

# Philemon Part 1

## A Power Packed Postcard

Postcards – We have all seen them – most of us have sent them –

A) Usually great pictures – with short message –

*Hey I miss you – love you – Having too much fun to sit down and write a letter – so I am sending this*

B) Then there are the ones where we flat out lie –  
*Having a great time – wish you were here.*

C) Philemon has been called – one of the Postcards of the New Testament - **Power Packed Postcard:**

**The book of Philemon is unique in many respects.**

A) It is the shortest of Paul's inspired writings, why it has been called a postcard.

B) It is the only one of the prison epistles addressed to an individual. – Philemon

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

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

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.**

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 – 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 he might have been was not due to the politics of man, but to the sovereignty of God

2) Great thing to remember

**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.**

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

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

C) **It seems that two men: Epaphras & Philemon –**

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

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

1) 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 of this home Church**

**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 love, 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 people leave refreshed!!!!**

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

2) **Philemon reminds me of Barnabas – Son of encouragement**

**Set up the Story: A Slave on the Run**

A) **Philemon had a Slave whose name was Onesimus – Onesimus – one day escaped –**

He also stole some things from Philemon's property before he left – headed to Rome

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

1) Lightfoot says: "Rome was the natural cesspool for the unclean of humanity."

**C) Our Las Vegas of our day/ New York**

1) It was the place he could get into the most trouble.

### **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) 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 – We end up in Bondage and despair**

**D) Plight of Onesimus**

**But Onesimus was to discover that although there is slavery in freedom, there is also freedom in slavery. A) How?**

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

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."**

**C) A Yoke- BUFF**

**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

**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 in chains, Paul was free, and although he was free, he was enslaved to his own sin, {Gave his heart to Christ**

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

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

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

### **AN APPEALING LETTER**

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

**RD V.8-9 –**

**<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.**

**A) Paul says I could have commanded you as an apostle – but I am appealing to you as a friend – as a brother in the Lord !**

**RD V.10-14**

**<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. <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 Paul obviously wants Philemon to deal gently with Onesimus.**

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

**B) It wasn't unusual for slaves to be crucified for lesser offenses than escaping.**

1) One ancient writer describes how a slave was carrying a tray of crystal goblets, and he dropped and broke one.

**The master instantly demanded the slave be thrown into a fishpond full of man eating fish that tore the slave to pieces.**

**C) “Roman law: imposed no limits to the power of the master over his slave.**

1) Considering there were as many as 60 million slaves, there were constant fears of a slave revolt.

**D) Therefore, laws against runaways were strict.**

1) A captured, runaway slave might be crucified, or branded with a red-hot iron on the forehead with the letter “F” for *fugitive*. That could have been Onesimus

**E) So according to Roman law Onesimus deserved any and all punishment that Philemon would choose to throw at him**

**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-**

1) Apparently he wasn’t a very good slave – Paul says in v.11 formerly he was unprofitable to you –

2) Seems he wasn’t a very good worker – and he stole from his master to boot.

**B) So he may not have been profitable to you – but he has been extremely profitable to me!**

1) Paul refers to Onesimus as his son /a beloved brother and one who ministered to Paul in his chains

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

1) Those who were lost – to those who are sons –

**C) Those who were enemies – to Brothers**

**RD V.15-6** <sup>5</sup> 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 but it was this very thing that brought him to Christ**

**C) Paul suggests to Philemon that God was using this evil to produce good (cf. Gen. 50:20; Rom. 8:28).**

1) **Satan meant it for evil** – He wanted Onesimus to be caught / killed and forever lost

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

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

**D) 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.’*

Tears filled the eyes of the heart-broken man as he walked away. It seemed that God had spoken through the workman to explain the ordeal through which he was passing.

**Perhaps you have made some bad choices.**

A) The consequences of those choices have been devastating and you are at the point of complete despair.

**B) You feel as though God is through with you, and will not put up with you anymore.**

1) You feel as though the hammer of God is coming down on you hard.

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

1) All bitter consequences of your sin, and all of the loving discipline that you are experiencing under the loving hand of your heavenly Father, is being used by Him to PREPARE you for heaven.

**D) Paul is asking Philemon to see how the Lord used this circumstance to transform Onesimus.**

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

1) New Man

**F) So Onesimus had Changed – but what about his Punishment? – what about Justice?**

**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) Rather, Paul offered to pay the debt himself. "Put it on my account—I will repay it!"**

**B) Onesimus could not possibly pay back all he owed Philemon.**

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

C) Paul deals with the issue of restitution and of Justice by asking Philemon to **accept him as you would me.**

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

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

A) Paul's appeal is powerful because he stands beside a guilty man and says to the owner of the slave,

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

**C) Philemon had been wronged by Onesimus's flight.** 1) Just like we wronged God - / offended – rejected – took the life He had given – to please Him and stole it – we lived for ourselves –

**D) Some of us – stole life from others – Hurting them – leading them down roads that took them farther from God .**

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

**A) Onesimus, like the sinner, stood in need of reconciliation.**

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

1) That is the same role Jesus plays in the relationship between the sinner and God. Paul, like Christ, was willing to pay the price of reconciliation.

C) Paul's willingness to suffer the temporal consequences of Onesimus's sin mirrors Christ's willingness to suffer the eternal consequences of our sin.

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

1) In other words, the saved sinner has as much right in heaven as Christ has, for he has *His* right to be there.

We are accepted in the beloved (see Eph. 1:6).

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 – Jesus stands in the Court room of God as our Defense attorney –**

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

Aa) Jesus agrees – He is guilty – He did all of that – But Charge it to my account – I paid the Price at Calvary – See these scars

B) **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 - why?

C) **Your sin was imputed to Him so that His righteousness could be imputed to you.**

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.*

*A sinless Jesus became sin filled so that sin filled people could be sin free*

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

**Jesus says: Forgive him because I did pay the debt**

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

A) Justified – Declared righteous in my eyes!

B) His sacrifice is SUFFICIENT for the whole world. But it is only EFFICIENT for those who trust in Him.

C) **APPLICATION:** If you haven't given your heart to Jesus you do not have a personal comforter and helper and Advocate. You are alone with the guilt and consequences of your sin.

**ILLUSTRATION:** In 1835 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." "No," replied the despairing man, "he can't help me. You see, I am Grimaldi!"

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

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

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

YOU have no real answers for your own dilemma. You NEED a Savior..... You NEED Jesus.

For without Him you stand alone and guilty for all of your sins.

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.