writing to Ephesus he praised their Pastor Onesimus!**

A)It appears likely that Onesimus, the runaway slave, had become, with the passing of years, the Pastor of THE CHURCH IN Ephesus !

B)Talking total Transformation

C)As we close today – make a couple of observations

**#1 Are you running from something?**

A)Not there yet – but you have been toying with the idea – thinking the grass is greener

B)Flirting with sin – and compromise –

**C)Beg you today – Repent – Change of mind – leads to a change of heart – results in a change of direction**

D)You don’t have to wait to end up in the pig pen

1)Lose everything

John 8:32

**32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."**

John 8:36

**36 Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.**